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Behavior Management Strategies for the Elementary School Setting

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Abstract

Behavior management is a facet of teaching that can be one of the largest causes of frustrations for educators, particularly novice teachers. It has even pushed many teachers to leave the profession. One of the root causes of the struggle is that teachers are not prepared with a repertoire of techniques to help them create the most effective learning environment. This study was conducted to determine effective behavior techniques for elementary teachers and future implications for supporting teachers with behavior management. The study involved ten elementary school teachers. Each teacher was given a survey that gauged their opinion on various behavior strategies and asked them to list their current effective strategies and how to best assist new teachers with behavior management. The surveys were anonymous. This paper will discuss the benefits of a variety of behavior strategies, such as creating a structured, predictable classroom, developing trusting relationships, reinforcing behavior expectations, correcting errors effectively, creating student engagement, and praising positive behavior. Upon completion of the study, it is determined that the best teachers of behavior management use many strategies to keep students engaged and motivated and to create a positive classroom environment where students want to be. This study indicates that behavior management is a critical factor in the success of a classroom and the overall happiness of teachers. Thus, the future of education lies in the importance of teacher education programs, as these programs should be restructured to include behavior management as a key component of teacher training.

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Abstract

Behavior management is a facet of teaching that can be one of the largest causes of frustrations for educators, particularly novice teachers. It has even pushed many teachers to leave the profession. One of the root causes of the struggle is that teachers are not prepared with a repertoire of techniques to help them create the most effective learning environment. This study was conducted to determine effective behavior techniques for elementary teachers and future implications for supporting teachers with behavior management. The study involved ten elementary school teachers. Each teacher was given a survey that gauged their opinion on various behavior strategies and asked them to list their current effective strategies and how to best assist new teachers with behavior management. The surveys were anonymous. This paper will discuss the benefits of a variety of behavior strategies, such as creating a structured, predictable classroom, developing trusting relationships, reinforcing behavior expectations, correcting errors effectively, creating student engagement, and praising positive behavior. Upon completion of the study, it is determined that the best teachers of behavior management use many strategies to keep students engaged and motivated and to create a positive classroom environment where students want to be. This study indicates that behavior management is a critical factor in the success of a classroom and the overall happiness of teachers. Thus, the future of education lies in the importance of teacher education programs, as these programs should be restructured to include behavior management as a key component of teacher training.

Introduction

There are several challenges that teachers face everyday, but one of the most significant challenges is behavior management, for both novice and experienced teachers. The challenges vary depending on each student; however, behavior challenges directly impact the learning environment in a negative way, causing more time being spent on addressing behaviors instead of teaching important skills and content. Difficulties with behavior challenges have even caused teachers to leave the profession entirely (Smart & Igo, 2010). Thus, teachers need effective techniques to help keep the classroom environment positive, safe, and productive for learning (Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008). In this research study, strategies to help teachers create an engaging and positive learning atmosphere will be discussed. The purpose of finding these techniques is to support teachers, so they feel more confident addressing behaviors and can ultimately reduce the number of negative behaviors in the classroom.

In this research study, I surveyed ten teachers in an elementary school in upstate New York. General education and special education teachers were surveyed. All surveys are anonymous. I administered a survey to these ten teachers regarding their views on behavior and their beliefs on future implications for supporting teachers with classroom management.

I received permission from the principal of the school, as well as consent from the ten teachers who were surveyed. My role in this study was to create and administer the survey as well as analyze the result of the anonymous surveys. After taking tallies on the number of teachers who agreed and disagreed on the surveys, as well as taking notes on the open-ended responses, I was able to draw conclusions about specific strategies and beliefs.

The results of this study illustrate that the majority of teachers feel that classroom behavior is one of the main challenges of teaching. Seven of the ten teachers surveyed agreed

with this statement. Four of the ten participants surveyed admit that they would consider leaving teaching because of the challenges of student behavior. The results of the survey show that all ten teachers believe that setting clear expectations and including positive praise in the classroom is effective at decreasing negative behaviors; however, one teacher was unsure and wrote positive praise is "sometimes" effective. In addition, the results show that all teachers believe that the physical arrangement of the classroom plays a role in behavior, as well as increasing opportunities to respond. All ten participants also believe that technology can help increase engagement in the classroom and promote positive behavior. The majority of these teachers, nine out of ten, also believe that allowing students to share about their personal lives helps decrease negative behaviors. Nine out of the ten teachers believe direct instruction increases engagement, while one teacher believes it does not increase engagement. Open-ended responses showed that there are strategies and programs that teachers are already using that they feel help promote positive behavior in their classrooms, such as ClassDojo, incentives, and positive praise/narration. Overall, these educators agree that teachers coming into the profession need more support with behavior, such as through coaching and feedback as well as observing experienced teachers.

Researcher Stance

My role in this study was to analyze the data from surveys. I made detailed notes based on what I gathered from the surveys to help me draw conclusions about attitudes and further implications for behavior. I was able to see the similarities and differences in responses and strategies already being implemented in their classrooms. Through this research, I was able to determine how teachers feel about behavior and if they think that more time and support needs to be dedicated to the management of behaviors.

I am currently certified in Childhood Education, grades 1-6, and I also have a Middle

School Extension, grades 7-9, in English. I am presently enrolled in a program working towards

earning a Master's of Science in Special Education. While I am working towards this

certification, I am also employed as a third grade teacher at the school where I am conducting my

study.

Review of the Literature

The Root of the Behavior Struggle

Most researchers and elementary teachers today feel that behavior is a critical factor in

student success in the classroom (Smart & Igo, 2010). According to Smart and Igo (2010), the

definition of behavior management is "the process of shaping student behavior in order to

facilitate a classroom environment in which effective learning can occur" (p. 568). However, due

to issues with behavior, many teachers will also argue that it is the main factor that pushes

teachers to leave the teaching profession (Smart & Igo, 2010). Like Smart and Igo (2010),

Lambert, Tingstrom, Sterling, Dufrene, and Lynne (2015) agree that behavior management is a

major concern for teachers, as these researchers found in a national survey that "77% of teachers

believed they would be able to teach more successfully if less time and energy were spent

addressing disruptive student behavior" (p. 414). According to Reglin, Akpo-Sanni, and Losike-

Sedimo (2012), " a lack of motivation, language barriers, and socioeconomic barriers contributed

to behavior problems in the classroom" (p. 5). Hence, this quote shows teachers must dig deep to

figure out how students' backgrounds and home lives affect their views of school.

The findings of Reglin et al. (2012) and Smart and Igo (2010) are similar because these

researchers believe that behavior management is particularly difficult for first year teachers

because they are navigating so many other challenges of being an educator for the first time. As a

result, management can be difficult for first year teachers. It is also hard to learn to be a

successful classroom manager, as McCready and Soloway (2010) show that there are two

reasons why new teachers have difficulty learning behavior management from master teachers:

"1) good discipline is invisible when it's done well; and 2) great teachers are the worst people for

explaining to anyone else how they discipline their students" (p. 113). Therefore, this adds to the

complexity for first year teachers to establish solid classroom management techniques.

Specific Behavior Strategies for a Structured Classroom

When teachers develop a toolbox of behavior techniques they can use in their classrooms,

they are more likely to create a learning environment that is purposefully predictable and

consequently allows for teaching and learning to occur (Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, &

Sugai, 2008). When the environment is predictable, students are aware of the rules in the

classroom and understand what is expected of them. This is the essence of structure (Simonsen et

al., 2008). According to Simonsen et al. (2008), structured classrooms encourage expected

positive academic and social behaviors. In addition, Simonsen et al. (2008) argue that the

positive results include "greater task involvement, friendlier peer interactions, more helpful

behaviors, more attentive behaviors, and less aggression" (p. 357).

Post, teach, review, monitor, and reinforce expectations.

Yet, before students can even be engaged, Simonsen et al. (2008) argue that expectations

must be outlined. Teachers need to enforce expectations for how students will act in the

classroom (Simonsen et al., 2008). It is important that educators set expectations that are stated

in a positive tone so that all students can understand and apply them during instruction. Once

expectations are clearly outlined, they should be posted so students can review them and see

them daily; furthermore, teachers should refer to these expectations as needed throughout the

year (Simonsen et al., 2008). In order to ensure expectations, Simonsen et al. (2008) explain how teachers should actively supervise students by "moving, looking around, interacting with students, correcting any errors made by students (i.e., behavior that is inconsistent with expectations), and providing reinforcement for behavior that is consistent with expectations" (p. 358).

When students follow class expectations, teachers need to provide praise (Simonsen et al., 2008). By specifically stating what students are doing that is positive, pupils can easily replicate the behavior. Hence, the praise needs to be specific and positive so the environment is calm and the teacher is not constantly calling out what students are doing wrong, only to cause behavior to worsen. In addition, it is important that directions are clear, so students can focus on the task and know what is expected of them. However, if directions are unclear, students may be off task and need feedback on their work and their behavior (Simonsen et al., 2008).

The findings of Simonsen et al. (2008) and Wheatley, West, Charlton, Sanders, Smith, and Taylor (2009) are similar because these researchers believe that praising appropriate behavior decreases inappropriate behavior; however, Wheatley et al. (2009) argue that this must be done in specific ways. Wheatley et al. (2009) assert that a praise note system can be effective because students are receiving the verbal praise, as well as the praise in the form of a note. The teacher can then draw the notes at the end of the day for students to receive small awards and the students whose names were put into the drawing can be placed on a board for further recognition even if they did not win the drawing. Wheatley et al. (2009) suggest that appropriate behaviors be specifically taught, practiced, and then rewarded. To practice, teachers can give students hypothetical scenarios of inappropriate or appropriate behaviors to students in the form of a game and students can determine whether the behavior would get rewarded with a praise note.

Teachers can also lead students in practice by rehearsing outlined routines for common areas and instances that often lead to inappropriate behavior, such as transitions in the hallway. Students can practice standing up, the order they will walk in a line, and how to walk safely and quietly to the destination. Ultimately, in order for students to understand the behavioral expectations, the expectations must be stated clearly and specifically using common language. By using common language, students can better understand the expectations and as a result, positive behavior can be easily replicated (Wheatley et al., 2009).

Maximize structure and predictability.

Although Simonsen et al. (2008) and Wheatley et al. (2009) both found that expectations should be clearly outlined and positively praised, Simonsen et al. (2008) argue that routines and the physical arrangement of the classroom are just as important in creating effective structure. To create a feeling of structure and predictability, teachers should plan and outline every routine in the classroom and clearly communicate to students how to carry out these routines (Simonsen et al., 2008). Structure is also created through the physical arrangement of the classroom. Teachers should create space in the classroom by deliberately placing tables, dividers, closets, desks, and other large items in appropriate places that allow for easy pathways for students and teachers. Space creates a feeling of calmness, while clutter creates feelings of chaos. By minimizing crowding, students are less likely to get distracted. Therefore, the goal should be to increase space and allow for easy traffic flow (Simonsen et al., 2008).

Plan questions and questioning techniques ahead of time.

Just as teachers plan every routine in the classroom, they should also plan their questioning so that students become aware of the types of questions their teachers may ask (Bond, 2007). Unlike Simonsen et al. (2008), Bond (2007) feels that questioning is an important

aspect of creating structure in the classroom. The positive result of effectively planned questioning can be that "students will remain motivated and more willing to remain intellectually engaged with the teacher if they feel positively toward the information and can answer the teacher's questions correctly most of the time" (Bond, 2007, p. 20). Students who feel successful will usually remain on task. Teachers should think about the ability of their students and who to call on to effectively guide instruction. Teachers should also plan to call on students randomly to keep them "on their toes," which also minimizes off-task behavior. These methods keep students engaged because students want to impress their teachers and classmates and be ready for the questions. Educators can also post questions, which help visual learners (Bond, 2007).

To prevent students from getting bored and to increase rigor while establishing a collaborative classroom community, educators can teach their students how to guide the conversations; teachers can help students learn how to respond to incorrect answers from classmates, which allows for a more interactive and engaging environment (Bond, 2007). The teacher can enrich the conversation by asking follow-up questions or by encouraging students to repeat the question to help another student or to build on to another student's answer (Bond, 2007).

Correcting errors quickly and non-intrusively.

When students behave in a way that is not consistent with expectations, teachers need to be equipped with ways to correct the errors, so the misbehavior does not escalate (Simonsen et al., 2008). These corrections are "brief, contingent, and specific" (Simonsen et al., 2008, p. 357). According to Simonsen et al. (2008), the error correction is "an informative statement, typically provided by the teacher, that is given when an undesirable behavior occurs (contingent), states the observed behavior, and tells the students exactly what they should do in the future in a brief,

concise manner" (Simonsen et al., 2008, p. 364). Similarly to Simonsen et al. (2008), Reglin et al. (2012) agree that teachers should provide immediate feedback, which can sound like "Jamal, you blurted out the answer three times without raising your hand during the lesson" (p. 6). This quote illustrates that students need to receive guidance on how to change their behaviors.

Actively engage students in observable ways.

To help prevent the need for so many corrections, teachers can create student engagement through proper planning and strategies for instruction that allow students to work in observable ways (Simonsen et al., 2008). The researchers explain that teachers can create and increase active engagement "by increasing students' opportunities to respond, utilizing direct instruction techniques, implementing peer tutoring, utilizing computer-based instruction, and providing guided notes" (Simonsen et al., 2008, p. 359). A teacher can increase students' opportunities to respond by using choral responding where students answer a question or repeat a key word stated by the teacher in unison or through response cards, such as whiteboards to write answers on (Simonsen et al., 2008). Bond (2007) agrees that varying the way students respond to questions and provide answers can be helpful in decreasing behavior concerns, especially when allowing students to write answers down first, such as on whiteboards, which provides a multisensory experience that increases student participation. The findings of Partin, Robertson, Maggin, Oliver, and Wehby (2010) are similar to the research of Bond (2007) because these researchers believe that increasing students' Opportunities To Respond (OTR) is linked with improved positive behavior in elementary aged students. Partin et al. (2010) explain that a fast-paced environment where students are given no-opt out and are provided with constant opportunities to engage in responding to the learning, decreases disruptive behaviors.

Although Partin et al. (2010) finds that increasing participation and engagement can limit unwanted behavior, Simonsen et al. (2008) claim that the approach of direct instruction should also be used to help increase engagement because through this method teachers clearly present content (Simonsen et al., 2008). Direct instruction can be very effective for students because material is modeled by the teacher, then students have guided work time, which is followed by independent practice opportunities. Thus, this also allows teachers to continually assess student progress and adjust instruction if necessary (Simonsen et al., 2008).

Peer work is also an effective way to get students engaged (Simonsen et al., 2008). Partner work can occur in various ways, such as peer tutoring, partner work on a task, or paired reading. During partner activities the teacher can circulate around the room, observe students, and give assistance when necessary (Simonsen et al., 2008).

Using technology is another way to engage students in content particularly because students are interested in technology (Simonsen et al., 2008; Chiarelli, Szabo, & Williams, 2015). In many elementary schools, educators teach guided reading to small groups, so there are a number of students who have to work at their seats independently without the guidance of a teacher during this time (Chiarelli et al., 2015). However, the use of laptops or iPads can be effective during independent work time because it allows students to receive "the benefits of one-on-one instruction (e.g., frequent opportunities to respond, immediate corrective feedback, material tailored to the appropriate instructional level) without leaving the larger classroom" (Simonsen et al., 2008, p. 360). Hence, as both Simonsen et al. (2008) and Chiarelli et al. (2015) found, technology increases engagement and is an effective way to interest and motivate students, which in turn, keeps behavior consistent with expectations.

Developing cultural awareness.

Creating the best environment for students requires teachers to be culturally aware (McCready & Soloway, 2010). This is critical because many teachers have backgrounds that differ from their students. Schools can provide professional development workshops at schools which will allow teachers to successfully implement cultural lessons into the curriculum, while infusing it with current standards. The goal is to create an inclusive environment where all religions and cultures are celebrated (McCready & Soloway, 2010). According to McCready and Soloway (2010), one teacher who was white in a predominantly black school stated she felt comfortable saying, "You know what, I don't know much about hip hop why don't you (students) teach me? Tell me what I can listen to" (p. 119). This teacher's openness helps her students to understand that everyone is a continuous learner and makes mistakes. Thus, this is an example of how a teacher can build a trusting environment.

Developing empathy.

It is important to give students time to share about their personal lives (McCready & Soloway, 2010). This may occur after a lesson or in the morning when students come into the classroom. The most caring teachers take the little moments they can to ask their students about their hobbies or what they did over the weekend. When students are greeted with a conversation in the morning, many teachers are better able to pinpoint the root of behavior issues. By allowing students to share personal stories, teachers can plan for how to assist them with successfully getting through the school day. Teachers must be compassionate to those issues and may need to adjust activities for that student that day. It is also important that teachers are honest with students and talk to them in ways that they would want to be talked to. Teachers need to share their own experiences so students can understand them; consequently, this builds a trusting relationship (McCready & Soloway, 2010).

Specific Programs/Technology to Implement

There are various educational apps to assist with behavior, such as ClassDojo (Chiarelli et al., 2015). Other teachers implement one specific strategy in their classrooms to promote good behaviors, such as a daily report card (Williams, Noell, Jones, & Gansle, 2012) or "tootling" (Lambert, Tingstrom, Sterling, Dufrene, & Lynne, 2015). There may be students who need a more specific approach regarding behavioral support, such as the Check-In/Check-Out strategy (Swoszowski, McDaniel, Joliverte, & Melius, 2013).

Electronic daily behavior report card.

Daily Behavior Report Cards (DBRC), or school-home notes, require the teacher to assess student behavior (Williams et al., 2012). According to the researchers, "DBRC has been shown to decrease a variety of classroom behavioral concerns, including, but not limited to, inattention, talking out, disrespect, off-task behavior, and aggression" (Williams et al., 2012, p. 270). In the past, some teachers have used a paper version of the daily report card for behavior. However, the electronic version is helpful as students are less likely to lose a paper report card (intentionally or accidentally). In addition, email is much quicker for most teachers than paper, making it a more effective approach. With DBRC, parents are given feedback each day on how their child behaves. The parents then deliver the consequence of their choice, if needed (Williams et al., 2012). According to Williams et al. (2012), the DBRC has been shown to increase on-task behavior, decrease the number of disruptive behaviors, and increase parent-teacher communication. Furthermore, the DBRC does not have to, but can be used, to also emphasize academic progress in all areas, such as reading, writing, and mathematics (Williams et al., 2012). Thus, these report cards can be used to support parents at home by outlining how they can also help their child academically.

Check-in/check-out.

Unlike Williams et al. (2012), who believe in displaying progress to parents through a

DBRC, Swoszowski et al. (2013) claims that behavior needs to be monitored and made evident

to students. Swoszowski et al. (2013) argue that teachers can help prevent more severe behaviors

through the Check-in/Check-out (CICO) strategy (Swoszowski et al., 2013). The student is

paired with an adult mentor, most likely one who he or she has a positive relationship with, and

the student checks in with that mentor at the start of each school day and at the end of each

school day (Swoszowski et al., 2013). According to Swoszowski et al. (2013), the Check-

In/Check-Out strategy allows for effective communication to occur between the student and the

mentor, which further enables the mentor to help the student set behavior milestones. Each day,

the student has behavioral goals and a daily point goal. Students can strive to earn a two for each

goal, with zero and one showing that the behavior goal needs improvement. Mentors encourage

students by ending the check-in with reinforcing statements. In order for students to feel

accountable for their behavior throughout the day, the teacher gives feedback after each subject

area. Students work toward a reward, such as access to a class treasure box (Swoszowski et al.,

2013).

Tootling.

Another class-wide reinforcement system to motivate all students in the classroom is the

use of the strategy known as tootling (Lambert et al., 2015). This is a "positive peer reporting

procedure" that teaches students to "recognize and report peers' prosocial behavior rather than

inappropriate behavior" (Lambert et al., 2015, p. 413). The name comes from the expression

"tooting your own horn" and is essentially the opposite of "tattling" and encourages students to

notice positive behavior, instead of focusing on only negative behavior (Lambert et al., 2015, p.

413). Tootling was developed as a substitute for "punishment procedures" (Lambert et al., 2015, p. 414) that many schools still use although they are not always the most effective. Punishment procedures include discipline referrals and zero tolerance practices; however, these procedures "have the potential to be problematic because, although some children will learn to avoid punishment by not engaging in inappropriate behaviors, other children will simply learn to avoid being seen engaging in those behaviors" (Lambert et al., 2015, p. 414). The goal of tootling is that students are taught to report on their peers' appropriate behavior, which will most likely result in an increase in these expected behaviors being noticed and replicated (Lambert et al., 2015, p. 415).

Tootling works by students privately reporting the positive behaviors they see throughout the lesson on index cards (Lambert et al., 2015). The completed index cards are placed in a collection container throughout the day and then the teacher reads them aloud to the students in order to give praise and feedback. This strategy can be modeled and taught to students in the beginning of the year and then used throughout the year fluidly. The teacher can place a dry erase board next to the box with the classroom's current tootling goal written on the white board. The progress toward the goal can be placed on this board as well. The teacher and the students can discuss what they think an appropriate goal is and then adjust that goal throughout the year. As a class, students can work towards a group reward. Students can brainstorm and vote on these rewards. Ultimately, tootling discourages undesired behavior and encourages desired behavior and creates positive relationships among students (Lambert et al., 2015).

ClassDojo.

Chiarelli et al. (2015), like Lambert et al. (2015), found that promoting positive behavior can be effective through a specific procedure or program. Chiarelli et al. (2015) explains that

there are applications teachers can get through their phone, computer, or laptop to encourage

positive behavior, such as "ClassDojo" (Chiarelli et al., 2015). According to Chiarelli et al.

(2015), ClassDojo is "a tool to help students recognize and self-monitor their behavior" (p. 81)

and works by students creating rules, with assistance from the teacher, and then "the teacher uses

ClassDojo to scaffold positive student behavior" (pp. 81-82). ClassDojo calls attention to

students' behaviors and students become more aware of their behaviors, resulting in positive

behavior as that becomes the more desired outcome. Students enjoy Dojo because they get to

pick their avatar character, choose positive/negative behaviors, as well as icons for each of those

chosen behaviors, and create rules for the classroom with the help of their teacher (Chiarelli et

al., 2015). There are many benefits to ClassDojo, such as that in creating these rules, children are

able to make meaning around morals and expected behavior (Chiarelli et al., 2015).

ClassDojo is an app that is completely free and used by approximately 200,000 teachers

and helps teachers track both positive and negative behaviors (Chiarelli et al., 2015). When

students are seen doing a task accurately and/or following rules, the teacher presses their avatar

and they hear a "ding" as the point is added. However, when students hear a "buzz," they are

aware that there is a negative behavior they need to adjust and are able to learn how to redirect

themselves. Teachers can place a poster in the room that shows students what they can receive at

each point level. For example, for ten points they may receive a sticker, but for fifty points, they

could receive a "no homework" pass (Chiarelli et al., 2015). Chiarelli et al. (2015) claim that

results from ClassDojo report a "45-90% increase in positive behavior and a 50-85% decrease in

incidents of negative behavior" (p. 83). The results show that ClassDojo improves behavior.

Chiarelli et al. (2015) explain the overall benefits of ClassDojo:

Because the program can give minute-by-minute, day-by-day, week-by-week feedback,

students are encouraged and motivated to do a better job. In addition, building the

avatars, creating classroom rules and choosing icons for each help to develop a caring,

supportive relationship with and among students as well as with the teacher. Additionally,

it promotes the development of student social skills and self-regulation. (p. 83)

It is evident that ClassDojo drives the overall atmosphere of the classroom and can motivate

students to do their best. Similar to the daily behavior report card, teachers can set up ClassDojo

so parents can have access and see their child's behavior (Williams et al., 2012; Chiarelli et al.,

2015). Finally, ClassDojo is an easy way for teachers to track data from the whole class as well

as individual scores and develop behavior plans, if needed (Chiarelli et al., 2015).

Future Implications

When not done well, behavior management can be taxing and stressful; thus, many new

teachers are so frustrated with trying to fix behaviors that they often leave the profession (Smart

& Igo, 2010). According to Clement (2010), new teachers often only know the myths that lie in

behavior strategies, such as starting out the school year strict or turning the lights on and off.

Therefore, moving forward, it is critical that researchers examine the importance of behavior and

how it can affect student success if it is not dealt with effectively (Smart & Igo, 2010).

Preservice teachers need to be educated on behavior management beyond simply one class in

their undergraduate careers (Smart & Igo, 2010). Clement (2010) agrees with Smart and Igo

(2010), asserting that teacher candidates need to be taught management, not just lesson planning

in teacher education courses in order to be successful in the classroom as a new teacher.

Research by Clement (2010) suggests that new teachers want to be prepared to deal with

challenging behaviors, as well as assisting students with special needs. Smart and Igo (2010)

agree as these researchers state, "With novice teachers experiencing significant struggles in

behavior management, it is critical to examine what teacher education programs are doing to

prepare preservice teachers for these challenges" (p. 569). Furthermore, studies show that

numerous universities across the country have teacher education programs that offer few classes

and curriculum in the area of behavior management (Smart & Igo, 2010). Specifically, Smart

and Igo (2010) found in a survey, of over one hundred universities, less than thirty percent of the

programs offer classes that cover behavior management theories and strategies. This research

shows that many higher education institutions do not consider behavior management to be an

important component in the teacher education curriculum. Smart and Igo (2010) explain that

"the wide array of management philosophies, as well as the disagreements among experts about

the validity of these views, makes it difficult for teacher education programs to design and

implement effective preservice curriculum in behavior management" (p. 569). In addition, more

schools are creating inclusive settings, meaning more and more novice teachers are teaching in

diverse environments with students with special needs. Thus, these inclusive environments create

all different types of behaviors that may be challenging for educators who have just entered the

field (Smart & Igo, 2010). Thus, as Smart and Igo (2010) outline preservice teacher preparation,

Clement (2010) develops this argument further, believing that preparation for behavior should go

beyond undergraduate training and continue in professional development sessions in schools to

help support employees throughout their careers.

     Smart and Igo (2010) provide insight into why behavior management can be so

challenging, as these researchers explain one teacher's opinion: "No one ever taught me what to

do with the kids that don't fit the mold. Why didn't they offer a class on dealing with those

students?" (p. 580). Some students require educators to think outside of the box, as this teacher

describes. Thus, in response to the need for effective teacher preparation, explained by Smart and

Igo (2010), Gaudreau, Royer, Frenette, Beaumont, and Flanagan (2013) assert that not only is

teacher preparation important, but so is teacher self-efficacy, which contributes to managing

behavior and creating a smooth and calm classroom culture. Gaudreau et al. (2013) believe that

when teachers have strategies for managing behaviors, they have a greater sense of self-efficacy

than teachers who are less prepared. In addition, Gaudreau et al. (2013) claim that teachers with

higher self-efficacy are more open to new ideas and are likely to try new behavior strategies in

class than teachers with lower self-efficacy and less preparation. Gaudreau et al. (2013) imply

that educators with better teacher training, specifically in behavior management, tend to have

higher self-efficacies, and as a result, are more likely to become more successful teachers.

Methodology

Context

My study took place in an elementary school in upstate New York. I was able to

complete the study here because I work in the school. I had the opportunity to survey general

education and special education teachers from Kindergarten to fourth grade.

Participants

In this study, I surveyed ten teachers. These participants included both general education

and special education teachers. Two of the participants are special education teachers and eight

of the participants are general education teachers. These educators teach in Kindergarten through

fourth grade settings.

Method

The purpose of this study is to gather data on teachers' views on behavior and their

beliefs on future implications for supporting teachers with behavior management. Surveys posed

ten statements regarding behavior and asked teachers if they agree or disagree and then asked

teachers to write an open-ended response regarding what specific programs or strategies they use

to promote positive behavior as well as how new teachers can be provided with adequate support

in behavior management. I gathered the data in the second semester during the school year.

Procedures

To conduct my study, I started out by asking permission from the administration of the

school in the form of email. Then, I asked for permission from participants in the form of a

signed letter. Once I had permission, I set up an interoffice folder labeled "completed surveys"

on my desk at work and in the letter, I stated that completed surveys could be anonymously

placed in this folder by the indicated date. When all surveys were complete, I looked over them

to collect data in the form of tally marks and bulleted notes regarding trends.

Informed Consent and Protecting the Rights of the Participants

I received consent from participants in the form of a consent form written in letter format.

I am protecting the rights of participants because all information on surveys remained

anonymous. Information and data will be kept locked in a secure location for three years. After

three years, it will be destroyed.

Data Collection

The data was collected in the form of a survey. I constructed the survey myself based on

my research in behavior management. I then took notes on how many teachers agreed and

disagreed on each statement and took notes on trends in open-ended responses.

Data Analysis

There are a few steps I took to analyze the data collected from the surveys. First, I read

through the data and wrote down tally marks next to each "agree" or "disagree" for the ten

statements on the survey. I then took bulleted notes on commonalities in responses from the

open-ended questions at the end of the survey. I was then able to analyze trends and outliers in

the data.

<div align="center">**Findings and Discussion**</div>

Findings

      The findings from the survey show that many participants have the same beliefs. Seven

out of ten people believe that classroom behavior is one of the main challenges of teaching,

while three participants disagreed with this statement. All ten participants believe it is important

to set clear expectations for how students will act in the classroom. Nine of the ten participants

believe that positive praise is effective in decreasing negative behavior. However, one participant

was unsure and did not circle agree or disagree for this statement and wrote "sometimes."

Another statement where nine participants agreed and one person disagreed was that teachers

should provide immediate feedback on behavior. Nine participants agreed that direct instruction

helps increase engagement because content is clearly presented, while one participant disagreed.

Nine participants also believe that giving students time to share about their personal lives helps

decrease negative behavior in the classroom; however, one person disagreed. All ten participants

agreed that the physical arrangement of the classroom is important in promoting positive

behavior. Another statement where all ten participants agreed was that increasing students'

opportunities to respond, through strategies, such as choral responding or response cards, is

effective in promoting engagement. All ten participants also agreed that technology tools

increase student engagement in the classroom. One statement where more participants were split

on is that they would consider leaving the teaching profession due to student behavior

challenges. Four participants agreed that they would consider leaving, while six participants disagreed.

When participants were asked in open-ended responses what strategies, systems, programs, or technology were most helpful in promoting positive behavior in their classrooms, many teachers shared similar strategies. Four teachers shared that they use "ClassDojo." Three teachers shared that posing challenges to their students, such as giving out row points or using "boys vs. girls," was helpful in their classroom. Five teachers mentioned that positive narration of desired behavior, as well as positive praise/reinforcement are helpful techniques they use in their classroom. Five teachers wrote about prizes or incentives to reward behavior.

In another open-ended response, teachers were asked for ideas on how we can ensure that new teachers are provided with enough support in behavior management. Four teachers wrote that teachers should video themselves or video experienced teachers, while three teachers wrote about observing master teachers in action. Another common piece of advice teachers wrote was that schools should include some sort of coaching system for teachers. Seven participants wrote about getting coached or receiving "feedback" on behavior management techniques. One teacher gave a similar strategy, as she wrote about providing new teachers with a "mentor teacher."

Discussion

Based on the surveys that were administered, all ten participants agreed that it is important to set clear expectations for behavior in the classroom, which relates to Simonsen et al. (2008) because these researchers argue that expectations must be outlined and teachers should enforce expectations for how students will act in the classroom. The survey results in this study also relate to Chiarelli et al. (2015) who articulate that, similar to some of the participants in this study, ClassDojo can help students self-monitor their behavior, which promotes positive

behavior in the classroom. The survey results in this study relate to Simonsen et al. (2008) and Reglin et al. (2012) who agree that providing brief, specific, and immediate feedback on behavior is effective. Nine of the ten participants agreed that direct instruction can be effective in eliminating unwanted behaviors because content is clearly presented, which coincides with the research of Simonsen et al. (2008). All ten teachers agreed that the physical arrangement of the classroom is important in promoting positive behavior. This trend connects to Simonsen et al. (2008) as they argue that the routines and physical arrangement of the classroom are critical in creating effective structure. Additionally, all ten participants agreed that increasing students' opportunities to respond through strategies like choral responding and whiteboards is effective in eliminating undesired behaviors due to increased participation. This strategy connects to Simonsen et al. (2008), Bond (2007), and Partin et al. (2010) who write that increased opportunities to respond creates a fast-paced environment, which is key to promoting desired behaviors. Another strategy all participants felt strongly about was the use of technology. All participants believed that technology further engages students in the classroom setting. This strategy connects to the findings of Simonsen et al. (2008) and Chiarelli et al. (2015), as these researchers feel that students' engagement in technology helps to decrease negative or off-task behaviors.

Conclusion

In this research, behavior management techniques for elementary classrooms were analyzed. The research question that guided this study was: What techniques are the most effective in managing elementary students and how can we ensure that new teachers are best prepared in behavior management? The findings of the study provide a toolbox for elementary

teachers and administrators to consider in order to improve behavior management in elementary schools.

The participants in this study were ten teachers. By surveying the teachers and thoroughly analyzing their responses to the questions that I had written, it was evident that there are a number of strategies that most teachers agree are effective in promoting positive behavior in the classroom. However, new teachers need support to effectively implement these strategies and can receive this support through programs put in place in schools, such as assigning mentor teachers and allowing new teachers to video and observe master teachers in action.

Teachers agreed that numerous strategies listed in research can be effective in decreasing negative behavior, such as setting clear expectations in the classroom. Most teachers also agreed that positive praise is effective, as well as the use of direct instruction, and giving students time to share about their personal lives. Teachers also expressed that the physical arrangement of the classroom is critical in creating a positive classroom environment, as well as allowing students multiple opportunities to respond through different strategies. Another technique teachers agreed to be valuable is the use of technology in the classroom. Teachers expressed a commonality in that the use of ClassDojo, an application that can be used through phone or computer, is a popular choice. Another trend was in using positive reinforcement to encourage appropriate behaviors, as well as the use of challenges and incentives in the classroom.

This study indicated that seven out of ten teachers believe that classroom behavior is one of the main challenges of the education profession. Four of the participants would consider leaving teaching because of behavioral challenges, while six of the participants wrote that behavioral challenges would not cause them to stop teaching. Thus, behavior management is a critical component of teaching and a clear indicator of teacher retention. Gaudreau et al. (2013)

believe that when teachers have strategies for managing behaviors, they have a greater sense of

self-efficacy than teachers who have less knowledge of classroom management strategies. These

researchers (Gaudreau et al., 2013) claim that teachers with higher self-efficacy are more open to

new ideas and trying new behavior strategies in their classrooms than teachers with lower self-

efficacy and less preparation. Therefore, novice teachers are at a higher risk of having a low self-

efficacy in the classroom if their preservice program does not prepare them well enough.

Gaudreau et al. (2013) imply that teachers with better teacher training, specifically in behavior

management, tend to have higher self-efficacies, and as a result, are more likely to become more

successful teachers. This shows that teacher education programs need to be structured to include

behavior management as a main component. In addition, districts and schools may need to

prepare even experienced teachers in behavior management to help them feel prepared and allow

them to implement the given strategies effectively; this could be achieved through professional

development sessions and meetings.

However, most teacher education programs focus on lesson planning, content knowledge,

and child development. It is recommended that universities and administrators make every effort

to support future and current teachers in behavior strategies so that classroom environments are

positive and effective.

This study contains limitations. One of the limitations was time. Since this study had to

be completed within a certain amount of time, I did not have a larger participation pool. In the

future, I would survey more teachers and maybe even administrators and college professors in

order to gain data regarding the different views on behavior management techniques and the

future implications for teachers. Another limitation of this study was that it included teachers

from one school, so their views may have been similar due to their common setting. In the future,

I would collect data from a variety of schools to see if that changes the outcome and opinions of educators.

       The study opens the door for further investigations regarding behavior, such as how to support students who require intensive strategies, as well as how schools, districts, and universities can structure teacher education programs to include more behavior management support. This study raises more questions. For example: How does the effectiveness of elementary behavior management strategies differ in suburban and urban schools? Are some strategies more effective for primary grades (Kindergarten-grade three) or intermediate elementary grades (grades four-six)? Therefore, further studies need to be constructed to address such questions in the field.

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Appendix

Below is the survey:

Directions: Please circle or bubble in **agree or disagree** for the ten questions below.

1. Classroom behavior is one of my main challenges in teaching.
    o   Agree
    o   Disagree
2. I would consider leaving teaching because of the challenges of student behavior.
    o   Agree
    o   Disagree
3. I believe it is important to set clear expectations for how students will act in the classroom.
    o   Agree
    o   Disagree
4. I believe that positive praise is effective in decreasing negative/inappropriate behavior.
    o   Agree
    o   Disagree
5. The physical arrangement of the classroom is important in promoting positive behavior.
    o   Agree
    o   Disagree
6. Teachers should provide immediate feedback on behavior, such as "John, you blurted out the answer three times without raising your hand during the lesson."
    o   Agree
    o   Disagree
7. Increasing students' opportunities to respond, through strategies such as choral responding or response cards (ex: whiteboards), is effective in promoting engagement.
    o   Agree
    o   Disagree
8. Direct instruction helps increase engagement because content is clearly presented.
    o   Agree
    o   Disagree
9. Technology is helpful in creating engagement for students.
    o   Agree
    o   Disagree
10. Giving students time to share about their personal lives helps decrease negative behavior in the classroom.
    o   Agree
    o   Disagree

Directions: Please **respond** briefly (sentences, lists, or bullets) to the questions below.

11. What specific programs/strategies/systems/technology (ClassDojo, Check-In/Check-Out, etc.) do you use to promote positive behavior in your classroom?

12. How can we ensure that new teachers are provided with enough support in behavior management?

Thank you for your time completing this survey and helping my research!