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A Model for Online Support in Classroom Management: Perceptions of Beginning Teachers

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Abstract

Classroom management is a challenge for beginning teachers. To address this challenge, a model to provide support for beginning teachers was developed, consisting of a one-day workshop on classroom management, followed with online support extending over eight weeks. Specific classroom management strategies included (a) developing a foundation based on relationships; (b) preventing disruptions with procedures and routines; (c) responding to disruptions and rule violations; (d) providing inclusion for students with special needs; and (e) resolving extreme or continuing conflicts.

Participants in the study were beginning teachers at both the elementary and secondary levels. After completing the classroom management workshop, teachers reviewed online video clips of strategies they had learned, applied the strategies in their respective classrooms, and engaged in online discussions of the results obtained. Researchers conducted a qualitative assessment of the discussion entries posted by the new teachers to determine the strategies employed, emerging themes, and the results obtained. Participants successfully employed classroom management strategies and reported generally positive results. Additional research is needed with a larger number of participating teachers.

Keywords: online learning, classroom management, teacher preparation, andragogy

Classroom management is a major challenge for beginning teachers as indicated by a strong consensus among researchers and practitioners (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Garrett, 2014; Goodwin, 2012; Greenberg, Putnam & Walsh, 2014; Jones, 2006; Simonsen & Myers, 2015). Even for experienced teachers, classroom management is frequently cited as a primary cause for teacher burnout (Friedman, 2006; Freiberg & Lapointe, 2006; Simonsen & Myers, 2015). Inadequate training in classroom management during initial teacher preparation programs has been identified as the primary source of the problem (Chesley & Jordan, 2012; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Garrett, 2014; Greenberg, Putnam, & Walsh, 2014; Jones, 2006; Stough & Montague, 2014). Stough and Montague (2014) contended that teacher preparation has emphasized content knowledge at the expense of training in

classroom management, and behavior management techniques have been largely ignored within the context of content preparation. Jones (2006) revealed that a strong majority of beginning teachers state that they were inadequately prepared by their teacher preparation programs to deal with classroom management. Evertson and Weinstein (2006) cited a lack of consensus about the content of courses dealing with classroom management, the result frequently being a presentation of several models without sufficient depth to prepare students for professional practice. Greenberg, Putnam and Walsh (2014) harshly criticized teacher preparation programs for ignoring research based management strategies, for embedding fragments of classroom management in multiple courses, and simply instructing teacher candidates to develop their own, personal philosophy of classroom management. Additionally, they cited a complete disconnect between the little that is taught about classroom management and accountability for implementing management practices in clinical teaching experiences (Greenberg, Putnam, & Walsh, 2014).

Need for the Study

How and when to provide training in classroom management has been a matter of debate among experts in education. As previously cited, pre-service teacher education has been criticized for failing to adequately prepare candidates for the realities of managing the classroom. Moreover, in-service training has often proven inadequate in that it primarily consisted of workshops with limited scope and little or no follow-up. New approaches embodying the principles of adult learning may provide a framework for delivering support to beginning teachers in classroom management. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005) described characteristics of adult learners, including a tendency to acquire new information and skills in relation to problems and challenges arising from real world occurrences. Rather than formulating solutions based on theory, adult learners seek pragmatic solutions to immediate problems.

Beginning teachers have a need for practical solutions to the challenges of managing a classroom, and online technology provides a means for teachers to access management strategies and techniques immediately in relation to specific situations. Given the above considerations, a model for supporting beginning teachers in classroom management was developed, consisting of a workshop coupled with online follow-up extending over a period of time.

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to assess the perceptions of beginning teachers in response to a model of professional development that included a workshop on classroom management coupled with extended, online support for the application of management methods taught in the workshop.

Program Design

Background

Spencer Henry, founder of Practical Ideas for Educators (Henry, n.d.-a), has been providing workshops on developing and maintaining positive classroom environments to educators participating in Tarleton State University's Effective Schools Project since 2007. Henry is a career educator who has been a teacher and principal, during which time he has developed a philosophy and methods for motivating and managing students at both the elementary and secondary levels. For the past fifteen years, he has consulted and presented workshops throughout the United States and Canada, introducing teachers and administrators to practical methods for establishing and maintaining positive relationships in schools and classrooms. Henry's methods are focused on the goal of creating wholesome classroom environments based on mutual respect and trust; establishing classrooms and schools that are places of physical and emotional security; and maintaining classes where students can achieve their basic psychological needs for acceptance and understanding (Henry, n.d.-b).

Program Structure

The program began with a one-day, in-person workshop on classroom management presented by Henry to beginning teachers. Classroom management strategies presented in the workshop included (a) building a foundation based on relationships; (b) preventing disruptions with procedures and routines; (c) responding to disruptions and rule violations; (d) promoting inclusion for students with special needs; and (e) resolving extreme or continuing conflicts. Within the framework of each broad strategy, Henry demonstrated and participants rehearsed multiple methods, including statements, interrogatives, directives, phrases, and checklists, each designed to promote a more positive environment for teaching and learning.

The online component of the program was designed as a follow-up to support beginning teachers in their application of the classroom management methods presented by Henry in the workshop. Modules related to each of the strategies were constructed, and short video clips from the workshop were embedded into each module, along with other support materials. The video clips provided vivid reminders of the multiple strategies and techniques participants learned in the one-day workshop. Beginning teachers were able to go online and access the videos according to their own schedule in relation to the challenges and needs they were experiencing in managing their classrooms.

Beginning teachers who participated in the initial workshop were invited to enroll in the eight-week follow-up online course. Participants in the online component accessed the modules on weekly intervals as their time and schedule permitted. Specific requirements of the online modules were (a) view short video clips of the strategies from the workshop; (b) decide which strategies are appropriate for your classroom; (c) implement strategies and methods; (d) reflect on the results obtained; and (e) engage in online discussions with other participants and an online facilitator/instructor. Approximately one or two hours per week were required to view video clips and participate in online discussions, and participants who completed the course were awarded 30 Continuing Professional Education (CPE) units.

Participants

Voluntary participants in the study were beginning teachers in their first or second year of teaching who attended the initial workshop delivered by Henry. Thirteen teachers initially began participating in the online follow-up to the workshop, and of this number, there were nine females and four males. Seven were elementary teachers, and six taught at the secondary level. Over the eight-week period of the course, participation began to fall off, and only six teachers completed the entire follow-up. Of the six program completers, three were males teaching at the middle school level, and three were female kindergarten teachers.

Data Analysis

The perceptions of beginning teachers in relation to classroom management techniques were studied through a qualitative assessment of the online discussions posted by the participants. Study was conducted to determine the frequency of specific strategies employed by participants, the emerging themes related to the strategies, the results related to classroom climate that were reported by participants, and the particular challenges that teachers confronted in implementing specific strategies. Researchers followed open and axial coding methodology and peer debriefing to determine themes and patterns with the narrative data (Creswell, 1997; 2013).

Findings

A total of 86 discussion posts were recorded over the eight-week duration of the online course. Thirteen teachers participated in the initial discussions that focused on establishing positive interpersonal relations in the classroom, but participation dropped to six teachers as the course progressed. While participation in the online course required only a small amount of time, new teachers frequently report that time management is a major challenge, and this may account for some of the drop in participation.

Building a Foundation Based on Relationships

Building a foundation based on positive interpersonal relations was the initial strategy presented in the workshop and featured the following relationship-building methods:

- **Know Students' Names** – Use students' names frequently.
- **Smile** - Students will respond in kind.
- **Shake Hands** – Greet students at the door. Establish eye contact. Read students' emotions.
- **"I Noticed"** – Take note and express a personal, positive comment to students.
- **Positive Note Home** – Establish a goal: send two per class per week.
- **Listen to Students** - Devote two minutes, three days per week to simply listen.

- **Have Students Evaluate their Teacher** – Periodically ask students: How am I doing? How can I teach so you can learn? Provide for anonymous responses.
- **Language of Encouragement** – Identify positive traits in a student. Encourage the student to develop a specific trait into a personal strength.

The beginning teachers applied a variety of methods in relation to this strategy. Of the 36 discussion posts in this section of the course, 14 identified greeting students at the classroom door as a viable method for building relationships. Commenting on the positive effects of greeting students, a first grade teacher stated, “Before the conference, I would attempt to greet the kids at the door; however, it was not a priority and I NEVER shook their hand. It is now a priority, and each student has that ‘one-on-one’ with me. It really makes our day start out great.”

One-fourth of the postings in the Relationships phase of the course discussed the “I noticed . . .” method. “I noticed . . .” requires the teacher to pay close attention to particular students and follow up with declarative statements, such as, “I noticed you’re wearing new shoes today. Nice looking!” A seventh grade science teacher commented, “I have implemented the “I noticed” statements in my classroom, and I have found it to be a wonderful strategy for connecting with students.”

Sending a positive note about a student to parents or care givers was another method addressed in six of the postings in the initial phase of the course. Commenting on the effectiveness of a note to parents, an elementary teacher posted, “It really created a bond with me, the child and the parents. I would recommend every teacher doing this.” A kindergarten teacher posted, “I also sent home positive notes this week. . . . I had one dad almost in tears thanking me for saying such nice things about his daughter.”

Additional strategies focusing on relationship building included designating individual students to have lunch with the teacher, having short conversations with students about a topic other than academics, listening intently to students, conducting occasional class meetings and learning students’ names. Developing relationships with students established a foundation for employing additional strategies related to a positive classroom learning environment.

Preventing Disruptions with Procedures and Routines

The beginning teachers addressed prevention strategies in the second phase of the online course. The preventive methods included

- **Identify and teach procedures to accomplish routine classroom transactions** – Remember to assume nothing. Teach everything!
 - Beginning the Class – Teach students to automatically follow a set routine. Practice and reinforce.

- Attendance – Use a chart to take attendance while students are engaged in the start of class routine.
- Tardy – Use a sign-in sheet. Students record their tardy with a simple entry noting date, time and reason. Apply consequences for multiple infractions.
- Make-up Work – Establish age appropriate procedures, including deadlines.
- Sharpening Pencils – Establish procedures that are part of an established routine.
- How to Get Help – Use a procedure such as, “Ask three before me.”
- Transitions – Anticipate transitions and prepare class in advance.
- Controlling Noise Level – Teach students in advance about what level of noise is acceptable for various classroom activities.
- Bathroom Procedures – Establish procedures in advance.
- **Zero-Based Noise Level** – Teach students to respond to a specific signal to stop activities and/or talking and to focus attention on the teacher.
- **Yes with a Clarifier** – Avoid saying “No” to students; instead, say “Yes – with a clarifier.” For example, “Yes, you may go to the restroom as soon as you finish this assignment.”

A total of 16 discussion items were posted, and it was also noted that an additional eight prevention strategies had been addressed in the Foundation phase. Only eight of the original 13 teachers participated in the discussion of participation strategies.

Frequently utilized methods related to Prevention Strategies included the “Zero-Based Noise Level,” “Closed-end Questions,” “Take 5,” and “Ask 3 before Me.” Zero-Based Noise Level is a technique designed to efficiently stop student discussion and focus attention on the teacher. An example of the method is the teacher standing before students, clapping three times and quietly raising his or her hand. Students are trained to respond to this signal by stopping their conversations, looking directly at the teacher, and raising their hand. Quiet attention can usually be obtained in five to seven seconds. Zero-Based Noise Level was discussed five times by beginning teachers, and the method was uniformly successful in producing an attentive classroom audience.

“Closed-end Questions” is a method designed to force students to think and respond to some aspect of their behavior. An example of a Closed-end Question is: “Talking while I’m talking – is that acceptable behavior in our classroom? Yes or no?” In two discussion posts, the beginning teachers expressed amazement at the effectiveness of the Closed-end Question method, while another teacher posted a thoughtful response: “Closing the question by saying “yes or no” has made my discipline and teaching more effective as I am not spending as much time addressing discipline problems in the classroom.”

Additional strategies that were employed by beginning teachers to prevent disruptions included “Ask 3 before Me” and “Yes with a Clarifier.” The “Ask 3” method is designed to prevent over-dependence on

the teacher and to help students develop the habit of using other resources to answer questions or resolve uncertainties. A kindergarten teacher noted, “I started making them ask three before me and it really helps! I get fewer distractions, plus it gives them the opportunity to work on social skills by communicating with their peers.”

“Yes with a Clarifier” is an additional method that prevents argumentative behavior and forces students to evaluate their own actions. The method is based on the understanding that telling a student “No!” invites confrontation, but utilizing “Yes with a Clarifier” tends to produce more positive results. A middle school teacher explained her application of the method:

I have one student who always wants to go to the bathroom, even after he has used up all of his bathroom passes. So this time instead of telling him no, I tried the new approach. I said, ‘Yes. What’s the procedure?’ He responded and started to [argue]. At that point I used the ‘broken record’ method. . . . I just said, ‘I understand that you need to go, and I need you to do your assignment.’ He would wait a few minutes and ask again. I would say, ‘Yes. What is the procedure?’ Eventually, he stopped asking.

Responding to Disruptions and Rule Violations

Action strategies for responding to classroom disruptions in a professional manner were also presented in the workshop. Response methods included the following:

- **Apply the “Law of Least.” Non-verbal actions that take little time.**
 - Use the student’s name as a part of instruction.
 - Move into close proximity to the student.
 - Give a student the “Evil Eye” (a stern look).
 - **Public Rules / Private Consequences**
 - Post a few, important rules. Insure students know and understand the rules.
 - Apply verbal actions and consequences privately. Do not cause embarrassment.
 - **“Thinking” questions or phrases to re-direct a student’s behavior** – Examples:
 - “What are you doing? What are you supposed to be doing?”
 - “What is the procedure for”
 - **“Closed end” questions** – Examples:
 - “Talking while I’m talking – is that acceptable in our class? Yes or No?”
 - “Copying from a classmate – is that against the rules? Yes or No?”
 - **“Redirect / Disengage”** (never stay engaged with a non-compliant student more than 10 seconds; avoid power struggles) – Examples:
-

- “Save your talking for after everyone is finished with the assignment. Thanks for understanding.” Disengage and walk away.
- “Feel free to joke after class. Thanks for your cooperation.” Disengage and walk away.
- **“You Have a Choice.” Empower the student** – Example:
 - “You have a choice. Finish the work now or after school. I know you will make a good choice.” Disengage and walk away.
- **Avoid Power Struggles. Learn to walk away.**
 - “Let go of the rope.” Do not engage in a “tug-of war.” Students can outlast you.
 - Getting the last word. Let the student have the last word. Learn to walk away.
- **QTIP. “Quit Taking It Personally”**

Techniques in this phase of the online course overlap with those in previous sections, but additional strategies such as “Hit & Run/Disengage,” “QTIP,” “Choices,” and “Private Consequences” were introduced by Henry in the workshop. Six beginning teachers posted a total of 12 discussion items in the online course describing their applications of action strategies.

“Redirect / Disengage” was described by beginning teachers in four discussions. The method is designed to enable teachers to confront minor, inappropriate behavior, while not allowing the behavior to interfere with instruction. The idea is to use brief, declarative sentences to (1) identify the inappropriate behavior; (2) redirect the student to a more appropriate behavior; (3) express thanks for their anticipated cooperation; and (4) move on. The operation should take no more than five seconds, and the teacher should never stay engaged with the offending students for more than a short span of time.

The beginning teachers acknowledged the value of limited engagement with misbehaving students in several discussion posts. One teacher admitted that employing redirect / disengage tactics had proven effective, but he constantly had to remind himself to utilize the newly learned skill: “This is new to me so it is not my natural instinct to respond to the students in this way. Until I get myself trained and it is a habit, I will continue to miss opportunities to use these strategies.”

Four teachers discussed QTIP – Quit Taking It Personally. A kindergarten teacher acknowledged:

Today a student told me he hated me, and I had to really step back and remind myself to not take it personally. It was hard for me to do, but. . . [I] was able to be more effective in that moment.

A middle school teacher stated,

I have learned to keep a Q-tip at my desk to remind me to Quit Taking It Personally. It really has been a big help. When I see the Q-tip it reminds me to just breathe and control my emotions before acting.

Beginning teachers were encouraged to deliver correctives or consequences in private statements or brief conferences with students, rather than putting students in an embarrassing situation in front of their peers. The technique proved to be effective for a middle school teacher who posted:

I have tried to be very intentional about having a private message to communicate with students, rather than embarrassing them. I have seen much better results. . . . Sometimes I find out that a student really did not intend to be disrespectful, and they actually just needed that quick, quiet conversation to clear up [a misunderstanding].

Promoting Inclusion for Students with Special Needs

Inclusion strategies designed to help ensure the success of students with special needs were presented in the workshop and applied by the beginning teachers.

- **Take 5** – Provide a cool-down period. Allow student time to take charge of his or her behavior away from and out of the presence of others.
 - **Remain firm on intent; be flexible with solutions.**
 - **Acknowledge the student’s feelings** – Examples:
 - “You sound angry, and we’ll talk about it later.”
 - “You look upset. Do you need to take 5?”
 - **What could you have done?** – Engage student in thinking about alternative behaviors that would have produced better results.
 - **Give students choices.**
 - To work independently or in a group
 - Ten questions on the test; you choose five that you want to answer
 - Choose the project you want to do
 - **Problem Solving Conference** – Arrange outside of class. Guide student through a formal problem solving procedure
 - What was the problem?
 - What caused the problem to arise?
 - How did you respond?
 - How could you have responded differently?
 - How could I have responded differently?
 - Agree on a course of action.
 - Set a date / time to evaluate new course of action.
-

Only six teachers were participating in online discussions, but a unique feature of this particular discussion was the amount of interaction among the remaining participants. At this point in the online course, the participants had jelled into a tightly-knit learning community. At the beginning of the discussion on Inclusion Strategies, a middle school teacher sought advice from his colleagues about how to work more effectively with a student whose attention deficit disorder was adversely affecting his learning. Within a few days, classmates responded four times with strategies that had proven effective in dealing with similar challenges in their classrooms. The middle school teacher who made the initial post decided to employ a combination of the suggestions he received, with one of the primary strategies being one he received from a kindergarten teacher.

Two of the beginning teachers adopted the strategies of “remaining firm on intent, but flexible on solutions” and utilizing a problem solving approach to address challenges presented by students with special learning needs. The primary conclusion expressed in their discussion posts was that there was no single solution to addressing the needs of diverse learners, but the task of the teacher was to maintain a focus on learning goals, while actively pursuing alternative strategies to address the needs of individual students. A kindergarten teacher posted the following in relation to two students who had extreme difficulties in staying on-task and completing assignments:

I realized that making them finish something in the same length as my other students in the same amount of time was unrealistic, and keeping them for longer in my group was only discouraging them more. I changed my solution by giving them a goal in the activity or handout we were working on, and as long as they were working hard the whole time and doing their best, it was alright if they didn't finish everything. . . . I'm so glad that I changed my solution, because it is helping them tremendously!

A middle school teacher was challenged in working with a student who had issues with self-control and tended to “blow up” whenever he could not get his way. The teacher decided to employ the management technique of giving the student choices on how to control his behavior. Instead of reprimanding the student, the teacher would ask, “What do you need to gain control? Do you need to leave class or do you want to ‘take 5’ at the table in back?” Reflecting on this method, the teacher wrote, “When some students feel that I am trying to ‘control’ them, then it makes things way worse. However, giving the student a choice puts them into control.”

Another middle school teacher adopted the method of conducting a problem solving conference with a particular student who habitually disrupted class. He addressed the results of this method in a discussion post: “One girl in particular planned to sit at a different table away from her friends, and it is much more rewarding to see her learn how to monitor her behavior than to simply punish her.”

Resolving Extreme or Continuing Conflicts

Techniques for resolving extreme differences were addressed in the workshop (see Figure 5), and specific instruction was provided about how to plan and conduct formal conferences with students, as well as with parents. The resolution methods included

- **Use the “language of understanding” to engage reluctant students.**
 - “I understand that you don’t want”
 - “If you did care, what would you ?”
 - “I’m not interested in finding fault. We simply must solve the problem”
 - “You could be right. We must still find a way to solve the problem”
 - “I’m sorry you feel that way. But we must find a way to solve the problem”
 - “Since you’re not ready to solve the problem, here’s what I recommend”
- **Problem Solving Conference with Parents**
 - Begin with the goal: “I want to find a way for (your child) to be successful in my class.”
 - In advance of the conference, identify 1-2 of the student’s positive traits. Discuss these traits during the conference.
 - Pose the question: “How can we build on these positive traits?”
 - Identify the specific problem you are having with the student.
 - Seek advice about how you and the parents can work together to help the student be successful in school.
 - Develop an action plan. Describe actions the teacher will take; actions the parents will take. Actions for the student to take.
 - Obtain approval and a commitment from the student (if age appropriate).
 - Set a date / time to review progress.
- **Class Meetings**
 - Identify one or two topics in advance to discuss at the meeting
 - Establish time limits.
 - Encourage students to identify problems, but also propose solutions
 - Pose questions: “How am I doing so far?” “What can I do to make class better?”
 - Pose questions: “How are you doing so far?” “What can you do to make class better?”
 - Follow up on ideas generated in class meeting

The six beginning teachers posted four discussion entries on conducting student conferences, and an additional four on parent conferences. They generally wrote of having more success with parent conferences than with student conferences, with some parent conferences being conducted face-to-face, while others utilized emails involving two-way communications between teacher and parents.

Problems with student conferences largely related to the challenge of persuading students to engage in a genuine dialogue with the teacher. One middle school teacher wrote, “So far I have only been able to get minimal participation from the student . . . and normally we wind up with me giving them two choices of how we are going to move forward.” And a kindergarten teacher stated, “There is one student I confer with quite often, but it’s really hard a lot of the time to get through to him because most of the time, he doesn’t think he’s done anything wrong.” In spite of the challenges inherent with conducting student conferences, the beginning teachers perceived the value of conferences as a means of helping students assume responsibility for their behavior as revealed in the remarks by a kindergarten teacher: “Did it always work? No, but at least it made them more aware of what they were doing wrong and were able to discuss ways they could act better next time.”

A checklist to prepare for parent conferences was presented in the workshop that included the following steps: begin with a positive statement; express that your goal is to help the student be successful; identify the specific problem and provide documentation if possible; explain your actions to date; ask for input from the parents about how to solve the problem; develop an action plan and provide for a follow-up assessment of the problem.

A middle school teacher wrote of his experience using email to conduct a parent conference: “I always stay positive during the emails and try to set a mood where I am letting the parents know that I care about their child and just want some ideas or advice. Having this approach has really helped solve the problems. In fact, some of those students have done a complete 180 when it comes to behavior and work ethic.” A kindergarten teacher who consulted with parents wrote,

I asked for their advice on what things motivated their child so that I could try a new method in the classroom. They gave me ideas, and I have implemented a new behavior management system specifically for this student that creates motivation for her to participate in classroom activities.

Conclusions

The beginning teachers readily grasped the importance of establishing positive interpersonal relationships. They embraced the idea that specific strategies must be employed to develop relationships, and they collectively posted 36 discussion items describing strategies they had employed. The teachers shared ideas with each other regarding what had proven effective in their individual classrooms as evidenced by 15 discussion posts that were generated as a result of one teacher responding to another in the online forum. And the teachers gained ideas from one another, such as the idea of using greeting cards with a short comment by the teacher as a means of quickly generating a positive note to parents.

The new teachers employed a variety of prevention strategies, with each utilizing strategies appropriate for their classrooms and the age of their students. They continued to share and learn from one another as evidenced by nine discussion items that were posted in response to an idea posted by another

teacher. Prevention of discipline problems was approached as a problem solving task, and the teachers addressed discipline incidents in a responsible manner, not in a defensive, personal response.

A variety of techniques were employed by the new teachers in response to disruptions or rule violations. Action strategies seemed to vary by grade level and from one classroom to another. The variety of strategies applied included proximity, closed-end questions, yes with a clarifier, thanks in advance, do it for me, hit-and-run/disengage, and private consequences. QTIP – Quit Taking It Personally – was the single method that found favor among four of the six beginning teachers. The understanding developed among the teachers that misbehavior is a problem arising from within the student and must be addressed professionally, but cannot be taken as a personal affront.

The six beginning teachers who remained active participants in the online course at this point posted nine discussion entries describing specific strategies they employed to work more effectively with students who had special needs. In addition, there were seven instances where teachers responded to the requests or the ideas of their colleagues in the class. At this point in the course, the new teachers were learning from one another and providing encouragement for utilizing effective classroom management strategies.

Conferencing with students produced mixed results. A middle school teacher stated that he had yet to obtain success in getting students to actively participate with him in solving behavior problems, while a kindergarten teacher alluded to the challenge of conducting a meaningful problem solving conference with a five year old student. Nonetheless, student conferences helped create an awareness among students about behavior issues.

Conferencing with parents produced more positive results. A structure for planning parent conferences was presented in the workshop, and teachers responded that applying the format for conferences gave them confidence and helped to produce positive outcomes in all instances. One reported that a parent conference had resulted in a complete turnaround in the student's behavior and attitude.

Overall, the beginning teachers indicated that employing the strategies and techniques learned from Spencer Henry helped them create a more positive learning environment and helped their students become better learners. Prompting from the online videos and threaded, online discussions with peer teachers provided guidance and support. Discipline problems were diminished and became more manageable, permitting teachers to devote more time to teaching academic subject matter. One teacher stated that the improvements she made in classroom management helped her enjoy teaching more, and a kindergarten teacher openly declared, "I can honestly say Spencer Henry saved my job!"

Limitations and Recommendations

Additional study is required to validate the perceptions reported by the beginning teachers. Thirteen subjects initially began participating in the online follow-up to the workshop, and only six participants completed the entire eight weeks of online discussion, thus limiting generalizations derived from the study. Further examination of the structure of the online component is warranted to determine if the

course can be streamlined or condensed to better accommodate the strenuous demands on time placed on beginning teachers. Obtaining stronger support from principals may also be beneficial in motivating beginning teachers to remain active participants in the online course.

The placement and timing of the online course must be evaluated. The participants in the program were beginning teachers who had already completed certification requirements. The effectiveness of the online modules might be improved by including the workshop and online component as a requirement of pre-service education during the semester of clinical teaching. Alternative certification interns might also benefit by responding to the online modules during their year of internship.

Involving mentor teachers in the delivery of the online course might contribute to further effectiveness. Mentors who work alongside new teachers are in a unique position to influence the behavior and professional practices of neophytes. If mentors attended the workshop with their protégé, they would be positioned to reference specific strategies in the online course and increase the likelihood that beginning teachers would apply specific classroom management techniques. Mentors may also reinforce the idea that time devoted to classroom management will likely produce positive results in relation to learning and achievement.

Addressing the challenge that beginning teachers face in creating a positive classroom environment is a critical issue for teacher preparation and professional development. The initial assessment of the perceptions of beginning teachers indicates the coupling of a workshop on classroom management with online follow-up modules warrants further application and investigation.

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