

Taking a Second Look at First Impressions  
That Kindergarten Teachers Have of  
Their Students

Thesis

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## **Abstract**

This study attempted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between first impression scores of Kindergarten students and scores after time. To achieve this purpose, a teacher survey was administered to fifteen Kindergarten teachers. During the first week of school, the teachers were asked to rate five of their students on 18 different characteristics on a scale of 1-5. These characteristics included attitude, social interaction, respect for adults, maturity, independence, behavior, curiosity, risk-taking, creativity, enjoyment of literature, concept of print, understanding of math concepts, memory, academic ability, oral language, physical fitness, fine-motor skills, and socio-economic status. After eight weeks of school, the survey was given again and the teachers rated the same students on the same characteristics.

A  $t$  test for paired two sample means was used to analyze the scores of each teacher individually and of all of the teachers together. The results of the study found a borderline significance between the scores of all of the teachers combined and that three out of the fifteen individual teachers had a statistically significant score.

# CHAPTER I

## Introduction to the Problem

### Overview

In society, first impressions are being formed everyday. Research has shown that our initial impressions of events and people frequently influence how we perceive and interpret other information about those events or people. Chowdhary (1991) stated that, "First impressions is (sic) embedded in symbolic interactionism and suggests that favorable first impressions result in a positive interaction and arouse the curiosity of an observer to learn more about the perceived" (p. 130). However, negative impressions, which are often based on stereotypes, can be destructive. "Negative stereotypes that result in disapproval and devaluation of members of the stereotyped group may result in self-rejection and self-devaluation by persons who hold membership in the stereotyped group" (Coleman, Ganong & Jones, 1990, p. 820).

This can be especially evident in the classroom as teachers form impressions of their students early on in the school year. As Ruiz and Hendricks (1993) pointed out, "Educators have often been warned not to be unduly swayed by first impressions and to carefully consider all information" (p. 354). However, the impact that first impressions can have

on student-teacher interaction and instruction has been shown to be based heavily on teacher impressions and expectations of the child. For example, in a study conducted by Dusek and Joseph (1983), it was found that teachers appear to be selective in the information to which they attend when forming expectancies. "Teachers' judgments of attentiveness, class participation, working independently, trying hard, reading ability, and being creative all were substantially and positively correlated with teachers' ratings of achievement." (p.334)

### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to compare first impressions that teachers had of students with their impressions after time.

### Research Questions

Are first impressions formed of Kindergarten students at the beginning of the school year in agreement with impressions given after eight weeks?

Are more experienced teachers better at making reliable first impressions?

### Need for the Study

Whether or not they are conscious of it, teachers make first impressions of their students. These impressions are based on very little data, and can impact the way they interact and educate their students. First impressions are generally very important. Teachers have to be careful about forming them too quickly at the beginning of the school year. They need to realize that the character of their students changes as they become more comfortable and accustomed to the classroom environment, and that initial impressions may not always be accurate. It has been found that teacher expectations greatly influence the motivation and achievement of students. Since initial impressions often impact teacher expectations early on, it is important to see how accurate they are. Very little research has been conducted on the accuracy of first impressions that teachers have of their students, despite the fact that it is a common practice and indicator of student/teacher relationship and interaction that can affect a child's education throughout the whole year.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of the Literature

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to compare first impressions that teachers had of students with their impressions after time.

#### The Importance and Impact of First Impressions

Cowen, Eksten, Lotyczewski, Pedor-Carroll, and Weissberg (1983), found that initial overall impressions shape individual, more specific judgments about others. Tetlock (1983) reinforced this idea in his study. "Previous research indicates that our initial impressions of events frequently influence how we interpret later information" (p. 285). Worrall and Cowan (1983) conducted a study in London concerning the formation of first impressions. Two videos of the same child were shown. In the first video, the child's behavior improved. The second video was shown in reverse order so that the child's behavior appeared to deteriorate. They reported, "It was this second version which led to higher performance ratings, indicating that impressions formed over the first few minutes exert a potent primacy effect" (p. 249). If first impressions have such a great impact on the way that a person is perceived, the question

must be asked, then, "how accurate are first impressions?" In a series of studies conducted in Germany, it was found that, "One result of these studies is a widespread belief that the accuracy of personality judgments is rather low." (Borenau & Liebler, 1993, p. 478).

### Factors That Influence First Impressions

Many studies have been conducted on the factors that influence first impressions, which can also be taken into account in the classroom. "Many variables appear to operate... to influence the initial impressions of regular-classroom teachers" (Aloia, G., Aloia, S., & Maxwell, 1981, p.622). Davis (1990) stated that, "Varying salient features of the stimulus person apparently elicit different categories from perceivers and thereby affect impressions formed of the person" (p. 334). Some of these features and factors include student gender, ethnicity, family structure, socioeconomic status, and behavior.

Gender is one of the most widespread areas studied in relation to first impressions. In research conducted by Black, Elliott, and Gresham (1987), it was concluded that, "Teachers have been shown to be capable of making accurate judgments of achievement levels of their students, and these judgments are not overly influenced by pupil gender" (p. 82). However conflicting results have emerged from many other studies.

In a study conducted by Clifton (1981-1982), it was discovered that there was a consistent sex effect on high-school teacher expectations for

reliability, cooperation, industry, and college potential. "With only one exception, females received higher mean evaluations than males" (p. 35). In another study it was found that, "There is evidence of teachers' preference for female pupils, as well as evidence that teachers underestimate both the potential and the achievements of male pupils" (Taylor, 1979, p. 899). These data are supported in a study conducted by Rong (1996) who stated, "Students' gender had a decisive effect on female teachers' ratings. Female students were likelier to be rated higher than male students regardless of a teacher's or student's race" (p. 271).

Gagne (1993) carried out a study of impressions of over 2,000 students in seventeen elementary school and found that boys and girls are not perceived by their teachers as equally alike in many areas. He reported, "Not only are these sex ratios quite frequent and large, but they also show a very high reproducibility: for a given prototype, we observe a similar direction and intensity in most samples" (p. 74). His report revealed that boys are perceived to excel more in physical aptitudes and technical talents, whereas girls are perceived to be more competent in socioaffective abilities and artistic talents. However Gagne's results differ slightly from other studies because he found that overall, boys were perceived as slightly more gifted and talented than girls. Cowen, Eksten, Lotydzewski, Pedro-Carroll, and Weissberg (1983) found through their research that,

Greater psychological health has been attributed to males, as well as qualities such as competence, calmness, logicity, boldness,

and restlessness. By contrast, qualities such as tact, sophistication, shyness, fearfulness, and frivolity have more often been attributed to females. (p. 462)

Ethnicity is also a factor where correlation is seen between a teacher's expectations and the achievement of a child. This is partially because as with gender, ethnicity is a characteristic that is quickly and easily noticed. Cooper, Baron, and Lowe (1975) suggested that there are many factors that may form teachers' perceptions of students, but that few factors have generated as much discussion as race and gender. A likely explanation for this is that teachers generally have some early information about them, and a student's race and gender are readily apparent. For example, Rong (1996) found that, "poor, minority, male students were more likely to be labeled and assigned to remedial and special education classes" (p. 264) In a report conducted by Smith (1988), it was suggested that teachers held consistently lower expectations of black students and the lowest expectations of black male students. However in contrast, it was discovered that both black and white female teachers generally viewed black female students in a more positive light. Taylor (1979) noted that research shows lower teacher expectations for black children as well. They are generally given less desirable evaluations and treatments, especially by white teachers. The labels placed on children because of their gender and/or race may or may not be accurate. Concern is raised by many researchers such as Cowan and Worall (1983) who determined, "If appearance and behavior cues from the child can

trigger some such element of automatic responding the implication is that outward markers generally, such as race or sex, may have a primitive residual which takes a longer time to dissipate than may be evident in the teacher's professed evaluations" (p. 251).

In addition to gender and ethnicity, socio-economic status has also been found to influence teachers' impressions of students. Stevens (1980) reported on the impact of ethnicity and socio-economic status. He concluded, "These results support the hypothesis that attributions of positive and negative behavior are influenced by extraneous variance from the variables of socio-economic status and ethnic identification" (p. 1287). In general, material wealth can affect a person's impression of another. In a study conducted in Britain, it was found that wealthy people were seen as more intelligent, successful, educated, and in control. In contrast, poorer people were labeled as warmer, friendlier, and more self-expressive (Dittmar, 1992). Dittmar determined that, "First impressions people form of others in different material circumstances are influenced strongly by dominant representations about the affluent and the less privileged" (p. 389).

Coleman, Ganong and Jones (1990) found that family structure can also influence a teacher's perception of students. Teachers expect better behavior and performance from children who come from an intact family. However, children from divorced families generally receive lower expectations. As they pointed out, this can devastate a child's success in

school. "If even a small percentage of teachers incorrectly hypothesize about students' behavior on the basis of the students' family structures, it can subtly affect the students in areas such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-control" (p. 824).

To combine these two categories of family structure and socio-economic status, Dusek and Joseph (1983) found that, "Teacher expectancies may be influenced by the child's home background and social class standing and that these expectancies cause the teacher to interact with lower and middle-class students differently" (p. 335). These researchers also concluded that attitudes toward children from different family situations may influence teacher expectancies. "Analyses revealed the teachers expected the children from one-parent homes to have lower academic achievement and especially more psycho-social problems than children from intact families" (p. 340). In addition, Dusek and Joseph also suggested that teachers have the tendency to expect younger siblings to be more like older siblings than they actually are. In fact, as Rivers (1980) noted, an older sibling's performance may create expectations for a younger sibling's performance in the early elementary years, thus possibly causing the teacher to have unrealistic or unfair expectations of the child.

Dusek and Joseph (1983) also determined that behavior of a child can greatly affect perceptions that a teacher has of that child. Expectations were generally higher for students who were more obedient,

attentive, possessed good self-control, and were helpful and careful. Not surprisingly, "Students who follow rules, use their time wisely, and in general behave well are likely to impress the teacher more positively than students who do not behave as well" (p. 337). Coleman, Ganong, and Jones (1990) supported this finding in their research on teachers' first impressions of adolescents. They found that adolescents presented as having bad behavior were perceived differently than adolescents presented as having good or being neutral in their behavior. In reference to adolescents with bad behavior, it was stated, "they were evaluated more negatively, as less potent, less satisfied, less stable, and as having less positive personal character" (p. 823).

In conjunction with Rong's (1996) findings regarding first impressions and gender, a distinct and disturbing finding was reported regarding gender and behavior. "Their study found that teachers more often disapproved of male students' behavior than female students' behavior and that students were generally aware of this difference, thus they tended to behave accordingly" (p. 264). Loy and Widmeyer (1988) conducted a study about the "warm/cold" manipulation effects on first impressions of people. It was found that those who were led to believe that the stimulus person had a warm personality perceived the stimulus person more positively, despite very minimal additional information. "Those subjects who were led to believe that the stimulus person was warm perceived him as less unpleasant, more sociable, less irritable, less

ruthless, more humorous, less formal, and more humane than did those subjects who were told that he was a cold person" (p. 119).

Some other categories that have been studied in relation to the formation of first impressions include clothing style, physical attractiveness, and vocal determinants. Reid, Lancuba and Morrow (1997) determined that better first impressions were made and more positive attributes were given to people dressed in a similar fashion as the person making the impression. In a study conducted by Braun (1976), it was established that recent research on the importance of physical attractiveness as a determinant of teacher expectancies has led some to conclude that teachers have higher expectancies for more attractive children. Dusek and Joseph (1983) noted that the average attractive student was expected to perform better than about 61% of less attractive students, and that attractive students were expected to have better social relations and personality development than 57% of less attractive students.

In Berry, Hansen, Landry-Pester, and Meier's (1994) study, it was found that a child's voice can elicit a positive or negative impression from a teacher.

Children with babyish voices were generally perceived to be more honest and warm but lower in competence, dominance, and leadership than were children with more mature-sounding voices. In addition, more competence, leadership, dominance, and warmth

was generally attributed to children with voices identified as attractive than to those with less attractive voices. (p. 195)

Impressions and expectations that teachers have of their students can have a big impact on student learning and achievement, and there are many factors that go into the formation of those impressions. Some argue that the impact of first impressions fades over time. Borkenau and Liebler (1993) stated, "There is ample evidence showing that first impressions are important but that they become less important as the judges are exposed to more behavioral information" (p. 486). However, there are others that believe that the formation of false first impressions based on characteristics that most children have very little or no control over can have a life-long impact. Clifton (1981-1982) stated, "It seems that the educational institution may be allocating people to positions within the society on the basis of various ascribed characteristics. And it seems that part of this allocation can be attributed directly to the expectations that teachers hold for students" (p. 36). It is apparent that most agree on the importance of first impressions and that there are many factors to contribute to the formation of impressions and stereotypes. If this is true, and first impressions can have such a great effect on the success or failure of a student, additional research on the accuracy of first impressions would shed some additional light onto this issue.

## **Chapter III**

### **Design of the Study**

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to compare first impressions that teachers had of students with impressions after time.

#### Research Questions

Are first impressions formed of Kindergarten students at the beginning of the school year in agreement with impressions given after eight weeks?

Are more experienced teachers better at making reliable first impressions?

#### Methodology

##### **Subjects**

The subjects of this study were fifteen teachers from one elementary school. This particular school is a primary building housing fourteen full-day Kindergarten classrooms. Kindergarten teachers, as well as consultant teachers at the Kindergarten level, participated in this study with the children in their classrooms. The teachers participating in

the study ranged in teaching experience from first year teachers to teachers with twenty-nine years of experience.

## **Materials**

The following materials were used in this study:

- Participation request letter (Appendix A)
- Researcher developed questionnaire form/ first impressions for random students. (Appendix B)
- Follow-up letter requesting second impressions of the same children (Appendix C)
- Researcher developed questionnaire form/ second impressions of the same students used in the first survey. (Appendix D)

## **Procedures**

All teachers received an evaluation sheet for five students in his/her classroom on the first day of school. They were given one week to record first impressions of randomly selected children in their room. The children were randomly selected by the researcher. This was accomplished by having the teachers give first impressions of the 2nd, 6th, 10th, 17th, and 20th students on their alphabetical class list. Characteristics of the child were broken down into 18 categories. They included attitude, social interaction, respect for adults, maturity, independence, behavior, curiosity, risk-taking, creativity, enjoyment of literature, concept of print, understanding of math concepts, memory,

academic ability, oral language, physical fitness, fine-motor skills, and socio-economic status. The teachers were asked to rate the child on a scale from one to five, with five being the most favorable rating. There was also an option given for no first impression. After eight weeks, the form was distributed again and second impressions of the same children were recorded so that comparisons could be made.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Some limitations of this study include the following:

1. All teachers were female.
2. Some of the classrooms were inclusion classrooms, while some were not.
3. Teachers had access to screening materials on the children before school started. This information is limited and some teachers chose not to look at them, however at least two of the teachers studied them intensely.

### **Analysis of Data**

The responses from the survey were recorded. A  $t$  test was run on the beginning and ending scores of all fifteen teachers to determine whether or not there was a statistically significant difference in scores from the beginning of the school year through the first eight weeks of school. Each teacher was also analyzed separately to determine the

breakdown of statistically significant scores in relation to their number of years teaching.

## CHAPTER IV

### Analysis of the Data

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to compare first impressions that teachers had of students with impressions after time.

#### Findings and Interpretations

The data collected from the participating teachers were analyzed using a  $t$  test for paired two sample means. The tables on the following pages illustrate the breakdown of mean, median, standard deviation,  $t$ -test results, and other data for the samples.

According to a statistics table, this  $t$  value is significant beyond the alpha .05 level. When all of the scores of all of the teachers were added and analyzed together, a statistically significant correlation of .05 was found. Therefore, when analyzing the data in this way, it can be concluded that overall, these teachers were not very reliable in their impressions of students after the first week of school. However, caution needs to be exercised in interpreting the data in this fashion because when the scores of each individual teacher were broken down, it was found that only three out of the fifteen teachers had a statistically

significant difference in scores. One teacher had a value of .04, while two others showed .004 and .006 values. One of these teachers was a first year teacher (teacher number 4), while the other two teachers have over twenty years of experience (teacher numbers 11 and 12).

Table 1- Teacher Score Reports					
TEACHER	EXP	STUDENT	GENDER	1st	2nd
1	2	2	F	62	57
1		6	F	74	75
1		10	F	59	51
1		17	F	60	47
1		20	M	59	67
2	5	2	F	51	65
2		6	F	76	80
2		10	F	69	66
2		17	M	68	67
2		20	F	64	49
3	3	2	M	62	58
3		6	F	67	64
3		10	F	60	64
3		17	M	67	71
3		20	M	48	60
4	1	2	F	59	57
4		6	M	54	52
4		10	F	64	62
4		17	F	51	43
4		20	F	78	70
5	2	2	F	90	79
5		6	M	53	49
5		10	F	69	73
5		17	F	72	83
5		20	F	52	55
6	10	2	F	49	45
6		6	M	70	50
6		10	F	39	44
6		17	M	32	42
6		20	F	63	60
7	15	2	F	71	77
7		6	F	70	66
7		10	F	40	37
7		17	F	66	63
7		20	M	39	33
8	6	2	F	53	63
8		6	M	31	37
8		10	M	44	46
8		17	M	59	52
8		20	M	43	52
9	12	2	M	44	52
9		6	M	78	75

9		10	F	55	55
9		17	F	55	67
9		20	F	61	56
10	14	2	F	55	61
10		6	M	39	41
10		10	M	40	48
10		17	F	59	58
10		20	F	50	40
11	25	2	F	35	41
11		6	F	63	76
11		10	M	25	32
11		17	M	52	67
11		20	F	73	84
12	27	2	F	65	70
12		6	M	44	54
12		10	M	71	88
12		17	M	67	84
12		20	F	67	79
13	29	2	M	64	68
13		6	F	46	57
13		10	F	76	75
13		17	M	64	65
13		20	M	38	38
14	23	2	F	58	62
14		6	F	51	58
14		10	F	77	82
14		17	F	48	48
14		20	M	46	38
15	25	2	M	37	48
15		6	F	66	72
15		10	F	60	58
15		17	F	54	58
15		20	M	58	49
<b>MEAN</b>				<b>57.31</b>	<b>59.13</b>
<b>STD DEV</b>				<b>13.03</b>	<b>13.66</b>
<b>MEDIAN</b>				<b>59</b>	<b>58</b>

Table 2- Individual Teacher Data								
t-Test:			t-Test:			t-Test:		
Paired Two Sample for Means			Paired Two Sample for Means			Paired Two Sample for Means		
TEACHER 1			TEACHER 2			TEACHER 3		
	<i>1st</i>	<i>2nd</i>		<i>1st</i>	<i>2nd</i>		<i>1st</i>	<i>2nd</i>
Mean	62.800	59.4	Mean	65.600	65.4	Mean	60.800	63.4
Variance	40.700	132.8	Variance	85.300	121.3	Variance	60.700	24.8
Observations	5.000	5	Observations	5.000	5	Observations	5.000	5
Pearson Correlation	0.729		Pearson Correlation	0.466		Pearson Correlation	0.563	
Hypothesized Mean	0.000		Hypothesized Mean	0.000		Hypothesized Mean	0.000	
df	4.000		df	4.000		df	4.000	
t Stat	0.934		t Stat	0.042		t Stat	-0.899	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.403		P(T<=t) two-tail	0.968		P(T<=t) two-tail	0.419	
t Critical two-tail	2.776		t Critical two-tail	2.776		t Critical two-tail	2.776	
t-Test:			t-Test:			t-Test:		
Paired Two Sample for Means			Paired Two Sample for Means			Paired Two Sample for Means		
TEACHER 4			TEACHER 5			TEACHER 6		
	<i>1st</i>	<i>2nd</i>		<i>1st</i>	<i>2nd</i>		<i>1st</i>	<i>2nd</i>
Mean	61.200	56.8	Mean	67.200	67.8	Mean	50.600	48.2
Variance	112.700	103.7	Variance	244.700	225.2	Variance	253.300	52.2
Observations	5.000	5	Observations	5.000	5	Observations	5.000	5
Pearson Correlation	0.951		Pearson Correlation	0.851		Pearson Correlation	0.762	
Hypothesized Mean	0.000		Hypothesized Mean	0.000		Hypothesized Mean	0.000	
df	4.000		df	4.000		df	4.000	
t Stat	2.994		t Stat	-0.160		t Stat	0.470	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.040		P(T<=t) two-tail	0.881		P(T<=t) two-tail	0.663	
t Critical two-tail	2.776		t Critical two-tail	2.776		t Critical two-tail	2.776	



t-Test:			t-Test:			t-Test:		
Paired Two Sample for Means			Paired Two Sample for Means			Paired Two Sample for Means		
TEACHER 13			TEACHER 14			TEACHER 15		
	<i>1st</i>	<i>2nd</i>		<i>1st</i>	<i>2nd</i>		<i>1st</i>	<i>2nd</i>
Mean	57.600	60.6	Mean	56.000	57.6	Mean	55.000	57
Variance	234.800	201.3	Variance	158.500	272.8	Variance	120.000	93
Observations	5.000	5	Observations	5.000	5	Observations	5.000	5
Pearson Correlation	0.949		Pearson Correlation	0.952		Pearson Correlation	0.727	
Hypothesized Mean	0.000		Hypothesized Mean	0.000		Hypothesized Mean	0.000	
df	4.000		df	4.000		df	4.000	
t Stat	-1.384		t Stat	-0.602		t Stat	-0.580	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.119		P(T<=t) one-tail	0.290		P(T<=t) one-tail	0.297	
t Critical one-tail	2.132		t Critical one-tail	2.132		t Critical one-tail	2.132	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.239		P(T<=t) two-tail	0.580		P(T<=t) two-tail	0.593	
t Critical two-tail	2.776		t Critical two-tail	2.776		t Critical two-tail	2.776	

Table 3: Combined Teacher Scores		
t-Test: Paired Two Sample		
ALL TEACHERS		
	<i>PRE</i>	<i>POST</i>
Mean	57.31	59.13
Variance	169.78	186.63
Observations	75	75
Pearson Correlation	0.83	
Hypothesized Mean Diff	0	
df	74	
t Stat	-2.03	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.05	
t Critical two-tail	1.99	

## CHAPTER V

### Conclusions and Implications

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to compare first impressions that teachers had of students with impressions after time.

#### Conclusions

This study found that three out of fifteen teachers showed a statistically significant difference between initial impressions of students and impressions after time. When all of the scores for all of the teachers we added together, the data show a borderline significance. Overall, it was found that teachers rated students slightly higher after time. Interestingly, a pattern could be seen in initial and final scores of students in relation to teacher experience. There was a tendency for newer teachers to give students higher first impression scores. In contrast, teachers who had been teaching for over 10 years tended to give higher scores after time.

As the scores were being calculated, the trend appeared to be that most teachers rated their students higher the first time, however when the data were analyzed mathematically, the opposite was shown to be true. Interesting dialogue resulted from this study. The teachers who

participated in the study were anxious to hear the results of their own ratings as well as the overall results. Some commented that they had seen changes in the students throughout the eight weeks, while others felt that their results would be consistent. Several teachers said that they never realized how quickly they form strong opinions about certain aspects of children. For many of the categories, they had no trouble deciding where they thought the child belonged. Others noted that it was difficult to make accurate judgments of a child so soon. One category that was consistently marked "No First Impression" was the child's socio-economic status. When questioned about this, some teachers responded that it was too hard to tell so early on. Most of these teachers were able to rate the children in this category later on. However, some teachers felt uncomfortable rating the children in this area and did not give a score on either survey.

### Implications for Teachers

The results of this study indicate that there can be a significant difference in the scores between initial impressions and impressions after time. Teachers need to be aware of the impressions that they form of their students early on, especially since many of those impressions are most likely based on stereotypes. The impact that first impressions can have on student-teacher interaction and instruction has been shown to be

based heavily on teacher impressions and expectations of the child. With this in mind, these recommendations follow:

1. Teachers should be very careful about forming opinions of students too quickly in the school year.
2. Reviewing past records and talking to previous teachers about a child can be of value, however teachers should keep in mind that there are many factors that contribute to impressions of a child. The way one person perceives another may be very different from the way another perceives that same person.
3. Students should have a chance to prove themselves and reveal who they really are. It is entirely possible that a child who has struggled in the past could live up to the higher expectations of a teacher who believes in him or her.
4. Teachers should be careful about forming opinions of a student based on factors beyond the students' control such as gender and race.

## Implications for Further Research

Other research questions that would be interesting to investigate regarding this topic include:

1. If first impressions have such a great impact on the way that a person is perceived and it has been shown that false first impressions are formed of students, what can be done to help this problem?

2. Does a teacher's impression of a child become a self-fulfilling prophesy?

3. Do impressions that different teachers have of a child remain similar throughout the child's academic career? First impressions are such a quick, immediate response, but do they last? And if they do last, are they accurate?

4. Many Kindergarten students are screened before they come to school. This is often a 20 minute session. How accurate and helpful is this information?

5. Do parents and teachers have the same impressions of the children?

6. Is the ethnicity of the student and/or teacher a factor on the first impressions of the child?

7. Is there any influence of a special education label on teachers' impressions of their students?

## Summary

I found the results of this study to be somewhat surprising. I learned that teaching experience does not necessarily indicate a teachers' ability to accurately assess their students early on. I also found it very fascinating that the newer teachers tended to have higher expectations at first. They had a more positive view of their students from the beginning, whereas more experienced teachers had more positive impressions after time.

Although the overall results of the study show a statistically significant difference between first impressions and impressions after time, I think that because two of the scores were so drastically different among a fairly small sample that using a larger group of teachers might yield a different overall result.

This study was very interesting to conduct and to participate in. I have become much more aware of how quickly first impressions are made and of the impact that they can have.

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## *Kindergarten and Special Ed Teachers*

I need your help!!

I am working on my thesis this year entitled "Taking a Second Look at First Impressions." I know you are very busy at the start of this new year, but would you please take 10-20 minutes to give me your first impressions of 5 children from your class? So that selection is random, please use the 2nd, 6th, 10th, 17th, and 20th kids in your alphabetical listing. In the space that asks for the child's name, you can either write his/her name or the number on the alphabetical listing. If you write the numbers, please make sure you remember which children they are so that you can do this one more time in several weeks on the same kids. Either way, names will remain confidential in my report. I'll be looking at how first impressions compare and hold up from the beginning of the year through the first few months of school. I hope this will be interesting for you too!

Please complete and return the attached form to me by **Wednesday, September 16th. *Thanks*** for your help!!

Sincerely,  
Kiera Hubbard

## First Impressions

Student's first name \_\_\_\_\_  
(or number on alphabetical list)

Teacher's name \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years teaching \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*Please select the 2nd, 6th, 10th, 17th, and 20th students from your alphabetical list.**

*Please circle the appropriate number based on your first impressions of this child. If you would like to comment on what led you to this conclusion, please do so underneath each selection.*

<b><u>Characteristic</u></b>	<b><u>Rating</u></b>					No first impression
	Poor	Below Avg.	Avg.	Good	Excellent	
1. Attitude towards school/learning	1	2	3	4	5	N
2. Social interaction with other children	1	2	3	4	5	N
3. Respect for adults/authority	1	2	3	4	5	N
4. Maturity	1	2	3	4	5	N
5. Degree of independence	1	2	3	4	5	N
6. Overall behavior	1	2	3	4	5	N
7. Curiosity	1	2	3	4	5	N
8. Risk-taking/self-confidence	1	2	3	4	5	N

**OVER**

	Poor	Below Avg.	Avg.	Good	Excellent	No impression
9. Creativity/inventiveness	1	2	3	4	5	N
10. Enjoyment of literature	1	2	3	4	5	N
11. Concept of print	1	2	3	4	5	N
12. Understanding of math concepts	1	2	3	4	5	N
13. Memory	1	2	3	4	5	N
14. Overall academic ability	1	2	3	4	5	N
15. Linguistic abilities/oral language	1	2	3	4	5	N
16. Physical fitness/General Health	1	2	3	4	5	N
17. Fine-motor skills	1	2	3	4	5	N
18. Socio-economic status	1	2	3	4	5	N

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS for me or about this child:

**THANK YOU!!!! Please return this form to my mailbox by Friday, November 13th!!**

## ***Kindergarten and Special Ed Teachers***

I need your help... One more time!!

It's hard to believe that 7 weeks of school have already passed by! Thank you again for your involvement with my thesis project. It's time for me to collect the second set of data, so I have included 5 new forms for you to fill out on the 5 students that you rated in September. I have included each child's name and/or number on the data sheet for you. Please come and see me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,  
Kiera Hubbard

Please complete and return these forms by ***FRIDAY, NOVEMBER  
13th!! Thank You!***

## Second Impressions

Student's first name \_\_\_\_\_  
(or number on alphabetical list)

Student's gender \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's name \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*Please select the 2nd, 6th, 10th, 17th, and 20th students from your alphabetical list. Make sure that these are the same students from September!**

*Please circle the appropriate number based on your impressions of this child after 8 weeks of school. If you would like to comment on what led you to this conclusion, please do so underneath each selection. There is additional space for comments on the back of this form.*

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Rating</b>					No impression
	Poor	Below Avg.	Avg.	Good	Excellent	
1. Attitude towards school/learning	1	2	3	4	5	N
2. Social interaction with other children	1	2	3	4	5	N
3. Respect for adults/authority	1	2	3	4	5	N
4. Maturity	1	2	3	4	5	N
5. Degree of independence	1	2	3	4	5	N
6. Overall behavior	1	2	3	4	5	N
7. Curiosity	1	2	3	4	5	N
8. Risk-taking/self-confidence	1	2	3	4	5	N

**OVER**

	Poor	Below Avg.	Avg.	Good	Excellent	No first impression
9. Creativity/inventiveness	1	2	3	4	5	N
10. Enjoyment of literature	1	2	3	4	5	N
11. Concept of print	1	2	3	4	5	N
12. Understanding of math concepts	1	2	3	4	5	N
13. Memory	1	2	3	4	5	N
14. Overall academic ability	1	2	3	4	5	N
15. Linguistic abilities/oral language	1	2	3	4	5	N
16. Physical fitness/General Health	1	2	3	4	5	N
17. Fine-motor skills	1	2	3	4	5	N
18. Socio-economic status	1	2	3	4	5	N

**THANK YOU!!!! Please return this form to my mailbox by **Wednesday, September 16th!!****