

Compli-Cards

A positive peer reporting intervention to increase compliments

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COMPLI-CARDS!!

I Got A Compliment!!!!

To _____

From _____

Compliment _____

Witness _____

Date _____

Negative comments can, and often do, plague classrooms. From sarcasm, criticism and just plain put-downs, many educators can agree that an increase in compliments is a step in the right direction. The primary aim of the Compli-Cards intervention is to do just that. This is a tool that is easy to implement, evidence based, and targets the entire classroom. Rather than try to change the behavior of one individual, Compli-Cards is designed to increase the positive comments of the whole class, creating a friendlier environment for both students and teachers. Moreover, the intervention is cost effective, time effective, and may even get kids used to the idea of giving compliments.

Introduction

Definition

Compli-Cards is a classroom based intervention that will increase the number of compliments given between classmates. The core component of Compli-Cards is positive peer reporting, in which students will fill out a “Compli-Card” on their peers. The other components of the Compli-Cards intervention are public posting, a group contingency with randomized reward criteria, and a positive home note (students get to take their Compli-Cards home and show their parents).

Why use Compli-Cards?

Compli-Cards can be used for any classroom that would like to experience a more positive environment. While teachers and other educators are often aware of the power of praise, students may not be. Using simple rewards to encourage compliments can help create a more positive atmosphere. Not only is a positive atmosphere more enjoyable for both educator and student to be in, children may also take on more positive attitudes toward school.

Going along with an increase in compliments, a decrease in negative peer comments can be anticipated. This may result in fewer put-downs, arguments, and even incidents of bullying. Current friendships will be strengthened, and new friendships may arise as a result of the Compli-Card intervention.

Target Population

The Compli-Card intervention is designed for elementary school children. The children should be old enough to understand and be able to give compliments, as well as record that compliment on a Compli-Card. However, the children should be young enough to embrace the intervention. It is a possibility that an older classroom may resent to the intervention, or find too many ways to take advantage of it. Ideally, Compli-Cards should be used with students in 1st to 4th grade.

Compli-Cards can be used in both general education settings, special education settings, and team or group settings. However, there should be at least five individuals participating in the program, otherwise the system may not be as effective. Also, as the number of individuals increases, the more

space the Compli-Cards will take up and organization may become difficult. It is our recommendation that the number of individuals be limited to 30.

If more than 30 students need to be accommodated, it may be a good idea to split the students into smaller groups. But, because Compli-Cards is intended to be completely positive, we do not encourage any promotion of competition between teams.

Evidence Base

Compli-Cards is based upon five different components that each contribute to the interventions effectiveness. And while Compli-Cards has yet to receive empirical evaluation, each one of the components is currently considered evidence-based practice, meaning there is a large amount of research literature supporting it. Therefore, it is assumed that Compli-Cards would follow in suit of its components.

Positive Peer Reporting

Positive peer reporting is a class-wide Positive Behavior Support (PBS) approach to increase pro-social behavior. Rather than report the negative behavior of their peers (tattling), students try to catch their peers engaging in a positive behavior and then report that to their teacher. PPR is also referred to in the literature as “tootling,” and has been shown to be effective in reducing negative peer interactions and bullying while increasing positive interactions and enhancing peer perceptions of other students (Cihak, Kirk, & Boon, 2009). One proposed reason for the effectiveness for PPR is that it is a peer mediated intervention. Peers are able to observe behavior that can go unnoticed by the teacher, and therefore the intervention can apply to a larger group. Jones (2000) suggested that PPR may be effective because peers have a significant impact on social development, and therefore recognition by a peer may have more importance than the recognition of a teacher or adult. Finally, a benefit of peer mediated interventions is that the teacher does not need to commit as much time or effort as would be necessary for a teacher-mediated intervention (Morrison). Because the students are responsible for the recording of the positive behavior, the teacher simply needs to provide the class with the reporting forms and reward of his or her choice.

Public Posting

Public posting is a technique in which the performance of an individual or group can be observed by others. This procedure has been used as a component of many interventions, and has been shown to be an effective way to increase motivation (Jenson & Reavis, 1996). Public posting can be used for a wide range of behaviors, as almost any behavior that can be recorded can be posted. Public posting is a type of visual feedback, and this allows both the teacher and the students to continuously monitor the performance of the group (Bowen, Jenson & Clark 2004). An additional benefit when using a tangible or physical product (e.g., a Compli-Card) is that the students can publicly post their own performance, which may be rewarding in itself.

Randomized Goals

It has been shown that when an individual is unaware of the exact criteria or goal that he or she needs to reach to receive a reward, that individual will show a greater degree of motivation (Theodore, Bray, Kehle, & Jenson, 2001). In other words, when a student doesn't know what their performance must be, they will work harder and longer. Of course, the goal must be attainable; otherwise the student will give up. However, by randomizing the goal within limits of their abilities, a teacher can maximize the efforts put forth by students. This technique prevents two forms of decreased effort. First, if students are aware of the goal and reach it before the period is over, they will have no motivation to continue as they have already met the goal. Second, if the goal is too high that the students don't believe they will reach it by the end of the period they will also give up. To make things worse, every student has different motivation. If some give up, others may try to coerce them into trying harder. This can lead to arguments and even fights. If no one knows the goal, everyone will be less likely to give up.

Interdependent Group Contingency

An interdependent group contingency is a strategy that uses the performance of the entire class to determine an outcome. Generally, if the class meets a certain requirement or criteria, then the entire class receives a reward. Group contingencies have one of the highest effect sizes for interventions in classroom settings (Stage & Quiroz, 1997). Because the reward is dependent upon the class's performance, peers can and may encourage other peers to perform. However, even if there are one or two individuals who, for whatever reason, do not engage in the targeted behavior, the class can still earn the reward. Even those individuals who did not participate may have access to the reward, which keeps the intervention viewed in a positive light by everyone.

Positive Home Note

The final component of the Compli-Card intervention is a positive home note. Essentially, this entails providing the student with a note that is completely positive to take home to show their parents. Positive home notes have been shown to increase positive attitudes towards school, enhance children's self esteem, and improve the relationship between parents and the school (Kelly & McCain, 1995).

COMPLI-CARDS: RUNNING THE SHOW

What You Will Need

- Compli-Card Template (see appendix)
 - Rewards
 - Small rewards: daily
 - Larger rewards: weekly
 - Random number generator (online)
 - Space on a bulletin board or bookcase
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Implementing Compli-Cards: Five Easy Steps

1. Set it up
2. Select the goal
3. Explain Compli-Cards
4. Select the rewards
5. Run it!

1. Set It Up

The first thing to do is **find the space** for the public posting. Because the Compli-Cards are relatively small, this space does not need to be big. We recommend the top edge of a bookshelf or desk be used. The goal of the public posting space is that everyone can see the Compli-Cards either from their seats or as they walk by. The more people that can see them, the better.

The reason we recommend the edge of a shelf is because this space is not generally used for another purpose (i.e. you can write or post other things on white boards), it has a place for a stack of Compli-Cards and a tape dispenser, and it lends itself to a naturally linear progression. This way, when a witness hears a compliment, they can come up to the shelf, fill out a Compli-Card from the stack, and tape it to the edge of the shelf directly next to the previous Compli-Card. This way, it is easy to watch the number of cards accumulate.

The shelf should be low enough that children can reach it to post the cards, as well as read them as they pass by. This may model appropriate compliments and remind them to post any compliments they hear.

The next step is to **print off a few sheets of the Compli-Card template** and prepare them as cards. We have used blue because it is easy to read and would stand out. However, it may be fun for the students if they get to choose what color they want the cards to be. The thickness of the paper that is used can also influence the outcome of the intervention. A child may be less likely to take home a piece of normal printer paper than a Compli-Card written on cardstock. Therefore, if you have an option, it is best to select the more substantial paper.

2. Select the Goal

Before you explain Compli-Cards to the class, **select a range for the first week's goal**. This takes a bit of estimation and creativity, but if you know your class it won't be hard.

To begin, choose a minimum number of Compli-Cards you would like to see given in the first week. Then choose a maximum number that reflects how many you think the students could do if they were performing at 100%. For the first week, these values should be low so that the class is almost guaranteed to earn a reward. This ensures that they will enjoy it, and it will give you an idea of how many Compli-Cards you can expect to see.

Once you have determined your weekly goal range, **divide those values by the number of schooldays that week**. These values become your daily goal range. For example, if I wanted to see at least 10 goals a week and thought the most I could see was 30, my weekly goal range would be 10-30 and my daily goal range would be 2-6 (given a 5 day week).

This is where the very important random number generator comes into play. Don't be intimidated by its really long name, if you have your minimum and maximum values you can do this in 10 seconds. All you need to do is **log onto a random number generator** online (www.random.org). It will ask for a minimum and maximum value which you have already created. Simply type those in, click "generate," and there you have your randomized goal. Repeat this procedure for the weekly goal and each daily goal.

Once you have the randomized goal, write it down in a safe place away from prying eyes. You will reveal this goal at the end of the day or week to determine if the goal was met!

The weekly reward is earned if the entire class accumulated enough Compli-Cards over the week to reach the goal. **If the total number of Compli-Cards given over that week meets the goal, the entire class receives the large reward.**

The daily goal and rewards only apply to those individuals that have participated in a Compli-Card. **If the number of Compli-Cards for that day meets the daily goal, then every person that gave a compliment (complimentor) and posted the Compli-Cards (witness) receives the reward.** The person who received the compliment (complimentee) does not receive the reward, but gets to take the Compli-Card home to his or her parents.

3. Explain Compli-Cards

Once the Compli-Card space and first week's goal are prepared, take 10 to 15 minutes to **talk to the class about compliments.** This discussion should be tailored to your grade level and expectations. There are some pages describing compliments and praise that can be found in the appendix, which may be helpful.

After going over the basics of compliments, **explain to the class how the Compli-Card system works.** It may be helpful to use the diagram at the beginning of this manual to explain the basic process of filling out and posting a Compli-Card. Then explain how the rewards work. Basically, **in order to earn the rewards, the class must have as many or more Compli-Cards as the goal.** If there aren't enough Compli-Cards, then there can be no reward.

This is the time when the class will ask what the rewards are. **Do not tell them what the rewards are just yet.** Instead, tell them that there are two types of rewards. Daily rewards are smaller, and are only given to the complimentor and witness. Remember to let the students know that the complimentee, who doesn't get the daily reward, gets to take his or her Compli-Card home to show his parents. Weekly rewards are larger, and the entire class can receive them, even if they did not participate in any of the Compli-Cards.

Explaining the goal may be trickier. Because each population will have a different comprehension of the random number generator, feel free to explain this in as much or as little detail as you like. However, it is crucial that you **emphasize that you aren't picking the goal, and that it is random.** Take some time to answer any questions the kids have about the way Compli-Cards work, how they can earn rewards, or what a good compliment is.

4. Select the Rewards

After you have gone over the basics, it is time to select the rewards you want to use. These rewards should be very inexpensive, easy to give, and not take up too much time.

The daily rewards should be smaller things, like little treats or a few minutes of free time. The weekly rewards should be larger and be things that everyone likes, such as extra recess or a free question on a homework assignment.

Feel free to include your students in the reward selection process. They will work harder and be more motivated to earn the rewards if they get to choose them. For a list of reward suggestions, try www.interventioncentral.org.

5. Run It

Now you are all set! The kids should understand, the goal for the first days and week are set, and the rewards have been chosen. It's time to sit back and watch the positive peer to peer comments go up.

During the day, occasionally glance through the posted Compli-Cards to ensure that everything is appropriate. If you find a card that does not meet standards, address it either to the entire class or individually

At the end of the day, reveal the random goal and count the Compli-Cards. If the goal was met, distribute the reward to the complimenter and the witness. Be sure to give the Compli-Card to the complimentee and record the number of Compli-Cards each day in a safe place, even if the daily goal was not met.

At the end of the week, add up all the Compli-Cards that had been given each day. If the random weekly goal was met, let the class know that they have all earned the large reward.

TROUBLESHOOTING: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

P: Poor compliment quality

This is a very likely problem. Kids will want to get the reward and will be willing to consider anything a compliment. This is a good opportunity to review again what compliments really are, providing specific examples. If your students can differentiate between general praise (you are a good artist) and specific praise (I like the way you draw boats), limit Compli-Cards to specific praise. Also, if there is a Compli-Card that you don't think is worthy of public posting, remove it. If it is a compliment of poor quality, describe what you are expecting more thoroughly to the entire class. If the Compli-Card contains something inappropriate, discuss it with the individual who posted it and implement regular classroom consequences.

P: Too easy/hard to get reward

This problem, also known as ceiling and floor effects, is also likely to happen. If you are finding that your students never meet the daily or weekly goal, simply lower your maximum value for your goal range. Conversely, if your students have never failed to achieve a reward, increase your maximum and minimum value for the goal range. There is not cut and dry rule for how often your class should meet the goal, but anywhere between 60 and 80 percent is ideal.

P: No witness for a compliment

This may occur during recess or lunch when two kids are isolated from other peers. Because the goal of Compli-Cards is to increase compliments in children's day to day routines, and there will be many instances when there is no witness, try to give them the benefit of the doubt. Also, some kids may be too shy to give compliments in public. We recommend that you discuss the compliment with each child individually. If they are able to provide the same compliment by themselves, allow the complimenter to be the witness and post the Compli-Card. However, if they come up with different compliments, do not allow that to be a Compli-Card.

P: Some kids never get complimented

This is a sad issue, but it will likely come up, especially with depressed, withdrawn and socially isolated kids. A first step would be to manipulate the room so that that child is near a pro-social peer or a peer who consistently gives compliments. Next, tell the withdrawn student to try to model the behavior he or she sees peers being complimented on. Finally, encourage the withdrawn student to give compliments. Most children in elementary school understand reciprocity at some level, and if a peer consistently gives compliments it is hoped that he or she will eventually get some back in return.

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