The Impact of Adapting Classroom Management on an Elementary Teacher's Perception of

Student Behavior

by
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Chapter One: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

It's late on a Tuesday morning; my class of first-graders is working on their daily skills assignment. As I glance to the left while circulating around the classroom, I again notice Bobby (all names for people and places are pseudonyms) making marks on Sally's paper. In a frustrated tone I explain to him that now, after two warnings, he will need to go and spend some time in Mr. Gardner's classroom. Why did I do this? I know that having Bobby leave the classroom is not the best approach to handle his disruptive behavior. Later, during students' transition from recess to the lunch line I count down from five to zero to get their attention. A few students follow the lead, but the majority require me to count down at least two times before beginning to clean up. Why weren't they listening? How much time are we wasting during transitions? What can I do to make the transitions more effective in my classroom?

I currently teach in an urban elementary school called Barker Elementary. Barker Elementary is part of a large urban school district located in Upstate New York. Throughout my educational career, I have come to understand the importance of finding a classroom management approach that meets the needs of both the teacher and his or her students. This is the key to having a successful school year overall. In my opinion, a successful school year includes students gaining a sense of control over classroom decisions, a feeling of belonging, and confidence as a learner overall. In other words, students should enjoy the wholeness of the learning process from academics to behavior. The classroom environment should foster students' feelings of success through praise and encouragement. The students should essentially feel as though they are at a home away from home where they are physically safe and feel comfortable making educational mistakes throughout the process.

Although this is the ideal setting of an optimal learning environment, I often found myself making decisions regarding classroom management out of frustration and without careful planning. This is not the teacher I wanted to be, nor was it the teacher my students deserved. I wanted my students to be able to enjoy transitioning from one activity to the next. These transitions needed to not only be effective but they needed to require minimal time. As well, I wanted to be able to guide my students toward appropriate decision making in the classroom. My goal as a teacher was to be able to create an environment for my students which fostered growth in all aspects and not strictly academics.

Significance of the Problem

The pressure placed on teachers today is nothing like what it was in past decades. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002) makes school funding dependent upon how well a school performs on mandated standardized tests. Test scores are then made publically accessible. Schools will then continue to receive funding or have funds taken away as a result of the scores (NCLB, 2002). This immense pressure for funding is put on the individual school administrators and is then transferred to the classroom teachers. As if the pressure to get your students to perform on such high stakes test wasn't enough, now imagine that you are in a classroom where student misbehavior and loss of time due to transition ineffectiveness impacted the ability for students to learn.

The pressures in the education field today have caused newer teachers to become increasingly frustrated with student behavior, which ultimately leads to increased attrition rates. Teaching is recognized as an extremely stressful occupation (Caples & McNeese, 2010; Lambert, McCarthy, O'Donnell, & Wang, 2009). It is upsetting that teachers have one of the biggest attrition rates of any profession. The percentage of new teachers leaving teaching within

the first five years is between 30% and 50% (Caples & McNeese, 2010). As overall student misbehavior decreased, the persistence of first year teachers increased (Caples & McNeese, 2010). If teachers can improve their classroom management by adapting their strategies and finding the best fit for themselves and their students, then not only will we be able to retain more young professionals, but those same teachers will be better equipped in the area of classroom management.

A teacher's classroom management approach evolves throughout his or her career and serves as a means to promote order, engage students and increase learning. It is very possible that teachers' philosophies can change depending on the make-up of their class and the goals that they want their students to achieve by the end of the school year. Teachers may also attend professional development, read texts or engage in professional conversations which encourage them to try a new strategy. Another way this evolvement can occur is through trial and error to find out what works best for the students in that particular class during that specific school year. It is important to remember that what works for one group of students one year may not work the next. This is why teachers need to be proactive in adapting their approach and remain flexible as they explore the best fit for each individual class.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study, then, was to explore how I could address the problem within my classroom. It was the focus of this study to more closely examine how I could adapt two specific areas of classroom management by asking the following questions:

Question 1: How can I adapt my strategies for classroom transitions to improve my perception of student behavior?

Question 2: How can I adapt behavior management strategies in my classroom to improve my perception of student behavior?

In the educational field that exists today the pressures placed on students and teachers to perform are very real and do not seem to be going away any time soon. Therefore, developing classroom management approaches that are manageable for teachers to follow through on and are also conducive to student learning is imperative to a successful educational experience.

Study Approach

The purpose of this study was to gain insight on the ways in which I could improve my classroom management and how those improvements might impact my perception of student behavior. Specifically, I focused on the areas of transitioning and behavior management. Since the focus of the study was on researching my own classroom management approach, the research was conducted through a qualitative self-study over a six week period. Interim analysis of research journal entries was also conducted.

During the duration of the study, I gathered data through the use of a research journal. I recorded observation notes hourly so that I was sure to remember the major takeaways of each day. After the completion of each school day as well as during breaks in the school day, I recorded narratives of the transitions as well as any behaviors that needed to be addressed. I developed reflective questions in order to guide the daily entries. Each narrative was followed by a critical reflection; the entries were completed at the end of each school day, in an effort to maintain validity. This allowed me to stay focused on my inquiry in regard to the following: How can I adapt my transitioning strategies to improve my perception of student behavior; and,

how can I adapt my strategies for behavior management to improve my perception of student behavior?

Rationale

Barker Elementary is a school community, including myself, that believes that if our students dare to dream and believe in themselves that they are capable of achieving their educational goals. I believe I can help facilitate this belief in my students by creating and maintaining a classroom environment that effectively guides students toward appropriate choices as well as providing the opportunity for more learning time.

As teachers, we know that the make-up of students in our classrooms from year to year differs greatly. A teacher's previous class may have had the ability to transition smoothly. However, when that teacher uses the exact same strategies with future classes, they may not be as successful, if at all. As educators, we have a duty to remain continuously critical of our approaches. This often includes asking ourselves why we make the decisions we make and how we can adjust our approaches in ways that continue to benefit our students and their experiences in our classrooms. This is the reason why I decided to adapt my practices as a teacher as opposed to looking at students individually.

Summary

Adapting my classroom management practices was an area in which I struggled daily. With increasing pressure placed on classroom teachers and their students to perform, I know that effective and consistent classroom management is the key to building a foundation for meaningful learning to occur. This self-study helped to assist me in discovering the balance between my classroom management approaches and my perception of student behavior in my

classroom. It was my hope and belief that this research would not only help me in my daily

practices but that others would find it equally as useful.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter will describe literature which is relevant to the research purposes of this study. It is organized into three sections: (1) classroom management, (2) classroom transitions, and (3) behavior management. At the end of each section, the relevance of the literature that was reviewed will be discussed.

The Importance of Classroom Management

In any classroom regardless of grade-level, the potential for conflict is inevitable. It is the job of the teacher to address and attempt to prevent such conflicts. Wong, Wong, Rogers and Brooks (2012) explain that there are three elements which make an effective teacher. In addition to teaching for lesson mastery and practicing positive expectations, classroom management makes an effective teacher. Therefore, a teacher cannot be effective without the ability to deal with potential conflicts. In the absence of classroom management skills, the effectiveness of quality instruction is compromised as well.

Classroom Management: History and Theory

In the 19th century it was believed that children should be seen and not heard unless called upon by the teacher. The teacher was viewed as a disciplinarian and was to be respected. It was the teacher's responsibility to focus on the fundamentals of reading, writing and arithmetic. According to Roskos & Neuman (2012), it was the expectation that children were to follow the "golden rule" and use courtesy, fairness, and good manners. If the children did not obey they would be hit with a hickory stick.

During the 20th century, it was discovered that not all classroom management strategies worked for all students. Classroom management consisted of a teacher having "withitness",

which included effective transitioning and challenging lessons. Research shows that during this time, effective management strategies were linked to academic achievement (Roskos & Neumann, 2012).

Classroom management in the 21st century has changed immensely along with our society. Corporal punishment and yelling are classroom management approaches of the past. Today's teachers need to be professional and caring. The rituals and routines of the classroom need to be set and should include student input. Teachers need to have a plethora of interventions at their fingertips. There is also a need for positive teacher-student relationships (Marzano, Marzano & Pickering, 2003).

Many theorists have offered their ideas as to what they think works when it comes to classroom management. After reading the work of these theorists, several ideas began to emerge. The major ideas surrounding classroom management consisted of student engagement, responsibility of students, and student/teacher collaboration.

According to Jacob Kounin (1970), a teacher needs to have "withitness" (pg. 64). Withitness means that a teacher is aware of what is going on in the classroom. He specified that the teacher may not know every detail of what is going on but that the students should have the perception that the teacher is always aware. Withitness can be achieved through continual eye contact with students. He found that teachers who were good disciplinarians possessed this quality and that it assisted in keeping students on task (Kounin, 1970).

Student engagement was also addressed by Jones, Jones and Jones (2000). They noted that approximately 50 percent of the time wasted in elementary classrooms is due to disruptive behaviors. Those disruptive behaviors include students being out of their seats, talking to

neighbors, goofing off, daydreaming, and making random noise. Though these behaviors may not seem significant, it is these types of behaviors that disrupt teaching and learning. Jones, Jones and Jones recommend the, "Say, See, Do Teaching" (pg. 74) approach which is similar to the gradual release theory. It involves the teacher explaining what is to be done, modeling what will be done and then the student does whatever it is that should or needs to be done. This approach also involves getting frequent responses from students. It keeps students alert and engaged in the lesson.

A teachers' body language is another important aspect of classroom management. When teachers use eye contact, close physical proximity, facial expressions, and gestures properly they can be effective in dealing with management matters (Jones, Jones, & Jones 2000; Kounin 1970). Kounin thought that teachers who had a solid system in place for gaining student attention and clarifying expectations exhibited group alerting. Group alerting consists of teachers designing their behaviors in a way that helps students to stay on task and reduce misbehavior. This means that teachers should learn how to correct a student's behavior in such a way that it encourages other students to change their behavior. His theory followed the idea that an effective teacher keeps students actively involved and attentive. In order to keep students accountable they need to be a regular participant in class activities (Kounin, 1970).

Rudolf Dreikurs' (1998) theory discusses the importance of students having self-control. Self-control is a responsibility of the learner. His idea focuses on the fact that students who are self-controlled are able to take initiative, assume responsibility, and make decisions that are reasonable. These actions benefit both themselves and others. When students have a social interest, they make an effort to contribute to a classroom that is productive as well as comfortable. He believed that good discipline occurs best in a democratic classroom. A

democratic classroom can be defined as a classroom in which students and the teacher collaborate to make decisions on how the class will best function. Ginott agreed that effective teachers invite cooperation from their students rather than dictating or bossing them around (Dreikurs, 1998; Manning & Bucher, 2001). Another responsibility is completing classwork. It is recommended by Jones, Jones and Jones, that when students demand attention for independent work, the teacher should, "praise, prompt, and leave" (2000, pg. 58). This allows the students to be redirected quickly and take responsibility for their learning (Jones, Jones, & Jones, 2000).

According to Dreikurs (1998), students have an increased sense of belonging when they are included in the process of decision making in various aspects of their day. This should include not only the making of rules but consequences as well. He believes that when students aren't involved in the decision making process, they will more than likely search for attention and power in less desirable ways (Dreikurs, 1998). When students understand that they are considered as equal participants in the classroom, there is a sense of community (Dreikurs, 1998; Manning & Bucher, 2001). Ginott also thought that the teacher should lead by example. Teachers should exhibit the cardinal principal of congruent communication, which is that they should address the situation and never the students' personality or character. This approach shows the students that they are socially equal to the teacher as opposed to beneath him or her. The ability for a teacher to do so instills the mindset that the student is capable of making decisions that are good and appropriate (Manning & Bucher, 2001).

The Canters' (2001) theory of classroom management is centralized on the idea that students have rights and needs that must be met in order to effectively learn. One such need that all students have is the need for a teacher who cares. A caring teacher strives to achieve what is best in the interest of the students. They also encourage teachers to reach out to "difficult"

students and interact with them personally to establish a relationship of respect and rapport

(Canter & Canter, 2001). Kohn (1996) agrees that the relationships between teachers and their

students need to be supported through a caring environment. This idea is supported when he

mentions that in a "working with" (pg. 54) classroom, students have the opportunity to play an

active role in decisions that affect them directly and the functioning of the classroom as a whole.

The teacher works with students to enhance their learning experiences. As opposed, in a "doing

to" (pg. 54) classroom, the teacher focuses on getting students to strictly comply. This style of

management often focuses on a system of punishments and rewards which only offer a

temporary fix as opposed to working toward the specific needs of students. He explains that it is

one thing to talk about a learner-centered classroom and another to make it a reality (Kohn,

1996). By creating a caring community for students, the teacher is able to instill a love of

learning that focuses on the students' underlying motives (Canter & Canter, 2001; Kohn, 1996).

It is important for teachers to consider what has been discovered in the past in an effort to

guide their practice in their own classroom. Chances are there isn't going to be one approach

that meets the needs of all students in a classroom. This is when teachers need to adapt their

strategies in order to match their own style and work toward particular goals while meeting the

needs of their students. There is certainly not a need to continually reinvent the wheel but what

worked for students years ago may not be suited best for the students of today's classrooms. All

of the things that a teacher does in an effort to organize time, materials, students, and space,

make up classroom management. The effectiveness of a teacher's classroom management

strategies can determine the overall success of the school year. Therefore it is important to

consider not only what is being done in classrooms today, but what has been done in the past.

Although many theorists have offered their findings and ideas on classroom management,

ultimately it is up to the classroom teacher to decide what works best for a particular group of children in order to meet their needs both socially and academically.

The Effects of Classroom Management on Academics

In order for students to have academic success, teachers must first create an optimal learning environment. The term optimal learning environment focuses on the way in which teachers set-up their classrooms with regard to physical space, academic opportunity and social interactions and growth. When discussing effective classroom management techniques discovered by researchers, it is important to be aware of how researchers define effective classroom management. Researchers typically use two elements to determine if a classroom management approach is successful. The first is a lack of inappropriate behavior. The other element is whether or not students are on-task (Babkie, 2006; Kounin, 1970; Rischer, 2008; Smart & Igo, 2010).

Kane, Taylor, Tyler and Wooten (2011) discuss that student achievement is impacted by teachers' practices. A teacher's effectiveness is directly related to the academic achievement of his or her students. Teachers are the most important factor in student achievement (Ferguson, 1991; Kane, Taylor, Tyler, & Wooten, 2011). Many aspects can cause a teacher to be deemed ineffective. One aspect is a teacher's ability to effectively manage the classroom. If a teacher is ineffective the impact can affect a student's academic career for years. Increasing teacher quality can cause the greatest increase in student achievement (Ferguson, 1991).

Freiburg and Lamb (2009) mentioned that when students are given opportunities to exhibit responsibility, they become connected to the classroom environment. This connection also allows students to become invested in making the teaching and learning relationship work.

When students are able to find their purpose within the classroom they can see themselves as learners and the door to academic achievement is opened. In order for students to become a part of the classroom community, they mentioned the differences between a "teacher-centered" and a "person-centered" (pg.101) classroom. For instance in a teacher-centered classroom, the teacher is the leader, rewards are extrinsic, and management is viewed as oversight of student behavior. However, in a person-centered classroom, leadership is shared among all classroom members, rewards are intrinsic, and management is a form of guidance (Freiburg & Lamb, 2009).

A study by Freiberg, Huzinec and Templeton (2009) investigated the effects of classroom management on academics in fourteen inner-city elementary schools. The researchers discussed that when students are self-disciplined the teachers are able to use more complex instruction that includes research projects, cooperative learning, and interactive centers. These types of approaches enhance students' learning experiences and allow for deeper understanding and retention of information. It was concluded that although classroom management is considered one of the most important factors that affect student learning, most management programs lack evidence to support that they improve student learning (Freiberg, Huzinec, & Templeton, 2009).

Rischer (2008) explains that in order to increase academic achievement within your classroom there are several management factors that need to be in place. First, a classroom has to be organized in such a way that allows students to be prepared to learn and the teacher ready to teach. Next, when dealing with inappropriate behaviors, the teacher must prepare for the worst by having strategies in place to diffuse the situation. When a situation presents itself, the teacher has an opportunity to pass along his or her experiences and connect with students. Knowing your students and respecting their cultural values is important because it allows the teacher to have an understanding of who the student is as an individual and a learner. As well,

teachers need to have an understanding of why a student may be acting out because often those behaviors cause other students to become distracted. Perhaps the student is acting out because he or she is lacking the ability to perform at a level equivalent to his or her peers. If the teacher is aware of the situation he or she can address it individually with the student. It is these connections that allow relationships to develop. As relationships develop, teachers can then raise the expectations for their students which increase accountability for their behavior and their learning (Rischer, 2008).

According to current research, newer educators as well as veteran teachers identify classroom management as an area that significantly impacts their ability to deliver instruction to students (Rosas & West, 2009). It appears that today's educators are faced with job-related stress more than ever before. What is so concerning is the fact that these high levels of stress may potentially impact their students. This would result in a negative effect on the well-being of the students, especially if students have developed strong student-teacher relationships. As well, when a teacher is stressed the students in the classroom may also become agitated and stressed, which would negatively impact their academic, personal, and social wellbeing (Rosas & West, 2009). Teachers are required to complete a variety of tasks throughout their day to meet the diverse needs of their students. These tasks include lesson planning, differentiating instruction, managing student behaviors, and meeting students' social and emotional needs. In an effort for teachers to create a successful academic environment, effective classroom management is essential (Kohn, 2000; Rischer, 2008; Rosas & West, 2009).

A study by Shook (2012) interviewed preservice teachers in an effort to gain insight into what types of classroom management strategies they were using as well as the effects of those strategies. The results found that three types of strategies were used most frequently by

preservice teachers. The first was talking individually with students. This approach seemed to be most effective. Next, teachers instructed students as a group as well as individually on appropriate behavior. The last strategy used was sending the student who was exhibiting less desirable behaviors out of the classroom. The last strategy was considered the least effective. Sending students out of the classroom deprives them of critical learning experiences and exposure to core content. The preservice teachers suggested ways to improve their strategies. Among the suggestions were having a more structured routine, improving transitions, and decreasing negative strategies for behavior management. The study concluded that negative strategies increased problem behaviors and decreased academic achievement (Shook, 2012).

The increasing pressures placed on students and teachers to perform academically are causing teachers to look for more effective ways to improve both time spent on academics as well as student learning experiences. Increasing learning time through effective transitions and decreased behavior disruptions are two ways in which student academics will be positively impacted.

Transitions in the Classroom Environment

One aspect of classroom management that seems to get looked past is that of transitioning. Often times teachers don't even realize how much time passes between activities. When compared to Chinese and Japanese classrooms, it was discovered that American classrooms spend significantly more time during transitions which then results in a decrease of academic instruction, causing American students to be at a disadvantage academically (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). It is this lack of awareness that actually has huge implications for student learning. Teachers may look at transitions as five minutes here or there, but in all reality about five minutes between six daily activities is equivalent to at least a half hour every day that

is simply wasted. Now take into consideration that the average school day lasts six hours. That is one-twelfth of the school day not being used for academics! This is a loss that neither teachers nor students can afford in a time of high-stakes testing and evaluations.

According to McIntosh, Herman and Sanford (2004), although a classroom may be otherwise well-functioning, the area of transitioning may present itself as challenging for teachers and students alike. Transitioning time that is ineffective allows for increased student misbehaviors and wasted academic opportunities. Transitioning within the classroom can be extremely difficult for students who already seem to experience difficulty with appropriate classroom behavior (Lee, 2006; McIntosh, Herman, & Sanford, 2004). Transitions are difficult because some children may not understand the expectations for a specific transition. If they are unsure of exactly what it is they need to do, the chances of unmet expectations occurring are greater which then increases the potential for behavior problems (Mathews, 2012).

One study compared forty-four first-grade classrooms in order to determine how teacher organization impacted classroom functioning. The classrooms were observed at three separate times throughout a school year (fall, winter, and spring). When looking specifically at classroom transitions it was found that teachers who were able to maximize the time spent on academic activities did so by pre-planning and having quick transitioning periods. The result of quicker transitions also decreased behavioral interruptions (Cameron, Connor, & Morrison, 2005).

In order for transitioning to be successful, there are a few requirements that need to be in place. First, the daily transitions should be carefully planned ahead of time. This can be done by having a daily schedule and adhering to it in order to ensure all aspects of the day are incorporated. The routine for transitioning then needs to be explicitly taught and modeled so

students have a reference to guide them while they transition throughout their day. Next, it is imperative that teachers monitor students as they transition. As teachers monitor students they are able to see where adjustments need to be made or directions should be clarified. Finally, it is important for the teacher to give students feedback (Garrison, Howard, & Sprick, 1993). Feedback regarding transitions does not need to be extensive, but rather a quick recognition of what the students did well or may need to work on during their next transition (McIntosh, Herman, & Sanford, 2004; Garrison, Howard, & Sprick, 1993). Teachers should adhere to these guidelines not only to improve transitioning within their classrooms but because they are good practice as well.

One of the most effective methods for lowering behavior problems and increasing attention is by incorporating music and/or singing into classroom transitions. Music has a calming effect on students which tends to lower anxiety and stress (Mathews, 2012). When children are happily engaged in the activity they need to transition from, music/singing can be a pleasant strategy to get their attention. By incorporating songs that include the desired instructions it makes it easier for children to understand the expectations. This can also be done through the use of a specific song/tone for a particular transition (Mathews, 2012). However, when doing so it is important to remember that the classroom teacher must discuss, model and praise when the transition directions are followed. Using a particular song to transition also allows a time limit to be placed on the transition.

Orlowski and Hart (2013) recommend adding movement to classroom transitions. The approaches they suggest include students playing games. For example, one transition for lining up included passing a ball from student to student until everyone is lined up. Brief instances of physical activity have the ability to improve students' attitudes, memory, and attention (Braniff,

2011; Orlowski & Hart, 2013). Braniff (2011) notes that some students have a need to wiggle and that allowing them to do so helped them to focus because the energy that built up was being released. Students are also less stressed when they are able to participate in opportunities for movement. The moments of movement help to limit distractions and frustration (Braniff, 2011).

The need for students to release energy throughout the day is apparent. However, the movement games suggested by Orlowski and Hart (2013) do not seem conducive to a classroom where transition time needs to be limited for academic purposes. Instead the games may be better suited in a preschool or kindergarten classroom setting. I can see movement being incorporated into daily transitions simply by having students do some sort of wiggle, random movement or dance of choice as they travel back to their seats or as they move from one activity to the next. If timed music or sounds are also used this will allow for the transition to not only be effective time wise but also in meeting students' need for release. This ideal strategy for transitioning would increase student attention while decreasing student stress.

Behavior Management

Schools today have an increase in the number of inclusive classrooms. This increase includes a variety of students being placed in one classroom as opposed to being separated by behavioral needs and/or academic ability. As much as we would all like to believe that these factors don't play a role in the management of our classrooms, they do. Classrooms are becoming more diverse as years pass. With an increase in diversity, conflicts between peers as well as peer pressure to perform amongst students often results in behavioral issues. These behavioral issues demand a need for appropriate behavior management (Grossman, 2004).

The opinions and research on behavior management, like most aspects in the field of education, differ greatly. While some researchers think that the goal of behavior management is for students to comply with teacher requests and follow rules created without their input, others believe that building strong student-teacher relationships and positively encouraging students to make appropriate choices is more beneficial overall (Babkie, 2006; Kohn, 1996; Lannie & McCurdy, 2007; Marzano, 2011; Wolk, 2003).

Babkie (2006) suggests that teachers should evaluate how the misbehavior is benefitting the students. Perhaps the students are looking to get out of doing a particular task. Maybe they are seeking attention from their peers. If the teacher is aware of why the behaviors may be occurring, he or she can better decide how to manage the situation. Babkie also recommends that when redirecting a student toward appropriate choices there are specific dos and don'ts. For instance, the teacher should get within close proximity to the student to prevent or diffuse a potential problem. The teacher should not embarrass or call attention to the student's misbehavior as this may cause resentment or worsen the situation.

Student-teacher relationships are the most significant component of classroom management and are crucial in creating an effective community of learners. These relationships are manifested in all aspects of classroom management from the choice of teaching methods to behavior management. For some children, the student-teacher relationship created while managing behavior issues provides emotional security and a model for future social interactions (Marzano, 2011; Wolk, 2003). However, Kohn's (1993) research suggests that the use of reward systems used to manage behavior simply end up doing more harm than good when it comes to building positive student-teacher relationships. Using rewards to improve student behavior disrupts the relationship and ignores the underlying reason for the behaviors that may have

occurred otherwise (Kohn, 1993). Marzano (2011) suggests that relationships between students and teachers are strengthened through cooperation and a sense of mutual respect. Students are then willing to take more risks and become more fully engaged in their learning (Marzano, 2011).

Smart and Igo (2010) investigated what behavior management strategies were being used by first-year elementary teachers along with how well the teachers perceived the effectiveness of the strategies.   The researchers found that first-year teachers categorized behaviors into two main subcategories. The first was mild behaviors, which consisted of breaking established rules, off-task behavior, and attention-getting behavior. The second category was that of severe behaviors. These behaviors included defiance, aggression, and deviant behaviors. Teachers cited using strategies that they had learned during student teaching experiences from colleagues when handling mild behaviors. These strategies included positive reinforcement, praise/verbal feedback, conferences, and negative punishment. However, when needing to address severe behaviors the responses varied. Some teachers stated ignoring the behavior because confronting the problem would cause a tantrum, a lot of trial and error in desperation, and thinking of something new that might work. The study concluded that teachers only perceived a strategy as being effective if it produced a definitive and sustained change in the behavior (Smart & Igo, 2010).

A study by Lannie and McCurdy (2007) set out to investigate the impact of the "Good Behavior Game" on student behavior. As well, the researchers also wanted to find out if student behavior improvement would increase teacher praise. The study focused on a first-grade elementary class in an urban school. The "Good Behavior Game" involves the teacher setting a limit on the number of disruptive behaviors that the students, who are separated into four teams,

must fall at or below. If the team has less than the predetermined amount they receive a prize. If a team has more disruptive behaviors then they are excluded from the prize. This empirically-based strategy resulted in improved on-task behavior and decreased disruptive behavior. However, the increase of positive behavior did not increase teacher praise. As well, in the absence of the game less desired behaviors increased once again and neutral or negative teacher responses occurred. The "Good Behavior Game" is user-friendly and an effective strategy for improving student behavior (Lannie & McCurdy, 2007). This implies that the teachers seemed to only be concerned with getting students to comply as opposed to positively reinforcing appropriate choices.

McCready and Soloway (2010) conducted research on 50 elementary teachers from four schools. The study sought to investigate what challenging behaviors teachers were seeing with their students and how they dealt with them within their own classrooms. Many teachers had experienced similar student behaviors. The behaviors included hitting, pushing, yelling, inappropriate tone used toward the teacher, and oppositional defiance. The teachers mentioned a variety of behavior management approaches that involved positivity and understanding. Many teachers discussed how having empathy, being flexible and understanding of students' situations helped to manage student behaviors in a way that was beneficial for students. They also mentioned that taking time to learn who your students are, as well as recognizing the positive aspects they bring to the classroom community, assist in building an environment conducive to student learning and growth (McCready & Soloway, 2010).

Looking at the research, it can be said that teachers need to do what works best for their students. Whether it is the use of a game, positive reinforcement, praise or personal conferences, the strategy used should benefit the students in a way that encourages positive behavior changes.

In my opinion, the "Good Behavior Game" also encourages students to not only help themselves but to work as a team. I think the game could be excessive if it was used during every lesson. I could see the game being used as a daily assessment. Ultimately, the goal is to teach, encourage, and support students as they grow socially and emotionally within the academic setting. If teachers keep this focus at the forefront of their practices then the rewards will be plentiful for all.

Conclusion

Research over the past couple of decades has discovered much about the importance of an effectively managed classroom. Transitions that are smooth within the classroom, allow for increased learning time. As well, effective behavior management has the potential to serve as teachable moments and improve student behavior overall. The benefits of such a classroom positively impact the daily interactions between students and their peers as well as students and their teacher. Classroom management plays a significant role in the success of a school year. Due to the increasing demand for students to perform, it is imperative that educators both young and old continue to adapt the strategies they use in an effort to create an optimal learning environment for every group of students from year to year.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As an elementary teacher, I was faced daily with the challenges of effective classroom management. The challenge lied in the struggle to find both transition strategies that allowed my students to move from one daily activity to the next, as well as meaningful ways to guide my students toward appropriate behavior choices.

The main focus of this qualitative self-study, as stated in chapter 1, was to examine how adapting my classroom management approach impacted my perception of student behavior. It was my hope that my study around this issue would allow me to gain insight into the following questions:

Question 1: How can I adapt my strategy for classroom transitions to improve my perception of student behavior?

Question 2: How can I adapt behavior management in my classroom to improve my perception of student behavior?

Context of the Study

District

This study was conducted at Barker Elementary (all names are pseudonyms), which is a Pre-K through 6th grade elementary school. Barker Elementary is part of a large urban school district in Upstate New York. According to the district website, there are 27 traditional elementary schools like Barker Elementary in the district. Over 30,000 students are enrolled district-wide. Graduation and the acquisition of skills to succeed in today's global economy are the district's missions. The NYSED school report card reports that 88% of students within the district received free or reduced lunch. The district is diverse in its population of students.

African American students make up the majority of the students attending the district at 62%, 24% of students were Hispanic, 10% were White, and 3% were Asian. The district has an overall attendance rating of 89% (www.p12.nysed.gov).

School

The NYSED school report card for Barker Elementary reported that 84% of students received free or reduced lunch. The school itself was made up of a diverse population of students. African American students made up the majority of the students at 44%, 34% of students were White, 18% were Hispanic, and 3% were Asian. The school had an overall attendance rating of 93% which was slightly higher than that of the district (www.p12.nysed.gov). Although most of the students lived in the surrounding neighborhoods, some students attended Barker Elementary even though it was not considered their "home school".

At Barker Elementary, the teachers strived for excellence not only in their academic expectations for students but in their own daily practices as well. The school day began with breakfast at 9:00 and commenced with dismissal at 3:45. All students received instruction in reading, writing, science, math, social studies and music, art, technology or physical education in 40-90 minute blocks daily. Every grade-level consisted of three classes, one of which was an integrated co-teaching setting to meet the needs of students with individualized education plans.

Barker Elementary had a school-wide positive behavior system. The school rules for all areas within the school were posted throughout. If a class was caught following the rules in the hallway or another area of the school they received a "white ticket". The ticket acknowledged that the class was caught following expectations along with the teacher who caught them. White

tickets were collected and class totals were announced monthly by the vice principal. The class

that had the most tickets got to carry the grade-level flag for the duration of the following month.

If individual students were caught by a staff member, they received a "gold ticket". It was the

individual classroom teacher's choice to decide how they want to reward or acknowledge the fact

that students earned a ticket. Some teachers allowed students to collect tickets to "buy" prizes

while others may not have done anything with them. In my classroom students put their tickets

in our ticket bin with their name on them and at the end of each month I would do several

drawings. If a student's name was selected they could pick from a treasure chest and an award

card was sent home for their parents to acknowledge. Students were reminded that the more

"gold tickets" they received, the better their chances were of having their name picked.

Classroom

I conducted this study in my general education classroom which was comprised of 22

first-graders. There were 12 male students and 10 female students who made up the class. The

classroom was located on the first floor of the building. In the center of the classroom there were

four rectangular tables which each sat 5-6 students. At the front of the classroom there was a

gathering area and a Smart board. In the back of the classroom there was a large kidney-shaped

table which served as a meeting area for small groups. Large windows that reached to the ceiling

covered an entire wall. A taped off area in front of the coat closets was designated for lining up.

The classroom was decorated with colorful anchor charts as well as motivational posters that

encouraged students to have a positive attitude and to work towards their goals. Student work

was proudly displayed for visitors to see. There was a reading corner and a long shelf beneath

the windows where students kept their individual book boxes. Although the classroom was

designed to be as spacious as possible, it was the smallest of the first-grade classrooms, which limited the space available for students to store their belongings.

Classroom Management: Transitioning and Behavior Management

Due to the fact that the study focused on the transitioning and behavior management aspects of my classroom management within my first grade classroom, it is imperative that I explain how each was set up.

Students transitioned throughout the day at various times. These transitions occurred between lessons within the classroom or from place to place within the school building. I often counted down or up from 1-5. Typically, the countdown occurred more than once. I would also use the flashing of the lights if students were engaged in an activity with a higher noise level. Once I had the students' attention, I then gave the directions that they needed to follow. Some students were able to follow directions the first time, but the majority required frequent repetition of directions and/or a lengthy amount of time. This caused frustration on my part, as well as wasted time.

Transitions from place to place within the building typically went smoothly, but I thought that there were still improvements that could have been made in regard to lining up. Some students would often rush to be first in line, while others would try to be the last in line. This often resulted in arguments between students. Students at Barker Elementary were repeatedly reminded of the hallway expectations. Hallway rules were posted on the walls; some hallways had large posters that noted they were a "quiet zone" due to extreme echoing, students might have been reminded by a staff member as to what the expectations were if they were not being followed. The primary classes especially got excited when their class received a "white ticket"

and were able to carry the grade-level flag. My class would get very excited and took pride in receiving a white ticket from another staff member.

Behavior management was a definite area in need of improvement within my classroom. Students often argued about supplies, for instance pencils. Each table has more than enough pencils for each student to have two pencils and yet they continued to argue over who would get a pencil first. Indoor recess also presented a series of arguments, whether students were being hurtful verbally or uncooperative with one another while playing with a game or toys, recess never seemed to go off without a hitch. Another aspect of classroom management was the noise level within the classroom. During group or partner work, it always seemed that the noise level tended to rise rather quickly and once I had acknowledged it, it wasn't long before the noise level would rise again. Not only was it important for the transitions within the classroom to be conducted smoothly, but the improvement of the above issues would also aid in increased learning time due to a decrease in managing behaviors and a more enjoyable school experience for all.

I had been using a stoplight chart since the beginning of the school year. Students began each day on green. When students made an inappropriate choice they were first given a verbal warning. If the behavior had not improved they turned their card to yellow and so on until they had reached red. A student was given the opportunity to go from yellow back to green; however, once a student had reached red a parent phone call was made or a note was sent home. I found that students often got discouraged once they needed to turn their card, even though they knew they had an opportunity to improve their behavior. This is not how I wanted my students to feel. They are children and although they need to learn appropriate behavior in all aspects of their lives I wanted them to be accepting of their mistakes while still trying to improve.

Participant and Positionality

Due to the fact that this study was to explore how I adapted various aspects of my classroom management approach, I chose to conduct a self-study. I chose myself as the sole participant. Considering that I would be the one adapting and reflecting on aspects of my classroom management approaches, I would have the opportunity to deeply reflect on my perceptions of how student behavior within my classroom changed or did not change. It was my hope to be able to use the findings of my study to not only improve my own classroom management strategies but to provide my colleagues with support as well.

I am a Caucasian female in my early thirties. I was educated in a small suburban district, near a mid-size city in Western New York, where the majority of my peers were from middle-class families. After graduating high school, I continued my education at both Monroe Community College and the State University of New York College at Brockport. Upon completion of my undergraduate work, I received a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and became initially certified to teach children in grades 1-6. I was working towards my Master's degree of Science in Education at the State University of New York College at Brockport at the time of the study.

I began my teaching experience as a substitute teacher from 2007-2010 within the same large, urban district where the study was conducted. Throughout my career as a substitute teacher, I worked with students in grades kindergarten through sixth grade. During my last year substitute teaching, I worked as the building substitute at the same school in which I conducted the study. In the 2010-2011 school year, I taught third grade in an integrated co-teaching classroom. Upon the completion of the 2010-2011 school year, I was laid off and returned to the

classroom in the 2012-2013 school year as a third grade teacher. I currently teach first grade at Barker Elementary.

As teachers take an active role in the inquiry process, they are able to transform their views on teaching and how students learn (Baumann & Duffy-Hester, 2002). This is why it was imperative that I explored my positionality as a teacher-researcher prior to this study, so that I was able to accurately reflect on the research experience.

Throughout my education and experience as a professional, I developed my own personal philosophy of education with regard to classroom management. I think that classroom management is the foundation for meaningful learning to occur. No matter how well planned a lesson is, if classroom management strategies are not in place the execution will not reach its full potential. Many aspects make up classroom management. A few of these aspects are pencils, rituals and routines, homework, behavior management, transitions, bathroom usage, and classroom jobs. I think that the students should have as much input into making classroom decisions as the teacher. It is my belief that teachers have a responsibility to maintain order in all aspects of the classroom, especially where student behavior is concerned. I think that addressing student behaviors helps to ensure the safety of all students as well as the teacher. When teachers are organized, provide a safe environment for students and are able to effectively teach, it provides a solid foundation for positive student-teacher relationships.

Data Collection

The purpose of this study was to explore how adapting my classroom management strategies improved my perception of student behavior. In order to do so, I gathered data by incorporating new strategies for both transitioning and behavior management in my classroom. I

also recorded narratives of student behaviors in a research journal. Following the narratives, I critically reflected upon them in order to gain insight into how my perception was or was not changing in regard to student behavior. I anticipated that my analysis of my research journal entries would provide insight as to how adapting my classroom management strategies impacted my perception of student behavior.

Research Journal

The main component of data collection for the study was a research journal. Journal writing is an effective way to discover insights, pursue thoughts, and make necessary decisions (Borg, 2011). I kept a research journal in which I not only recorded narratives of daily events, but I also reflected critically on how adapting my classroom management strategies impacted my perceptions of student behavior. These entries were completed at the end of every school day. I also incorporated a weekly reflection which allowed for more critical analysis. Each journal entry was focused on the following questions:

- What happens when I incorporate a new strategy for classroom transitions?

  -Why did I choose this new strategy?

  -Why do I think it did/did not go well?

  -What might I do to adapt how I use the strategy?

- What happens when I incorporate a new strategy for behavior management?

  -Why did I choose this new strategy?

  -Why do I think it did/did not go well?

  -What might I do to adapt how I use the strategy?

- What behavior issues occurred during the day?

  -What seemed to be a catalyst for the inappropriate behaviors?

-How did I address the behavior?

-Did the behavior improve?

-What proof do I have that the behavior improved?

- What strategies are working best for positively impacting my perceptions of student behavior?

- Based on today's behaviors, what adjustments can I make to classroom transitions and behavior management?

My daily entries focused on what I thought were the most important takeaways of the day. All questions may not have been answered each day; however, they acted as a guide when narrating and reflecting each day. Upon reflection, adjustments were made to classroom management strategies, if necessary, as stated above. At the end of each week, I also completed a culminating reflection which allowed me to summarize the information that was gathered.

Data Analysis

As I collected data, it was analyzed to search for answers to the following research questions:

Question 1: How can I adapt my strategies for classroom transitions to improve my perception of student behavior?

Question 2: How can I adapt behavior management strategies in my classroom to improve my perception of student behavior?

I analyzed the strategies that were implemented as well as the research journal by using qualitative research analysis.

Research Journal

I used continual interim analysis as soon as I began to collect data in my research journal. Every week, I would read through my research journal entries in order to gain preliminary interpretations of the data. I used a different colored pen to make notes on my narratives and reflections. It was my anticipation that I would begin to see patterns in the narratives and reflections. I made notes of these patterns. If more than one pattern emerged, I used different colored highlighters to code the data (Samaras, 2011). I used triangulation by creating narratives, after reviewing daily observation notes, and recorded critical reflections based on the narratives to aid me in gaining a better understanding of my perception of student behavior.

Procedures

The data collection for this study occurred over a period of six weeks. The following was the sequence for which data collection was done:

Week One:

-Began implementation of adapted classroom management strategies

-Collected observation notes hourly

-Began writing research journal entries

-Began weekly analysis of classroom management adaptations, research journal data, and identification of how my perceptions were or were not changing

Week 2-6:

-Continued writing research journal entries

-Continued collection of hourly observation notes

-Continued weekly analysis of classroom management adaptations, research journal data, and identification of how my perceptions were or were not changing

Criteria for Trustworthiness

According to Mertler (2008), "both the collection and analysis of qualitative data are prone to errors of subjectivity and imprecision" (p.153). As a teacher-researcher, I was committed to conduct this study in a precise and accurate manner. I used prolonged engagement over a six week period to ensure trustworthiness. Due to the fact that the results of this study would have an impact on my future classroom management approaches, I ensured that my collection and analysis of the data were done in the most valid and credible way possible. My reflections in the research journal were detailed and purposeful to accurately depict my perceptions on student behavior. The journal entries were written consistently and quickly upon the completion of each school day using observation notes to ensure validity. Throughout the analysis process, I used triangulation across data sources such as observation notes and my research journal to ensure that it was done in a valid and credible manner. While interpreting the data, I used an objective lens and looked for multiple sources of evidence (Mertler & Charles, 2008). The statements above ensured that I did not let my biases influence the results of the study.

Limitations of the Study

I intended to conduct this study in a trustworthy and ethical manner; however, it is possible that the results may have had some limitations. First, the data collected in this study was solely collected from one participant and in one context. Next, there may be limitations with

the consistency in which I completed journal entries. As a result of unforeseen circumstances, the amount of time I had to reflect may have been altered or limited. This might have affected the quality of some entries. Finally, the analysis of the data was based only on my own personal interpretations, which may have been biased due to my philosophy of education. In an effort to prevent such limitations, I focused my interpretations around theoretical knowledge.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative self-study was to explore how I adapted various classroom management strategies in an effort to improve my perception of student behavior. In order to obtain an understanding of my practices, I employed the use of my classroom management adaptations and a research journal within my first-grade classroom for six weeks. The data was analyzed using continual interim analysis (Mertler & Charles, 2008). It was my anticipation that my findings would aide me in becoming a more effective teacher in the area of classroom management.

Chapter Four: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore how I approached the struggles of transitions and behavior management within my first-grade classroom. The research strived to answer two major questions:

Question 1: How can I adapt my strategies for classroom transitions to improve my perception of student behavior?

Question 2: How can I adapt behavior management strategies in my classroom to improve my perception of student behavior?

Over a period of six weeks in the spring of 2014, I adapted my classroom management strategies, specifically in the areas of transitioning and behavior management, in an effort to improve my perceptions of student behavior. I was the sole participant in this self-study. I recorded observation notes and kept a research journal. In the research journal, I wrote narratives and reflections about what adaptations I made to my transitioning and behavior management strategies, as well as how the adaptations impacted my perception of student behavior.

As I analyzed the data collected, a few major themes emerged. The first theme was that of sources for strategies and resources. The second theme was adaptations to strategies. The third theme was student accountability and responsibility. The fourth theme was alternative areas of change. The fifth and final theme was personal growth.

Theme 1: Sources for Resources and Strategies

A theme of sources for resources and strategies was apparent in my research journal. I found that the resources and strategies used throughout the study came from three main sources. The three sources were my colleagues, prior experiences, and peer-reviewed research.

Colleagues

The first source was my colleagues. Hue and Li (2008) suggest that one way to achieve effective classroom management is through collegial collaboration. The collaboration between my colleagues and I came in the form of exchanging useful tools. When I began thinking about this study I became more aware of what my colleagues were doing in their own classrooms, specifically in the areas of transitioning and behavior management. For example, on April 4, 2014, I wrote, "This chime/wand intrigued me from the minute I saw Mrs. Harold using it. It seemed to grab her students' attention so quickly and it worked the very first time she used it. We have been talking about my study and she let me borrow it to see if it will work for my students as well."

The chime provided my students with a non-verbal cue in a voice dominant environment. The chime is made of metal wire and several variations of it exist. The chime I purchased has two squares on either end that gradually get smaller as they spiral inward. The middle or handle portion of the wand has a zigzag pattern made by the metal wire. The purpose of the chime is to be used as a signal to grab someone's attention. It can be used by parents, teachers or anyone who needs to send a quick signal to gain attention. It simply needs to be struck on any surface to emit sound, however, the harder the surface is the louder the sound it will make. It was different from the strategies of counting and flashing the lights that I had used since the beginning of the school year. Because the study did not go beyond six weeks, it is difficult to say whether or not

this new strategy would have worked for the duration of the school year, or if the novelty of it would have worn off.

According to Wong, Wong, Rogers and Brooks (2012), practicing positive expectations help to make an effective teacher. When I used the chime with my own students, I wanted to make sure that I explained and modeled what the expectations were going to be for when they heard it. We practiced three times before they began recess that day. The first time we practiced, I had a student model the role of the teacher using the wand and I acted as the student. I modeled the expected behavior. The second time, I modeled the incorrect behavior. Finally, I had my students practice the appropriate expectations as a class. As I got ready to ring the chime, I hoped it would work as well as it had for Mrs. Harold's class. On April 7, 2014, I wrote, "The "wand" worked wonders. The class immediately stopped everything they were doing and directed their attention toward me like we had practiced. It's hard to believe that something so small made such a huge difference in getting their attention." After the initial use following recess, I continued to use the "wand" and every time it worked as it had the first time. In my reflection on April, 23, 2014, I wrote, "I had to laugh today when Ms. Jean came in as we were getting ready to transition and I tapped the wand. She commented on how well my students had turned their attention toward me and how she needed to get "one of those"."

Another example of a strategy I used from my colleagues was the "no yell bell". It was during my planning period when I stopped by Mrs. Lucy's classroom. As we talked briefly about her upcoming vacation, I grabbed a large plastic bell off of her desk. Instantly a loud "boing" noise leapt from the speaker in the bottom of the bell. I noticed that the handle of the bell turned and with each turn a different sound was released. I was fascinated that not only did this bell emit the typical sound of a bell ringing, but it also had 8 other sound effect options that

could be used to get the attention of a group. I thought about the recent success I had with the chime wand and instantly knew that this could be an alternative option should the effect of the chime wear off. I knew I could also use the bell as a way to switch up the techniques used to get my students' attention. Mrs. Lucy shared that because she had older students, they had a bell ringer. It was the bell ringer's job to select the sound for the day, and that particular student may or may not chose to ring the bell as necessary throughout the day to get the attention of the class. I knew that I wanted to get one of my own so that I had an alternative option to add to my toolbox of strategies for getting my students' attention.

On April 22, 2014, I wrote "I finally bought my own "no yell bell". It was delivered last night and I couldn't wait to try it with my class today. After the announcements, I tried a couple of the sounds. My students stared at me as to say, where did that come from? I told them that like the chime wand, I would also use the bell to get their attention." It seemed as though different sound effects appealed to different students, but they all knew that when they heard the bell their attention needed to be on me because that meant we were either about to transition or I had something important to let them know. It was fascinating to watch my students whenever I played the military bugle call. The majority would pretend to play an instrument similar to a trumpet. It is this sound that seemed to remain the favorite overall.

I think alternating between the bell and the chime wand kept the strategies from becoming overused to the point that they lost their effectiveness. My students enjoyed both strategies and because the expectations were clear, it didn't matter which option I chose, both remained effective. Finding a strategy for gaining students' attention that works for both the teacher and the students is an important aspect of classroom management. Also, having a variety of strategies readily available is just as important. How students react to an approach one day

may not be how they react to that same approach the next day. It is important to be prepared with alternative options, should what was originally planned not work accordingly.

Collegial collaboration is an important component when discovering new classroom management strategies. I had completed half of my student teaching experience at Barker Elementary. I was also a substitute teacher and have been teaching at Barker Elementary for 6 years. Although I have been around the majority of the staff for quite some time, there are teachers who I always tended to gravitate toward. For instance, I felt most comfortable with the first teacher I co-taught with, the teacher I tutored with, and the teachers who were on the third grade and first grade teams. I felt comfortable with them because they were the teachers with whom I had daily interactions. These are also the same teachers that I discussed strategies and my study with. In regard to the context in which we would share strategies that worked, these conversations typically happened during grade-level meetings, planning periods and lunch breaks. These opportunities allowed us to have in-depth discussions regarding what was working within each of classrooms and what we may be struggling with. We used this time to hear others' views and were then able to take away new ideas and adapt them to meet our needs and the needs of our individual classes.

Prior Experience

The next source that was evident as a resource for strategies was my own prior experience, specifically notes I took during observations of other classrooms while student teaching. On April 11, 2014, I wrote, "Having Ms. Roberts' student-teacher observe me today got me thinking that it might help me to look through my own student-teaching notes from observations to get ideas. I wonder if I'll find any ideas that are useful. When I student taught everything seemed like a great idea. It took me so long after I was a student-teacher to get my

own classroom and I haven't looked at them in years." Then on April 21, 2014, I wrote, "I find it interesting that while looking through my bins from student-teaching I found notes about a teacher using some type of clip-up chart. The teacher used a rocket ship and when students reached the top they were "blasting off". This idea was also mentioned in a class I took a few semesters ago. I wonder why I've never tried this type of chart in my own classroom. Maybe it's because the majority of my colleagues use a turn-a-card chart and I've been using the chart that was in my classroom because it was already there. I definitely plan to make some version of a clip-up chart for my classroom this weekend. I think with students being able to move up a chart as opposed to just down might give them an incentive to make more appropriate choices."

I decided to incorporate a version of the clip-up chart because it seemed to me that my students were feeling defeated by using the turn-a-card style chart. In my opinion, my students were not being provided with an opportunity to find success with the turn-a-card chart. As well, if they were going above the expectations of the classroom, there was no way for that success to be displayed visually. In order to improve my perception of my students' behavior, I needed to have a way to see that there was change going on in our classroom. The use of a clip-up chart seemed to be a perfect strategy to give an instant visual reference of student behavior to both my students and myself.

On April 28, 2014 I introduced the new chart to my students. When my students were settled we came together at the "gathering spot" to discuss the rules or the new chart. I again wanted to involve input from them. They made suggestions which included how they could move their clips up and why they might need to move their clips down. Some suggestions included getting a compliment from another teacher, a classmate or from me. I added that giving an outstanding answer or really using their smarts could also allow them to move their clip up.

We then moved on to ways in which they may have to move a clip down. These included things such as being hurtful, unsafe or disruptive. The chart had seven levels which included a starting point of green which meant that they are ready to learn. There were also three levels above and below green with "Super Student" being the highest level and "Caution" being the lowest level.

My students loved the idea of the new chart. The fact that they now had the ability to go beyond the green level got them excited and they seemed to want to exceed the classroom expectations in order to move to one of the upper three levels. Also, the idea that they could be recognized by someone other than me allowed them to become more aware of what others were doing well, because after all, this was a tool that was meant to focus more on the positive daily interactions and improving student behavior. I think this chart worked for my students because it was not only a change from what they were used to but they had a chance to show their potential for success.

Another tool that I found when looking back at materials and my notes from prior experiences, was a behavior tracker. Although this tracker was originally used with a class that did not have a behavior chart, I wanted to use it because it was an easy way for me to record what level each student was on at the end of every day. The tracker listed the students' names, followed by a column for each day of the week. If my students were on the red level, there was also additional space following the columns for me to jot down why they were on red. The tracker seemed to work well with the behavior chart once I adjusted it to include the specific elements of our new clip-up chart. It was easy enough for me to record their levels using corresponding colored markers. This tool was mainly for my own personal use but acted as a reference when having personal conversations with my students. I could use, it to explain that I was noticing a pattern in the number of days they were on red. From that initial point of

discussing my concern, I could ask why they thought they had for example three days on red. It was this tracker that also provided me with necessary data if I needed to contact a parent.

Reflecting back on the experience of using the tracker, I can now recognize ways that I will adjust its use next year in my classroom. One possible adjustment might be to have my students chart their own level. I would have to adjust how I would incorporate it into our dismissal routine, but I think that it would add the element of accountability. Perhaps, my students could also fill out a weekly slip that went home to inform their parents of their behavior for the week.

Peer-Reviewed Research

The third source I found myself using for strategies was prior research. According to Szabo, Scott and Yellin (2002) it is imperative for teachers to put theory into practice by engaging, incorporating and reflecting on new ideas and approaches. By doing so, teachers are able to make connections between theory and practice and form their own ideas on what works best for themselves and their students. While conducting research for this study, I came across a strategy that I wanted to incorporate into the behavior management system in my classroom. The strategy was that of incorporating the Good Behavior Game (Lannie & McCurdy, 2007). The Good Behavior Game consists of the teacher selecting a number of points that a team or group of students could or should not exceed. Every time the group would have a member or the entire group acting out, being unfocused or disruptive, the teacher would give them a point. The object of the "game" was to keep the team total below the "mystery number" the teacher had previously selected. At the end of each lesson, the teacher would announce the mystery number and that "game" was then over.

I decided to try the Good Behavior Game with my students because when I was a student in first grade I remembered being intrigued by the "mystery box" which was a box where we could put in any questions we were wondering about. My teacher would randomly select questions throughout the day and we would have a brief discussion of the answer. Although this idea is very different from the Good Behavior Game, I couldn't help but think that the element of mystery might grab my students' interest in a way that could assist with behavior management.

On April 10, 2014, I wrote, "Today I incorporated the Good Behavior Game that I came across in my research. The game seems simple enough to use and the element of mystery intrigues my students. They couldn't wait to find out what the mystery number was. Prior to explaining the game to my students, I decided I was already going to change one aspect. In the article, the participants showed the mystery number to their students at the end of every lesson. I knew that this approach was definitely not going to work, especially because we are also working on having quicker and smoother transitions. I felt that saving the mystery number until the end of the day would be a great way to show that the day may not be as great as they had hoped that there is always room to improve tomorrow."

Initially in my observation notes I noticed that my students were only having sporadic minor disagreements with each other about who caused the group to get a mark. However, as time went on my notes reflected that the numbers of disagreements were becoming more frequent, with the catalyst for the arguments being who did what wrong that caused the group to get a mark. This caused the need for yet another change in the strategy. Noticing that the acknowledgement of negative behaviors was causing frustration among my students, I decided to focus on what they were doing that was appropriate, instead. I changed the game so that there was still a mystery number but now groups would want to earn points. They would now need to

have at least the number of points that was noted in the envelope. In an effort to encourage

positive behavior in the classroom, I initially kept the mystery number slightly lower. As the

days went on I increased the mystery number gradually. On April 29, 2014, I wrote, "Switching

the focus of the behavior game toward what students are doing that is adding positivity to our

classroom is beginning to change the tone in the room. I've even noticed students recognizing

each other's accomplishments, even when they are aren't in the same groups."

Although this strategy that I found in the research initially seemed ideal, I still needed to

adjust it to meet the needs of my students that were made apparent through my observation

notes. There is no need to continually reinvent the wheel however, it was necessary to make

adaptations when what was being used was not helping my students in the way I had hoped.

Initially, the purpose of this strategy was that students did not want their groups to earn

points. Getting points was viewed negatively. It was this negative connotation that was the root

of many disagreements between students within each group. It was necessary to adapt this

strategy if it was going to continue to be used. Changing the focus of the points from negative to

positive seemed to help guide my students toward success within their groups. This idea leads to

the next theme of strategy adaptations.

Today we have many ways to communicate with other educators. Whether it is within

our own schools, through interactions with other professionals while attending professional

development, through research or blogs on the internet, the possibilities are endless. By using

insight from my colleagues, prior student teaching experience and research, I was able to explore

a variety of classroom management strategies within my classroom to improve my perception of

my students' behavior. Educators have to be willing to seek out opportunities to help guide our

practices in an effort to do what is best for our students.

Theme 2: Adaptations to Strategies

Another major theme that I discovered when analyzing the data was adaptations to the

strategies that I incorporated for transitioning and behavior management. As previously

discussed with the first theme, I made necessary adaptations to the Good Behavior Game. I

made these adaptations in order to meet the needs of my students and the goals of our classroom.

As I incorporated strategies for transitioning and behavior management, I noticed that other

changes needed to be made to those strategies as well in order to further meet the behavioral and

academic needs of my students.

Mathews (2012) suggested using music as a way to help students transition more easily.

This is exactly what I was searching for, a way to help my students transition quickly but in a

way that would ease them from one lesson to the next. I decided that I would play a mixed CD

of children's songs and after a set amount of time the song would stop and we would be ready to

move on to our next lesson.

When I began to incorporate music into daily transitions I realized after reviewing my

observation notes that there were multiple instances when it was too chaotic. Just playing music

during this time seemed to get my students excited to the point where they would take longer to

get refocused. I noted that several students were running around and not focused on preparing

themselves for the next lesson. On May 2, 2014, I wrote, "Today's transitions were chaotic. The

expectations for starting different lessons are slightly different. I think they might benefit from

having specific songs for each particular transition to signal what is coming up. This might help.

I remember last year, Mr. Dale used different doorbell tones to signal transitions for different content areas." The songs needed to represent a signal to begin transitioning. By using particular songs such as the *Jeopardy* theme song to transition into social studies and the *Price is Right* theme song to prepare for math, students knew what to expect because the song represented a particular time of our day.

As a class we reviewed the expectations of each transition. During these discussions, I made sure students were aware of where they needed to be in the room when the music stopped. Typically math begins at the "gathering spot", so by playing the *Price is Right* theme song they knew that by the time the music stopped they should be at the "gathering spot". My students and I also talked about how to safely travel throughout the room and that even though music was going to be playing they still needed to be respectful of others' space. We also shared that because the music was going to be acting as our time keeper, it was important not to talk to others so we could all hear when it was time to stop and be ready for the next lesson. One student commented how it was like making popcorn and when the timer goes off you want to get your treat. To which I replied that was an excellent comparison and that our treat in the classroom was going to be our new learning.

On May 6, 2014, I wrote, "Today went better than yesterday. We definitely needed to practice the expectations a couple of times." Again on May 14, 2014, I wrote, "I think they are really beginning to get into the habit of following the routine. They still get a little excited with the music but as long as the overall expectation is being met and we are able to move into the lesson shortly after the music has stopped, they are just kids being kids. They are also being silly together and not arguing so that is a bonus as well." I was not surprised that my students needed some practice as this seems to be the case with most aspects of teaching. I was also really glad

to see that my students were enjoying the music. The music seemed to put a sense of lightness in the air of our day. It made me feel as though we were really having more fun in the classroom while still accomplishing our learning goals for the day.

As I discussed in the previous theme, several strategies were discovered through prior research in my review of the literature. Mathews (2012) suggested that music and/or singing helps to ease students through transitions because it has a calming effect which may help to reduce anxiety and stress. I decided to see if this would be true for my students. When I tried to have my students do a little of their own singing during transitions prior to including theme songs, things just did not go the way I had expected. On April 30, 2014, I wrote, "In my observations today I noticed that several students (almost half of the class) complained or didn't sing while the rest of the class sang the song we practiced this morning for cleaning up. One student even said, "This is for babies". I guess having them sing isn't going to work for transitioning. I'm not going to force them to participate if they don't want to."

I don't think that singing was successful with my students because at Barker Elementary all of the preschool and kindergarten classes sing throughout their day. They sang for counting, cleaning up, reviewing their colors, and when they went into the hall. It is often mentioned to the new first graders that they are making a big transition when moving from kindergarten into first grade. Many of my students also have older siblings, which may have impacted their ideas of what is considered "babyish". Some students were shyer than others, so singing in front of their peers is not something they would have chosen to do willingly. As well, other students tended to follow what their friends were or were not doing, so if their friend has chosen not to sing, the chance that they too would not sing was greater.

While conducting my research I came across a chant that included expectations for lining up in preparation for going into the hallway. Once I read it, I recalled hearing a version of it in my days as a student-observer and I thought that it may be beneficial to include it in my study. The modified chant I decided to use with my class is as follows:

My hands are hanging by my sides,

I'm standing straight and tall.

My eyes are looking forward and

I'm ready for the hall.

On May 7, 2014, I wrote, "I was a little apprehensive to try the chant considering they didn't enjoy the other song. Although overall they did not like the idea of singing songs to clean-up, the chant for lining up has helped and students seem to enjoy following my lead. In the beginning when teaching them the chant I acted like a student who was not ready for the hall at all and as I said the chant I got into the right position in a funny but dramatic way. The first few times, I would act it out with them but in just a short time they have taken it upon themselves to finish the chant with my lead. All I say is, "My hands" and they continue with the rest."

I attempted the chant because although it could be looked at as similar to singing it was spoken as opposed to being sung. I think it was more effective for my students because of the exact same reason, it wasn't singing. The chant was more of a pledge or promise of sorts, which was similar to the pledge of allegiance and the school pact we recited each morning during the announcements. As well, many of my students attributed the singing to kindergarten and being babyish because they were at this point almost second-graders.

One strategy I tried that just did not work with my students was incorporating structured movement into transitions. Orlowski and Hart (2013) suggested incorporating brief games and movement into classroom transitions. I knew from the beginning that I was not going to attempt transition games. My goal was to make our transitions smoother and more efficient. The idea of playing a game just seemed as though it would be even more time consuming. I did however attempt to incorporate the movement component. At the time I had recently attended training on Smart Board tools. During the training I learned how to create choice spinners. For example, a student could approach the Smart Board, tap it and the spinner would spin and land on a particular movement that my students would do while transitioning. For example, some of the movements were to act like your favorite animal, walk like an Egyptian, and move like a robot. I decided to attach the movements to the spinner because it allowed the choice for movement to be random. I was not the one deciding nor was the student who was tapping the board. My students initially seemed to be interested. They loved the idea of the spinner moving and the Smart Board deciding what they would do. The movements were tied to topics we had learned about and they laughed as I modeled the examples. Walking like an Egyptian in particular got them laughing hysterically. However, my observation notes showed that once it came time to move, several of my male students weren't moving or they took it too far and became out of control.

On May 8, 2014, I wrote, "The research suggested that incorporating movement helps to improve students' attitudes and attention. I can definitely see how movement can help students. However, not only was it difficult having all of my students doing the same movement but when they got carried away and things got chaotic it seemed harder to get them to focus back toward the math lesson I was about to teach."

I think that what I was seeing was that my students were expressing their need for individuality. Although the spinner intrigued them and they liked watching me model the moves, they weren't expressing themselves freely. Looking back now, I can see that maybe I gave up too easily on this approach. Perhaps I could have tried having them do their own movement of choice. Then again, maybe they still would have been chaotic because of the movements they chose.

Another adaptation that I made was to our preexisting behavior chart. Previously I had used the turn-a-card chart. This chart had three levels: green, yellow, and red. Students began each day on green. When students made an inappropriate choice they were first given a verbal warning. If the behavior had not improved, they turned their card to yellow and so on until they had reached red. A student was given the opportunity to go from yellow back to green; however, once a student had reached red, I would make a phone call to his or her parents or I would send a note home. I found that students often got discouraged once they needed to turn their card to yellow, even though they knew they had an opportunity to improve their behavior.

Although the Good Behavior Game focused on students working cooperatively as groups, I did not want to completely eliminate the already existing system for monitoring student behavior on an independent level. Instead my students and I had a meeting in which I built up the idea of a new chart as opposed to the preexisting turn-a-card chart. I started the meeting by saying, "What if I said you could get on red and still fix your day?" They began to cheer. I knew by their reaction that this was obviously an area that negatively impacted them. I went on and discussed that I was going to be making a new chart that would allow them to move their clip above the green level. For instance, the highest level was "Super Student" and the lowest level was "Caution". The level that students would begin each day on remained "Ready to

Learn". I shared that the lower levels would include yellow, orange and red. My students were familiar with the yellow and red levels but the addition of the orange level gave them an added opportunity to change their behavior. Then I explained that the upper levels would be blue, purple, and pink. My students and I came up with the names each level would be called. The blue level became known as "Great Job" and was for the time when students exhibited good behavior beyond the regular classroom expectations. The next level was the purple or "Excellent Effort" level. Getting on purple meant that student who was on blue was continuing to improve their behavior as the day progressed. The highest level that students could reach was the pink or "Super Student" level. Moving a clip from purple to pink meant that the student had gone above and beyond the expectations of the classroom. The ability to move past the green level provided several opportunities for students to find success within their day.

On April, 28, 2014, I wrote, "Today was the first day we used the new chart. They got so excited when they had the opportunity to move their clips up. I didn't get many complaints from students if they needed to move their clip down. This was probably because they were already used to it from the old chart. Overall, I can say that the new chart seems to be a success."

I think the chart was successful with my students because they were able to input their ideas and we created the plan for the chart together. The chart also provided them with the opportunity to go beyond the green level they were so accustomed to. I think that this adjustment was easy to make as well because they knew that placing their clip on a lower level did not confine them to that level indefinitely. They were able to make personal improvements, which should be the goal of any behavior management system.

By making adaptations to preexisting strategies that were being incorporated, I noticed that my students were making better choices overall. As well, the sense of community in our classroom was becoming stronger. This leads to the third theme of student accountability and responsibility.

Theme 3: Student Accountability and Responsibility

The next theme that was prevalent in the data was that of student accountability and responsibility. As I adapted the strategies for transitioning and behavior management within my classroom, I began to notice a change in the demeanor of many of my students. On April 11, 2014, I wrote, "Today as the class came in to begin our day, one of my students approached me and gave me a toy she had brought to school. She said she wanted to give it to me now so that it didn't distract her or others in her group." When my student did this, it showed me that she was taking responsibility. She was thinking about the day she wanted to have like we had previously discussed and knew that having this toy may have potentially caused her to become distracted. To me this was a huge step. It showed that my students were being responsible learners. Not only was she concerned with being distracted herself but she wanted to make sure she did not negatively impact her peers.

When students began to use the clip-up chart I noted and recorded in my observations an increase in student attention during lesson delivery. My students seemed to be more engaged. They were participating in class discussions and I found that more students were raising their hands to contribute to the lessons being taught. The idea of being recognized for giving an outstanding response and being a responsible learner seemed to be giving my students a much needed boost to be engaged. Students became interested in striving to have the best day possible which lessened the frequency of off-task behaviors. The chart seemed to help my students to

become accountable participants in their own learning. On May 9, 2014, I wrote, "Not only are my students continuing to participate more regularly with the incorporation of the clip-up chart but it has made me more conscious of what my students are doing well. I don't feel so negative by always noticing what they are doing wrong. I love recognizing them for what they are doing right instead."

The previous turn-a-card chart that I used in my classroom put a large focus on what students were doing wrong instead of what they were doing that was right. When I noticed what my students were doing well, it encouraged them. It helped them to know that just because they weren't misbehaving or acting out, they were still worthy of my attention. Students want to be recognized. It goes with the idea of being an active and included participant in the classroom community. By recognizing the positives and addressing the negatives I was able to provide my students with a more solid sense of community. It also changed my perspective because I became more focused on the positive aspects of our days. This allowed my perception of my students' behaviors to be positively impacted as well.

Although the chart allowed my students more freedom to make good choices and provided them with opportunities to improve, there were a few downfalls to the chart. The first was that I noted students repeatedly asking me if they could move their clips up. This caused the need for us as a class to have a discussion. In our discussion we talked about the fact that they needed to be recognized by myself, another teacher or a classmate in order to move his or her clip up. The second downfall was that if a student was recognized for doing something worthy of moving his or her clip up, other students quickly repeated whatever was done. For instance on May 1, 2014, I wrote, "It is difficult at times to have a student move his or her clip up because what quickly follows is a snowball effect of repeated behaviors. Today when one student

randomly commented on another's new shoes and how he really liked them, I told the

commenter to move his clip up because that was an example of showing kindness. No sooner

did that student return to his seat, did I hear at least five more random comments to each other

about what he or she liked about what someone else was wearing. I don't want to downplay

their kindness but I want their actions to be genuine and not simply because they have an

opportunity to more their clip up."

As I previously discussed, recognizing my students for what they were doing well

resulted in praise and moving their clips up. I think that I heard repeated comments because

students were provided with opportunities to be recognized, which was what the majority of my

students wanted. They wanted recognition. They wanted to be told that what they were doing

was the right thing. When they saw me acknowledge one of their peers, they recognized the

action as being worthy of moving their clip up. As I noticed this happening more frequently, I

mentioned that showing kindness toward others is what you should do when no one is watching.

I also shared with them that today I may notice what they did to be kind, but that tomorrow I

might not see it. It is not always possible for me to catch my students doing the right thing,

because of this; it was made possible that students could be recognized by other students or

teachers. I also made sure that I shared with them that when someone is a kind person, they are

kind because it is the right thing to do and not because they are getting recognized. After all, I

wanted to teach my students to be genuinely good citizens, not just because they were getting

something in return.

When students moved their clips down the chart and reached the red level they were no

longer "stuck" there. Because I had adapted the rules of the chart to help my students improve

their days, reaching the red level meant it was time for me to have a discussion with the student.

My first goal was to find out why he or she thought it was necessary to move a clip. By starting the conversation off in such a way, I was able to see if he or she was even aware of his or her behavior. If he or she was not aware, I would explain the reasons that led up to the level red. If he or she knew why, we would start there. Next, we would discuss what the appropriate choice would have been in that particular situation. Lastly, we would talk about what he or she thought an appropriate consequence would be. Some students would say stay on red, some said lunch detention (which was interesting because one of my teammates did that but I didn't), apologize, write an apology letter, or try to fix his or her behavior and get off of red.

One student who frequently had behavioral incidents with multiple students required frequent conversations because of her behavior. It was obvious that she needed something more. I made it a point to check in with her on an hourly basis to see how she was feeling. I did this because her outbursts were sporadic and often without anything obvious occurring. I found that much of her anger and frustration toward others stemmed from issues she was experiencing at home. On May 5, 2014, I wrote, "I think having conversations with my students has really shown me more about who my students are as individuals. Not only am I learning more about their lives and personalities but I am truly able to show them I care and don't want to put them on red. That is not my goal. My goal is to help them cope with their behaviors in a way that encourages them to think before they act." Frequently checking in with her showed her that I cared about her and her feelings. We discussed the fact that before having an outburst, if she felt herself becoming angry, upset or frustrated to take her personal pass I made for her and to take a cool down walk down the hall and back. I noted in my observations that she was beginning to come up to me and express her need to take a walk as opposed to me having to continually check

in on her. This showed that she was beginning to take responsibility for her outbursts and improving her ways of coping by recognizing she needed to cool down.

In order for students to be accountable and show responsibility, they need to know that their efforts will be acknowledged. It is through this acknowledgement that students gain a sense of community and belonging. When students' needs are being met and they don't feel constantly criticized the opportunity for personal growth is present and change can begin.

Theme 4: Alternative Areas of Change

As I adapted strategies for transitioning and behavior management within my first grade classroom I was surprised at what I found. By facing two major areas of concern within my classroom management practice, transitioning and behavior management, I noticed that smaller issues began to arise or became more apparent.

One such area was that of dealing with pencils. To some it may seem trivial to argue over a pencil, but to many of my first graders it was a big deal. It didn't matter which group they were in or if the person sitting next to them was their "best friend", they would all dive for the pencil basket when it was time to complete their work. After the initial dive there would be comments such as, "she took MY pencil" and "I wanted that pencil". I never assigned pencils or handed them out myself. They all looked the same and I always made sure they were all sharpened and that extras were available if one broke. Even if a student got a special pencil on his or her birthday, I would sharpen it and it was taken home that day.

When I reviewed my observation notes, this issue became pronounced. Thinking about the catalysts to students' disagreements, more often than not it was pencils that caused a lot of problems. I first thought about how I could eliminate "the dive" for the pencil basket that may or

may not have led to the entire basket spilling. On April 25, 2014, I wrote, "Looking at my notes today, I am surprised by how many disagreements are resulting from getting a pencil to complete their work." It was obvious that each student enjoyed getting to pick his or her own pencil, so I thought having one student start with the basket and passing it around might work because it would give them a moment to each select their own. I called the person who would begin the rotation the "pencil starter" and the last person to get his or her pencil and return the basket to the center of the table the "pencil ender". Again, on April 29, 2014, I wrote, "The pencil passer worked for two days but today they started expressing their frustrations for not getting a turn to start." On April 30, 2014, I shared with my students that the pencil passers would move on a rotation so that every day there would be a new "pencil passer".

I think this approach was effective because it allowed each of my students to have a turn and even if it wasn't that day, they knew their turn would come soon. Each student was able to play an active role in his or her group and feel included. Prior to conducting the study, these types of disagreements between my students would cause frustration on my part as well as among my students. By approaching the difficulties within our classroom in a proactive way, I was able to problem solve while still making sure that I was being considerate of my students' needs to be involved. The obstacles I faced became opportunities that benefited all members of our classroom.

Another area of classroom management in need of change that was prevalent in my research journal was lining students up. I have never been fond of the idea of having assigned spots for my students in line. However, I noticed that I was constantly dealing with arguments about who was going to be first in line and/or who was going to be last. On April 22, 2014, I wrote, "I find myself becoming more and more frustrated with the constant battle over who is

going to be first/last in line every day." It was hearing one of my students say, "I never get a chance to be the line leader", that I decided to bring my name sticks for my lessons to the line. I pulled a name and asked if that student wanted to be first or last in line. They chose to go last. The next name I pulled decided they wanted to be first. There were a few moans and groans from some but I let them know that from now on we would be doing this every time we left the room and if they didn't have a turn now, that theirs would surely come. If the second student chosen did not want the position available, I would select another name and theirs would be returned to the cup.

On May 12, 2014, I wrote, "It's been a couple of weeks since I began pulling sticks for line spots. I will definitely start next school year off with this strategy in place. Thinking back at how many disagreements I have had to resolve over who is going to stand where and how much time and energy I could have saved. It seems so simple once you do it but when you are caught up in the day to day sometimes you don't realize how often something is really occurring. I think that taking the time to reflect daily on the happenings in my classroom has really allowed me to see what was always there and improve it."

What became more apparent to me was that my students were craving to be participants in the classroom. Whether it was being the "pencil passer", the person at the end or the beginning of the line, when they were given the opportunity to be included the sense of community within our classroom became more recognizable. This idea stems from the beliefs of both Dreikurs (1998) and Manning and Bucher (2001) that a sense of community is strengthened when students feel they are equal participants in the classroom.

An alternative area of change that occurred outside of the classroom was creating an assigned seating chart for my students in the cafeteria. Almost daily when I would pick up my students from lunch I would get an earful from the lunch monitor about who did what to who along with a rant about certain students. As I approached the cafeteria I could hear the yelling from the monitor. It wasn't fair to my students that they were being criticized daily because the cafeteria was shorthanded or because there was a lack of structure when they were used to it in most areas of their school day. On May 13, 2014, I wrote, "My students and I have been having success with the changes to our classroom management, however there are still instances occurring daily in the cafeteria. It seems like they become a different class when they aren't given structure. While the class was in music I created a seating chart. I don't like taking the freedom from them to sit where they want but I also want the cafeteria to be a place where they can enjoy their lunches without having behavioral issues that take valuable time to address once we are back in the classroom." Because I assigned them in an alternating boy/girl fashion, I made sure that they were still near a few friends and separated those few students who typically had problems in the cafeteria.

On May 22, 2014, I wrote, "It has been such a relief to arrive back to the classroom without being bombarded by my students telling me everything that went wrong in the cafeteria. I know that they only did this because the issues and behaviors weren't being addressed by the cafeteria staff but because I wasn't there to witness the incidents it was difficult to properly address situations with multiple versions of what happened." It is difficult to maintain the structure that is established in your own classroom when returning from a setting that has such little structure, however doing what was within my control helped my students to get the structure they needed even when I wasn't there. Having the assigned seats allowed my students

to know that I put them there to keep them from getting into a situation with another student that may cause them to get in trouble with a cafeteria monitor. Prior to sending my students through the lunch line I reiterated to them the importance of following school rules in the cafeteria and being safe and respectful of others and their food. I would also check in with a few students as we reentered the classroom to assure their lunch time was as enjoyable as possible. This spot-checking helped me to stay aware of the happenings in the cafeteria.

As my data collection came to an end, I realized that there are always going to be management issues within any classroom. Our students are not with us all hours of their day. The situations they endure in their personal lives greatly impact their behaviors and interactions when they are in our classrooms. Our responsibility is to create an environment that is the most conducive to learning and social growth. We must also understand that we are not perfect either and have much to learn from the experiences we have within our classrooms. This idea led to the fifth and final theme of personal growth.

Theme 5: Personal Growth

The final theme that emerged from the data analysis was that of my own personal growth as a teacher. Prior to conducting this study, I often found myself frustrated when my class needed to transition between lessons. It was also my first year of teaching a new grade level. My first grade students were very different behaviorally from the third graders I had taught the year before. They had different needs and I was struggling with how I could meet those needs and improve my perception of how they were behaving. Conducting this study allowed me to find ways in which I could make transitions in my classroom run more efficiently. I adapted preexisting strategies in my classroom and incorporated new strategies that benefited my students in the area of behavior management as well. Overall, I began to notice that not only

were my perceptions of my students' behaviors changing, but I could tell that as the teacher I was also changing. On May 8, 2014, I wrote, "I feel as though the days are becoming more enjoyable as the study goes on. There is a sense of harmony in my classroom that makes me feel more at ease when I encounter an issue with one or several of my students. Because the majority of the class is on-task and aware of the expectations, I have the opportunity to have personal conversations with students who are in need."

Engaging in this self-study also supported my growth as a professional. I have become a teacher who doesn't just do what everyone else is doing. I make decisions based on the needs of my students and what I know to be best for them. I listen to my students not only by what they say but how they interact within our classroom. I adapt myself and my practice to meet their needs whether they are expressing them directly or indirectly. I now see the importance of making necessary changes within the classroom environment as well as elsewhere in the school community in an effort to provide my student with an optimal learning environment.

My analysis of the data collected allowed me to find the importance of being reflective about my practices. Regular reflection played a significant role in my growth throughout the study. Taking the opportunity to rewind my day and look for the areas of need allowed me to think critically about not only what went wrong, but why. Once I was able to recognize where improvement was needed, I could then begin to inquire about the changes that needed to take place. As well, I was able to take note of the aspects of the day that were improving and how those improvements might be positively impacting my students and my perception of their behavior. I greatly enjoyed the reflection process and being more aware of what was occurring in our classroom from day to day. I can honestly say that this is a strategy I will continue to use as my professional career progresses.

The growth that I experienced throughout the study has also enabled me to have more confidence when discussing what I'm seeing occur in my classroom. During lunch, when I conversed with my colleagues, I found myself wanting to discuss the changes I saw happening within my classroom. I was excited about what the study was showing me and I thought that sharing this information may persuade some of my colleagues to look at their own practices and see how they too could change what they were doing in their classrooms. On May 15, 2014, I wrote, "I love exploring new ways to improve the environment in my classroom. Although at times it feels like a game of trial and error, the end result is always better than the beginning. I feel more like a true professional and valuable when I am able to offer ideas to my team. They may not find the same success with the strategies I've used but at least I am able to contribute and to help with their frustrations."

The study overall led me toward becoming the teacher I want to be. I have always considered myself to be an organized teacher. However, conducting this study provided me with the insight that there is always room for change and improvement. By adapting my practices with transitioning and behavior management, I was able to find other areas within my classroom management system that were in need of change and further organization. Such changes were handling issues with pencils, choosing students to be at the beginning and end of the line to avoid conflicts, and assigning seats in the cafeteria. On May 20, 2014, I wrote, "During this study I have noticed changes occurring within myself. I feel more organized and better planned; I don't find myself getting easily frustrated by little things. Instead of feeling defeated when my students have a conflict, I find a sense of joy in being able to help them solve their problems peacefully and watching them learn from the experience. For me, this growth has been a welcome change."

Caples and McNeese (2010) discussed how teacher attrition rates are the highest among teachers who are within their first five years of teaching. It is obvious to see that the frustration of student misbehavior along with the stress and pressure for students to perform academically can impact the confidence of newer teachers. As society changes and our students bring new experiences and challenges into our lives, we need to adapt our own practices as well. I know that with each school year and as my career progresses I will continue to grow.

Conclusion

This qualitative self-study answered my research questions; how can I adapt my strategies for classroom transitions to improve my perception of student behavior and how can I adapt behavior management strategies in my classroom to improve my perception of student behavior? I discovered that although adapting my strategies for transitioning and behavior management in general improved my perception of student behavior, there were still incidents of inappropriate and off-task behavior. Some students required individual support that was separate from what met the needs of the majority of the class. The research also suggests that in order to meet students' needs within the area of classroom management, it is important to notice what is occurring throughout the school day and use what you are wondering about to adapt your practice. It was apparent that once the more significant areas of transitioning within the classroom and behavior management were addressed that other areas of classroom management in need of adapting were noticed. Overall this research study provided me with great insight on the areas of improvement I needed to make in my daily practices as a teacher. I was able to help myself have more positive experiences within the classroom while doing the same for my students.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

This study set out to focus on what happened when I adapted my classroom management strategies in my first-grade classroom. The study examined the following questions:

Question 1: How can I adapt my strategies for classroom transitions to improve my perception of student behavior?

Question 2: How can I adapt behavior management strategies in my classroom to improve my perception of student behavior?

In this chapter, the conclusions I made based on my findings of the study will be discussed. I will also share how the results reported in chapter four seemed to benefit my current students based on my reflections and how they might benefit my future students. I will discuss as well, how I benefited from the research results and how they will impact my future as a teacher. Finally, I will make recommendations for future research.

Conclusions

It is Necessary to Adapt Classroom Management Strategies to Meet Students' Needs and Improve Teachers' Perceptions of Student Behavior

Prior to conducting this study my approach toward classroom management did not involve much input from my students, nor was it catered toward their needs. I would often find myself getting easily frustrated with misbehavior. As I mentioned in the introduction, I would also resort to having a student spend time in another classroom. I would hope that the time away would miraculously cause the behavior to change. This obviously was not the case.

Howard (2013) discusses how our beliefs are strongly guided by our experiences. For example, if when a teacher was in elementary school his or her teacher sent students that were

having behavior problems out of the room; they may repeat those same practices. However, they may have been the student being sent out and therefore they don't send their students out of the classroom. It is when teachers take into consideration the individual needs of each student, as well as the needs of the class as a whole that their beliefs about classroom management may begin to change. For instance, when I incorporated the Good Behavior Game (Lannie & McCurdy, 2007), I found it necessary to change the focus of the point system from being negative to positive. It was this adaptation that allowed me to provide my students with an opportunity for guidance. Regardless of the amount of time teachers have been in the classroom, teachers' beliefs about classroom management may change as they interact with a variety of student populations from one school year to the next in order to meet the diverse needs of each population (Howard, 2013).

As I began my study I had a conversation with my students about the fact that teachers are also learners, even though we are adults. My goals and purpose for conducting this study were to find ways in which I could guide my students towards appropriate decision making and how those changes would impact my perceptions of their behavior. I wanted to help foster my students' growth both academically and behaviorally. It was through improving our classroom transitions that I was able to include more time for our academic needs and help my students to ease the changes from lesson to lesson. By reflecting and making necessary changes to my behavior management strategies, I was able to provide my students with support in coping with their behavior needs. I have learned so much from my students throughout this experience.

When I began implementing different strategies for transitioning in the classroom and for managing behaviors, I noticed that some aspects worked for my students while others needed to be modified to meet their needs. For instance, when I tried to incorporate a cleanup song for

transitioning, several students were not participating. This led me to use theme songs instead. By using the theme songs, students didn't have to focus on the song but rather the directions they needed to follow. The theme songs were also timed which allowed students to transition quickly and gain more time for academic lessons. By making the classroom transitions more time efficient, my students' academic needs were being met because I was able to complete my lessons more thoroughly. Also, there was less down time for problem behaviors to occur , which met their behavioral needs. Smoother transitions also positively impacted my perception of student behaviors during these times.

When I adapted preexisting strategies to meet student needs, students showed improvement in their behaviors. I noticed that my students were becoming easily discouraged when using the previous "turn-a-card" behavior chart. Once students went to yellow or red, it seemed that they felt like they could no longer find success in their day. My students needed to know that this was not the case and that although they may have made a mistake, they had the ability to change their behavior and still have a successful day. By changing the system and allowing students to move their clip up or down a chart with 7 different levels, three above the starting line and three below, students had increased opportunities to feel confident. My students were also involved in the creation of the behavior chart and the rules that went with it. Dreikurs (1998) supports this approach by suggesting that when students are involved in the decision making process, they are less likely to search for power in less desirable ways. By including input from my students, I was showing them that their opinions and needs were an important contribution to our classroom community. When students understand that they are active participants in the classroom, it builds on the overall sense of community among the students and the teacher (Dreikurs 1998; Manning & Bucher, 2001).

I also eliminated the rule that students needed to stay on red. Once students reached a level red, which was the lowest level, he or she had a private conversation with me. These conversations helped me to gain a better understanding for why the misbehavior was occurring and together we discussed how they could have handled the situation in a better way. This change supported my goal of being able to guide my students towards appropriate choices. It also positively impacted my perceptions of student behaviors because my students were taking ownership over their behaviors and I was able to more fully understand why behaviors were occurring.

It is critical for teachers to do what works best for their students (Gordon, 2001). After all, our students and their families depend on us to do what is best for their success in the classroom. If we are aware of what is working and what is not, we can make the necessary changes, allowing our students to be successful in ways we may not have thought possible.

An Effective Classroom Management System Includes Organization, Guidelines and Communication

Although this study sought to investigate transitioning and behavior management within my classroom, I discovered that once I began to address the major areas, smaller management pieces needed to be adjusted as well. In the beginning of the study, my focus was to find ways to make transitions run more smoothly and to improve student behavior. However, as the study progressed, I began to notice that my students were having difficulties in other areas of the classroom. For instance, I found that many disagreements would occur when it was time for students to get pencils from their group baskets which were located in the middle of their group tables. I adapted the situation so that each group had a "pencil starter". This person was the first to choose a pencil and pass the basket around in a circular pattern. This adjustment worked well

until students began to complain that they weren't getting a turn. I again needed to come up with a solution. A schedule was created that allowed each student at a group to have a turn for an entire day. These turns followed the same circular pattern which made it easy to track who was next to have a turn.

Although the strategies that were introduced were meeting my students' needs in various ways, I noticed that they still were in need of different kinds of structure. This type of structure still allowed them to have freedoms with the choices they made, while making sure there was some structure to our daily routines. By allowing students to take turns with various duties, each was given the opportunity to play an active role and participate in the classroom community. For example, a system was also incorporated for having a line "leader" and "ender". A name stick was pulled for each spot every time we transitioned out of the classroom with the exception of dismissal. Kohn (1996) focused on the importance of students having the ability to play an active role in the classroom. By pulling a stick and setting it aside, it gave each student an opportunity to hold a specific spot in the line. That role held the responsibility of either leading the class or making sure the classroom lights were off and the door was shut.

A classroom management system is the large picture made up of many small aspects. Each piece of the puzzle is necessary to have a more effectively run classroom. According to Smith and Misra (1992), if an area of the overall classroom management system is not producing desired results then it must be changed. If the area of need is not adapted teachers will end up spending more time and energy dealing with classroom interruptions (Smith & Misra, 1992). By having organized classroom management systems, communicating effectively with students, and providing students with structure and guidelines, teachers are better equipped to handle academic and behavioral issues within their classrooms (Dreikurs, 1998; Jones, Jones & Jones, 2000).

Use Prior Experiences and Colleagues as Resources for Building a Toolbox of Classroom Management Strategies

While conducting this study, many of the strategies that I incorporated came from colleagues, research, and prior teaching experiences such as student-teaching. Just as students in a classroom make up a community of learners, teachers make up a community of educators who are also learners. Bieler (2012) mentions that this community can be a vital resource for offering advice, strategies, and support to one another.

In the beginning phases of the study I paid close attention to what my peers were using in their classroom for both transitioning students and behavior management. One tool that was incorporated into my daily routines, after seeing one of my colleagues use it, was a chime wand. The chime wand was an excellent way to quickly grab student attention through the use of a nonverbal auditory cue. For the first two days, I borrowed this tool from my colleague and after seeing quick results I decided to purchase my own. This experience was true for the "no yell bell" as well. Nespor (1985) discusses that collegial collaboration can offer a resource for solving problems, improving personal skills, and overall it helps to build a strong sense of community. When teachers collaborate and share their experiences, they can build on their knowledge base and resources available when decisions need to be made. Collegial collaboration also helps educators to challenge their beliefs. When teachers are critical and reflective in their practices, they are able to offer better experiences for themselves and their students.

When I began looking for alternatives to the "turn-a-card" behavior chart that was being used in my classroom, I looked back through a plethora of student-teaching and prior course materials. I came across the concept of using a chart that allowed students to move up and down

a behavior chart. I had actually seen this approach before and perhaps I never used it because many of my colleagues resorted to the red, yellow, green "turn a card" chart. This is an example of how I can contribute to the community of educators in my building by sharing my success with an alternative method.

Finally, I also used much of the research reviewed in chapter two to guide my decisions about incorporating and adapting transitioning and behavior management strategies. Mathews (2012) suggests the use of music during transitions. Incorporating music definitely helped to structure transitions and allowed for more valuable learning time. However, this was not the case when trying to incorporate movement. Research suggests that brief instances of physical activity have the ability to improve students' attitudes, memory, and attention (Braniff, 2011; Orlowski & Hart, 2013). Although the incorporation of movement did not work with my students, I was able to try a new approach to see if it was feasible for my class. Using prior research is helpful because teachers can easily find out if a strategy showed success as well as where limitations existed. Teachers can then make the decision to try something new and adapt it to meet the needs of their students. There are many great resources available for teachers of all experience levels. What we have to remember is to use them.

It is also critical that we as educators keep our beliefs and goals at the forefront when making decisions about what strategies we will use. It is through careful analysis and critical reflection that we are able to make the best decisions for meeting our goals and our students' needs. Rosas and West (2009) discuss that teachers' beliefs often change as they interact with new strategies. It is important for teachers to attempt new approaches. Teachers' beliefs are critical in the interpretation of new approaches. When incorporating a new approach, initial

steps include planning, accepting or rejecting new ideas, evaluating how beliefs have changed if at all, and making any necessary modifications based on the results (Pajares, 1992).

Implications for Student Learning

Students' Learning Time Increases When Transitions are Structured Effectively

The findings of this study have led me to the conclusion that when transitions within the classroom are structured and smooth, the amount of student learning time is increased.

Unstructured transitions between lessons cause an increase in wasted time (Buck, 1999). As a result of running out of time to complete lessons thoroughly, valuable content is being eliminated. For example, prior to conducting this study, I often ran out of time to complete the lesson debrief for my math lessons. We would need to prepare for our specials classes and clean up. I realized that my students were being robbed of this critical opportunity to ask questions and make connections about what they had learned in the lesson. It took time to get students' attention, give directions, clean up, and prepare for the next lesson or activity. This loss of instructional time may seem minimal when looked at independently, but over time the minutes add up and quickly become hours of lost instructional time. The lost instructional time is felt even more in today's classrooms of high-stakes testing and increased pressure on teachers to improve student learning experiences (Lambert, McCarthy, O'Donnell, & Wang, 2009).

Students deserve to get the most learning time possible out of every day while they are in school. Mathews (2012) suggests that when transitions are efficient there is less time available for off-task behaviors and a positive classroom environment is able to be maintained. If teachers can incorporate effective structure into their transitions, then student learning time has the potential be increased. As Stevenson and Stigler (1992) discussed, American students are

academically disadvantaged in comparison to students in Asian countries due to the abundance of wasted transition time in classrooms. If we as educators want our students to reach their full potential we need to do what is within our control to assure that they are receiving the most academic time possible.

Student Engagement is Positively Impacted When the Teacher is Supportive as Opposed to Reactive

Thinking back to various incidents prior to conducting my research, I know now that I was not helping myself or my students. I can recall how sending a student out of the classroom or becoming frustrated seemed to cause problems and my frustration to escalate. However, this research allowed me to explore a variety of ways to interact with my students that provided them with a supportive environment for addressing their inappropriate behavior choices.

As McLennan (2008) suggests, in order for students to participate fully in the educational process, they must first feel safe and secure within the classroom. As the research progressed, I noticed that my students needed less redirection during lessons. They almost seemed to cling to my every word and action. The relationships we made, from my perspective, seemed to be causing an increase in student engagement. As the study progressed, I felt more and more that my students respected me because I was respecting their needs even when they made poor behavior choices. By having personalized private conversations with students as incidents occurred, I was able to explain more thoroughly what the expectations were. We also discussed the reasons why they were exhibiting that particular behavior. Discussions followed about what the student felt they could do to correct their behavior in an effort to avoid a repeat situation from occurring.

When I incorporated a behavior chart, that allowed students to move up, as opposed to just down due to poor behavior, I also noticed an increase in student engagement. Students focused on the content more in an effort to achieve the "Excellent Effort" level. They were more eager to answer questions and students who rarely interacted in group discussions were beginning to participate. Dreikurs (1998) discussed that students' sense of belonging increases when they are included in decision making processes within the classroom. This includes not only the making of rules, but consequences as well. When students aren't involved in the decision making process, they will likely search for attention and power in less desirable ways (Dreikurs, 1998). When students feel as if they are equal participants in the classroom, there is a sense of community (Dreikurs, 1998; Manning & Bucher, 2001).

It is imperative that teachers consider each student as an individual. Every student comes to the classroom with his or her own personal baggage. Those experiences impact how they act within the walls of the school and the classroom. If teachers take the time to address the child in a respectful and helpful manner, teacher and student relationships will develop in a way that benefits all parties involved (Kohn, 1996; Marzano, 2003; McLennan, 2008). Having personal conversations with my students shows them that I value their individual situations and their feelings. When students feel that they are a part of the classroom environment they are more apt to want to help nurture that environment and keep it as consistent as possible. For some students their classroom environment is the safest and most consistent aspect of their day. The relationships that we create and foster with our students are often more significant than we may be aware of.

Students Benefit from a Classroom Management Approach that Involves Their Input

Although the initial adaptations made to my classroom management approaches were my own doing, I involved input from my students in order to modify them to what they wanted or needed. In my daily observations I was also able to notice whether or not a strategy was working well. I would then let my students know what I was noticing. They were then able to make suggestions on how we could fix or change it. For instance, when incorporating music/songs into our transitions, I noticed several students not singing or making comments about it being babyish. The next day we had a "mini-meeting" and decided on theme songs that already existed. Students responded with enthusiasm and especially loved the *Bill Nye the Science Guy* theme song.

Weinstein and Mignano (1993) explained that, "classroom order is like conversation, it can only be achieved if both parties agree to participate" (pg. 88). Students seemed to take more responsibility and made better choices because they were involved in the decision making process. Prior to the study, I did not think that my students were always aware of their behaviors until I made it apparent something was wrong. However, after the study the majority of my students were, in my opinion, becoming more aware of their behaviors. I attribute this to the fact that my students and I were continually engaging in class discussions that involved their input and my reasoning as to why there were changes being made to our daily routines. I began the study with a discussion about why I was conducting the study. It was this initial conversation that helped my students to understand that teachers are learners too.

Throughout the study as strategies were introduced and adapted, we would often come together at the "gathering spot" to share our thoughts, ideas, and concerns with what was happening is our classroom community. When I would ask my students for their input and then

implement an idea they had, I observed my students having a sense of ownership. My students were no longer bystanders following my rules; they were the ones creating them and sharing their thoughts. If my students weren't directly expressing their opinions, I was using examples of what I observed to drive my decisions and I shared that with them. I did this so my students knew that it was in an effort to help them be successful that changes were being made.

When teacher include students' thoughts and opinions in the decision-making processes within the classroom, student-teacher relationships are strengthened. These positive relationships help students feel more positive and encouraged to make appropriate behavior choices. Building a strong foundation for community in the classroom provides students with a sense of security while learning to improve their behavior (Babkie, 2006; Kohn, 1996; Lannie & McCurdy, 2007; Marzano, 2011; Wolk, 2003).

Implications for My Teaching

Teachers Should Continuously Reflect on Their Classroom Management Practices

It is my belief that even though we are educators, we never stop learning. There is no way possible that we can know everything there is to know about everything. Every day our students and our interactions with the world around us teach us something new. Whether it is a conversation we have, an experience we share, or an interaction we observe, we are always learning. Throughout this study I had the opportunity to reflect on my own practices and how they impacted my students. I can honestly say that I now make frequent observations while walking down the halls of my school. Through these observations I find myself wondering why I'm seeing what I'm seeing. Whether what is seen sparks my interest or leaves me questioning another teachers' approach to a situation, I am constantly reflecting mentally.

Writing in my research journal introduced me to the benefits that reflecting could have on my classroom management practices. I was able to recognize more easily through my writing what I thought was and was not working for my students. I was also able to think more critically about what changes I could make in order for my students to have more positive and meaningful interactions within our classroom.

Every year teachers in every district as well as my own are observed by administrators. My district allows teachers the option of having a peer reviewer. Every year thus far I have opted to have a peer reviewer. These opportunities to have others critique my practice provide me with valuable information on how I can improve myself. If I continue to reflect through a teaching journal throughout my career, I will have a wealth of knowledge and proof of my growth as an educator. It is my hope to soon be able to mentor a student-teacher. Danielson (2008) suggests that although observing students can show evidence of reflective practice, it is writing in a journal that provides the best opportunity for analyzing one's own teaching practices. It is through reflective journals that teachers can gain an understanding of teaching practice, inform the decisions we make in our classrooms, and foster professional growth (Danielson, 2008). Reflective journals provide an opportunity for growth, only if we are honest and critical of ourselves. If teachers just write in a journal but do not reflect, then it is simply words on a page. If teachers take the opportunity to really step back and analyze themselves then they are able to allow change, and hopefully that change is for the better. The idea of a reflection journal will definitely be something I will encourage him or her to keep. This process has shown me so much about myself and I am proud of my personal growth so far.

Teachers Must be Prepared to Adapt Their Behavior Management Practices to Improve

Student Behavior

Teachers have an important role to ensure that their classroom environments are safe and conducive for learning. By managing behaviors through guidance and support, they are not only helping the student or students involved but the entire classroom community as a whole. By helping students to improve their behaviors and make better choices, the number of disruptive incidents decreases. Like the saying goes, "If you always do what you've always done, then you'll always get what you always got". Basically, if teachers continue to feel frustrated year after year with student behavior, but don't change their strategies or approach then they can expect that things will unfortunately remain the same. This approach is a huge injustice to students. It is our job as educators to help guide students toward making appropriate choices. For the most part, students aren't just going to change because in your mind you think they should.

Peterson and Skiba (2001) discuss that the classroom climate consists of the overall feelings students have about the environment. If the environment is nurturing, comforting and allows students to feel safe it is considered to be supportive. A supportive environment allows students to feel positive. It is this feeling of positivity and that has an effect on students' behavior. However, when the feelings are negative in regard to their environment, students experience frustration, loneliness, and fear. These negative feelings are what contribute to behavior problems in the classroom (Peterson & Skiba, 2001; Wang, Selman, Dishion & Stormshak, 2010). It is this idea that teachers must reflect upon when adapting their behavior management strategies. If teachers are experiencing problem behaviors within their classroom and they believe that a positive environment encourages positive behavior, it is then that

adjustments should be made that incorporate their beliefs and the goals they have for their students.

Throughout the study, there were times when I needed to make changes to a new strategy I was using. I have even noticed that several teachers within my school change up their entire behavior management system midway through the year because what worked in the beginning has become ineffective as the school year goes on. It is this change that makes me wonder if perhaps teachers need to reexamine their goals for behavior management within their classrooms. If teachers are finding it necessary to change their complete system for behavior management, maybe the goal of their initial system was not met. However, if they continue to start each school year the same way and repeatedly find a need to change their approach, then is it really working? By reflecting on why the change was necessary, they may find that their beliefs need to be changed. They may need to incorporate a system that gradually allows students to be less dependent on it, as opposed to incorporating a whole new system.

Although this study was only conducted over a six week period, I would be intrigued to see what the results would be over the duration of an entire school year as well as from one year to the next. Perhaps this is something I could do next school year.

Teachers Must be Prepared to Adapt Their Transitioning Strategies to Increase Student Learning Time

As teachers our goal is to help students learn and grow as learners. One way we can accomplish this goal is through making the most of each school day. Teachers need to be aware of how time in our classrooms is being used and where it is being wasted. Often times it is during transitions within the classroom that the largest amounts of time are being misused. The

way a teacher gets student attention needs to be quick and without much fanfare. The transition itself should also be managed effectively so that it is smooth. Switching gears from one lesson to the next should not take a significant amount of time. If teachers notice that valuable learning time is not being utilized effectively, it is their duty to adjust their strategies and plan ahead of time. This planning should also include the input of the students. For instance, student input was used to select the timed theme songs we would use for transitions.

While conducting my study, a variety of sounds and tones were used to get students' attention quickly. As soon as I had their attention, directions were quickly explained to make sure all students understood the expectations. Once everyone understood music was incorporated into the transitions. Although students were moving about and listening to a theme song, they were able to complete the transition within the specified amount of time.

In order for transitions within the classroom to be beneficial for teachers and their students, they must be well thought out. Buck (1999) and Feldman (2003) agree that in order for student learning to be maximized there should to be precise expectations for transitioning, the setting must be prepared and organized, and rules and routines should be established. Teachers should consider what the students need to do to move from one lesson to the next. Estimating how long the transition may take will help to manage time once students get moving. Having materials prepared ahead of time can also save time. Next school year, I plan to incorporate the strategies used in my study in an effort to maximize student learning time from day one.

Recommendations for Future Research

Interview First Grade Teachers in Urban and Suburban Districts on Their Classroom Management Strategies, Specifically for Transitioning and Behavior Management

As teachers, many of us look to our colleagues for new ideas or suggestions. In order to gain insight into what strategies work best for teachers with regard to transitioning and behavior management, teachers could participate in interviews. The interviews would address a variety of questions. What strategies have teachers used for transitioning students in a timely manner? Do they count, flash the lights, use music, sounds, or songs? If they have used several strategies, which seemed to work best and why? Did one strategy work better with one group of students and not so well with another, why? What behavior management strategies have they used? Which strategies seem to work best for most students? Which strategies have they tried that just did not seem to work? Do they allow input from their students for behavior management? If so, how do they do so? What are their goals for classroom management, more specifically in the areas of transitioning and behavior management? What are their beliefs about classroom management? Do they think their beliefs are supported by their school community overall? Do they think there are constricting factors that prevent them from carrying out classroom management systems that may differ from the school community? I think it would be interesting to collect this data from both urban and suburban educators. There is no college that strictly educates just urban or just suburban educators, so by comparing both data sets we may be able to see what differences are encountered. After collecting the data from both urban and suburban teachers, a comparison of the results could be conducted and reflected upon.

Conduct This Study Across All Grade-Levels Within My School

This study was conducted based on the data collected in a research journal by one teacher. Triangulation was used over a six week period in which I, the sole participant, used prolonged engagement and reflected in my research journal following the end of the school day. Although the list above assisted in ensuring that the research was conducted in a credible and valid way, it is possible that my bias played a role in my journal reflections.

In an effort to eliminate biased results, I would be intrigued to see the data collected by more participants. My study focused strictly on a first-grade classroom setting. Perhaps the results would be different with older students or in an inclusive classroom. Teachers could participate in a self-study as I have and at the end of data collection, teachers could collaborate and compare results. An alternative option could also be to have teachers of similar grade-levels meet weekly to discuss the classroom management issues they are experiencing and bounce strategies and ideas off of each other. After the discussions, teachers would then implement the strategies suggested and record their data in an effort to meet the needs of their students and address the management deficiencies. Teachers could then record their findings in a document or binder that offers a plethora of suggestions that future teachers could use. It could be expanded on as new data were found, as a type of living document.

Interview Students on Behavior Management Systems They Think Best Meet Their Needs

This study focused on the experience of one classroom teacher as well as her perspectives on students' behaviors. I think that it would be beneficial to gather the opinions of students on what behavior management strategies they think work best to help them become better students and peers. Students could be interviewed and/or participate in a survey. Do they think that students should be rewarded for good behavior? What do they think are appropriate

consequences for disruptive behavior? Why do they think students misbehave? It may be determined that one approach for conducting the study works better for younger students, an interview or a survey. The data collected could be a valuable resource for all teachers, building and district-wide, as to what students want and need from their teachers. An extension to this interview may be to introduce a parental component. The parental interview could ask the same questions listed above. Having parental input as to what consequences are appropriate could avoid future conflicts between parents and teachers and can support an open line of communication between school and home.

Final Thoughts

Classroom management is very different today from decades past. With increasing pressures being placed on classroom teachers to perform, effective classroom management is more important than ever. Classroom management is the solid foundation on which academic achievement, a positive learning environment, and meaningful relationships are built. Evertson and Weinstein (2006) discuss the two main purposes of classroom management by stating that, "It not only seeks to establish and sustain an orderly environment so students can engage in meaningful academic learning, it also aims to enhance student social and moral growth" (pg. 4).

As this study has shown, it is crucial for teachers to adapt their current classroom management approaches in order to meet the various needs of their students. This assessment of student needs should be done throughout each school year as the make-up of students and their needs changes from year to year as well as throughout the year. If teachers do not make the necessary changes to their classroom management practices then students are unable to reach their true potential socially and academically and are denied the opportunity to grow in a supportive environment. As teachers, we enter the profession in order to make a difference in

the lives of our students, to help them discover a love of learning and most importantly to guide

them toward personal overall success. It is important that we never lose sight of our purpose.

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