

Collaborative Decision Making in Developing a Behavioral Management Program in a Diverse School Setting

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The researcher developed a classroom management intervention program through collaboration. Research and training for educators was lacking. This study focused on the significant role of administrators in delegating facilitators to assist teachers in managing their classrooms effectively. The problem was that there were no effective behavioral interventions or systematic discipline plans in operation at the elementary school.

A program was implemented through continuous collaboration with administrators and teachers. The study assessed teachers' behavior before and after a training intervention that exposed teachers to strategies, methods, and procedures for becoming effective educators. The research method used was the development methodology.

Analysis of the data revealed that more boys than girls were likely to have behavioral problems in the primary grade level (K-3) and that parents were not actively involved in their children's schooling. Nonetheless, in-service training and collaboration with the new teachers provided invaluable resources for classroom management. The committees believed that the program should remain in effect but that revisions to the school-wide discipline plan were needed because of a lack of teacher participation.

Collaborative Decision Making in Developing a Behavioral Management Program in a Diverse School Setting

The author researched and developed a behavior management intervention program for an elementary school in order to reduce the school's growing number of suspensions and disruptions. According to school records, during the 2002-2003 school year, the school did not meet all of its yearly objectives because of a lack of disciplinary action in the classroom. Therefore, the author collaborated with the teachers, administrators, and parents to address behavioral problems to help teachers improve management of their classrooms through the development of effective discipline and intervention strategies. Through continuous collaboration with the administrators and the

teachers, the author an behavioral management program through team work.

Furthermore, the author assessed teacher behavior before and after a training intervention that exposed teachers to strategies, methods, and procedures for becoming effective educators. Additionally, the author surveyed administrators, teachers, and parents. The research method used was development methodology. The author used Kotter's (1996) international bestseller *Leading Change*, which outlined an actionable, eight-step process for implementing successful transformations.

School behavioral problems eventually lead to outdoor suspensions and negatively affect students academically. An outdoor suspension involves sending students home for a number of days. The students receive failing grades for the days of school that they miss while so suspended.

Setting

The study took place at an elementary school located in North Miami, Miami-Dade County, Florida. The school was established in 1955 with an assigned program capacity of approximately 750 students. In 2005, the student population was approximately 1,200. The school had 1 principal and 1 assistant principal, both of whom were assigned to coordinate four areas: primary (prekindergarten through Grade 3), intermediate (Grades 4 through 6), exceptional student education (ESE), and adult community school.

All the teachers at the elementary school held 5-year Florida teaching certificates or 3-year temporary certificates. The elementary school had 130 faculty and staff members. There also were more than 80 instructional staff members. Sixty staff members held bachelor's degrees in education, with experience ranging from 1 to 34 years; 17 held

master's degrees in education, with experience ranging from 15 to 30 years; 3 had specialist degrees in education, with experience ranging from 10 to 15 years; and 1 staff member held a doctoral degree in education, with 16 years of experience. According to school records, the staff was categorized into three groups: (a) 20 new teachers (1 to 3 years of experience), (b) 36 professional teachers (3 to 10 years of experience), and 50 veteran teachers (11 or more years of experience).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the applied dissertation study was to develop a comprehensive behavior management program for an elementary school to address behavioral problems. The author believed that addressing the problems and getting every constituent involved would result in reductions in suspensions and referrals. It was hoped that reducing the number of students suspended and referred to the principal would make a positive change in the school climate. Students with behavioral problems would receive counseling and peer group remediation at the elementary school.

The author began the process of implementing the new intervention paradigm by using two of Kotter's (1996) eight essential stages: establishing a sense of urgency and creating a guiding coalition. The author planned to use the stages as strategies inherent to the plan to initiate change until the vision was embedded into the culture of the organization.

According to Kotter (1996), a good leader must establish a sense of urgency. With this sense of urgency, the leader can create a guiding coalition with enough power and credibility to guide the effort of others or to convince crucial players to spend the time necessary to create and to communicate a change. Kotter stated:

A strong guiding coalition is always needed--one with the right composition, level of trust, and shared objective. Building such a team is always an essential part of the early stages of any effort to restructure, reengineer, and retool a set of strategies. (p. 52)

The author urged the faculty and staff members to take note of the importance of the intervention plan and its potential to benefit the school and the community. The author established a sense of urgency by presenting to the staff data that were collected from numerous referrals and suspensions. The writer and a few stakeholders met with a behavioral specialist from another school to discuss the ongoing problem such as student behavioral problem which results an increase of referrals and suspensions at the elementary school. We also made suggestions for new strategies that would cultivate the spirit of positive change. The writer suggested that the most appropriate way to approach the problem was to create a new model that would improve the behavior management skills of teachers through collaboration and team building strategies.

Many principals believe that before a teacher is trained in classroom management skills, the teacher must admit that there is a problem and that assistance is needed (Hopkins, 2003). Johnston and Berry-Lazo (as cited in Hopkins) suggested that it is the administrator's responsibility to help teachers develop essential skills in classroom management by establishing a plan and a timeline for improvement that meet the needs of specific teachers.

At the time of the study, there were continuous classroom disturbances at the elementary school. During the 2002-2003 school year, there were more than 10 outdoor suspensions.

Overall student body behavior can improve if there is a classroom management program and there are no more outdoor suspensions. Generally, the teachers were not applying appropriate behavior management skills in the classroom. Pursuant to Principal V. B. Ward (personal communication, September 3, 2003), too many students were running in the hallways after lunch, and the teachers were not picking up the students on time from the physical education hard court. Furthermore, there were too many disruptions and students were being sent to the office for pity situations, such as talking back to the teacher (V. B. Ward, personal communication, September 21, 2003). Overall, according to the school records, the teachers were not reinforcing their discipline plans.

Areas of Needed Improvement

1. Effective behavior management skills and teamwork.
2. Targets and benchmarks.
3. Reading, math, student attendance, and parental involvement.
4. Objectives for establishing a committee to create and to implement a schoolwide discipline plan.

Need for Program

A behavior management program was expected to be of practical significance because many teachers at the elementary school were having difficulty managing their classrooms. According to the researcher's observation, between the 1980s and the time of the study, the school's population changed from an upper-middle-class North American to a middle-class and working-class Haitian and North American population. When the dynamics of the population changed, according to school records, parent support decreased and student behavior worsened tremendously.

According to the researcher's data, In 2004-2005, the principal hired more than 10 first-year teachers. During the first week of school, 2 new teachers decided not to remain in the profession. Before the end of the 90-day probation period, 5 other new teachers were forced to resign. Therefore, the behavioral intervention program was expected to be a positive experience.

Faculty and staff members were expected to accept the writer's behavioral intervention program because of the change in the population, the increasing number of student violations, and the new teacher dropouts. The author discussed the behavioral intervention program with the administrator, the access center vice superintendent, and the chair of the research review committee for the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS). They all agreed that there was a need for the program. The principal (V. B. Ward, personal communication, September 3, 2003) discussed the financial aspects of the program with the author. The school received a 3-year \$300,000 Annenberg Grant and a \$150,000 Comprehensive School Reform Grant. (V. Ward, personal communication, October 2003)

The elementary school was an associate of the Annenberg PASS. The program is a nonprofit organization that assists schools financially so that they may obtain educational materials and incentives to improve school performance. Annenberg set up a list of objectives the school had to meet for the faculty and the staff to receive any kind of monetary incentives. In both the 2002-2003 academic year and the 2003-2004 academic year, according to school records, the elementary school did not meet the objective to reduce the number of student outdoor suspensions. (The elementary school yearly inventory, 2002-2004)

More than 80 teachers worked diligently to provide quality education to the students at the elementary school. According to school records, the school's instructional staff held Florida Teaching Certificates in either one or two of the following subjects: (a) educational leadership, (b) elementary education, (c) primary education, (d) business education, (e) guidance counseling, (f) special education, (g) computer education, (h) physical education, (i) art education, (j) music education, (k) media center specialist education, and (l) English Speakers of Other Languages endorsement. According to the researchers findings, although numerous teachers were certified, many new teachers lacked experience in the classroom and were not trained in behavior management. In addition, many veteran teachers were not culturally sensitive or were worn out by the low morale at the school.

Governmental involvement. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was considered by those who supported it a milestone in educational reform and was presumably intended to improve student achievement and to change the culture of U.S. schools. In the spirit of the act, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is given to all students in Grades 3 through 12. The State of Florida uses these scores to grade schools to determine each school's overall yearly progress (Sadker & Sadker, 2005). Between 2001 and 2002, the elementary school achieved major improvement in the estimation of the state's accountability system, leaping from a D to a B grade level. Nonetheless, in the 2002-2003 school year, the letter grade for the elementary school was reduced to a C.

Areas of needed improvement. The researchers found out that the lack of effective behavior-management skills and teamwork affected the school's ability to

improve. According to school records, the school's Annenberg PASS had 12 targets and 12 benchmarks; of these targets and benchmarks, the staff achieved 6 targets and 9 benchmarks. Some of the targets and benchmarks were in the areas of reading, math, student attendance, and parental involvement. Progress was lacking in relation to the objectives for establishing a committee to create and implement a school-wide discipline plan. A committee was never established.

Sexton (as cited in Whiston, 2003) and Whiston indicated that academic and behavioral problems could be solved through group counseling and teamwork. A group-counseling and classroom-guidance model, Student Success Skills (SSS), was Whiston's primary intervention. The focus of SSS was on three sets of skills: cognitive, social, and self-management. Sexton (as cited in Whiston) and Whiston revealed that success in improving behavioral problems was achieved through career planning, group counseling, social skills training, and peer counseling. Overall, continuity was lacking in the classrooms that the writer studied. This lack of continuity was also noted in the elementary school's yearly inventory report. Some of the elementary school teachers believed that classroom management was the most important factor in governing student learning (Z. Sutton, personal communication, May 6, 2004). According to the elementary school's records, effective classroom management is a significant characteristic that a classroom teacher should possess.

Research Questions

The following questions were instrumental in creating an intervention plan to assist teachers in developing effective behavior-management skills in the classroom. The questions were geared toward applying strategies to meet the 2004-2005 year-end

objective.

Research Question 1. What is the cause of referrals, suspensions, and disruptive behaviors in the primary grades?

Research Question 2. How are problem students identified for testing for behavioral problems?

Research Question 3. How can parents become active participants in addressing students' behavioral problems?

Research Question 4. What type of training program should be designed to decrease classroom disruption and to avoid referrals?

Research Question 5. What types of procedures have similar programs followed to solve behavioral problems?

Research Question 6. How will this program be implemented and evaluated?

Results Related to Research Question 1

The author conducted an extensive literature review to improve her understanding of the cause of continuous problems and to identify whether the cause was a situation that occurred in most urban schools. The author's goal was to compare the school under study with other urban schools to find ways of reducing the continuous behavioral problems that eventually lead to suspensions, referrals, and classroom disruptions.

Mather and Goldstein (2001) listed popular models and techniques for dealing with discipline referrals focusing on (a) prevention through preventative classroom ; (b) effective teaching practices; (c) frequent monitoring and clear rules and procedures; (d) correction and control of misbehavior through behavior modification, wherein a teacher gives direct instruction, reinforcement techniques, and assertive discipline; and (e)

treatment through social skills training, wherein the counselor or the teacher directs instruction, modeling, rehearsal, coaching of social skills techniques, anger-control training, and morale discussion. The author used these techniques as tools for training teachers at the elementary school to reduce the vast number of daily referrals. In addition, the administrators at the elementary school believed that the Mather and Goldstein models were relevant strategies for helping the school to improve student behavior and teacher management skills.

The author collected data from the cumulative records of those students who were identified by the assistant principal as having repetitive behavioral problems. The students' files were kept in the assistant principal's office in a file cabinet, where the assistant principal monitored the growing number of teacher referrals and indoor and outdoor suspensions. The assistant principal had identified 25 students as either having gotten into continuous trouble or having broken a major school regulation. The author identified 10 students in the primary grades who were continuously in trouble and who had received more than three referrals in 1 year. Each violation group received disciplinary actions, including (a) parent conference, (b) repayment for damage, (c) meeting with teacher, (d) loss of bus privileges, (e) referral of criminal acts to Miami-Dade County Public Schools Police and the local police, (f) student notification of possible expulsion, and (g) suspension of the student from school for up to 10 days.

The author realized that all the students were referred to outdoor suspensions from 1 day to 1 week in duration, depending on the violation; however, only 30% of the students were referred to outdoor suspensions more than two times in the school year. Therefore, the author witnessed students being suspended from school before any

alternative was implemented. The teachers believed that parental involvement played a major role in student behavior (Z. Sutton, personal communication, March 14, 2006). According to the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) (P. Ellis, personal communication, March 14, 2006), less than 60% of parents were members of the organization and less than 50% of the parents played an active role in their children's education. According to both administrators, the main cause for the excessive number of referrals, indoor and outdoor suspensions, and behavioral problems was the high teacher turnover rate and the new teacher intake for the previous 2 years (V. Ward & A. Harley, personal communication, March 14, 2006).

The author discovered through data analysis that the students were getting in trouble for the following reasons: (a) skipping school; (b) walking out of class; (c) fighting; (d) being defiant to a teacher; (e) undermining a teacher's authority; (f) behaving disruptively; (g) bringing a pornographic movie to school; (h) bringing pornographic magazines to school; (i) fighting in the cafeteria, bus, and hallway; and (j) hitting the teacher. The author used the counselors as resource persons for the teachers as a means of helping the targeted teachers with problematic children in the classroom. The counselors worked in collaboration with the BMC, providing private and group counseling and peer mediation to identify students in order to alleviate continuous problems. According to the school counselors (R. Hartner & M. Forbes, personal communication, March 7, 2006), the teachers were not using the counselors enough. The lines of communication, such as feedback and filling out request sheets, were not being used enough by the classroom teachers.

Brigman (2003) believed that helping students to improve behavior, to succeed in

school, and to develop social and self-management skills was needed for effective learning, working, and relating. The elements of this statement seemed to be a direct fit with the position of the American School Counseling Association which relied heavily on three categories of the Parent Evaluation Survey: academic, personal-social, and career.(Brigman, 2003)

In contrast to the primary grade counselor, the secondary grade counselor reported an increase in referrals to guidance counseling from 75% to 85% from the 2003-2004 school year to the 2004-2005 school year, which was a 10% increase. Teachers in the intermediate grades were using counselors more often to help students solve personal problems, to control their anger, and to follow school guidelines (M. Forbes, personal communication, March 6, 2006).

Results Related to Research Question 2

The 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the 1999 Final Regulations brought about a number of changes in policy concerning special education. In particular, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 required school personnel to develop a functional behavioral assessment (Buck, Polloway, Kirkpatrick, Patton, & Fad, 2000).

Buck et al. (2000) believed the requirement of a functional behavior assessment applied when a student with a disability is being considered for serious disciplinary action (e.g., a change in placement or expulsion). Specifically, either before, or no later than, 10 days after such disciplinary action is taken, the agency must conduct a functional behavioral assessment and implement a BIP for the behavior that led to the disciplinary action. If a plan is already in effect, professional leaders must review the plan and modify

it, as necessary, to respond to the behavior. The school board already had a plan in effect; however, it had not been implemented appropriately for many years. The principal saw a need to make a change and acted on a sense of urgency by placing an ESE teacher in the position of ESE department chairperson.

The 10 students who were identified as habitual behavioral problems were those who were placed for testing. The author realized that many of the students had been problematic since kindergarten. Not many teachers wanted to take the time to complete the Student Evaluation form and go through the long testing procedure. According to G. Jones (personal communication, March 6, 2006), the ESE department chairperson, teachers were required to complete an AIP, including the behavioral section of the Student Evaluation form from the Division of Exceptional Education website (M-DCPS, 2003). When the AIP was completed, the teachers were supposed to submit information to the ESE department and wait for the student to be tested. Then the district sent a psychologist to test and diagnose the student. The psychologist, the teacher, and a parent would attend a child study meeting in the ESE department after the child had been monitored for two grading periods. If the child was identified as having limited English proficiency (LEP), the child had to undergo a bilingual assessment, and testing had to be conducted by a bilingual psychologist.

Nonetheless, during the 2005-2006 school year, 40 students were referred for testing. Twelve students were identified as having behavioral problems. Only 10 students successfully completed the process and went on to the Child Study Team stage. The Child Study Team consisted of a general education teacher, a math facilitator, a reading leader, a school psychologist, an ESE administrator, and a parent of the student. It took 3

months to get a child tested for any kind of behavioral problems (G. Jones, personal communication, March 6, 2006).

According to the researcher's findings, all 10 students were tested, and 80% were identified as having some sort of disability: (a) a learning disability (LD), (b) attention deficit disorder (ADD), or (c) attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). One of the students who was not identified as having some sort of disability was not excelling academically; however, all the students were reading below grade level and were scoring below the 25th percentile in both reading and math.

Silver (2002) maintained that a learning disability is a disorder that affects people's ability either to interpret what they see and hear or to link information from different parts of the brain. These limitations can show up in many ways as specific difficulties with (a) spoken and written language, (b) coordination, (c) self-control, or (d) attention.

After a child received numerous referrals, suspensions, or detentions, the author checked with the teacher, and previous teachers, to make sure that the student was placed for testing. The author met with the school counselor to check the student's AIP to determine whether alternative strategies were implemented. Based on the data, alternative strategies were met for 9 of 10 of the students before they were placed for testing. The author directed the homeroom teachers to complete a Student Evaluation form, which was found at the Miami-Dade County Public Schools website (M-DCPS, 2005) or in the ESE department, to have each child tested for problems, such as emotional mental handicap or ADD.

The ESE administrator met with each grade chairperson and gave him or her a

packet from the ESE department. Each packet consisted of important ESE forms, the AIP, behavioral identification forms, and testing procedures. Each grade chairperson gave a copy to everyone in his or her department. One month after a child was tested, the teacher, the psychologist, the ESE administrator, and a parent met to discuss the child's scores, behavioral history, and academic achievement. The author attended 8 of 10 of the child study meetings. While interviewing the ESE administrators, the author listed the procedures that were required by the State of Florida in identifying students with behavior problems.

The teachers completed the required forms. They started with Form 6279, which is a form for requesting that a student be tested for whatever disability the teacher had observed. The administrator handed all grade chairs a manual with the forms and procedures to follow. M-DCPS ESE programs offer a variety of services to meet the diverse needs of the students and their parents. Exceptional students receive ongoing assistance from dedicated teachers, paraprofessionals, therapists, counselors, psychologists, social workers, and administrators to enhance their academic, social, and emotional progress (M-DCPS, 2005). The formative committee, the summative committee, and the BMC met with the ESE administrator and the psychologist to go over the appropriate protocol for identifying children's needs or types of behavioral problems.

Results Related to Research Question 3

The author conducted a review of literature regarding parental involvement and its effects on student behavior in school. The committees reviewed all literature and the surveys. The author realized that the parents of the students who were identified in the student suspensions breakdown were not actively involved. More than 50% of those

parents did not attend an open house or a parent academy. Additionally, the parents did not become members of the PTA (P. Ellis, personal communication, March 8, 2006). On the referrals, the teachers indicated that they contacted the parents; however, most of the parents were unable to attend a parent conference regarding the behavior in question.

Boulter (2004) stated, “Child-rearing styles are patterns of parenting behavior that create a pervasive family climate and influence the extent to which the child will develop effective social skills, self-control, and the ability to comply with rules by adolescence” (p. 29). Furthermore, the uninvolved parent makes few demands for obedience or respect but is emotionally detached and withdrawn. This parent is not interested in the child’s opinions and is indifferent to the child’s decisions. Garbarino (as cited in Boulter) concluded that in homes with authoritarian, permissive, or uninvolved parents, there is not a good fit between parenting style and child, and the result is a child who does not know limits, does not have self-control, and is unhappy and often violent.

The parents who attended the first workshop were given a Likert-scale survey and also made necessary comments. The BMC handed out 120 surveys during the workshop. The parents were instructed to return the survey after the workshop; however, only 75 parents did so. The elementary school consisted of 1,100 students; only 120 parents attended the workshop. According to M. Francis (personal communication, March 6, 2005), the community liaison representative, only 550 parents attended an open house for the 2005-2006 school year. For the 2004-2005 open house, 500 parents had attended.

The author drafted a list of findings from the research and gave it to the formative committee to review. The formative and summative committees commended the contents of the Parent Log sheet, which the teachers used to keep a record of parental contact. The

Parent Log sheet had three columns: (a) a column for student name and the parent contacted; (b) a column for the type of contact, telephone, written letter, in person; and (c) a column for the outcome of the conference. The committee believed that the teachers should continue turning in monthly Parent Log sheets to the BMC and to the community liaison to monitor continuous communication. The president of the PTA also was a teacher and was delighted with the program. She was willing to help the PTA start a parent-to-parent program by creating a telephone tree with the active and inactive parents. The PTA president's goal was to make sure the parents became active participants in the Excellence Everywhere school wide plan. The parents were required to sign their children's Weekly Behavioral Report. The PTA president and administrators attended several parent workshops that were conducted by M-DCPS under the supervision of the former Superintendent Rudy Crew. The workshop series was titled The Parent Academy. Crew (2005) stated:

Our Parent Academy already has trained more than 10,000 parents and guardians this school year. We have more National Board-certified teachers than almost any other school system in the United States. Completing the best deal imaginable for the benefit of students, however, will take the full and unwavering support of both our teachers and the public, particularly parents. Our ability to deliver ultimately will depend on those willing to join us at the table and sign on the dotted line. Our children will receive the payoff. (p. 1)

The teachers were able to communicate with the parents via telephone, in personal conferences, or by letter. The summative committee approved the Parent Log sheets and Parent Evaluation Survey.

Before the 2005-2006 open house, the BMC and the PTA collaborated to conduct a 1-hour parent workshop to let parents know that they played a major role in their children's behavior in school. The workshop also provided information on parenting, disciplining children, and getting involved in children's education. In addition, they instigated a sense of urgency that they needed to take action. As the parents were leaving the meeting, it was recommended that they complete the Parent Evaluation Survey and return it to their children's homeroom teachers.

The three categories of the Parent Evaluation Survey were as follows:

1. Community involvement, which included five statements to be answered with (a) *disagree*, (b) *neutral*, or (c) *agree*.

2. Course evaluation, which included the questions "What course was most helpful to your child?" "What did your child like most about the course?" "What did your child like least about the course?" and "How could the course have been improved to help your child more?"

3. Parent satisfaction, which included 12 statements that required the parents to answer with *agree* or *disagree* and provided space for comments.

Seventy-five parents returned their surveys.

Most of the parents believed that reading was the most helpful course that their children had to take at the elementary school. They stated that their children liked grade-level ability grouping. The students who were academically higher-level readers did not get restless in the classroom, and the academically lower-level readers did not feel as frustrated in the classroom. Most of the parents believed that the reading course was beneficial to their children.

The parents were asked to give the school an overall grade. The question was “Overall, how would you grade the quality of education your child is receiving at the school?” The parents answered with 5 (*excellent*), 4 (*very good*), 3 (*good*), 2 (*fair*), or 1 (*poor*). Most of the parents gave the school a grade of 3 (*good*). The distribution of grades that was given is shown in Figure 1.

Protheroe (2006) stated:

For many educators, a close school-family connection has been defined in traditional terms. Good parents come to parent-teacher conferences, help their children with homework, and attend PTA meetings. What may seem to be a lack of involvement by diverse families may reflect cultural differences and attitudes toward education. (p. 52)

Results Related to Research Question 4

Desiderio and Mullennix (2005) conducted research on student teachers who were trained in assertive discipline before entering the classroom and school settings. Assertive discipline is a behavior management system that emphasizes positive reinforcement as the key to students making appropriate choices regarding classroom behavior. Teachers wishing to implement assertive discipline successfully must adopt the position that they care enough about teaching and learning in their classroom that they will not allow anyone to interfere with the process, not even the students (Desiderio & Mullennix).

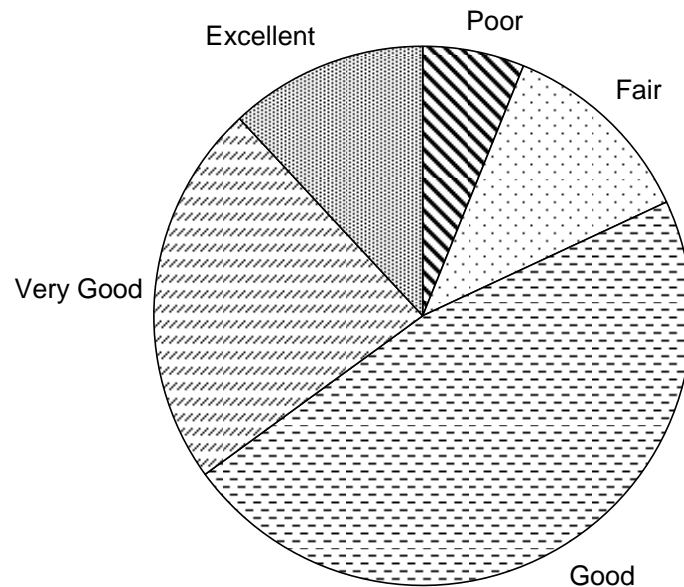


Figure 1. Parents' grades for the school.

The author and the BMC met and discussed various workshops for selected teachers. During the school year, the entire faculty attended two behavior management workshops. The first workshop was held to create a sense of urgency to promote better teacher morale and motivation to become effective teachers. Then the faculty watched H. K. Wong's (1998) video *The Effective Teacher*. The second faculty workshop was held to introduce the staff and the faculty to the new discipline plan, Excellence Everywhere.

For the first workshop for the selected teachers, the agenda consisted of (a) a literature review; (b) a video presentation; (c) speeches by teacher representatives of primary, intermediate, and ESE activities; and (d) the completion of the Teachers' Workshop Comment Sheet. The formative committee, the summative committee, and the administrators were present at the first workshop with the selected group to observe and to make recommendations for the next two workshops. After each workshop, the teachers met with their mentor to discuss what they had learned and to voice their concerns. The

behavior management training program was designed for all teachers and was continuously provided to selected teachers.

Communication played a major role in implementing the change vision. To communicate the new vision and strategies, Kotter's (1996) eight-stage process was used (see Figure 2).

Teacher training survey. The author conducted a (a) one-time behavior management training session for all teachers, (b) ongoing training for selected teachers, and (c) a one-time parent-training session. The author gave the teachers the Teacher Training Survey (see Appendix B). The survey consisted of several questions, such as "What teacher training available at your workplace?" "Do you use any external resources?" "What is the proportion of native and nonnative training teachers at the institution for which you work?" "Does the institution have an induction training program for new teachers?" and "Does the institution offer an in-service training scheme?" The Teacher Training Survey questions were grouped into three sections. The first section addressed instructional leadership. The teachers were to respond with *often*, *sometimes*, *rarely*, or *never* to questions in this section. The second section covered learning experiences. To questions in this section, the teachers were to respond with either *true* or *false*. Space was provided for comments and answers to six extra questions.

1. Establishing a sense of urgency. Crisis is major behavioral problem in school.



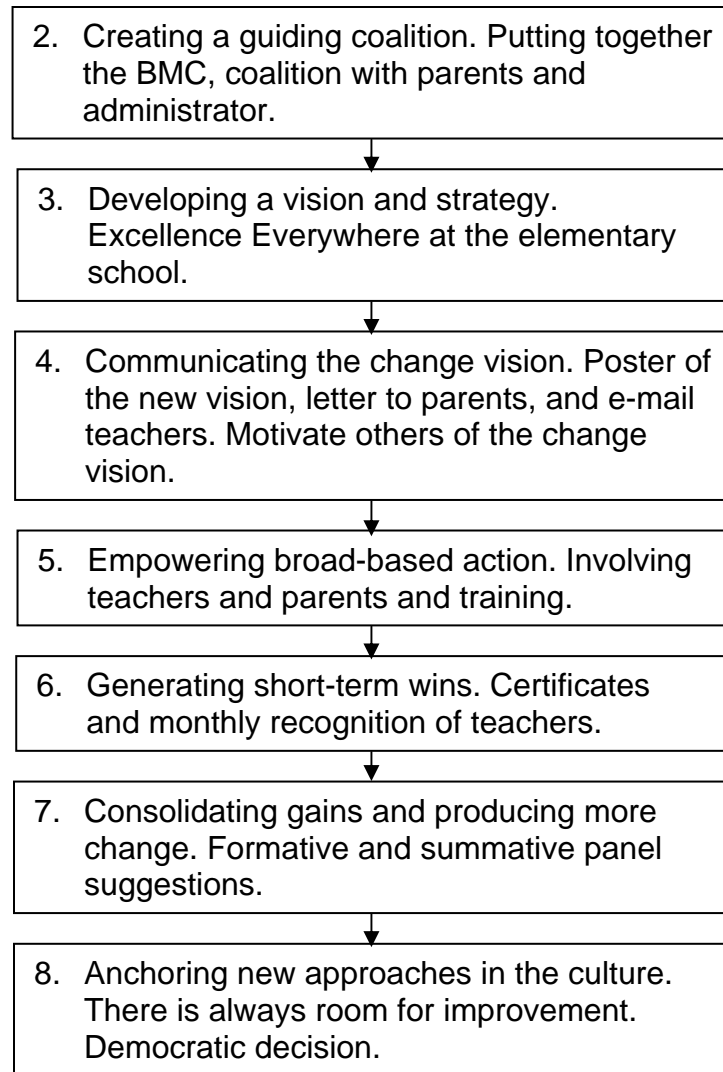


Figure 2. Kotter's eight-stage process. From *Leading Change* (p. 21), by J. P. Kotter, 1996, Boston: Harvard Business School Press. Copyright 1996 by J. P. Kotter. Adapted with permission.

The third section covered professional development sessions. To questions in this section, the teachers were to respond with *always*, *sometimes*, *rarely*, or *never*. The last question addressed the year's training. It asked, "This year, what was the total number of hours of professional development you received?" Most of the teachers answered that they had received more than 10 hours of professional development for the 2005-2006 academic year; however, the teachers received less than 5 hours of in-service training in other subjects, such as reading and math, on the school premises. In addition, no teachers

had ever received behavior management training.

Teachers' workshop comment sheet. Before conducting the workshop for the targeted teachers, the author met with the formative and summative committees. The formative committee reviewed the training survey and the administrators' survey, the agenda, the activities, and the plan. By meeting with the two groups, the author was able to implement Kotter's (1996) Stage 3, developing a vision and strategy to direct the change effort. Then the summative committee approved the plan. In addition, the PTA collaborated with the BMC and designed a workshop for the parents that allowed the teachers to meet the students' parents to create a good line of communication. The workshop provided information on parenting, disciplining children, and getting involved in children's education. The parents were encouraged to attend the Parent Academy, which was designed by the school board.

After each workshop, the 19 teachers who had participated in the study completed a Teachers' Workshop Comment Sheet. The Behavioral Management Skills Professional Development Teachers' Workshop Comment Sheet directed the teachers to "list three strategies you have learned from the workshop" and asked, "How would the behavioral management strategies benefit you in the classroom?" "Would you recommend this workshop to another coworker?" and "Was this workshop beneficial to you? If not, what can the facilitator do to improve the workshop?".

The 19 teachers then completed the professional development comment sheet after the nine workshops, which were conducted over a period of 5 months. All 19 teachers indicated that they would recommend the workshop to coworkers, and they indicated that the workshop was beneficial to them.

Results Related to Research Question 5

The writer completed an extensive literature review and collected information regarding several programs that had been effective for other schools of the same demographics. Mather and Goldstein (2001) commented on methods that can be developed for defining, observing, and measuring behaviors and for designing effective interventions. They believed behavior modification never fails; rather, it is applied inefficiently or inconsistently. Consequences of behavior are important in any intervention program.

Several programs had been shown to be effective and were followed by many public schools. These included the Zero Tolerance Program (Sadker & Sadker, 2005), the Effective Teacher Program (Rao, 2005), teacher-directed individualized education program (IEP) meetings, and the Empowering Students Through Consistency Program (Martin et al., 2006). An elementary school in the same district had an effective program to control behavioral problems. The program was part of the ESE program; it was geared for emotionally disturbed children. Students who were tested and were found to be eligible for the program were placed at the school in classes in which there were other students with the same problems, and their needs were met through continuous monitoring.

Researchers Martin et al. (2006) observed 109 middle and high schools; 90% of the participants in their study completed a postmeeting survey. They called for an increase in student involvement in IEP meetings (Martin et al.). The results of Martin et al.'s study indicated that students need to be taught effective meeting participation skills to enhance participation by all parties.

According to Sadker and Sadker (2005), many schools adopt zero-tolerance policies in an attempt to create safe schools. A zero tolerance policy typically sets out predetermined consequences or punishment for specific offenses, regardless of the circumstances or disciplinary history of the student involved. Zero-tolerance policies send a powerful message to the school community that violent, aggressive behavior is not acceptable. Sadker and Sadker pointed out that zero-tolerance policies are inherently unfair and that they can backfire. H. Wong and Wong (1998) were strong believers in implementing a schoolwide discipline plan.

The writer, the BMC, and the teachers worked to implement the Excellence Everywhere schoolwide discipline plan for 5 months to ensure that the school put into practice a program that could change the school environment. According to the chairperson of the discipline committee (M. R. Sabetella, personal communication, February 26, 2006), which later became the BMC, the Excellence Everywhere schoolwide discipline plan was not a success.

Rao (2005) conducted a study to meet challenges of diversity in classrooms of various multicultural teacher education programs to prepare preservice teachers with the objective of changing beliefs, attitudes, knowledge base, and pedagogical skills. Rao suggested that studies that have reported effectiveness of these programs have used such measures as portfolio assessment, interviews, surveys, questionnaires, concept maps, case studies, and dialogue journals to lead to effective outcomes for all students. Overall, if teachers understand and are not biased against students of diverse circumstances and backgrounds, then they will not have much of a problem managing their classrooms and meeting the educational needs of the students.

The author believed that an effective multicultural program would be efficient because of the population of the school. The summative committee validated the Excellence Everywhere program and believed it should be continued with few changes to increase teacher participation.

Results Related to Research Question 6

The author implemented the Behavioral Management Program in collaboration with the instructional faculty and administrators. The author used Kotter's (1996) eight-stage process of creating major changes as a vehicle. To enhance her leadership style while making a positive change in the elementary school, the author's BMC met to oversee the program. After 1 school year of implementing the project, the principal and the assistant principal completed the Administrators' Observation Survey (see Appendix A) a second time. The survey that was given in the beginning of the year as a preevaluation was used as a postevaluation survey. There was not much difference in the administrators' responses from preevaluation to postevaluation; all of their answers remained the same. The administrators were frustrated and disappointed. They and the author observed the identified teachers twice that year to determine any improvement. The selected teachers did show some improvement; however, the committee and the author believed that those teachers should be monitored the following school year.

The BMC completed the Committee Evaluation Form. The formative and summative committees reviewed all data and processes until they reached consensus on whether they should keep the program as it was or make revisions to it. Both committees believed that the program should remain in effect at the elementary school; however, the committees indicated that revisions to the schoolwide discipline plan were necessitated

by a lack of teacher participation. Nevertheless, the behavior management training and the BMC were successful. The BMC teamwork created a better culture in the school.

Excellence Everywhere. The Excellence Everywhere schoolwide discipline plan was not a success. Of 80 instructional staff members in eight grade levels (who taught in kindergarten through Grade 6, prekindergarten, and ESE), only 6 instructional staff members in one grade level (Grade 1) implemented the schoolwide discipline plan effectively. All first-grade teachers completed the Weekly Excellence Report for a period of 5 months. The weekly rating was determined as follows:

1. If the student received nearly all excellent ratings with no satisfactory scores, he or she would be rated excellent.

2. If the student received no unsatisfactory marks, but too many satisfactory scores, he or she would be rated satisfactory.

3. If the student received his or her first unsatisfactory rating, a student case management referral form was completed and the student served a detention.

4. If the student continued to receive an unsatisfactory rating, then he or she was referred to the guidance counselor and then to the school administrator for suspension. If a student received an excellent rating for a period of 1 month, he or she would receive an Excellence Everywhere ticket to go to the Excellence Everywhere store and pick a prize. The teachers also kept an Annual Excellence Log Sheet for the school year.

The first-grade teachers' main complaint about the program was the administrators. The first-grade teachers believed that the leadership team was inconsistent with discipline and did not promote the program throughout the school; however, the administrators complained that the teachers were not enforcing detentions (I. Isidore,

May 4, 2006). Most teachers who did not implement the program believed that there was too much paperwork and inconsistent consequences.

Administrators' observation survey. The writer conducted the Administrators' Observation Survey. Both administrators completed the Likert-scale survey. The administrators answered seven statements with either *always, often, sometimes, never, or no opinion.*

The final query to which the administrators were asked to respond was "Which group of teachers requires continuous behavioral management training?" Both administrators agreed that new teachers (with 0 to 3 years of experience) required continuous training in behavior management. Therefore, a new teacher program was implemented to train, monitor, and mentor the teachers throughout a period of 5 months.

Teacher profile. The second survey was Kim's (2003) Teacher Profile, which 80 instructional staff members completed after the first meeting regarding the behavior management intervention plan. All teachers completed the Teacher Profile. The teacher classroom management profile was a Likert-scale profile with 12 questions. The teachers were given the opportunity to express agreement or disagreement by using the numbered scale of 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *agree*, and 5 = *strongly agree*. The teachers were to indicate their style: *authoritarian, authoritative, laissez-faire, or indifferent*. Of 80 surveys that were delivered to the teachers, 50 were completed and returned to the writer. The distribution of styles among the 50 respondents was as shown in Figure 3.

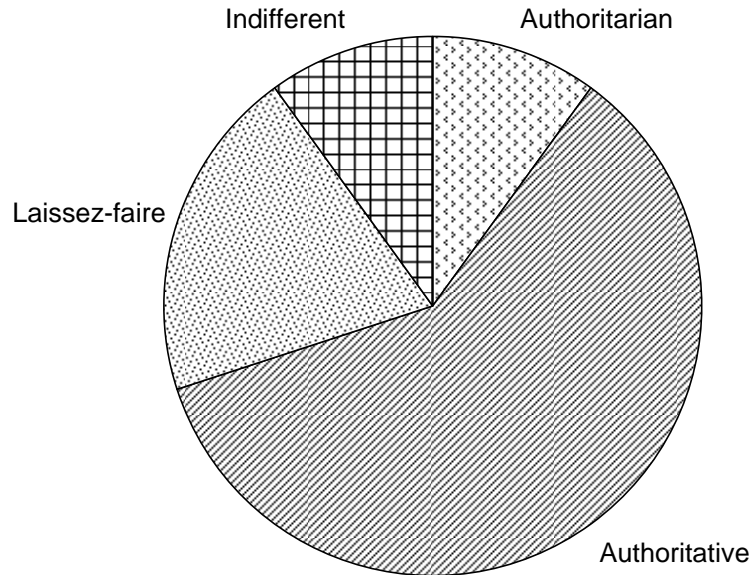


Figure 3. Distribution of teachers ($N = 50$) with each teaching style profile.

The writer believed that neither the laissez-faire style nor the indifferent style was promoted by the administrator as a good classroom management style. An inconsistent classroom is terrifying, and if teachers cannot maintain discipline in the classroom, they should not expect the school administrators to do it for them (Kim).

Santrock (1996) defined the various styles that can be used in the classroom and by parents:

1. The authoritarian is a teacher who places firm limits on the students, expects swift obedience, and expects students to follow directions and not ask why.
2. The authoritative teacher is a teacher who places limits and controls but encourages independence. This teacher is polite but firm. He or she reprimands disruptive students. This teacher is open to verbal interaction, including critical debate.
3. The laissez-faire teacher is one who places few demands or controls on the students, does not enforce rules, and applies discipline in an inconsistent manner.

4. The indifferent teacher is one who places few demands or impositions on students and lacks classroom discipline.

Additional Outcomes

The writer implemented Kotter's (1996) eight-stage process to create major change in her workplace. The first workshop was held at the beginning of the school year to prepare the staff for the new school-wide plan. The writer established a sense of urgency regarding the ongoing behavioral problems and the need for a better plan to help teachers become better classroom managers.

The quality of student behavior at the elementary school was declining, teachers were stressed and drained, and parents were not providing any support. Therefore, the writer developed a guiding coalition with others to create a positive change, forming a new culture that would improve the morale of the school. After each workshop, the writer gave each selected teacher a certificate of participation for satisfactorily completing 2 hours of in-service training.

According to Kotter's (1996) eight-stage process, a good leader should generate short-term wins to keep people motivated for the new change. Therefore, the writer consolidated gains and produced more changes for the next school year. The writer used Kotter's eight-stage process as a tool to lead a successful change. The summative committee suggested that, for a long-term win, next time, the elementary school should request approval to give teachers who participate in the behavior-management workshop 60 master points toward recertification with the M-DCPS Board Teacher Education Center.

After the summative and formative committees reviewed the Behavioral

Management Program, they completed the Committee Evaluation Form. The following questions were presented, and the accompanying answers were given by the summative and formative committees:

1. "After 1 year of training, did the overall behavior-management profile of the school improve?" As a whole, the committee believed the teachers' behavior-management skills to have improved; however, the number of referrals and disruptions was still growing.

2. "Did the school meet the target of obtaining less than two suspensions for the year? If not, did it improve or reach closer to its goal?" The committee members were not sure the school met the target, but they believed that the elementary school may have met the target because it was the first time that the school collaborated to meet the goal to improve students' behavior by improving teachers' behavior-management skills.

3. "After reevaluating the new teachers or selected teachers, are there any positive changes in their management skills?" All the committee members believed that the teachers' behavior-management skills had improved. When the committee members reevaluated the new teachers, using the Teacher Behavior Management Checklist, all of the teachers were able to implement 7 or more of the 10 strategies effectively in their classrooms.

4. "After observing one of the workshops, what changes would you suggest the BMC and the facilitator make to improve the Behavior Management Program?" The committees believed that the workshop was excellent; however, they also believed that the teachers should be given a stipend or some type of incentive in order to get them motivated. Therefore, they suspected that, if the program were to be implemented the

next year, the BMC should seek recertification master points through the school board or stipends through a grant. The committees believed that rewards usually motivate people to support a new plan.

5. “On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you rate the Behavioral Management Program?” The committees rated the program as 4 (*good work*); nevertheless, they believed that there would always be room for improvement and for enablement of the school administrators and the instructional staff members to adapt to this positive change.

Results Related to Expected Outcomes

Expected Outcome 1 was that there would be a decrease of at least 1% in classroom disturbance, as evidenced by a reduction in calls for security assistance and by teacher referrals, as a result of this applied dissertation intervention, which took place between May 2005 and May 2006. After 1 year of training, teachers had improved classroom management skills, yet the numbers of classroom disruptions and referrals continued to grow. This outcome was not achieved.

Expected Outcome 2 was that there would be a decrease in outdoor suspensions from 1.8% of the population prestudy to less than 1.0% of the population poststudy, as evidenced by the yearly Annenberg Inventory, as a result of this applied dissertation intervention, which took place between May 2005 and May 2006. This reduction in outdoor suspensions was expected to satisfy an objective of the Annenberg PASS. During 1 year of teacher training, less than 1.0% of the population received outdoor suspension. This outcome was achieved.

Expected Outcome 3 was that there would be a decrease of at least 1% in running in the hallways after lunch, as evidenced by the Excellence Everywhere report, as a result

of this applied dissertation intervention, which took place between May 2005 and May 2006. The Excellence Everywhere school-wide discipline plan was in place between May 2004 and May 2005. After one year of intervention (between May 2005 and May 2006), the 40% of the teachers who continued to follow the plan, which was still in effect, had students who were less likely to run in the hallways than were the students of the 60% of the teachers who did not follow the plan. This outcome was not achieved.

Conclusions

This study documented that the same issues that face teachers across the nation are relevant to the public schools in Florida. This conclusion was drawn through review of the literature, training of the target teachers, and work with the BMC and the formative and summative committees.

The primary and secondary research that was part of this applied dissertation study focused on studies that documented the need for a plan of support for teachers to decrease behavioral problems in the classroom. Marzano et al. (2003) discovered that a great deal of evidence shows that the public at large judges the effectiveness of a school in terms of its management of student behavior. Safety in schools appears to be a major concern of parents. Polls at the national and local levels consistently demonstrate that the general public perceives safety as one of its primary issues.

In addition, with the growing number of immigrants, the training also must include the nuances of the student population and the teacher's ability to teach and manage a multicultural class. Many of the new teachers felt thrown into the classroom without any support.

H. Wong and Wong (1998) noted that school districts do not prepare new

teachers. In the business world, conversely, the newcomer goes through a training or apprenticeship period, gradually gaining knowledge, experience, and responsibility. This does not happen in the teaching profession. Newly hired teachers, not just neophyte teachers, are given a key to a room and are told to go and teach.

Ongoing classroom behavior-management training must be in effect for all teachers. The behavior-management training within the school should be ongoing to decrease the growing number of behavioral problems in the classroom. The writer included the data that were taken from the study in the behavior-management training.

The writer also elaborated on the importance of teamwork when implementing change through the use of Kotter's (1996) eight-stage process. The writer believes that teamwork would help the school faculty and staff to bring about a successful change at the location. Further, a team approach would facilitate an improved organizational culture that the teachers, administrators, students, and parents would accept and from which they would benefit.

Recommendations

According to Perez (2004), the Miami Dade County grand jury report addressed school safety and provided recommendations as to how to improve school safety. One of the recommendations is to establish a code of student conduct for pre-K and kindergarten students. The grand jury inserts that engraining this information in the students at an early age will increase the chances that they will observe and honor their responsibilities and take steps to make sure that their environment at school will be safe. There is a clear and urgent need for an increased emphasis on

character education. (p. 1)

The writer realized that, if teachers enforced the same policy for a student from the beginning of his or her prekindergarten and kindergarten education, then there would be fewer referrals, classroom disruptions, and indoor and outdoor suspensions. The findings of the study and the review of literature provided valuable information for educators confronting effective classroom-management skills, which, in return, could provide a safe environment for students.

The problems that were identified in this applied dissertation study must be aggressively addressed by the leaders at the elementary school to increase the number of behavior-management training sessions for teachers.

The recommendations of the writer are based on the conclusions that were derived from on the findings of the study. They include the development of a behavior-management plan with relevant information to meet the needs of all teachers. The development plan would be for all teachers and the selected teachers paired with experienced teachers who serve as mentors. Professional development in classroom-management skills would be provided continuously for selected teachers. New teachers would be paired with an expert teacher for a minimum of 3 years. Any intervention plan must be introduced to the faculty at the beginning of the school year, and the school discipline plan must be promoted by the principal for the faculty to give the plan importance.

The major focus on behavior-development activities would be to help selected teachers with (a) managing the classroom and planning their lessons, (b) knowing curricula and standards, (c) conferring effectively with parents, and (d) developing

professionally.

If the leader shows interest, then, most likely, a majority of the teachers will follow his or her lead. Kouzes and Posner (1995) believed that one must be an exemplary leader. Kouzes and Posner stated, “Leaders breathe life into the hopes and dreams of others and enable them to see the exciting possibilities that the future holds. Leaders forge a unity of purpose by showing constitutes how the dream is for the common good” (p. 11).

Many teachers complained about the Excellence Everywhere discipline plan because they already had too much paperwork, which had to do with the FCAT. The BMC should consider minimizing the amount of paperwork in the school-wide discipline plan. The more attention a school pays to rules and procedures regarding its physical environment and routines, the fewer chances there are for disruption and misbehavior (Marzano et al., 2003).

Teachers should be encouraged to use the various alternatives that are provided by the school when dealing with a challenging student. They should collaborate with counselors, parents, the BMC, and fellow grade-level teachers. If that plan does not work, the student AIP and a behavioral evaluation form should be completed to get the child tested to identify the problem, if there is one.

The assistant principal and many of the instructional staff members would very much like to have a behavioral specialist at the school (V. Ward, personal communication, April 18, 2006). Many believe that the student population is too large for only two administrators to handle in regard to behavioral issues.

The BMC and the leadership team must continue to work together to implement

positive changes and to touch on other issues that the school may encounter in the future. This way, the team can help the school improve as a whole, academically and behaviorally. The BMC recommended that the school expand the line of communication between the school and the parents and develop ways to encourage and motivate parents to get more involved. They also suggested hiring two individuals or asking for two volunteers who speak the Creole language to work with the community liaison specialist to make the parents feel more at ease. Language may be the barrier between the school and the community.

Issues of professional development, training in behavior management, and lack of parental involvement in school-wide discipline plans are subjects the school should address with teachers periodically through team meetings. Thus, the BMC and the leadership team should collaborate to anchor a new culture that would provide professional growth for teachers and educational growth for students. When that is done, the school will be a refuge and an organization that is able to adapt to the 21st century, providing lifelong learners to society.

Kotter (1996) believed that people who embrace the future are happier than those who cling to the past. Men and women who attempt to grow, to become more comfortable with change, and to develop leadership skills are typically driven by a sense that they are doing what is right for themselves, their families, and their organization. Teachers, administrators, and parents should leap into the future and overcome natural fears in order to expand the leadership capacity of the organization. Then, they will provide a profoundly important service to the entire community.

Continuation of the study

The researcher continued the study by observing the environment of the school during 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years. From 2006-2008 there was a new administration and many new teachers. Both the principal and the assistant principal were new in administration. Therefore, administration was open for suggestions and ideas from a veteran teacher.

In addition, the researcher used her classroom management and Methods of teaching ESOL strategies course as a vehicle in conducting research with undergraduate students. Students were required to complete a clinical task at a school with the same population of students. Students were required to observe a teacher and complete The Teacher Management Checklist (Appendix A) and also make a copy of the teacher's lesson plan and interviewed the teachers. The teachers also completed the Teacher Profile survey (Appendix B). Then the researcher collects the data every year to compare and contrast information and ideas on making improvement in improving classroom management in a diverse community through collaboration. Kotter (1996) believed that people who embrace the future are happier than those who cling to the past. Men and women who attempt to grow, to become more comfortable with change, and to develop leadership skills are typically driven by a sense that they are doing what is right for themselves, their families, and their organization. Therefore, the writer believes collaborative decision making is the route in improving classroom management skills in a diverse school setting.

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Appendix A

Teacher Behavior Management Checklist

The following is a checklist of behavior management skills that experienced teachers at an elementary school believe all teachers should possess to manage their classrooms effectively.

- 1. Classroom rules, consequences, and rewards _____
- 2. Procedures and routines _____
- 3. Seating arrangements _____
- 4. Excellent organizational skills _____
- 5. Provide meaningful lessons _____
- 6. Firm, consistent routines, and follow-through _____
- 7. Positive reinforcement _____
- 8. Daily behavioral logs (primary grades) _____
- 9. Parental contact _____
- 10. Behavioral point sheet (intermediate grades) _____

Teacher Talk

What is your classroom management profile?



Answer these 12 questions and learn more about your classroom management profile. The steps are simple:

- Read each statement carefully.
 - Write your response, from the scale below, on a sheet of paper.
 - Respond to each statement based upon either actual or imagined classroom experience.
 - Then, follow the scoring instructions below. It couldn't be easier!
1. = Strongly Disagree
 2. = Disagree
 3. = Neutral
 4. = Agree
 5. = Strongly Agree

(1) If a student is disruptive during class, I assign him/her to detention, without further discussion.

(2) I don't want to impose any rules on my students.

(3) The classroom must be quiet in order for students to learn.

(4) I am concerned about both what my students learn and how they learn.

(5) If a student turns in a late homework assignment, it is not my problem.

(6) I don't want to reprimand a student because it might hurt his/her feelings.

(7) Class preparation isn't worth the effort.

(8) I always try to explain the reasons behind my rules and decisions.

- (9) I will not accept excuses from a student who is tardy.
- (10) The emotional well-being of my students is more important than classroom control.
- (11) My students understand that they can interrupt my lecture if they have a relevant question.
- (12) If a student requests a hall pass, I always honor the request.

To score your quiz,

Add your responses to statements 1, 3, and 9. This is your score for the authoritarian style.

Statements 4, 8 and 11 refer to the authoritative style.

Statements 6, 10, and 12 refer to the laissez-faire style.

Statements 2, 5, and 7 refer to the indifferent style.

The result is your classroom management profile. Your score for each management style can range from 3 to 15. A high score indicates a strong preference for that particular style. After you have scored your quiz, and determined your profile, read the descriptions of each management style. You may see a little bit of yourself in each one.

As you gain teaching experience, you may find that your preferred style(s) will change. Over time, your profile may become more diverse or more focused. Also, it may be suitable to rely upon a specific style when addressing a particular situation or subject. Perhaps the successful teacher is one who can evaluate a situation and then apply the appropriate style. Finally, remember that the intent of this exercise is to inform you and arouse your curiosity regarding classroom management styles.

The classroom management styles are adaptations of the parenting styles discussed in *Adolescence*, by John T. Santrock. They were adapted by Kris Bosworth, Kevin McCracken, Paul Haakenson, Marsha Ritt er Jones, Anne Grey, Laura Versaci, Julie James, and Ronen Hammer.



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