

# The Relationship between Anger Management Techniques and Discipline Reports

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to target students who show aggressive and bullying behavior due to a lack of anger management and self-control skills. Two groups of boys in grades 2-4 participated in anger managements groups that either followed an anger management curriculum or followed the anger management curriculum plus breathing techniques. The study found that the boys in the anger management plus breathing techniques group, in general, showed an increase in anger control and a decrease in discipline reports.

## Introduction

Emotion regulation is a person's ability to adapt their emotions appropriately within the social context (Kuzucu, 2016). Anger, on its own, is not necessarily a negative emotion. It does become negative when it leads to aggression and other negative consequences (Seshardri, 2014). All students deserve a school environment where they feel safe and welcome but if these behaviors are allowed to continue students will continue to feel unsafe in the school environment. Many of these students who are exhibiting these behaviors are doing

so because they lack the necessary skills involved in emotion regulation. An intervention that teaches students how to better regulate their emotions and behaviors is needed for students at Whitesburg School, a P-8 in a southern state.

## Literature Review

Experts have many definitions for anger. Oolup, Brown, Nowicki, and Aziz (2016) state that anger is "an emotional condition that is often socially instigated through the perception of threatening, frustrating or stressful circumstances and environments" (p. 280). Golden (2016) describes it as follows:

Anger is a powerful and challenging emotion triggered by feelings of threat to our physical or mental well-being. It is also often a reaction to and a distraction from some form of inner pain that may be associated with anxiety, shame, powerlessness, or disrespect. (p. 57)

Park and Kim (2012) define anger as a "powerful emotion that has been associated with a host of negative psychological outcomes, including externalizing problems such as aggression and delinquency" (p. 1339). Another definition of anger given

by Sukhodolsky, Smith, McCauley, Ibrahim, and Piasecka (2016) is "a negative affective state that may include increased physiological arousal, thoughts of blame, and an increased predisposition toward aggressive behavior" (p. 58). It can be triggered by frustration and can vary in duration and intensity (Sukhodolsky, Smith, McCauley, Ibrahim, & Piasecka, 2016, p. 59).

Even though anger is mostly seen as a negative emotion, not all experts agree on anger being only negative. There are those who feel that if anger is managed well, it can be a positive emotion also. Howie and Malouff (2014) state that, "Anger is a normal human emotion that can be instrumental for motivating an individual towards assertiveness and the necessary action to defend one's self in the face of personal threat from the environment" (p. 310). Golden (2016, p. 57) proposes that when anger is informed by self-reflection, anger can become healthy. Lowth (2015) states, "Getting angry is normal, but letting anger get the best of you is not." It is not the anger itself that is negative, it is the behavior and consequences that come with the anger that make anger seem negative. In many instances anger can lead to aggressive behaviors, sometimes including physical altercations. Golden (2016) also says that when those who are angry act impulsively, they can be dangerous (p. 57).

Interventions can help those who have anger issues learn to control their anger and regulate their emotions. Golden (2016) proposes that when those who are angry learn to stay calm, have compassion for themselves, and being aware will help their anger be healthy instead of destructive. It is important that students, as early as possible learn the skills to help them manage and regulate their emotions, especially

anger. Rice and Howell (2006) discuss how important is when planning an intervention for anger to use anger reflection and control techniques since these have been shown to be more successful at reducing overall anger. When those who have problems with anger are used to acting out when they are angry, this usually leads to more aggressive behavior and more anger (Rice & Howell, 2006, p. 52). Rice and Howell also discuss the three main ways people express their anger: anger-out, anger-suppression, and anger-reflection/control. Anger-out is anger express outwardly, anger-suppression is anger held in, and anger-reflection/control is a cognitive way or expressing anger.

How students regulate their anger can be influenced by their family and culture. Social skills can also play a part in how a student regulates their anger. Park and Kim (2012) discuss how family dynamics can influence how Korean-American students regulate their anger. Negative relationships within the family can lead to low anger control by Korean-American students. This can lead more to anger-out and anger-suppression methods of expressing anger. However, when students have more positive relationships within the family and a more independent self-construal, this can lead to more anger-reflection/control methods of expressing anger.

The role of family dynamics in influencing how student express anger is not far-fetched. Children and adolescents need to develop anger regulation skill and one of the first places they will learn that skill is within their families. But family dynamics are not the only factor that mediate how students regulate their anger. Students' social skills also help mediate their anger control skills. A lack of social skills can lead

to aggression and behavioral problems (Kuzucu, 2016). Kuzucu states, “Aggressive behavior is predicted by anger in adolescents. Anger leads to adolescent to misinterpret existing cues, and this misinterpretation is more likely results in physical, verbal, and indirect aggression” (p. 850). Because of their lack of social skills, adolescents cannot read social cues correctly which leads to misunderstanding, which in turn can lead to anger and aggression. It is important for adolescents to develop these skills so that they can use social problem-solving instead of aggression to help them through troubles (p. 851).

There are many reasons why anger control is an important skill to develop in children. When children are young they start to learn how to deal with and regulate their anger. When they learn maladaptive forms of anger control, this can later be tied to deficits in social and academic skills (Daniels, Mandleco, & Luthy, 2012). For example, tantrums in children after a certain age are an abnormal way to deal with anger, which can become more serious as they get older (Daniels, Mandleco, & Luthy, 2012). This can be indicative of a more serious issue that may need a referral for services (p. 572). When students feel these negative emotions without any way to manage them or regulate them, they can make students feel disadvantaged at many levels, such as socially or academically (Sharp, Carr, & Panger, 2016).

Another reason anger regulation is important is that poor anger regulation leads to high risk behavior along with the aggression. Gambetti and Giusberti (2016) state that there is evidence that “during adolescence anger increases vulnerability to risky behaviors and predicts numerous risk decisions, such as violence, smoking,

and substance abuse” (p. 343). Cooley and Fite (2016) also echo this sentiment when they state:

Emotional competence requires coping with negative emotions in a manner that is responsive to the demands of the social context. Thus, adaptive emotion regulation involves strategies, such as behavioral distraction and social support seeking, used to modulate emotional arousal in order to avoid undesired consequences and prevent negative emotions from overwhelming and impairing one’s ability to engage in goal-directed behavior. (p. 536-537).

Anger can lead to risky decisions in children and adolescents. This habit of risky decisions can continue into adulthood and lead to more serious consequences.

There are many interventions that can help students learn to manage and regulate their anger. Many studies discussed the use of groups to help students learn how to manage their anger (alavinezhad, Mousavi, & Sohrabi, 2014; Burt, Patel, Butler, & Gonzalez, 2013; Fitzsimmons, Isaacs, & McCloy, 2015; Ho, Carter, & Stephenson, 2010; Seshadri, 2014; Steffgen, 2017; Tosun, 2014; “Training Helps Teens Manage Anger,” 2012). Group training for anger management may have many functions. One of those functions is helping those with anger issues learn appropriate social skills within the group, such as leadership (Burt, Patel, Butler, & Gonzalez, 2013). Replacing poor anger management and social skill with more positive ones can be beneficial to the recipient for the long term. This is can also be helpful to students with special education needs. Ho, Carter, and Stephenson (2010) found that there was some success to having these interventions with students with special education needs to a moderate degree.

In interventions for anger, it is important that there is a cognitive component to the training. When there is a cognitive component, it has been shown that the anger management training was more effective over the long term (Burt, Patel, Butler, & Gonzalez, 2013; Fitzsimmons, Isaacs, & McCloy, 2015; Steffgen, 2017). A more holistic approach to anger management can not only teach anger management skills but also coping skills for other difficult emotions which can lead to less aggressive behaviors and other negative consequences (Burt, Patel, Butler, & Gonzalez, 2013). When trying to decrease the aggression and negative consequences related to anger, more positive means of dealing with problems need to be addressed because the anger and aggressive behavior can be related to each other (Tosun, 2014).

Nontraditional methods of group anger management training have also been shown to be effective in helping with anger regulation. Art therapy can be used to help express anger in a more productive and less aggressive way by giving the participant an outlet when they cannot express their anger verbally (alavinezhad, Mousavi, & Sohrabi, 2014). Online therapy is also a means for those with anger regulation issues to seek out help. It can be especially helpful for those who would not or could not participate in a face-to-face intervention (Howie & Malouff, 2014). Also, when dealing with children, it is important when working with groups to have visual aids of how anger can build up and using that visual representation to talk about how to not let anger “bubble up” (Seshadri, 2014). There are many ways to reach children and adolescents who are dealing with anger issues.

The literature shows that anger is not inherently negative but if children and adolescents do not know how to regulate and manage their anger, it can lead to aggression and other negative consequences. The purpose of this study is to use this concept to help students learn better ways to manage their anger and develop better coping skills. This would lead to a decrease in office discipline referrals for these students and a more safe and inviting environment for all students and staff.

## Methods

### *Participants*

For this study, students in grades 2-5 (ages 7-11) at Whitesburg P-8 will be selected based on their discipline referral history. The students had been referred to the Problem Solving Team (PST) for behavior. Students with at least three discipline reports or those who have been referred to PST for aggressive behaviors will be chosen. The students represent a variety of racial and economic backgrounds. Parents will be notified of their children’s selection for the intervention groups by sending a letter home describing the intervention group. On the letter will be an opt-out option for parents to sign and send back to the school if they do not want their children to participate in the intervention.

### *Measures*

Anger control will be measured by a questionnaire, modified to meet the students’ age levels, measuring their level of anger control (Outlook Associates of New England, n.d., see Appendix). The questionnaire contains 20 statements about anger. The participants will be asked to rate each statement on a five-point scale where 1 is never, 2 is rarely, 3 is sometimes, 4 is frequently, and 5 is always. Scores for a participant could range from 20 to 100.

The questionnaire will be giving to students during the first group session and the last group session to determine if anger control has improved after the intervention.

#### *Procedure*

Participants were chosen based on their discipline history and referral to the PST for behavior issues. Participants will assigned into one of two groups. The two groups will receive interventions. Each of the intervention groups will be divided up into smaller groups of four to six students to conduct the group sessions with. The first intervention group will participate in a small group focused on anger management. The small group curriculum used will be from Griffith's (2012) Creative Small Groups: Ready-to-Use Lessons for Grades K-5. The group session will last approximately 30 minutes. The second and third grade groups will participate in seven weekly sessions on anger management. The fourth and fifth grade groups will participate in eight weekly sessions on anger management.

The second intervention group will also participate in the small group curriculum on anger management. In addition to the small group curriculum, at the end of each session the group will learn some breathing and relaxation techniques (Roberts, 2014). Each week the students will learn breathing and relaxation techniques to help them better control and regulate their emotions, especially anger.

**Small group session 1 for second and third grades.** The first session is an orientation session for the participants. The materials needed for this session are a board or chart paper and animal cards (Griffith, 2012, p. 41-44). First students will get an introduction to the group and why

the group could be helpful to them. Students will also complete the questionnaire during this first group session. After the questionnaire is filled out and turned in to the group leader, the group will move into Griffith's (2012) first anger management group lesson (p. 23).

Students will be shown animal cards. The animal cards show a number of different animals. Students will be directed to choose an animal that best represents their anger. Each student will then explain their choice. The group leader will make note of which animal card each student chooses. If students are having trouble explaining their choice, the group leader can ask clarifying questions such as:

How is your anger like something this animal does? Which of your angry actions or attitudes might make others think of this animal? What might happen when this animal is angry? What usually happens when you act like this animal? What other animal would you prefer to be like when you are angry? (Griffith, 2012, p. 23)

While students are explaining their animal choice or answering the clarifying questions, the group leader is writing the behaviors and actions the students mention on the board or chart paper.

After all students have had their turn, the group leader will ask the following questions to open up a discussion on which behaviors may cause the most or least problems:

Which behavior is hardest for you to control? Which behavior gets you into the most trouble? Does anyone else in your family behave this way when angry? What usually happens? How do you feel when your family member does this? (Griffith, 2012, p. 23)

This discussion concludes the first session. The group leader reminds the students that during this group, they will be working on ways to help them control their behavior when angry.

#### **Small group session 2 for second and third grades.**

The materials needed for this session are a few sets of the animal cards, a board or chart paper, scissors, light-colored construction paper, glue sticks, and crayons. This session will start with asking students to select the animal card they chose in session one. If the students do not remember their card, the group leader can remind them. Then each student will select a different animal card that represents having anger control. The group leader will ask each student what about their new animal helps the student help control angry behavior. The group leader will summarize the responses on the board or chart paper. Then the group leader will lead the group in brainstorming other ideas for controlling their anger and add those to the list.

Next the group leader will give each student a piece of construction paper, a glue stick and crayons. The students will pick two animal cards, one for anger and one for anger control. They will color their cards and then glue the cards to opposite sides of the construction paper. The group leader will tell the students that they can use these cards as a reminder of the lesson about anger control.

#### **Small group session 3 for second and third grades.**

The group leader will need the animal cards, pipe cleaners, colored beads, and the "Rules For Getting Your Anger Out" handout for each student (Griffith, 2012, p. 47). The group leader will start this session by using the animal

cards to review the anger behaviors that cause problems for the students. The group leader will then lead a discussion of why anger energy must be let out in a safe way. The students will then brainstorm ways they can safely let out their anger energy without getting in trouble. The group leader will discuss with the students appropriate times and places to engage in these behaviors.

Next each student will receive the "Rules For Getting Your Anger Out" handout and each rule will be discussed with the group leader. The group leader will then discuss how counting to 10 can help them learn to delay responding to something that makes them angry. The group will then use the pipe cleaners and colored beads to create a tactile device to help them count slowly to 10 since most students count too fast to get the benefit from the exercise. The group leader will give the following instructions to create the devices:

Fold over about one inch of the end of the pipe cleaner, twisting it around itself to create a loop. Slide the beads onto the pipe cleaner. Fold over about one inch at the other end of the pipe cleaner, creating another loop. These loops keep the beads on the pipe cleaner. (Griffith, 2012, p. 26)

The group leader will instruct the students to slide one bead from one end to the other of the pipe cleaner as they count to 10. The sliding of the bead helps the student pause between the numbers. The group leader and students will practice counting to 10 using the bead. The group leader will then remind the group to use the beads the next time they need to calm down from being angry.

**Small group session 4 for second and third grades.** The group leader will need

a board or chart paper, “Egg-Ons” print outs (Griffith, 2012, p. 48), scissors, and pencils. The group leader will explain that “Egg-Ons” are behaviors or words that escalate angry behaviors. An egg-on can be a thought, a word, or an action. They can come from the person who caused the anger or bystanders. The group leader will then provide examples of egg-ons. The group leader and students will then come up with more egg-ons to write on the board or chart paper in a T-chart. On the other side of the T-chart, the students will brainstorm words or thoughts that would counter each egg-on. The group leader will then give each student a cut-out egg and a pencil. The students will then select on egg-on from the board and write it on one side of the egg. On the other side of the egg, the students will write words or thought that will not escalate their anger.

**Small group session 5 for second and third grades.** The group leader will need two pitchers, water, food coloring, eye dropper, and oil. The group leader will prepare this lesson by filling one of the pitchers with water and placing a small amount of oil in the other pitcher. The group leader will explain to the students that many like to think about how they would like to get revenge on those who we think have wronged us. The group leader then reminds students that thinking about revenge keeps them angry and hurts themselves. The group leader will then give examples of revenge thoughts and then let the students come up with more. The group leader will remind the students that it is important to talk about their anger. The group leader will then use the pitchers to demonstrate how thinking about or waiting on revenge keeps them angry. The group leader will pour about half the water from the full pitcher to the other pitcher explaining to the students

that the clear water show them when they are calm and thinking clearly. The food coloring represents revenge and when it is added to the water (with the oil in the bottom), the food coloring stays on the surface for a while but eventually seeps into the rest of the water. The group leader will then ask the students for suggestions on how to turn the water back to the way it was. After each suggestion, the group leader adds more clear water to the colored water. The students will see that even the water gets lighter, it will not return to clear. The group leader reminds the students that the only way to clear their minds is to get rid of the thought of revenge completely and start with fresh water.

**Small group session 6 for second and third grades.** The group leader will need copies of the “I Can Control Myself” handout for each group member and pencils (Griffith, 2012, p. 49). The group leader will start by asking students to describe something inside of them that stops them from acting on their anger or hurting others when they are angry. The group leader will explain to the students that this is their conscience and if they listen to it, it will help them think before they act. The group leader will talk with the students about how certain parts of our body are associated with certain feelings and thoughts. For example, the brain is associated with clear thinking, the heart is associated with caring, and the stomach associated with nervousness. The group leader will then ask what body parts could help them control their anger and what that body part might say to them when they are angry. Each student receives a copy of the “I Can Control Myself” handout and a pencil. The students will then be asked to draw the body part that helps them control their anger and write how it helps them

control their anger. The students will take the worksheet with them as a reminder to control their angry behaviors.

**Small group session 7 for second and third grades.** The group leader will need drawing paper and crayons for this last session. The group leader will discuss with the students “hot thoughts” that lead to anger (Griffith, 2012, p. 31). These thoughts make anger erupt faster and keeps anger going for longer. The group leader then ask the students for the most ridiculous place they can think of to get rid of their hot thoughts. The group leader will encourage acting silly to help with the students’ creativity. The group leader will then suggest to students that they imagine that place when they feel anger to help them cool down then next time they have hot thoughts. Each student will get drawing paper and crayons to draw where their hot thoughts go. They will then share with the group. The group leader will congratulate the students on what they have learned in the group over the weeks. They will also review some of the things they have discussed throughout the sessions. Students will then fill out the questionnaire they completed in the first session to compare their anger control to how it was before they participated in the group.

**Small group session 1 for fourth and fifth grades.** The first session is an orientation session for the participants. The materials needed for this session are a board or chart paper, scissors, and a few sets of the animal cards. First students will get an introduction to the group and why the group could be helpful to them. Students will also complete the questionnaire during this first group session. After the questionnaire is filled out and turned in to the group leader, the group will move into

Griffith’s (2012) first anger management group lesson (p. 32). Students will be shown animal cards. The animal cards show a number of different animals. Students will be directed to choose an animal that best represents their anger. Each student will then explain their choice. The group leader will make note of which animal card each student chooses. If students are having trouble explaining their choice, the group leader can ask clarifying questions such as:

What might happen when this animal is angry? What might make this animal angry? How is your anger like something this animal does? Which of your angry actions or attitudes might make others think of this animal? What kinds of things tend to make you angry? What usually happens when you act like this animal? (Griffith, 2012, p. 32)

The group leader will then make two T-charts on chart paper with the first chart’s columns being Reasons Animals Get Angry and Angry Animal Behaviors. The second chart’s columns will be Reasons People Get Angry and Angry People Behaviors. The students will complete the charts with the group leader. The group leader will then ask the following questions:

What are some common reasons why animals and people get angry? Which reason do you agree with most/least? What behavior is hardest for you to control? Which behaviors gets you into the most trouble? Does anyone else in your family behave this way when angry? What usually happens? How do you feel when he/she does this? (Griffith, 2012, p. 32)

The group leader will then remind the students that they will be learning how to control angry behaviors during the group.

### **Small group session 2 for fourth and fifth grades.**

The group leader will need the animal cards, the two charts from session 1, chart paper, drawing paper, and crayons or markers. This session will start with asking students to select the animal card they chose in session one. If the students do not remember their card, the group leader can remind them. The group leader will review the charts from session 1. Then each student will select a different animal card that represents having anger control. The group leader will ask each student what about their new animal helps the student help control angry behavior. The group leader may ask the following clarifying questions:

What stops you from acting in a hurtful way or saying hurtful words when you're angry? What about the animal you chose is similar to something that might help you control your angry thoughts, words, and actions? (Griffith, 2012, p. 33)

Each student will get a chance to explain why they chose a particular animal, including specific traits that animal has represents control of anger. The group leader will record these traits on chart paper. The group will then brainstorm more ideas for keeping control of their anger. The group leader will give each student drawing paper and crayons and ask them to draw their two animals for anger and control with a line in the middle separating the two animals. The group leader will ask the students to identify specific animal behaviors that personally relate to them and let them share those behaviors with the group.

### **Small group session 3 for fourth and fifth grades.**

The group leader will need the "Rules For Getting Your Anger Out" handout for each student, small clear plastic soda bottles with lids, water, liquid

soap, food coloring, and glue. The group leader will lead the students in making a Churning Feelings Bottle (Griffith, 2012, p. 34). The group leader will review the angry behaviors talked about in session two and discuss how these behaviors could cause problems. The group leader will ask the students to come up with ways they can let people know they are angry without getting into trouble. The group leader will talk about how angry energy needs to be let out in a safe way and each student will receive the "Rules For Getting Your Anger Out" handout and discuss the rules. Student will make their own Churning Feelings Bottle by filling their bottle with water and then adding liquid soap and a few drops of food coloring. They will then but glue on the lid of the bottle and screw on the lid. The group leader will tell the students that their Churning Feelings Bottle can be used as a reminder of the way angry feeling can bubble up but dissipate over time.

### **Small group session 4 for fourth and fifth grades.**

The group leader will need pencils and the "Heat Up or Cool Down" handout for each student (Griffith, 2012, p.50). The group leader will explain that another problem with anger is that students will use negative or aggressive words. The group leader will provide examples of this kind of language. The group leader will tell students that sarcastic language can also create more anger. The group leader will also go over body language that also fuels anger, for example, rolling eyes or making a face. The group leader will lead a discussion on why these behaviors keep anger going. The students will receive the "Heat Up or Cool Down" handout and a pencil. The group leader will go over each statement with the students and the students will write cool down statements in the right column of their worksheet.

### **Small group session 5 for fourth and fifth grades.**

The group leader will need the "Beliefs That Fuel Anger" handout (Griffith, 2012, p. 52), the "Faulty Beliefs Cards" (p. 53), the "Faulty Belief Statement Cards" (p. 54), scissors, and for each student the "Hot Thoughts That Turn Up The Heat Inside" handout (p.51). The group leader will tell the students about hot thoughts and how they keep anger turned up. The group leader will then ask students to identify their own hot thoughts. The group leader will then use the "Faulty Belief Cards" and "Beliefs That Fuel Anger" to discuss reasons to hot thoughts. When the group leader is done with the discussion, the group leader will place the "Faulty Belief Cards" face up on the table. The group leader will also place the "Faulty Belief Statement Cards" face down on the table. Each student will draw a card and tell what type of hot thought it is. The student will then match it with the "Faulty Belief Cards" on the table. Each student will receive a copy of the "Hot Thoughts That Turn Up The Heat Inside."

### **Small group session 6 for fourth and fifth grades.**

The group leader will need a trash can, index cards, pencils, small balloons, flour, scoops, and funnels. The group leader will explain that it is helpful to have an exact way to get out their angry thoughts and feelings. The group leader will give the example of writing bad feelings down on paper and throwing them in the trash can. Each student will receive an index card and a pencil. The students will write down a recent angry thought on the card. They will share their thought with the group. Each student will then tear up their card into small pieces and throw them in the trash can. The group leader will tell the students that it is important to release

anger energy. The group leader will go over ways to release anger energy, for example, going for a walk or shooting hoops. The leader will set out the funnels, scoops, and flour on the table and give each student a balloon. The students will fill their balloons using the scoops and funnels with flour until no more flour can be added. They will then tie off their balloons. The group leader will explain that the balloon can be a stress reliever. The students can squeeze the balloon to get rid of some of their angry energy.

### **Small group session 7 for fourth and fifth grades.**

The group leader will need a short story or book that includes problems, Accordion Book handout (Griffith, 2012, p. 55), pencils, glue sticks, and scissors. The group leader will tell the students that if they hold on to anger for a long time, the more likely they are to act on those thoughts. The group leader will discuss how thoughts of revenge also make people hold on to anger longer. The group leader will explain how acting on those thoughts can get them into a lot of trouble. The group leader will ask the students how getting even benefits them and get them what they want. The group leader will ask how students could feel better without getting revenge. The group leader and students will discuss how a decision can change the day for everyone around them. The group leader will read the short story or book to the students. The group leaders and students will then retell the story by changing the characters' decisions to have a more positive outcome. Each student will receive a copy of the Accordion Book and instruct the students how to put their accordion book together. Each student will complete the book with a scenario in which they decide to not act on their anger.

### Small group session 8 for fourth and fifth grades.

The group leader will need a list of topics discussed and activities completed, Flip Book pattern (Griffith, 2012, p. 56-58), scissors, and a stapler. The group leader will review the topics and activities discussed over the group sessions. Each student will receive a set of flip book pages. The group leader will instruct the students to write their names in the top rectangle on the first page. The group leader will review each page with the students and have students complete the pages. The students will staple the pages together to make a flip book of strategies. The group leader will congratulate the students on what they have learned in the group over the weeks. Students will then fill out the questionnaire they completed in the first session to compare their anger control to how it was before they participated in the group.

### Breathing and relaxation sessions.

For the second experimental group, these students will also participate in a brief, 10-15 minute, breathing exercise to help students learn to relax and release tension. The group leader will lead the students in an active breathing exercise named "Sunshine Breath" (Roberts, 2014, p. 66-67). The students will stand with both feet planted about shoulder or hip width apart and arms by their side. The students will close their eyes and start to observe their breathing. The group leader will instruct students to take a deep breath in slowly while raising their arms above their heads in a circle. Their hand will meet at the top of the circle above their heads. The group leader will instruct students to exhale while bringing their hands down to the center of their body. On the next inhale, the group leader will instruct the students to push their hands back above their heads. On the

next exhale, the students will bring their arms back to their sides. This cycle will be repeated around five times. After the fifth round students will sit quietly for about a minute breathing until the group leader instructs the students to open their eyes. This breathing exercise will be done at the end of the small group session for the second experimental group.

### Results

There was a total of 14 students selected by the advisory committee in grades two through four. Four of the students were not chosen for the small groups due to a lack of parental permission to participate in the small groups. Five students participated in the anger management small group curriculum only (Group 1). The other five students participated in the anger management small group curriculum with the breathing techniques (Group 2). The students were sorted into the two groups based on their daily schedule and when they could meet. The anger management curriculum was followed with fidelity for both groups.

Table 1 shows the number discipline reports for each student from the beginning of the school year until the end of the group and how many discipline reports each student had after the small groups had started. Six of the students did not have a significant decrease in the number of discipline reports because they had very few discipline reports to begin the semester. One of the students only received one discipline report after starting the group. Two students, both in Group 1, did not decrease in discipline reports and one student had more after starting the group than before the group.

Table 2 shows the results of the anger

control questionnaire before and after the small group for both Group 1 and Group 2. The participants in Group 2 overall showed a greater decrease in their anger control scores than the participants in Group 1. The average decrease in the anger control questionnaire for Group 1 was 10.8 compared to 16.8 for Group 2.

### Discussion

This research study was used to target students who had shown aggressive and bullying behavior due to a lack of anger management and self-control. The purpose was to reduce the amount of discipline reports filed on the students. During the first PST meeting of the school year, students were selected, based on their behavior, for the intervention groups. Some students had a long list of discipline reports, while some had only one or none but were still participating in behaviors that could become more serious if there was no outside intervention.

Overall, the findings of the research were consistent with prior research on anger management in children. The students who did not learn to control their anger would act out more aggressively when they did get angry (Gambetti & Giusberti, 2016; Rice & Howell, 2006). These students also seemed to lack social skills in the classroom and small groups settings that would lead to more desirable behaviors (Daniels, Mandelco, & Luthy, 2012; Kuzucu, 2016). Those students who did well in the small group did learn some more appropriate social skills to deal with their anger (Burt, Patel, Butler, & Gonzalez, 2013). This led to less discipline reports for those students. It is interesting to note the difference between Group 1 and Group 2 when it comes to discipline reports and their anger control questionnaire. The second group did have

an additional intervention but I do not believe that this is the main reason for the difference in the anger control questionnaires. The personality of the two groups was very different. Group 1 had two 2nd graders who were very aggressive and resistant to the group activities and process. The other students in the group could have fed off this disdain for the group and, as a result, not have improved as much as they were capable. Group 2, overall, was more open to the small group curriculum. This group was a little bit older overall, with two 4th graders, two 3rd graders, and only one 2nd grader so they may have had a little more maturity than Group 1.

The study has some strengths. The anger management and breathing techniques were both strong interventions for anger management and self-control. The instrument used to measure the students' anger control allowed students to think through why they chose the number they chose for each question. This led some students to think about why certain things were triggers for them over others. Many of the students did see a decrease in discipline reports and more anger control.

Some limitations of the study were the selection of the groups. Having a more selection process for the groups could have led to a better mix, especially in Group 1. The anger control questionnaire is a good tool for the students, but to really measure how much the group was affecting the students' everyday lives, it would have been more beneficial to have some teacher input as to how well the students were managing their anger and showing good self-control.

This study could be implemented school wide with age and developmental appropriate interventions for students younger and

older than the targeted group. This could be an intervention that is started earlier in the school year when teachers start to see signs of trouble with their students. This could be an alternative to other punishments for repeat offenders, especially for the older students.

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