Classroom management: a study in leadership, theory, and implementation

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CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT: A STUDY IN LEADERSHIP,

THEORY, AND IMPLEMENTATION

by

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The purpose of this study is to review the literature, identify components of a classroom management plan, and implement the research into practice to study the effects of implementing a classroom management plan. There will be three action research cycles that drive this case study.

The case study starts by studying the effects of implementing a classroom management plan with 18 teachers in Generic Township High School. Utilizing the research, key components have been identified: procedures, rules, hierarchy of negative consequences, and the importance of positive reinforcement and communication home. This study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Qualitatively, the participants were observed and interviewed in order to gauge effectiveness from their vantage point. Quantitatively, data on teacher discipline referrals were collected by marking period and analyzed. Surveys were utilized in the data collection.

If classroom management plans are necessary to provide structure and improve learning, then it is important to identify the effective components of classroom management plans and to most effectively implement them. This study’s findings suggest
that implementing a classroom management plan positively impacts classroom behavior in regards to classroom disruptions.
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CHAPTER I
PROBLEM STATEMENT

Nine years ago my teaching career began; I became a special education teacher in a suburban high school. Many have influenced my pedagogical development, including past teachers; however, no one greater than my parents. Teaching has always seemed to be a natural fit and passion for me. I find it rewarding to help guide students in reaching their fullest potential, whatever that may be. I enjoy challenging teenagers to reach new heights and creating a thirst for knowledge in them that will hopefully never be quenched. Overall, I am driven to impact the world we live in and I feel there is no greater way to do that than to educate the future of its occupants.

Six years ago I was afforded an opportunity to be a part of a small committee that worked closely with the superintendent and principal regarding the future of New Jersey high schools. This committee focused on the type of instructional techniques used by teachers, the way various types of schedules can impact student achievement, and how restructuring a building can create a smaller environment for the teachers and students. It was this experience that influenced my career path. I came to the realization that I could have a greater impact on the educational community if I pursued positions of leadership.

Introduction

Classroom management according to Wong and Wong (2005) is the number one factor that affects student learning. A lack of classroom management, according to Mehta (2009), is among the top reasons educators leave the profession within their first year. Generic Township High School, the setting of this study, had 3,988 discipline referrals in
the 2008-2009 school year. Incidences included leaving class without permission, fighting, and disruptive behavior. On average, for every 100 students, 250 discipline referrals were completed with an average of 22 per teacher. It is my assertion that, with appropriate professional development in effective classroom management strategies and the utilization of a classroom management plan, these numbers would decrease.

The quantity of discipline referrals was addressed in 2001 during the Accreditation for Growth (AFG) process. Goal #2 stated, “By 2006, students of Generic Township High School (GTHS) will exhibit improved citizenship, and academic responsibility as measured by…a decrease in the number of detentions assigned to 75 per 100 students” (AFG report, 2002). With a strong focus on reforming instructional practices, we have lost sight of an important foundational piece that is vital to the success of classroom instruction: classroom management.

The purpose of this study is to provide professional development in classroom management practices to a group of 18 teachers (approximately 10% of the teaching staff at GTHS) and institute the use of a comprehensive classroom management plan. Wong and Wong (2005) start with the premise, “Effective teachers manage their classroom. Ineffective teachers discipline their classrooms” (p. 83). The basic concept is that teachers are responsible for organizing a well-managed classroom where the focus is on a task oriented environment.

Rationale

It is noteworthy that “among the top reasons why teachers are deemed unsuccessful or leave the profession is their inability to effectively manage student
behavior, experts say” (Mehta, 2009, “The Hardest Skill,” para. 2). First year teachers often struggle with classroom management. There is no identifiable single best practice or method for how to manage a classroom. Some teachers, for example, offer rewards for good behavior; others believe that creates a false motivation. Although there is a myriad of possible approaches, experts agree on a handful of guidelines. It is a focal point that “teachers must be consistent in their message and consequences, lay a strong foundation of expectations early in the school year, follow through with promised punishments when children misbehave and remain dispassionate and unflappable” (Mehta, 2009, “The Hardest Skill,” para. 8).

Research dictates that although styles may differ, there are constants that remain for sound practices in classroom management. These guidelines include classroom procedures and rules, a hierarchy of consequences that is followed consistently from day one, communicated expectations, and positive reinforcement. There is truth to the broken-windows theory of police work: if small transgressions go unchecked, larger problems will arise. “…from day one, misbehavior is dealt with quickly and dispassionately. Students who get out of their seats without permission, swear, or talk back are instantly countered with detentions, phone calls home, or trips to the principal's office” (Mehta, 2009, “Mentoring Teachers,” para. 4).

The research that fuels the importance of this study begins with the philosophies of assertive discipline. Assertive discipline, as a concept, was created by Canter and Hunter (2001). It is a method of disciplining that focuses on encouraging positive behavior, formulating a discipline plan, teaching the students the appropriate way to behave and to make decisions. Canter and Hunter (2001) describe an assertive teacher as
one who sets consistent, positive behavioral limits while supporting and reinforcing students for their appropriate behavior. Being assertive is the foundation of this method to effective classroom management. The purpose of this model is not to punish poor behavioral choices but to prevent them from occurring.

Assertive discipline is a proactive approach to discipline. Discipline, expectations, and rules must be taught early in the school year and reinforced throughout. Canter and Hunter (2001) imply that a teacher must approach the management of behavior and classroom management plans with as much thought and planning as he/she would lesson plans. In short, a discipline plan must be created prior to the students walking in the first day of school. Being prepared and having a plan assures the teacher will not resort to reactive discipline that is inconsistent and ineffective. Reactive responses to discipline lose sight of the goal of behavior management: stopping undesired behavior and teaching appropriate behavior.

This research is also reinforced by the works of Dr. Robert Marzano. Marzano (2003), in his book Classroom Management that Works, identifies classroom management as the most important factor that impacts student achievement. A well-managed classroom creates an atmosphere conducive for student learning. Marzano (2003) identifies several key components that separate teachers that are good classroom managers from those who are not. Those elements include a keen awareness and understanding of how to handle disruptions in a consistent and fair manner, communicating expectations of behavior and work prior to new activities, and creating an atmosphere of high expectations and academic rigor (Marzano, 2003).
Wong and Wong’s (2005) research mirrors many of the characteristics of Marzano (2003). Wong and Wong portray an ideal classroom as one where students are actively engaged and working. Students know that the assignments and tests are based on objectives. These objectives are clearly communicated. Additionally, teachers have established procedures and routines that the students follow. A common and very effective routine is a “do now” or anticipatory set activity that is engaging and serves as a bridge from the previous day’s lesson and creates relevance for the current day’s lesson. Assignments for the class are posted where the students can see them. These procedures and routines have been carefully planned by the teacher and reinforced until they become common practice.

Context

Generic Township High School is a large high school located in the suburban community of Generic Township. The school serves approximately 1,700 students. The staff is made up of approximately 180 teachers, eight department coordinators, three assistant principals, and one principal. Academically, Generic Township High School provides a diverse program of studies in which students may choose from over 195 challenging courses. I am doing this project because classroom management has always been a priority of mine, due to working in a program for emotionally disturbed children for six years. Utilizing a classroom management plan has always been a critical element to the success of my teaching.

My role in this action research will vary. I will start the study in the role of professional development. This is important because each of the teachers participating in
this study have varying degrees of training and exposure to classroom management techniques and plans. It is important for the subjects to be professionally developed successfully in this area prior to moving forward. During this period of time, I will provide training as to what composes an effective classroom management plan. Once the training is complete, I will then move into the role of observer.

I will observe the courses of the participants, conduct interviews, and study trends in discipline referrals. My assumption is that this action research project will show a decrease in the amount of discipline referrals and identify important components of classroom management plans. This information can then be used in professional development to better help teachers serve students in an educationally sound atmosphere.

Methodology/Action Research

Taking existing research into account, I identified components of an effective classroom management plan. Eighteen teachers were identified to participate based on years of experience and subject taught. These 18 teachers were then asked to volunteer for an action research study on managing a classroom. After consent was given, they were trained and provided with the guidelines to follow when creating a classroom management plan. The focus of this study is to identify what the participants created for their classroom management plans, the thought process they followed, and the effectiveness of their classroom management plans.

The purpose of this action research study is to answer the following questions:

- How does implementing a classroom management plan impact the learning environment as measured by teacher feedback?
• How does implementing a classroom management plan impact the quantity of discipline referrals submitted?

• How does implementing a classroom management plan impact the learning environment as measured by student attendance?

• Which components of the classroom management plan have been identified as effective/ineffective in managing the behavior within a high school classroom?

• How does positive parental communication to the student’s homes affect student behavior and motivation in the classroom?

• How has my leadership style evolved as a result of this action research project?

Utilizing the research, procedures, rules, hierarchy of negative consequences, and the importance of positive communication to the student’s homes are the guidelines the participants used when creating their classroom management plans.

For the purpose of my research project, I used a mixed methods approach. Mixed methods research is a blend of both qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative research “is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). Qualitative research focuses on the how and why of the topic. Qualitative research emphasizes the utilization of interviews, observations, human interaction, and non-statistical data collection techniques (Creswell, 2009). This collected information must then be coded by the researcher to identify recurring themes and important information. Quantitative research focuses on the collection and interpretation of hard data (Creswell, 2009).
Qualitatively, the participants were observed within their classrooms. As a researcher, it is important to observe the interactions between the teacher and students when it pertains directly to classroom management. Random observations were conducted and post-observation meetings took place to discuss what transpired. Observations throughout the year were coded to identify the components of the classroom management plan, components of the lesson, and student disruptions.

Interviews were also utilized as part of the qualitative research (Appendix A). It was important to interview the participants in order to gauge effectiveness from their vantage point. Since the participants were given guidelines to follow in creating their personal classroom management plans, the initial interview focused on bridging the gap between the information and guidelines that were presented to the participants in the form of professional development and how they utilized that information to plan accordingly. Further interviews took place throughout the year.

Many characteristics encompass an effective leader. Strong morals, ethics, and character are the solid foundation of any leader’s platform. It has been my experience that it takes sufficient time to earn the respect and allegiance of followers; however it takes only one mishap, where personal agenda or ego are allowed to cloud judgment, to lose their respect. This respect is a delicate gift and should be treated with the highest regard. Good leadership is authentic. Evans (1996) theory on authentic leadership asserts that it is more important to lead by example by “walking the walk” not just “talk the talk.” I would never ask someone to do anything that I am not willing to do myself. Every action must mirror the expectations for followers. Leadership is not the adage, “Do as I say, not as I do.”
My project required leadership. I asked 18 teachers to trust me, leave their comfort zone, follow a program that would either show them a better way, remain status quo, or have the potential to negatively impact their learning environment. In a day where achievement is data driven, test results can be a reflection of a teacher’s performance. Leaving one’s comfort zone to try something new is intimidating and requires my leadership if it is to proceed successfully.

I have grown tremendously in the past 18 months as a leader. Through the readings, discussions, and reflection I have learned more about my own leadership capabilities and potential than I could have imagined. I recognize the importance of a shared vision where the stakeholders have a say and buy into it. Conversely, I recognize the importance of taking charge at times and managing a situation. For my action research project to be successful, I leaned on a variety of leadership theories such as transformational, transactional, emotional intelligence, moral, and authentic leadership. Chapter II defines what constitutes a good leader, leadership theories I subscribe to, how my leadership will impact my project, and how the project will impact my leadership.
“What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us.” ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Leadership is the ability to inspire others to achieve a specific goal, to reach their full potential, and to motivate them to work toward a shared vision. As a leader in the classroom, I strive to make my students realize their full potential so that they may continue to learn and achieve their ambitions once they leave my class. My motivation is to inspire to instill a feeling of accomplishment and a thirst for knowledge that will never be quenched. Fullan (2001) writes, “…teaching a child to read is an important contribution, but inspiring him or her to be an enthusiastic, lifelong reader is quite another matter” (p. 29). As an aspiring administrator, I carry this belief system with me. I base my leadership platform on a Shakespearian quote: “To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.” As a leader, it is vital to be emotionally intelligent, make all decisions based on integrity, and make sure the moral compass is pointed due north at all times, meaning direction and decisions are based on what is morally right, reflecting strong character.

Leadership is accompanied by a multitude of responsibilities. Leaders have the responsibility to create a vision of success that incorporates all stakeholders. They must develop and/or sustain a culture where an instructional program exists that is conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. A leader is charged with maintaining a safe environment and by managing and maintaining the organization’s operations. Furthermore, a leader must maintain open communication between the school and all
viable stakeholders and above all else to act in a fair and ethical manner that always reflects integrity.

As an educational leader, it is important to stay proactive in current educational research. Educational strategies are always evolving as new research and data are published. It is the responsibility of the educational leader to be aware of the new research and data, and through collaboration with the staff, decide which of these current trends should be applied to one’s school. An effective school administrator must be able to recognize and implement change.

Foundation

In this section, the leadership theories that serve as the foundation of who I am as a leader will be outlined. These leadership characteristics include, but are not limited to strong character, integrity, and moral imperative.

Integrity and ethics are the foundation of my leadership platform. I assert that effective leaders should base all decisions on a set of core values. First and foremost, a leader should be honest, morally and ethically sound, and someone who models integrity and professionalism in every decision no matter how big or small. Wren (1995) describes moral leadership as:

The group goals which are the objective of leadership are moral and the process of achieving these goals must be ethical. If either the ends of leadership or the means to achieve it be improper, the ultimate goal of leadership – the betterment of society – is compromised. (p. 483)
Moral leaders have a relationship with their followers built on common needs, aspirations, and values. Decisions that are based on morals and ethics are the anchors that help us make decisions that stand the test of time, stand up in the face of adversity, complex decisions, and continue to foster a relationship of trust with followers. I consider myself someone who displays these traits in all aspects of life.

Fullan (2003), in his book entitled *The Moral Imperative of School leadership*, further delves into the moral purpose that should drive school leaders. Moral imperative can be defined as an unavoidable obligation. Further, it is a necessity that must be carried out because it is ethically right, regardless of opposition or difficulty. There is a push for school leaders to create systematic change on all levels including individual, school, regional, and societal. Thus, school leaders need to rediscover and realign their moral compass to compensate for this expectation. Regarding this systematic change, Fullan (2003) writes:

> You cannot do this without dedicated, highly competent teaching force-teachers in numbers, working together for the continuous betterment of the schools. And you cannot get teachers working like this without leaders at all levels guiding and supporting the process. (p. 5)

Sound leaders exhibit many of the same traits, nothing more prominent than building and exhibiting trust based on decisions and actions. Fullan (2001) writes, “As the main institution for fostering social cohesion in an increasingly diverse society, publicly funded schools must serve all children, not simply those with the loudest advocates” (p. 3).
A leader should demonstrate solid character. Posted in the Rutgers University athletics office is a sign that represents what character means for the Rutgers’ football players through this acronym:

**Character:** Treat others the way you want them to treat you

**Honesty:** Be honest with yourself and others

**Actions:** Your actions are what define your character

**Responsibility:** Be accountable for your actions

**Acceptance:** Accept others’ differences and appreciate diversity

**Citizenship:** Participate fully as a student and member of society

**Trustworthiness:** Trust must be earned, deliver on your promises

**Empathy:** See the world from someone else’s perspective

**Respect:** Always respect yourself and others

This acronym is an excellent depiction of what defines solid character. Each letter represents a portion of what makes up someone’s character. Character is about what one does when no one is looking. It is the leader’s responsibility to lead by example: true authentic leadership. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1862) stated in regards to education, "The true test of civilization is not the census, nor the size of cities, nor the crops - no, but the kind of man the country turns out” (p. 502).

Servant leadership theory is the belief that a leader begins with a need to serve people. This need is what inspires a person to want to lead. In Wren’s (1995) book, *The Leader’s Companion*, Greenleaf (1991) states:

A new moral principle is emerging which holds that the only authority deserving one’s allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the followers to
the leader in response to, and to proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader. The servant leader may not look to reinvent the wheel each day, but is always looking, listening, and expecting that a better wheel for these times is in the making and will emerge any day. (p. 20)

The leadership concept of this theory is that the only way to change society is to produce and motivate enough people who will want to change it. The servant leader aspires to create an environment based on trust, and decisions based on morals/values. A leader who truly gains the respect and trust of his or her followers is focused on what is right for the people as well as the needs of the organization. Leaders do not allow for a personal agenda to interfere.

Leadership Application

Through much reflection, I have identified leadership theories that I feel represent my leadership style. These theories include emotional intelligence, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, authentic leadership, and situational leadership. Finally, I touch upon Collin’s (2001) book, *From Good to Great*, and his philosophies and characteristics of a level five leader.

Besides solid character and integrity, great leaders are emotionally intelligent. Emotional intelligence is the leader’s ability to connect to his or her followers’ emotions. Emotional intelligence is comprised of four domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Self-awareness and self-management relate to how we as leaders manage our own emotions. Self-awareness is about recognizing one’s own emotions and how they impact the organization and vision. This
domain is about knowing my strengths and weaknesses as well as having a sound understanding of my self-worth and capabilities. The second domain is self-management, which is about keeping disruptive emotions and impulses under control; always displaying honesty, integrity, and trust while being adaptable and flexible. I am self-regulated in that I have a vision of what good education is and what needs to be done to accomplish it.

The final two domains are social awareness and relationship management. Social awareness is recognizing and understanding other people’s emotions. Socially aware leaders have empathy, sense others’ emotions, understand their perspective, and take an active interest in their needs/concerns. This means being organizationally aware regarding politics at the organizational level. Relationship management is the ability of the leader to behave in a way that leads to the success of the vision. Leaders who manage relationships are inspirational, influential with the ability to persuade, a catalyst for change, manage conflicts, and encourage teamwork and cooperation. I am cognizant of my surroundings and empathetic to the people in it. I am highly motivated and passionate about my beliefs. Goleman (2002) says:

These domains are, of course, closely intertwined, with a dynamic relationship among them. For instance, a leader cannot manage his emotions if he has little or no awareness of them. And if his emotions are out of control, then his ability to handle relationships will suffer. (p. 30)

Authentic leadership, as coined by Evans (1996), is about leading by example: walking the walk as opposed to just talking the talk. In paraphrasing Julius Caesar, Robert Campbell (2009) said, “Someone once asked Julius Caesar, a great Roman
general, what the difference was between an officer and a leader. Caesar supposedly said, “The difference between an officer and a leader is that an officer yells charge while a leader yells follow me” (R. Campbell, personal communication, October 2008).

Two theories that strongly influence my leadership platform are transactional and transformational leadership. It is my assertion that neither can exist without the other. Fullan (2001) writes:

I have never been fond of distinguishing between leadership and management: they overlap and you need both qualities. But there is one difference that it makes sense to highlight: leadership is needed for problems that do not have easy answers. (p. 2)

Mastering and utilizing both theories is necessary to properly lead an organization to reach its fullest potential for growth, and to continue to move forward. A transactional leader believes the role of the leader is to make decisions that keep the organization moving forward. It is the staff’s responsibility to carry out the tasks delegated to them by the administration. Motivation is based solely on rewards for carrying out the expected behavior and punishment for not doing so. This leadership theory is most effective when the focus is on the daily routines that are necessary for the organization to continue to function, or in times of crisis. Conversely, transformational leadership includes the staff in the decision making process. The leader’s vision is adopted and supported, and the motivation for the staff is to see the vision carried out and successfully implemented. I believe it is more important for a leader to help produce more leaders, not more followers. Everyone has the potential to accomplish great things, and to have positive contributions to one’s organization. When decisions need to be made that affect the
educational community and the core beliefs of that community’s vision, transformational leadership is the best approach. As a transformational leader my goal is to inspire, motivate, and ultimately create resonance with the vision. It is not about where we currently stand, but the direction we are headed.

It is important that a leader is prepared to lead in any situation. It should be noted that successful leaders, according to the situational leadership theory, know how to determine which situation requires which leadership style. Leaders should be able to tap into one of the six styles in their repertoire. A truly balanced leader is able to assess the situation and innately be able to identify which leadership style is best suited for the desired outcome.

Goleman (2000) describes situational leadership as:

1) Visionary: The most positive of all the styles. Should be used when changes require a new vision, or when clear direction is needed. Moves people toward shared dreams.

2) Coaching: This style is also highly positive. Connects what a person wants with the organization’s goals. Improve employee performance by building long-term capabilities.

3) Affiliative: This style is positive. It creates harmony by connecting people to each other. This style is most useful when there is a rift between members; motivation needed during stressful times, and/or strengthen connections.

4) Democratic: This is a positive style that values people’s input and achieves commitment through participation.
5) Pacesetting: This style is used to get high quality results from a motivated and competent team.

6) Commanding: This leadership style is most effective during times of crisis when clear direction is needed to soothe fears. (p. 82-83).

When I first entered this program a year ago, I thought I was what Collins (2001) would refer to as a competent manager. A competent manager organizes people and resources toward the effective and efficient pursuit of pre-determined objectives. As the year went on, I learned what it meant to be a leader. I have grown into an effective leader, or a level four leader. An effective leader catalyzes commitment to a vigorous pursuit of a clear and compelling vision, stimulating higher performance standards. My personal goal is to attain true level five leadership, or the executive level. Although I have many of the traits of the executive leader, I am not quite there yet. An executive builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will.

A level five leader, according to Collins (2001), is one who leads with a constant balance of personal humility and a strong professional will. These individuals are very humble on a personal level, but possess serious drive and an unwavering desire to succeed. Success is not for personal gain or ego, but the desire to create something great that will remain sustainable even after the leader moves on. Level five leaders do not credit themselves as the cause for an organization’s success. In contrast, they will credit the people around them, or even cite luck, as the reason for success.

A glaring difference between the level four leaders and level five leaders is how they look at attaining their goal. A level four leader will take the reins, be the genius with a thousand helpers, set a vision for the organization, and then enlist helpers to make the
vision a reality. A level five leader follows a more democratic approach; she/he first gets the right people on the bus and builds a superior leadership team, and then collectively creates the vision (Collins, 2001). By creating a team of leaders, a leader can ensure that what he/she is striving to do impacts the culture and lives on well after he has left.

There were many other lessons on leadership that I learned from Collins (2001). The concepts are:

1. Confront the brutal facts but never lose faith. The Stockdale Paradox was a story of a former prisoner of war who survived by having an unwavering belief that he and his men would be rescued; however they acknowledged the gravity of the current situation. Level five leaders need to maintain a culture of unwavering faith that one can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties. However at the same time must confront the most brutal facts of the current reality, regardless of what that may be.

2. The hedgehog concept, maintaining simplicity within the three circles. This refers to the idea of excelling and embracing what the organization could be great at. Regardless of what has been done in the past, the leader needs to look ahead. To do this, the leader and leadership team must reflect on the three circles; what is the team deeply passionate about, what can the organization be the best at, and what drives the economic engine. Although the last of the circles is more relevant to businesses looking to make a profit, it can be connected to schools and how to best meet the needs of our students.
3. Put the best people on the biggest opportunity, not the biggest problem.

   Opportunities are what create growth in the organization. If the best people
   are always addressing the problems, many opportunities may slip away.

4. Creating a culture of discipline. One of the most prominent responsibilities of
   school leaders is to hire the right people for the job. This isn’t always the most
   impressive resume or the best interview but the character that the person
   possesses. Ultimately the school wants to create a culture of discipline.
   Disciplined people do not need hierarchy and disciplined thought does not
   need bureaucracy. When there is disciplined action, excessive controls are not
   necessary. Hiring the right people, or getting the right people on the bus,
   followed by quickly addressing bad hires, can go a long way to creating this
   culture. Disciplined people do not need to be micromanaged.

   Schools need level five leaders. A level four leader can turn a school around,
   improve scores, but fails to create enduring greatness. A level five leader creates a culture
   and surrounds himself with great teachers that are self disciplined, informed in
   professional inquiry and action that results in raising the bar and closing the gap by
   engaging all students in learning. The right people need to be led, not managed.

   Follower’s Role

   This portion of my leadership platform focuses on the followers within the
   organization. In this section, I define courageous followers, characteristics of successful
   teams, avoiding groupthink, and promoting positive culture.
The teachers, or followers, in an organization have great responsibility. Good followers can be described as people who think for themselves, exercise self-control, and are able to accept responsibility and obligation to the goal/vision. They believe in and care about what they are doing and thus are self-motivated to perform their responsibilities for what is right for the school and is aligned with vision.

True leadership involves going beyond just having followers aligned with the vision, it is pushing for attunement. The transformational leader that achieves attunement of the vision develops the vision with his/her followers. Followers are expected to adopt the vision, but truly effective and courageous followers are committed to the vision and will work diligently toward its successful implementation. It is the leader’s responsibility to know his/her followers’ strengths and weaknesses. As a leader, knowing the followers allows the leader to best address the weaknesses while utilizing their strengths.

A leader wisely learns the culture prior to any action. Learning the culture reveals its weaknesses and strengths. The strengths can be tapped into to drive the organization while the weaknesses need to be addressed and changed in time. The first step in learning the culture is looking at the organization through Bolman and Deal’s (2003) four lenses, or frames. Bolman and Deal, in their book *Reframing Organizations*, discuss how to break down the complex components of organizations into four frames. These four frames can be described as “windows” looking into the core of an organization. This includes the structural, human resources, political, and symbolic frames. Studying these four frames, and what they represent, allows the evaluator to discover what the organization truly stands for and what it hopes to accomplish.

Bolman and Deal's (2003) four frameworks can be further explained as:
1. **Structural Framework**: Leadership style is analysis and goal oriented. There is a strong focus on structure, strategy, environment, implementation, division of labor, and specialized roles. The leadership style is ideal for the completion of daily routines necessary for the organization to continue to function.

2. **Human Resource Framework**: Leadership style is support, advocacy, and empowerment. This is a family; the leader is visible and accessible. Shared leadership focuses on empowerment, increased participation, and support.

3. **Political Framework**: Leadership style is power based. Skills include bargaining, negotiation, compromise, and coercion if necessary.

4. **Symbolic Framework**: The leader is inspirational. Organizations are viewed as a stage to play certain roles and give impressions. These leaders use symbols to capture attention and communicate a vision. These organizations carry a rich culture of tradition and ritual.

My project will require leadership and change. Understanding the culture will reveal what change movements have been attempted and the success of those changes, potential roadblocks, how susceptible the members of the organization are to change, and the strengths and weaknesses of the organization.

Learning the organization’s culture requires further breaking the organization down into Schein’s (2004) three levels of culture. Leadership and culture, according to Schein, are two sides of the same coin. Schein’s three levels of culture are artifacts, espoused beliefs, and underlying assumptions:
1. Artifacts are at the surface, those aspects which can be easily discerned, but may be difficult to understand the significance. Artifacts could be the trophies on display, banners of achievement, and murals.

2. Espoused beliefs are conscious strategies, goals and philosophies. These are the mission statements, student handbook.

3. Basic Assumptions and Values. The core of culture is represented by the basic underlying assumptions and values. They are difficult to discern because they exist at a largely unconscious level. However they provide the key to understanding why things happen in a particular way. This could also be referred to as the hidden agenda.

Team-oriented leaders prioritize the development of more leaders and fewer followers. As leaders, we have to create an environment conducive for open communication amongst its members. Avoiding the symptoms of groupthink, as well as utilizing some of the suggestions within the article, would result in a team that can really make a difference and avoid continuing down bad paths based on poor decisions.

Groupthink (Author Unknown, 1971), occurs when a group makes faulty decisions because group pressures lead to a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment. Groups affected by groupthink ignore alternatives and are afraid to challenge ideas or create a culture of accountability.

As I move through my action cycles I will be relying on input from my participants. I need to ensure that they function as a team and avoid potential groupthink scenarios. There are eight symptoms of groupthink. These symptoms include:
• Illusion of invulnerability – Creates excessive optimism that encourages taking extreme risks.

• Collective rationalization – Members discount warnings and do not reconsider their assumptions.

• Belief in inherent morality – Members believe in the rightness of their cause and therefore ignore the ethical or moral consequences of their decisions.

• Stereotyped views of out-groups – Negative views of “enemy” make effective responses to conflict seem unnecessary.

• Direct pressure on dissenters – Members are under pressure not to express arguments against any of the group’s views.

• Self-censorship – Doubts and deviations from the perceived group consensus are not expressed.

• Illusion of unanimity – The majority view and judgments are assumed to be unanimous.

• Self-appointed ‘mindguards’ – Members protect the group and the leader from information that is problematic or contradictory to the group’s cohesiveness, view, and/or decisions.

As a leader, it is my responsibility to create a culture of constructive conflict, critical friends, and egoless leaders by establishing a team based on trust and accountability. Furthermore, Janis (1971) offers these suggestions for avoiding groupthink:

• Assign the role of critical evaluator to each member.

• Avoid stating preferences and expectations at the outset.
• One or more experts should be invited to each meeting on a staggered basis and encouraged to challenge views of the members.

• At least one articulate and knowledgeable member should be given the role of devil's advocate.

Reflection

Reflection is critical for reaching fullest potential whether one’s school role is student, teacher, or administrator. As a high school teacher working in a program for emotionally disturbed children, I require my students to consider their actions and their subsequent outcomes. Academically, I require my students to reflect on their assignments. Ultimately, the reflection helps them to become better students and realize their potential.

As an educator, I critically reflect on my lessons daily. I consider what I could have done better, what went well and what did not, and what I could do differently next time. Reflection equals growth: growth for me as an administrative leader, growth for teachers, and growth within the classroom.

I often reflect on my experiences that have brought me to this point in my career. From that reflection, two questions emerge: First, how did those experiences help me to grow as a teacher and as an educational leader? Secondly, was I indeed a courageous follower and were my experiences in line with the vision of my school? As a teacher I have been very involved in my school. I have chaired the committee that effectively transitioned away from a remedial summer school program to a summer school enrichment program. This enrichment program featured classes that better prepare middle
school students to life in the high school, higher level courses that better prepare students to meet the challenging demands of courses such as physics and chemistry, and courses geared toward equipping students with the proper tools to have success on standardized tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). I was part of a team that developed the Transitional Academic Program (TAPS), a program for emotionally disturbed students and the Design Committee on which I worked for two years to create a transition plan for the high school from a traditional eight period schedule to an alternating block schedule. I have worked on a variety of other committees including the Crisis Intervention Team, which researched and implemented a plan of action in the event that a crisis adversely affects the high school or surrounding community, and the Discipline Committee, which focused on revamping and updating the existing code of conduct. In addition, I meet regularly with students as they reach various benchmarks for excessive discipline in an attempt to work with them to correct the behavior and motivate them to get back on the “right track.” I have also developed a strong sense of the importance of community involvement during the seven years I worked as Key Club advisor.

There may be no such thing as a perfect leader, but it is our responsibility to constantly strive to evolve into the best leaders we can be. Good leaders are visionary, and are thus led by that vision. In a successful organization, the leader and followers share this same vision and strive to see it become a reality. The leader must motivate and inspire his followers to reach their fullest potential. The organization that reaches this level of success sees shared leadership between the leader and followers. This joint
ownership creates incentive for having an organization that continues to strive even after the leader moves on.

Leadership is necessary to successfully complete a change initiative. However, for the purpose of this project, leadership composes just the beginning. Chapter III will take an in depth look at the various theories on behavior management and classroom management plans.
CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The focus of my dissertation is classroom management. The word discipline is often associated with punishment, punitive measures taken against students in an attempt to alter the behavior of students within a classroom. Discipline is training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character. Generic Township High School has a code of conduct in place. The code of conduct clearly states what behaviors are considered inappropriate, as well as what responsive measures are to be taken. For example, disruption of a class by speaking out or being argumentative would result in an after-school detention. However, this form of discipline does not teach the students the appropriate way to behave. Furthermore, operating a classroom under the assumption that any infraction results in a discipline referral is not an effective strategy. A study conducted by Wong, Haertal, and Walberg reviewed 11,000 pieces of research that spanned 50 years regarding student learning (Marzano, 2003). From that research, 28 factors that influenced student learning were identified. The most important factor that was identified was classroom management. Wong and Wong (2005) highlight in their book, The First Days of School, “How you manage the classroom is the primary determinant of how well your students will learn” (p. 82). Wong and Wong’s findings beg the question: Are students in a learning environment conducive for successful learning without the teacher utilizing a classroom management plan?
Schools that are identified as well-disciplined schools all share similar characteristics. Classroom management and the code of conduct require commitment from the administration, teachers, and support staff to establish and maintain appropriate student behavior. Discipline requires as much planning and attention as an educator would give to the curriculum. Classroom management is essential for learning to take place. Setting the bar high in classroom assignments as well as high behavioral expectations are necessities.

The second finding is clear and broad-based rules. As Dewey’s (1994) democratic philosophy and Canters’ (2001) assertive discipline model state, the classroom rules, sanctions, and procedures are developed with input from students. These rules are clearly specified and clearly communicated to everyone in the class. According to Cotton (1990) and Canter (2001), student participation in developing the classroom rules creates a sense of ownership and belongingness, a result of clearly posting these rules and expectations; this way, both students and the teacher clearly understand the expectations of what is acceptable, and what is not.

A concern for students as individuals is vital to effective classroom management. Teachers and administrators need to take the time to develop a rapport with the students, take interest in their personal goals and achievements as well as the problems the students face, and support them in their personal academic and extracurricular endeavors (Cotton, 1990). In addition, Cotton’s study suggests the importance of empowering teachers. A supportive administrative team will handle major infractions while supporting teachers to handle minor infractions. This maintains the authority that the teacher has within the classroom. In addition, well-disciplined schools have highly visible
administrators. These administrators will patrol hallways and classrooms, talking informally with teachers and students, speaking to them by name, and expressing interest in their activities (Cotton, 1990).

This chapter is broken down into several subthemes discussing the various models of discipline that were utilized to create my research project.

Classroom Management

The 1998 Gallup Poll of the public’s attitude toward public school consistently identified lack of discipline as the most serious problem facing public schools (Marzano, 2003). Cotton (1990) estimates that half of classroom time is used dealing with classroom behavior problems leaving only the other half for instruction (Marzano, 2003). Marzano, in his book Classroom Management that Works, identifies classroom management as the most important factor that relates to student achievement. A well-managed classroom creates an atmosphere conducive for student learning. Marzano (2003) identifies several key components that separate teachers that are good classroom managers as opposed to those that are not. Some of those elements included the following:

- “Withitness” means a keen awareness of disruptive behavior or potentially disruptive behavior and immediate attention to that behavior.
- Smoothness and momentum during lesson presentations.
- Letting students know what behavior is expected of them at any given point in time.
- Variety and challenge in the seatwork assigned to students.
Rules and procedures are both very important as they pertain to classroom management. Rules identify general expectations or standards. A procedure, on the other hand, communicates expectations for specific behaviors. A rule may refer to respecting others in the class, whereas a procedure might identify the expected behavior for using the bathroom. Differing from Wong and Wong’s (2005) suggestion of limiting rules to five, Marzano (2003) identifies seven as the maximum allowed.

Marzano (2003) states the beginning and the end of each class are very important. Procedures are in place to make sure students get right to work, have all necessary materials, students who were absent have make up work, and attendance is taken. The end of the class sets the tone for the next day.

Procedures for transitions and interruptions in the class are important. Such transitions at the secondary level might include leaving the room for any number of reasons, returning to the room, fire drills, and split lunch blocks. Procedures need to be established for distributing materials, collecting materials, and storage for commonly used materials. Working in groups is a highly effective teaching practice but can open the door for potential misbehavior. It is important that students know what the expected behavior is during groupwork. A great way to teach expectations of groupwork is modeling the behavior.

Marzano (2003), backed by research, suggests it is important to involve students in the rule making process. The effective classroom manager simply does not impose rules. It is more of a democratic process. This goes against what Canter and Hunter (2001) and Wong and Wong (2005) suggest. Other theorists recognize the importance of
discussion in the importance of rules; however the classroom leader and manager are in charge and create the rules.

Discipline interventions include teacher reaction, tangible recognition, direct cost, group contingency, and home contingency. Teacher reaction encompasses making eye contact, physical cues, verbal reminders of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, and stimulus cueing. Research dictates that some of the most effective teacher reactions revolve around catching the student being good. Verbally praising the student, giving a pat on the back, or calling parents with positive news are all great ways of reinforcing good behavior. Tangible recognition is some form of material reward for doing something positive. Direct costs are more directed at negative consequences for breaking a classroom rule. This may include time outs or staying after school.

Group contingency are rewards aimed at a larger group, for instance, the class as a whole. Peer pressure encourages students to do the right thing. Some theorists question if this is the right thing to do. Marzano (2003) responds by using this strategy carefully and in moderation. Home contingency requires direct contact with the home. This is highly effective for both reinforcing positive behavior and correcting negative behavior.

As the teacher, it is important to exhibit a level of dominance, clearly establishing the role as a leader in the classroom. When dealing with a student who has broken a rule, body language, eye contact, and physical proximity are important to recognize. For instance, it is a good practice to maintain eye contact and face the students, however, it is important not to stand too close to the student. Another way to demonstrate leadership is to clearly establish learning goals at the beginning of the lesson.
Good classroom management also relates to developing a rapport with the students. Teachers must empower the students in their education, get to know the students, and act with integrity consistently. Good practices include actions as small as meeting and greeting the students at the door.

The teacher is also responsible for taking into account what the students might be dealing with outside the classroom. This includes poverty, divided homes, language barriers, and students with special needs.

According to Marzano (2003), another component of classroom management is a teacher’s mental set. “Withitness” as described by Marzano (2003), is the ability to identify and quickly act on potential behavioral problems. Emotional objectivity is the ability to interact with students in a businesslike, matter of fact manner, even though the teacher may be experiencing strong emotions. This is especially important when disciplining a student.

Marzano (2003) also recognizes the importance of teaching students their responsibility in classroom management and decision-making. One strategy is conducting class meetings. Class meetings would require planning on the part of the teacher. This planning would require learned procedures and rules, such as who can call the meeting and that no names can be used. Class meetings help contribute to students learning decision-making strategies as well as conflict management skills. Classrooms should have a statement of beliefs expressing student rights, such as the right to learn and the courage to answer a question without fear of being embarrassed. Self-reflection is also a powerful tool for growth. Encouraging students to fill out forms of reflection or open dialogue with the teacher and/or classmates can help teach and encourage responsibilities.
Marzano (2003) stresses the importance of getting off to a good start. The first few days of school are vital for teaching rules and procedures and setting the precedent early. Effective classroom management is determined by:

1. Organizing the classroom.
2. Planning and teaching rules and procedures.
3. Developing student accountability.
4. Maintain good student behavior through positive reinforcement.
5. Planning and organizing challenging and meaningful classroom activities and instruction.
6. Conducting instruction and maintaining momentum.
7. Getting off to a good start.

Assertive Discipline

Assertive discipline, as a concept, was created by Canter and Hunter (2001). It is a method for disciplining that focuses on encouraging positive behavior, formulating a discipline plan, and teaching the students the appropriate way to behave and to make better decisions. The word assertive is defined as to state or express positively. According to Canter and Hunter (2001), “An assertive teacher sets consistent, positive behavioral limits while providing warmth and support to students for their appropriate behavior” (p. 37). Being assertive is the foundation of this method to effective classroom management. The purpose of this model is not to punish poor behavioral choices but to prevent them from occurring.

Canter and Hunter (2001) Assertive Discipline model has four main objectives:
- A set of consistent and firm but fair rules set by the teacher.
- A set of negative consequences set by the teacher for inappropriate behavior.
- A set of positive responses to be set by the teacher for positive behavior.
- The teacher is to create a plan for implementation of the negative and positive consequences for the rules.

Assertive discipline begins with, and focuses on, the role of the teacher. Regardless of how long a teacher has taught, grade level, and/or population of students taught, an individual chose to teach to make a difference in children’s lives and allow them to reach their full potential academically, personally, and socially. Students face many challenges in their home lives that affect the way they behave in class. Often times, students are put in situations where they negotiate their way to adulthood without guidance from their parents. As a result, teachers must fill that role (Canter and Hunter, 2001).

Students need to know the behavioral expectations. Expectations must be clearly stated in a manner that leaves room for zero interpretations. Students cannot be put in a situation where they have to guess what is expected. Responsible behavior must be taught because “True success and increased self-esteem occur when students first learn how you expect them to behave and then choose that behavior on their own” (Canter & Hunter, 2001, p. 25).

Assertive discipline is a proactive approach to discipline. Discipline, expectations, and rules must be taught early in the school year and reinforced throughout. Classroom management must be approached with as much thought and planning as lesson planning. In short, a discipline plan must be created prior to the students walking in on the first day. Being prepared and having this plan assures the teacher will not resort to reactive
discipline that is inconsistent and ineffective. Reactive responses to discipline lose sight of the goal of behavior management: stopping undesired behavior and teaching appropriate behavior (Canter & Hunter, 2001, p. 37).

In the assertive discipline program, there has to be balance between structure and caring. Students need to know the teacher cares about them if this program is to work. Building relationships based on trust and compassion is the motivation behind the students wanting to change their behavior. These relationships take time to develop. As a result, early in the year is when the teacher must be very strict in following his/her discipline plan.

A discipline plan consists of three components: rules, supportive feedback, and corrective action. The rules a teacher puts in place should be observable, clearly understood by students, and limited in numbers. Rules are different from goals in that goals are long-range behaviors that compromise the culture of the school. Goals are open to interpretation and are not easily observable. All of these behaviors are observable and can be in effect at all times. Examples of rules are:

- Follow directions
- Keep your hands to yourself
- No swearing, teasing, or put-downs
- Be in your seat when the bell rings (Canter & Hunter, 2001)

Part two of a discipline plan is supportive feedback. Supportive feedback can be described as sincere and meaningful attention that would provide encouragement for a student behaving according to your expectations. Supportive feedback encourages students to continue behaving appropriately, increases student
self-esteem, reduces behavior problems, and creates a positive classroom atmosphere (Canter & Hunter, 2001).

Students that do not get the attention they crave at home will seek it in the classroom. Consequently, if a student does not get attention for doing positive things, he/she will act out to receive negative attention. For assertive discipline to be successful, a teacher must make positive feedback a major part of the discipline plan. Creating a positive relationship with the students lets the students know the teacher cares about their life inside and outside of the classroom.

Supportive feedback consists of verbal recognition, positive notes or calls to the home, behavior rewards, special privileges, and tangible rewards. Rewards provide the students with positive attention for positive behavior. Contact with the parents for positive behavior sets the foundation for a positive working relationship. Another powerful tool is class-wide supportive feedback, or rewarding the class for their positive behavior. The focus remains on positive attention and recognition for positive behavior.

Corrective actions round out the discipline plan. Corrective actions are the consequences to the student’s choice to break a rule. It is important that the corrective action is viewed as the student’s choice. For example, a teacher might say, “Because you made the decision to use your cell phone in class, which you know is against the rules; I am issuing you a warning.” This puts the responsibility squarely in the hands of the student.

Corrective actions must be something the students do not like, but never physically or psychologically harmful in any way. They are fundamental for self-management and do not have to be severe to be effective. Punishments are different
from corrective actions in that punishments generally take the form of criticism, humiliation, or even physical pain. Punishment is ineffective in assertive discipline in that the relationship developed with the students is based on trust and respect. Punishment breeds resentment and to utilize this in the classroom management plan will do so at the expense of student self-esteem and growth (Canter & Hunter, 2001).

When planning the corrective actions, a hierarchy of discipline and offenses should be created. The hierarchy can consist of five levels starting with a warning and leading up to having a parent contacted and possible removal from the classroom. There should also be a severe behavior clause in effect that deals with severe infractions such as fighting. The severe clause’s consequences can have the student immediately removed from the classroom.

Characteristics of Discipline Problems

Consequences to breaking the rules should commensurate with the offense committed. The consequence must be viewed by the student as a punishment. If the consequence is too light or too severe, it will not be effective. Frequently used consequences, according to Cotton’s research, are loss of some privilege, mobility, or company of friends (Cotton, 1990).

Research covered in the Cotton (1990) article depicted how important it is to demonstrate these characteristics from the beginning of the year. Teachers that did not demonstrate these strategies from the beginning found it very difficult to regain control later in the year.
Gaustaud (1992) referenced Johns Hopkins University researchers, Gary D. Gottfredson and Denise C. Gottfredson conducted research on what challenges schools face pertaining to classroom management and effective discipline. They analyzed data from over 600 of the nation's secondary schools. The researchers found that the following school characteristics were associated with discipline problems:

Rules were unclear or perceived as unfairly or inconsistently enforced; students did not believe in the rules; teachers and administrators did not know what the rules were or disagreed on the proper responses to student misconduct; teacher-administration cooperation was poor or the administration inactive; teachers tended to have punitive attitudes; misconduct was ignored; and schools were large or lacked adequate resources for teaching (Gaustaud, 1992, para. 4).

Gaustaud’s (1992) research concluded that in order for schools to maintain effective discipline, in and out of the classroom, certain characteristics need to be present. Rules need to be clearly communicated to staff, students, and parents. These rules must be enforced consistently, fairly/equitably, and promptly. Larger schools need to be broken down into smaller schools, small learning communities, in order to develop closer relationships between students, teachers, and administrators.

Teachers should utilize positive reinforcement to the students who demonstrate appropriate behavior. Many educators, especially in secondary settings, assume students know how to behave appropriately. This assumption in many cases is untrue. Expected behavior must be taught.

Administrative leadership was also very prevalent in effective discipline. Principals of well-disciplined students are usually highly visible within the school. They
engage in management by walking around, greeting students and teachers, and informally monitoring possible problem areas. Effective principals are liked and respected, rather than feared, and communicate caring for students as well as willingness to impose punishment if necessary. I found this to be a theme in my readings and research as it pertains to the principal’s role in the school (Gaustaud, 1992).

According to the study done by Ellis and Karr-Kidweel (1995), conflict resolution was not prevalent in assertive discipline. Assertive discipline’s goal is to eliminate poor behavioral choices and to teach the students the appropriate way to learn in a classroom. Conflict resolution teaches the student how to handle confrontational situations when they arise, without resorting to violent behavior. In Ellis and Karr-Kidweel’s (1995) article, teachers trained in conflict resolution have two benefits: the first is the willingness to assume responsibility, and the second is effective control of the behavior.

Although the argument for conflict resolution has some validity since my findings on assertive discipline do not focus on handling conflicts other than utilizing the severe clause in the hierarchy, assertive discipline demonstrates characteristics of what Covaleskie (1994) reports on Dewey’s democratic approach. Assertive discipline is not just giving orders and expecting them to be followed, as Dewey describes in the previous statement. In most instances, behavior management is taught through a smorgasbord approach. Teachers are instructed to find whichever one works for them, within their classroom setting. Canter (n.d.) states:

Such an approach to training teachers in behavior management is analogous to a swimming class in which non-swimmers are briefly introduced - without practice - to the crawl stroke, the breast stroke, the back stroke, and the side stroke; then
they are rowed to the middle of a lake, tossed overboard, and told to swim to shore, using whatever stroke works for them. In effect, we're telling teachers to sink or swim, and too many teachers are sinking. (para. 24)
CHAPTER IV

GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

When training teachers in assertive discipline, Canter and Hunter (2001) identify five steps: recognizing and removing roadblocks, practicing the use of assertive response styles, learning to set limits within the classroom, learning to follow through on limits, and implementing a system of positive assertions.

First, the trainer must recognize and remove roadblocks that stand in the way of teachers responding to assertive discipline. Negative experiences of students, involving poor health, home, personality, genes, past history, and/or environment, lead to the expectation that they will act out and misbehave. These potential factors should not impact a teacher’s response to unacceptable behavior. Disruptive behavior violates the rights of that child’s peers and teacher to maintain an atmosphere for learning. Teachers must recognize that they can impact the behavior in the classroom in a very positive way regardless of what problems the child might possess. This is where Lewin’s change theory, as described by Wirth (2004), unfreeze, mold, refreeze, would be effective. During the unfreezing process, this misconception would have to be addressed and altered during the molding phase. To achieve this, a teacher needs to remember the following three points by Canter and Hunter (2001):

- All students need limits. It is the teacher’s right and responsibility to set them. Teachers are admired who have high expectations, set high standards, and stick to them.
- Teachers have the right to ask for and receive assistance from parents and principals.
- Not all students respond to a blanket approach to classroom management. Students might require special incentive programs or behavior modification programs.

Second, teachers must practice the use of assertive response styles. Canter and Hunter (2001) differentiate among three response styles: nonassertive, hostile, and assertive. Nonassertive, or passive teachers fail to clearly establish standards of behavior. They are inconsistent in dealing with behaviors and often fail to back up words with appropriate action. Hostile teachers typically shout, use threats, and/or sarcasm when dealing with student discipline infractions. Hostile and passive teaching styles should not be utilized as they are not effective and often violate the rights of the students.

The assertive teacher sets clear expectations, limits, rules, and consequences. Students are taught appropriate behavior, and when they comply they are rewarded with positive reinforcement. When the students make the choice to misbehave, they are handled in a clear, prompt, consistent, and fair way.

Teachers need to set limits, regardless of what the activity is. An assertive teacher needs to be cognizant of what behaviors are desired and required from the students. Prior to any activity, the teacher must specifically address what behaviors are expected from the students. When the teacher observes good behavior, it is time to praise the student. Positive praise should be used frequently. In some situations, tangible rewards or special privileges may be utilized to further reward the child for positive behavior. When negative behavior is exhibited, it should not be ignored. It should be handled with a firm reminder of what is expected. If misbehavior continues, it should be handled by moving up the preplanned hierarchy of consequences. When disciplining a student, it is important
for a teacher to remember to make eye contact, use the students’ names (especially if the student is across the room), and utilize the broken record ploy, which requires the teacher to continue to repeat the response verbatim repeatedly, if the student is making excuses (Canter & Hunter, 2001).

Teachers must learn to follow consistently through on limits. Limits are defined as the positive demands a teacher has made on his/her students. Teachers must consistently follow through with positive reinforcement for good behavior or corrective action in response to poor behavioral choices. Teachers must have established criteria for consequences in advance, as well as responses to possible behavior. These responses should be practiced (The Canter and Jones Models, n.d.).

The fifth step to training teachers in assertive discipline is implementing a system of positive assertions. When positive reinforcement is used on a regular basis, teacher influence with students increases, the quantity of negative behavior is reduced, and the classroom environment is a positive one.

Wong and Wong (2005) start with the premise, “Effective teachers manage their classroom. Ineffective teachers discipline their classrooms” (p. 83). The basic concept is that teachers are responsible for organizing a well-managed classroom where the focus is on a task-oriented environment. Establishing this type of an environment starts with preparation. Preparation leads to a structured and consistent environment. This needs to be the focus from day one, and especially the focus of the first week of school. Students need to learn the procedures, rules, and consequences of the choices they make early on.

Classroom management encompasses much more than just discipline. Preparation and classroom management refers to more than simply setting rules. Classroom
management refers to all of the things a teacher does to organize students, space, time, and the materials used in class that need to be present for student learning to take place. A well-managed classroom has structure controlled by a set of procedures and routines. A well-managed classroom has many visible characteristics. The classroom is well laid out, organized, and clean. The materials are accessible and neatly stored. The teacher is facilitating a student-oriented task that displays efficiency, knowledge, and friendliness. Too often, teachers mistake teaching for simply providing an activity and disciplining when a problem arises.

An ideal classroom reflects the following, according to Wong and Wong (2005):

- Students are actively engaged and working.
- Students know that the assignments and tests are based on objectives. Objectives are clearly communicated.
- Teacher has established procedures and routines that the students follow. Part of those routines and procedures include an engaging activity for students to do as they enter the room and begin class. Assignments for the class are posted where the students can see them. These procedures and routines have been carefully planned by the teacher and practiced until they become common practice.
- Teacher utilizes praise and positive reinforcement to encourage positive behavior.

A task-oriented and predictable environment is a characteristic of effective classroom management. Preparation prior to the first student walking in is a key factor. Confusion, boredom, and no direction lead to misbehavior. Minimizing student misbehavior is
pivotal in creating an atmosphere conducive for maximized student learning. A successful teacher has desks in an appropriate arrangement, books and papers needed ready to be disseminated, assignments posted, and any other miscellaneous materials accounted for prior to the bell ringing.

Setting up the classroom should also be done with classroom management in mind. Desks should be arranged appropriately for each activity. For instance, when going over class rules, routines, and procedures, desks should be arranged so that all eyes are on the teacher. Wall space should be used effectively to display rules and routines, but also for student work, assignments, objectives, and other important information.

Classroom management is also about communicating teacher expectations. Wong and Wong (2005) stress the importance of the teacher sending home a letter before school begins introducing the teacher and expressing expectations and goals for the year. This serves as an early introduction of the teacher and the course to parents and students. The first day of school sets the precedent for the whole year. Students have many questions and it is important to put their minds at ease to build an early rapport. Wong and Wong (2005) identify seven common concerns students stress about in the first days of school that create anxiety:

1. Am I in the right room?
2. Where am I supposed to sit?
3. How will I be graded?
4. What will I be doing this year?
5. Who is the teacher as a person?
6. What are the rules in this classroom?
7. Will the teacher treat me as a human being?

Easing these anxieties is a great way to start the year on the right foot. Warmly greeting the students at the door, posting much of this information on the board, and the pre-letter are great ways to ease these anxieties. This also is the first step to establishing the teacher’s routines such as how to enter a room and immediate expectations for starting the class with an activity.

A teacher’s opening speech to the class is also very important and choice of words and content should be planned out prior to seeing students the first time. Express expectations in this opening dialogue will also set an early tone for the year. Seating arrangements should coincide with the design of the task. Assigned seating allows the teacher more control, separates potential problems, and allows the teacher to learn names quicker.

Housekeeping, such as taking attendance, should not involve the students. An effective strategy is doing these housekeeping activities while the student is busy doing the warm up or do-now activity. Posting the teacher’s assignments for the students to see is another great way to get the students working immediately. However, this needs to be a routine taught, and assignments would need to be posted in the same place each day. The beginning of the class are considered prime time; it sets the tone for the class and the students are very curious as to what lesson the day brings.

Gradebooks should be reflections of students’ growth. Gradebooks should be set up to assist teacher in attendance, grades, and parent contacts. Having all of this information kept up to date and at the teacher’s fingertips allows the teacher to recognize red flags or negative trends so an intervention may be utilized. Also, documenting
discipline notes can reflect positive progress in order to appropriately utilize positive reinforcement for encouragement.

Wong and Wong (2005) state: “The research shows that the most effective schools are those with a well-ordered environment and high academic expectations” (p. 86). Rules are important for a variety of reasons. Rules are expectations of appropriate student behavior. The rules should be clearly communicated verbally and in written form as well as posted in the room. Rules come in two forms: general rules and specific rules. When creating a set of classroom rules, no more than three to five rules at a time. Rules can be replaced as they become “unwritten” rules during the course of the year if a new rule presents itself as necessary.

General rules are more encompassing and may cover more than one behavior. For example, respecting others and behaving in the media center are examples of general rules. Veteran teachers with prior classroom management experiences are more likely to utilize general rules. They offer the advantage of flexibility and broadness of coverage.

Specific rules are to the point and clearly cover just one specific rule. Being in class on time is an example. The advantage of specific rules is that they clearly state the expected behavior with no room for interpretation. The downside is that a teacher has to carefully think of the rules they wish to post because he/she can only post five.

In review of rules, Wong and Wong (2005) state the following:

- Rules are carefully planned for what the teacher wants to accomplish.
- Rules have been written to assist in accomplishing the goals.
- Rules, along with consequences and rewards, have been posted and sent home for parental support and awareness.
Student involvement in creating rules should be minimal if at all. More importantly, students should be a part of the discussion on why rules are important. Students must buy in to the importance of the rules. Rules are in place to keep students safe and protected, and to create and maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning. Students will test the rules and it is vital that the teacher enforces all rules, from the first class. If a student attempts to engage the teacher in a debate or argument over rule violation, it is important the teacher simply explains that the student chose to break the rule. This statement is short, to the point, and uses the broken record strategy (Wong & Wong, 2005).

After rules have been established, it is important to attach consequences to those rules. It is the student’s choice to either follow or not to follow the rules. Like all choices, this decision is accompanied by a consequence whether good or bad. It is important the students know it is about choice. When a student breaks a rule, he/she makes a conscious choice to accept the negative consequence.

Consequences should be posted and communicated to the students. The students should be made aware of what will happen each time they choose not to follow a rule. There should be a hierarchy of consequences, ranging from the first time they break a rule to eventually being removed from the class. Likewise, it is the responsibility of the teacher to keep track of all students and their discipline. Phone calls home are generally highly effective, for both negative and positive consequence, and keep vital parental involvement strong.

It is important that the teacher does not stop instruction when giving out a consequence. When the teacher sees a violation, he/she immediately gives out the
penalty. However, it must be done quietly while instruction is still being given. The teacher must either list names on the board, in a grade book, or somewhere else quickly and efficiently.

Predetermined rules followed consistently each class, and having consequences listed and clearly communicated, keep discipline efficient, consistent, and fair. Most of all, it keeps the discipline process equitable. A well-managed classroom is based on procedures. Procedures are different than rules. Rules have consequences. A procedure is simply a way something is appropriately done. Procedures encompass everything from what to do when a bell rings, where to find assignments when absent, and where to look for the daily assignments. A teacher with a well-thought-out classroom management plan prepares. This preparation includes which procedures need to be taught that are pertinent to the class.

There are three steps to consider when teaching a procedure. First, the teacher must explain the procedure. The teacher needs to state, model, and demonstrate the procedure. Step two is rehearsing the procedure. If necessary, the teacher may have the students model the procedure under the supervision of the teacher. Finally, the teacher must reinforce the procedure until it becomes habit and routine. Procedures that are followed correctly should be rewarded with praise and positive reinforcement.

In summing up Wong and Wong’s (2005) work, classroom management involves procedures for everyday activities, rules to follow to ensure safety, and a classroom atmosphere conducive for learning. Additionally, consequences must be in place to respond to the students’ decisions. The time a teacher uses to prepare prior to the first class is crucial. Finally the importance of communication with students, parents, and
administration about classroom expectations and the classroom management plan is of the utmost importance for a successful learning environment.

The next chapter will serve as a blueprint for my project. I will outline the action cycles, context, and setting, as well as the participants and how they were chosen. Information from Chapter II and Chapter III will inform my study and my leadership of the project.
CHAPTER V
METHODOLOGY

The basis for my action research project was researching, observing, and implementing a classroom management plan to gain a better understanding of what practices, when implemented correctly and consistently, create a sound educational atmosphere conducive to learning. Classroom management, according to Wong and Wong (2005), is the number one reason affecting the learning environment. Mehta (2009) suggests one of the top reasons why teachers are deemed unsuccessful or leave the profession is inability to effectively manage a classroom.

Components of a classroom management plan were established based on the research found in the existing literature. These components include rules, procedures, hierarchy of consequences, and communicated expectations. These components served as a guideline for 18 consenting teachers and were implemented within their classes.

The purpose of this action research is to answer the following research questions:

• How does implementing a classroom management plan impact the learning environment as measured by teacher feedback?
• How does implementing a classroom management plan impact the quantity of discipline referrals submitted?
• How does implementing a classroom management plan impact the learning environment as measured by student attendance?
• Which components of the classroom management plan have been identified as effective/ineffective in managing the behavior within a high school classroom?
• How does positive communication home affect student behavior and motivation in the classroom?
• How has my leadership style evolved as a result of this action research project?

Setting

Generic Township High School is a large high school located in the suburban community of Generic Township. The school serves approximately 1,600 students. The staff is composed of 182 teachers, eight department coordinators, three assistant principals, and one principal. Academically, Generic Township High School provides a diverse program of studies in which students may choose from over 195 courses. Advanced placement and honors classes are offered across the curriculum to challenge the high achieving students. The special education department is the largest in the school, providing programs that are designed to meet the needs of students needing additional support in the classroom. Special programs such as Project Rebound and Transitional Academic Program (TAPS) provide alternative programs designed to meet the needs of students who need a highly structured and differentiated means of delivering the curriculum. In addition, the high school has a state of the art distance learning lab, designed to enable students to take classes from other educational sites, thus expanding the course offerings. The high school offers state of the art technology which allows the teaching staff to provide instruction with creativity and flexibility, as well as best prepare the students for success beyond high school.
The school day at GTHS is 6 hours, 33 minutes. Ninety-seven percent of students speak English, 1% speak Spanish. In 2008, there was a graduation rate of 98% compared to the state average of 89.3%. Ninety percent go on to a two or four year school. Two hundred and nine students earned a 3 or higher on various AP testing out of the 303 students who took an AP exam. The average attendance is 94.1%, which is comparable to state average. School suspensions rose from 14% to 20% during the 2008/2009 school year. The state average was 14%. The average per pupil cost is $15,345. Generic Township High School recognizes the school motto of “excellence is our expectation.” The variety of academic programs, alternative academic programs, and co-curricular activities meet the needs of our student body and take the learning environment above and beyond the classroom.

Research Design

According to Hinchey (2008), “Action research always begins with a local question and explores local content, seeking local rather than global insight” (p. 32). Generic Township High School’s administration received almost 4,000 discipline referrals during the 2008/2009 school year. This statistic represents on average 250 referrals per 100 students. Reducing this number has been a goal for almost the last decade in the high school as described in the Accreditation for Growth (AFG) school accreditation report from 2002, goal number 2.

Calhoun (1994) describes the action research cycle as involving “defining a problem, collecting data, organizing data, and taking action” (p. 2). The number of referrals is high. Each referral represents an incident when the teacher could not handle
the infraction within the classroom and was forced to interrupt the educational process by bringing an administrator in to handle the incident. Through professional development, the teachers could learn more effective strategies in dealing with these occurrences to reduce the incidents in quantity thus reducing the quantity of discipline referrals.

This study will require both a quantitative and qualitative research, otherwise known as a mixed methodology approach. Mixed methods research is a blend of both qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative research “is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). Qualitative research focuses on the how and why of the topic. Qualitative research focuses on interviews, observations, human interaction, and non-statistical data collection techniques. This collected information must then be coded by the researcher to identify recurring themes and important information. Quantitative research focuses on the collection and interpretation of hard data (Creswell, 2009).

Quantitative research focuses on counts and measures of hard data whereas qualitative utilizes the power of interviewing and observation. Qualitative research is exploratory and open-ended, seeking the participants’ perceptions, feelings, and opinions (Creswell, 2009).

Data Collection

*Quantitative Data Collection*

I monitored the quantity of discipline referrals submitted by the 18 participants in the study during the course of all action research cycles. I compared the average number submitted by participants to the average of the staff that was not privy to the professional
development of the 18 participants. Surveys were also utilized to gauge snapshots of the teacher’s attitudes towards the classroom management plans (see Appendices B and C).

**Qualitative Data Collection**

Quantitative data collection may be helpful in certain situations; however, to truly understand the effectiveness of a program like classroom management, it is important to observe the process firsthand and listen to the voices of those actually implementing it. Similar to the power of authentic leadership and leading by example, the leader needs to be involved at the classroom level, working with teachers. Qualitatively, the participants took part in biweekly roundtables to discuss how the classroom management plans were working, observations were made throughout the various action research cycles, and individuals as well as groups were surveyed.

Qualitatively, the participants were observed within their classrooms. As the researcher, I assert it is important to observe the interactions between the teacher and students especially when it pertains directly to classroom management. Random observations were conducted and a post-observation meeting took place to debrief what transpired. The observations were coded to identify the components of the classroom management plan, components of the lesson, and student disruptions. Classroom observations were scheduled throughout the year.

Interviews were also utilized as part of the qualitative research. It was important to interview the participants in order to gauge effectiveness from their vantage point (see Appendix A). Since the participants were given guidelines to follow in creating their personal classroom management plans, the initial interview focused on bridging the gap between the information and guidelines that were presented to the participants in the form
of professional development and how they utilized that information to plan accordingly. Further interviews took place throughout the year. Teacher’s names were kept confidential and anonymous.

Cycle I

For the purpose of action research Cycle I, the participants were trained in effective classroom management strategies and created a classroom management plan for their classroom (see sample in Appendix E). As the professional developer, I reflected on my leadership throughout the training. A journal was kept logging what training I provided, how the participants responded, and my leadership style. This cycle was qualitative in nature.

Cycle II

In action research Cycle II, the 18 teacher participants implemented the classroom management plans they created following the guidelines established. I reviewed each participant’s classroom management plan to ensure all criteria had been met.

Qualitatively, my plan was to conduct group and individual interviews. The real substance of my project came from these interviews as the teachers were the ones actually utilizing classroom management plans. Observations were also utilized to triangulate the findings from the interviews. To assist in limiting bias, surveys were also implemented. These hard data reinforced the responses attained from the interviews and observations.
Quantitatively, in addition to the survey, data on teacher discipline referrals were collected and analyzed for comparing the average number of referrals issued from the 18 participants to the staff average as a whole. It was determined by the researcher and participants that utilizing the previous year’s referrals as a baseline would create validity issues. Thus, comparing the average referrals submitted to administration from the nonparticipating staff was determined to be more effective.

Cycle III

Cycle III utilized the same 18 teachers and was implemented over the final 2 months of the school year. This action cycle was geared towards taking a closer look at research question three:

- How does positive parental communication home and positive reinforcement within the classroom effect classroom management?

The teachers attended a professional development on positive reinforcement. I wished to study the effects of positive reinforcement within the class as well as when it is communicated to parents. The 18 participants were asked to make weekly phone calls home to communicate something positive. The goal was that all the students would earn a phone call home during the course of the study.

As the researcher, I conducted individual interviews with each teacher to gauge if the positive communication had altered the classroom environment. I also conducted some observations after the communication was made. In an effort to eliminate bias, I also used surveys to triangulate the data I collected from the interviews and observations.
Participants

A purposeful, non-random, sample of convenience was conducted of the teachers of Generic Township High School. The high school currently employs 182 teachers; 18 were selected to participate in the study. Those 18 teachers represent both new and veteran teachers (five years or more) and represent all the core subjects taught (math, science, history, and language arts). After consent was given, the teachers were trained and provided with the guidelines to follow when creating a classroom management plan. The focus of this study was to identify what the participants created for their classroom management plans, the thought process they followed, and how effective it had been. The case study of these 18 teachers serves as a foundation piece for my action research. The practices they used following the guidelines from the literature review were used to create a professional development document to use with new and veteran teachers in Generic Township High School.

Model for Change

The change process I chose to follow for my project is Kotter’s (1996) eight-step change model. There are eight stages within this model: the first calls for creating a sense of urgency. Teachers in my district have not been trained in any specific classroom management techniques and in turn handle disruptions reactively, as opposed to being proactive.

Step one of Kotter’s (1996) model calls for creating a sense of urgency. For change to happen, the members of the organization must be involved in the change, and really want it, or buy-in. For this to happen, the leader must create a sense of urgency. A
sense of urgency can be created by opening an honest and convincing dialogue about what is transpiring in the classroom. Simply showing statistics for discipline referrals is not enough. If the members of the organization begin discussing proposed change, urgency can build and feed on itself.

To create a sense of urgency, I opened honest candid discussion on what transpires during a class. One of the questions was: “What causes students to act the way they do?” Research indicates that students act out because of a number of factors. Some of those factors are:

- Media showcases violence, disrespect for authority, and a casual attitude toward sex and profanity.
- The frenetic pace of media causes the development of short neural pathways, not the long ones needed for school.
- Social skills are not as commonly taught in the home as they were 25 years ago.
- The lesson is not engaging.

Teachers need to change with the times and adjust the way they handle classroom management. Classroom management is just that: managing the class. Disruptions need to be minimized and controlled. Disciplining of students needs to be handled equitably and promptly. Teachers need to be proactive in their approach. Classroom management requires as much planning as daily lessons.

To support the honest and candid discussions, I also supplied data to support the amount of discipline referrals handled by assistant principals. This served two purposes. First, each referral represented a disruption to the learning environment. Secondly, most
referrals were repeat offenders, which supports the philosophy of assertive discipline. This implied that some of the students truly do not know what to do in certain situations and need clear direction and expectations.

Kotter’s (1996) step two calls for the formation of a powerful coalition. Convincing people that change is necessary requires strong leadership and visible support from key people within the organization. Change cannot be managed; change requires leadership. The coalition should consist of a team of influential people whose power comes from a variety of sources. These sources include title, status, expertise, and political importance. After the coalition is formed, the team needs to work together to build the urgency around the change. I had been building this coalition through the planning phase by reaching and gaining the approval and support of my building administration and central administration.

Step three is creating a vision for change. Grant Wiggins says this vision must be like architects’ blueprints (G. Wiggins, personal communication, January 2009). The vision is so clear the finished product can be visualized without a single brick having been laid and so specific it is down to the last screw. A vision must be powerful and the members of the organization must buy in to it; buying in also happens when the members of the organization formulate the vision together.

Step four is communicating the vision. This step is very important because what the leader does with his/her vision will determine success. The vision must be communicated frequently and powerfully and embedded in everything you do.

Step five requires the removal of obstacles. Questions arise at this step: “Is anyone resisting the change?” “Are there any processes or structures that are getting in
the way of the change effort?” These questions need to be visited and any obstacles need to be addressed immediately and dealt with.

Step five is difficult to plan for in advance due to the fact that I was unsure which obstacles would arise until the change process is underway. What I could do was acknowledge that obstacles would arise and be prepared to handle them head on. As the leader, I planned on incorporating classroom visits, weekly feedback, and open dialogue to be proactive with potential problems.

Step six calls for the creation of short-term wins. As Kotter (1996) implies, nothing motivates more than success. Short-term wins keep the critics and negative thinkers at bay. Although it is important to keep the focus on the end result, short-term wins keep the momentum moving in the right direction. The short-term wins were easy to monitor and acknowledge. Feedback on a weekly and monthly basis dictated the success of the program and trainings. The feedback was also supported by data: the amount of referrals sent to the assistant principals.

Step seven calls for building on the change. Kotter (1996) argues that too many change projects fail because victory is declared too early. Second-order change becomes part of the new culture. Short-term wins are only the beginning of what needs to be done to achieve long-term change. Each new success provides an opportunity to build on what was successful and where improvement could be made.

Kotter (1996) suggests that after every win, the participants must analyze what went right and what needs improving. It is the responsibility of the leader to continue to set goals that continue building on the momentum achieved. Finally, ideas must be kept fresh by bringing in new change agents and leaders for your change coalition.
My goal is that once the pioneers have established the change as part of the culture it will gain enough momentum that the rest of the staff will wish to follow. If the result of my action research dissertation sparks this type of momentum, I will truly feel it was successful.

Step eight requires anchoring the change. When the change affects the culture it will remain long after the leader moves on. It is important for the leader to talk about progress and tell success stories about the change process.

Significance of the Study

Classroom management has consistently been identified via research studies as one of the most important factors in producing and maintaining a sound education atmosphere conducive for learning. The quantity of discipline referrals in this school has been targeted since 2002 as needing improvement. Research on this topic that identifies components of an effective classroom management plan and what factors lead to success could benefit teachers within my district via future professional development.

Reducing Bias

To eliminate bias, I did not include my own class in the study. I relied on interviews and surveys to triangulate with the observations conducted. By triangulating the data, the opportunity for bias to be entered is severely limited.
Next Steps

By utilizing the research I have done for this project as well as my future findings, I hope to create a classroom management plan resource for the teachers in Generic Township School District.
CHAPTER VI
RESULTS

Data Collection

I am entering my ninth year at Generic High School as a special education teacher. Although I have been a part of many reform initiatives and committees in the past, this is my first experience as the driving force behind a change initiative. Cycle I overlaps both Cycles II and III and consists of the two main professional developments held just prior to the start of Cycles II and III, as well as the various support and data collection meetings held throughout the additional cycles.

The first meeting I held was with all 18 participants in an informal group setting. The purpose for this meeting was to share my vision of this research project and to lay the foundation for the necessity of the work, thus creating a sense of urgency, ultimately leading to the participants buying in to the project. However, I was extremely nervous and had many doubts leading up to the first meeting. I wrote in my journal just prior:

Today I will meet with the group as a whole for the first time. I am both extremely nervous and excited for this…I question whether or not I am ready…I hope I come across as confident as I need to. It helps and hurts that I know the participants. On one hand, knowing them leads to a certain level of comfort; however, on the other hand, I fear they have these lofty expectations of me and I do not want to disappoint them. (Leadership journal, 2009)

After the initial meeting, I felt great about what had transpired. I felt that although a small percentage challenged the necessity of going through the creation and implementation of
a classroom management plan, the vast majority was on board. I was confident in the weeks leading up to the first major professional development workshop that the group bought in and was ready to learn and implement. I wrote as reflection in my journal following that meeting:

Today was a huge success. Once the participants arrived, I was at ease and totally focused on the task at hand. Although I had a few challenge the ideas, the vast majority saw relevance and were extremely excited to start. I had a few already begin to ask questions including if they could do any prep leading up to the scheduled professional development. To address the three participants that had reservations, I engaged in conversation individually and was able to instill confidence within them that things needed to change in the way teachers handle discipline and this could be a viable start. This is not a total buy in, but it is a start. (Leadership journal, 2009)

The first of two professional developments focused on classroom management plans and techniques for the teachers to follow. It was a full-day training. I utilized small groups, some activities, video, and modeling, and had the teachers bring materials to create their classroom management plans together. I have attached some samples in the appendices. I wanted to develop a team mentality. I wrote:

I wanted the group to work together as a team that can support each other, bounce ideas off each other, and generally lean on each other for support through this process. I of course want to be looked at as the leader; however, I do feel that the group will be more true to the process, will glean more from this experience, and in turn embed this mentality into the culture if a team culture was established.
This also speaks to the foundation of my leadership platform. I believe firmly in establishing a culture that goes beyond individual efforts and reflects a unified attitude. I think I did a good job of that today laying the groundwork.

(Leadership journal, 2009)

I reflect on many of these concepts in future journal entries. The bi-weekly meetings that ensued during Cycle II were a bit of a challenge in that not everyone could make each meeting. On average, I would meet with 12-15 of the 18 participants. During these meetings, the group would work together to identify trends or discuss incidences. Strategies were discussed to compensate and in some cases adaptations to classroom managements plans were made. One particular meeting was reflected upon in my journal: “I was so proud today when one participant assisted another by reminding them of a strategy discussed during the professional development day I had conducted. Everyone seems so receptive to our vision” (Leadership journal, 2009).

On another occasion I wrote:

I think the study is going well. The participants have bought in and are sharing stories of success. The meetings are beneficial and seem to be serving as “rah rah” sessions as defined by Collins. I am seeing a real change and am excited about what future meetings will behold. (Leadership journal, 2009)

The first meeting that was held focused on discussing the importance of preplanning and gaining an insight to how much time most teachers put into it prior to starting the study. On average, most responded that it took them between one and three weeks. Some admitted to still tinkering over a month. We discussed the importance of
reflection and that it was a living document, meaning that changes to address needs is a good thing. One participant said:

Including the time spent typing and copying the packets of information I gave to the students I would say it was about one week. I spent quite a bit of time thinking about all the possible scenarios that could come up in my classroom and how I would like them to “play out.” I also reflected on the classroom rules portion of your professional development and put some thought into how I wanted my rules to empower students to make good choices.

Being proactive and spending the time preplanning should pay dividends in terms of a well-managed classroom. Another focus of the first meeting was to gain insight into how the classroom management plans were communicated to the students. A big part of classroom management is that the students understand what is expected of them. The way the plans are taught could have a big affect on how well the students respond and the plans are executed. One participant responded:

Procedures that are most important to my class are action plans to provide reflection after a breach in code of conduct, extra credit opportunities, and reinforcement of school policies (ID, no beverages, no personal technologies). We read the procedures in the syllabus. In my two sophomore honors classes, students were assigned a rule and created a 3 minute skit. This was most enjoyable, although it had the potential for getting out of hand. I did find I had to reiterate and underscore a few missed facts, however, and used them as closure for the lesson.

Another participant added:
… procedures that were important focused on appropriate language and classroom etiquette (no calling out, raising your hand). Those two procedures as well as the others gone over in class were modeled by me. Students read over those procedures and then I had them re-word or explain how correct behavior is displayed.

Another participant stated: “I demonstrated this procedure and the students will be given an assessment in the form of a test each marking period (MP) based on their ability to follow the start of class procedure”

The nature of the next meeting focused on procedures and hierarchy of consequences (see example in Appendix E). A procedure might be the appropriate way to request a bathroom pass. Procedures were modeled to the class in the beginning of the school year and reinforced as needed throughout the year. The hierarchy of consequences must be a set of preplanned course of actions based on a classroom disruption or rules violation. The idea is the teacher would model consistency when handling these disruptions or violations. The students are aware of consequences and in turn the choice becomes theirs to adhere and comply or act out and deal with consequences. The hierarchy preaches consistency because it takes out human emotion or a reactionary response. The steps on the hierarchy varied between the teachers; however, they were all within three to five steps.

When asked about what types of procedures they utilized in their classroom and found most helpful, participants responded with the following:

Participant D:
I feel one of the most important procedures is at the very beginning of class. The students need to know when the bell rings they should be in their seats with all materials ready. By simply reiterating to the class the first few times we met what was expected of them, students now enter and sit in their assigned seats with their binders, calculators, and homework out on the desk to be checked.

Participant D went on to say, “I have found the procedures extremely helpful. They have given me the opportunity to have more instructional time and a much better conduct from my students.”

Participant E had this to say about procedures:

The most important procedures in my class involve students raising their hands, remaining in their seat, and the protocol for laboratory work (including set-up and clean up). The first two items were addressed from day one and reinforced each day. This was conveyed to students through a video, through modeling, and through positive reinforcement during our first laboratory activity. The procedures are clearly more helpful. The students feel comfortable with the class, and they know what is expected of them.

Participant H reported:

The procedures that I feel are the most important in my classroom are how to move around the classroom and how to ask a question. I like the kids feeling comfortable enough to go the trashcan or sharpener freely without interrupting the class. Also, I like the kids knowing to have their homework on their desk available for collecting. Procedures have been helpful. The students know what to do rather than disrupting class.
Another interesting perspective from a participant was:

I felt the classroom and school rules were the most important to my class. I lectured to students the expectations and rules. There were many times during the first few days of school when I had teaching moments and could demonstrate/model the rule. For example, a student was eating a cereal bar in class. I took two minutes out of the lesson to explain to the students, using John Doe, that eating and/or drinking was prohibited in class and he had to throw his bar away and was written up.

Planning, implementing, and maintaining a hierarchy of consequences ensures consistency in handling discipline. It removes outside influences and provides a clear plan in handling discipline and distractions as they arise within a teacher’s classroom. The participants all implemented a hierarchy of consequences that range from three to five steps. Generally the early steps allowed for verbal warnings and one on one discussion with the student. From there, the hierarchy moves to more severe consequences like contacting parents, discipline referrals, and removing the student from class. All hierarchy of consequences allow for a severe clause for incidents such as threatening behavior or fighting that called for immediate removal from the classroom.

One participant had this to say during an interview:

There are three levels. Level one is a warning, level two the student must stay briefly after class and will receive a phone call home, level three is a discipline referral and all of the above. Having a student stay after class has had a large impact on their behavior. The student gets flustered that they may be late or not be the first person on the lunch line so they dread staying after class.
Another participant had this to add when asked if procedures and hierarchy of consequences helped:

> Without a doubt, there is a large improvement from last year. Students know that I do not tolerate even being five seconds late to my class. Because of this fact, they are sure to be at my class on time. This is necessary to ensure a smooth start to the class. The cell phone policy was outlined with a hierarchy of consequences. The students were very responsive to it and it hasn’t been a problem. Cell phones can be a prominent source of cheating and distraction. With this eliminated, it maintains the integrity of the students as well as their focus on the lesson. Lastly, having the students assigned to a calculator which they must retrieve at the beginning of class has proved to be the most substantial improvement from last year. Because the students know exactly what is expected of them, it helps them to get on track from the beginning of class, which is generally the most difficult time to gain their attention.

The last meeting leading up to the next professional development day prior to Cycle III focused on the importance of expressing expectations prior to new activities. A common theme in the research was that many high school teachers feel that by the time students come to their class they should have the pre-existing understanding of what is and is not appropriate behavior for specific activities.

During the meeting, some participants had interesting responses when asked the question, “In your opinion do you find that expressing your behavioral expectations prior to activities has helped with student behavior? Why/why not?”

One participant responded:
It certainly has helped. They understand proper behavior while in my classroom. They know what I tolerate and what I don’t. Telling the students beforehand makes them aware and responsible for their actions in class. If I didn’t take care of the behavioral expectations in the beginning, I wouldn’t be doing a good job as a teacher in my opinion. Students shouldn’t be surprised by something, they will be turned off and choose not to pay attention and will act out. If they are told what is expected of them, I have noticed that students respond in a positive way and are active in the learning process.

Another participant stated, “I do feel like expressing behavior expectations prior to an activity helps with each individual student’s behavior because if they get off topic a gentle warning seems to help them refocus.”

Participant B added:

I do believe that expressing behavior expectations prior to activities help with student behavior. The first day of school I modeled and explained expected behavior. In class, before we do any type of activity, I tell the students the rules, model the activity to be done, and they are allowed to ask questions before we start.

The focus of the second professional day was to outline the expectations of utilizing positive reinforcement within the classroom and maintaining a journal of positive communication home. Each teacher was to call or email the parents or guardians of two or three students a week and communicate something positive his or her child had done that week. The positive communication could be related to educational or behavioral progress made.
The second professional development went smoothly. By this point, the research participants had a firm understanding of the classroom management component. Positive reinforcement can be a very powerful tool to running an effective classroom.

As teachers, we find it all too easy to spend our time looking for what is wrong, pointing out errors, and focusing on mistakes. However, an effective teacher looks for opportunities to find people doing things right and knows how to praise those people so they’ll keep on doing things right. (Whitaker, 2003, p. 48)

When positive behavior is reinforced, it creates a positive culture in the classroom. Todd Whitaker (2003), in his book *What Great Teachers Do Differently*, breaks positive reinforcement into five components. These five components are: authentic, specific, immediate, clean, and private. These five components were the foundation of the professional development and what I hoped to see teachers incorporate into their classes.

Authentic positive reinforcement means “praising people for something genuine, recognizing them for something that is true” (Whitaker, 2003, p. 48). Teachers often do not praise enough. Authentic praise is genuine and true. As an educational leader, catching students doing something right and praising them for it is an opportunity to provide authentic praise.

Effective praise is specific. Whitaker (2003) writes, “The behavior we acknowledge often becomes the behavior that will be continued” (p. 47-48). Making the praise specific ensures that the student recognizes the value of that specific action. Specific praise allows us as educational leaders to praise every student in our class, even struggling students.
The praise must be immediate. For praise to be effective, it must be done in a timely manner. The praise can be authentic and specific; however, if it takes weeks between the action and the reinforcement, it loses its effectiveness. Praise must be immediately following the action.

The fourth component of effective praise is that it must be clean. Clean praise means that it cannot be done to manipulate. Praising someone to get them to do something in the future is not clean. Praising a student for going above and beyond on a homework assignment is completely unrelated to that student’s behavior in class. One should not have anything to do with the other. The second aspect of clean praise is it cannot include the word “but.” Telling a student they did well on the math work but that they need to improve test scores is not effective praise since students will only remember the word “but.”

The final piece of positive reinforcement is that it must be private. Whitaker (2003) states, “…sending their parents a letter, would probably accomplish the same thing without potentially building resentment among their peers” (p. 48-49). Praising students for lofty grade point averages (GPA) and high test scores might create a feeling of resentment toward that student thus making the student feel uncomfortable. In effect, the praise had an adverse effect.

Authentic, specific, timely, clean, and private are the guidelines for effective praise. “If everyone in a school is treated with dignity and respect you may still have nothing special. However, if everyone in a school is not treated with dignity and respect you will never have anything special” (Whitaker, 2003, p. #48-49).
During the interview process at a group meeting, there were mixed responses. Everyone seemed to agree that positive reinforcement within the classroom had a positive effect on student achievement and attitude. However, taking the time to make weekly positive reinforcement emails/phone calls home got mixed reviews. Participants that reported positive effects stated the following:

- The students that received calls tried harder.
- Other students in the class strived to receive phone calls.
- Classes where phone calls were made regularly demonstrated better work ethics and positive attitudes.
- Classes where phone calls were made regularly, the students had less disruptions and teachers reported less infractions of the classroom rules.

Participants that reported negative effects stated the following:

- The students who received positive phone calls demonstrated positive attitudes and stronger work ethic but it was for only a brief period of time and was not sustained for more than a day or two.
- Students did not share with other classmates that they received a positive phone call or email thus not impacting the class’s attitude.

At our first meeting after the second major professional development day, about a month after the communication logs were instituted, this was the early feedback from three of the participants in the study:

Participant A:

I have made a large number of positive e-mails to parents this year. It seems to have a positive effect on what is going on in the classroom. I get a sense that the
students know that I am a teacher who will communicate with their parents, and not just in a negative way. It is my hope that students will begin to strive for achieving the positive communication contacts.

Participant B added:

I have made one positive email to a parent and I feel like it made the world of difference to the student. She came in the next class block and was very excited that I called about the good job she was doing in class. During that block she seemed to ask even more questions and wanted to make sure she was doing her work correctly.

Participant E added:

Yes. My students were scared because I called home, but when they found out it was a “good” call they appreciated it. It helps them maintain a positive attitude in the class. One student bragged about it to the whole class.

The second follow-up meeting to the second professional day training featured individual interviews with the participants. The interview encompassed the whole process to date with a focus on classroom management plans and the positive communication piece.

The first question I asked the participants was: “Have you made any changes to your classroom management plan since the beginning of the year (i.e. add/delete a rule or procedure, new step in hierarchy of classroom management plan)?”

Overall, many of the participants noted that very little if any changes had been made. Some noted that they might alter the hierarchy of consequences to increase the steps before a referral is written and sent to the office. This was because they found
themselves actually writing more referrals by following the hierarchy consistently each day.

The second question was: “In your experience, have you noticed a difference in your classroom utilizing a formal classroom management plan?” Generally, the responses reflected that an effective classroom management plan was the key to providing a structured learning environment. All of the participants responded that they were able to conduct a smoother classroom environment based on their classroom management plans. There were a few responses that stood out to me, representative of the group, but also adding their own perspective. Those responses were:

Perspective one:

For the most part, students have responded well to the management plan and the contact home (phone calls and e-mails both good and bad) have had a positive impact on the classroom behavior.

Perspective two:

Without a doubt, the class is more orderly. The students follow a routine, know what is expected of them, and do their very best to maintain that order. I have found that students are working harder because they feel as though they can handle the class by accomplishing little tasks.

Perspective three:

Yes, the students have a clear understanding of the penalties. I also have a clear direction on how to respond/handle a situation. The guideline has been established and I just have to operate according to it.
The third interview questions were: “Have you found it worthwhile maintaining a positive communication piece with the parents and students of your class?” and “What difference has it made, if any, with your class?” I noted earlier that the responses were mixed. I would say the majority found it helpful establishing a positive rapport with the parents prior to having to make a negative phone call. Also, the teachers generally reported that the students had a better attitude toward the class and classwork, and that spread that sentiment to other students in the class. Other students did vie for their own positive phone call home.

However, some participants did report that in some instances there was little to no change within the class. I have included some participant responses that reflected both positive and negative results.

Participant response one:

I was able to find out that a particular student doesn’t have her parents around that often and that to get in touch with them I needed to speak with an older sibling. I was able to reflect on this and realize that much of her acting out in a negative way is a result of not enough attention; so she tries to get any attention she can while in school. She participated wonderfully in class during this marking period and I immediately contacted her sibling, spoke of her excellent work in class and since then she has done far better in class then previously.

Participant response two added:

Yes, through the parent-teacher conferences (with a translator), I have learned some things about the students that I would not have known. It has helped me to understand the motivation (or lack thereof) of my students.
Participant response three:

Yes, I’ve found that the positive communication piece is a great way to establish a rapport with the parents. Parents who occasionally hear good news are much more apt to work with you to help resolve any negative issues. Students also respond well to the positive reinforcement. They hope to receive positive phone calls home.

Participant response four:

Yes, parents are more willing to help out when a negative incident occurs now that our relationship has been established first by a positive contact. Also, the student seems more willing to keep their parents happy and the good calls coming so they try for that reward. Now that they know it is an option they try to reach it. The students who usually receive negative feedback from other teachers are receiving positive feedback from my class. These students are performing better and showing more of an interest in my lessons.

Participant response five:

It has only made a difference with certain students in my class. I found that it did not make a difference with the students with more of a behavioral or emotional problem.

Participant response six:

I feel as though the students are more focused on doing well in the class. The possibility of positive phone calls has clearly served as motivation for some students. In addition, I feel that students are more likely to display traits of good
behavior because they know I am a teacher who will communicate with
their parents.

Participant response seven:

I don’t recognize a difference in the classroom from maintaining positive
communication. However, I believe it can have a long-term positive effect in
parent communication.

The fourth interview question was: “How receptive were the parents to
maintaining open communication?” The participant responses were overwhelmingly
positive. I have included responses that reflected the whole:

Participant D:

Most appreciated the phone calls or e-mails home; they liked being able to have a
dialogue with the teacher. The contact with parents has been cordial and the
students, as well as the parents, have responded positively by the open
communication lines. Parents have e-mailed concerning progress reports and
students have worked to produce better work in class.

Participant E:

They have been very receptive. Most of the parents seem happy to hear from a
teacher about something good that happens. The parents are more apt to contact
you if they have any questions.

Participant M:

For the most part, the parents have been very receptive to phone calls and e-mails.
In some of the positive calls that have been made, the parents expressed surprise
to hear from a teacher about something positive.
The fifth interview question asked: “How many steps are on your hierarchy of consequences and have you found implementing a hierarchy has helped you stay consistent?” On average, the participant’s hierarchy of consequences was between three to five steps. The responses were informative in that the members with shorter hierarchy of consequences reported having more discipline referrals. All of the members expressed how important this had been to their classroom management because it put more emphasis on consistency and it placed the onus on the students. If the students are aware of the consequences, then essentially they choose the consequence when they act out or violate a rule. Some of the participant responses were:

Participant B:

I have five steps on the hierarchy. The hierarchy has allowed me to stay more consistent with the students and punish or praise without judgment of the student, which also allows me to be consistent with the parents for the good and bad, which has made a positive impact in my classroom behavior.

Participant P:

There are three steps. It definitely helps me stay consistent. You don’t have to think as much about what your action should be and the kids all know what is going to happen. I do, however, notice that I am filling out more discipline referrals whereas in the past I might have just issued another warning. The class is running more smoothly with the hierarchy in place and the students know what to expect.

The sixth interview question was: “Have you found any one step of the hierarchy of consequences especially effective (i.e., Keeping the student one minute after class)?”
The idea behind collecting these data was to assist in the next steps section. I wanted to gain a better understanding into which steps work most effectively in a high school setting. Some of the participants responded with:

Participant A:

Keeping the students after class has been successful. Given that my class is 4th block, most students want to head home and that more than anything has been the rule that students have abhorred the most. It gives me time to have them reflect on their behavior, and how they can change it for future class periods.

Participant P:

Usually the minor interventions before you even reach the hierarchy are the most effective. Reminding the students of the steps and consequences for their actions seems to work wonders.

Participant O:

I have found talking to them one-on-one and discussing what happened is the most effective. It gives them a chance to have their voice heard and an opportunity for me to explain why their actions were wrong. I truly believe that they really do not know the reason what they are doing is wrong.

Participant C:

I have found that the timeout is quick, and eliminates the chaos associated with kicking someone out of the classroom. It is especially effective in maintaining order while still enforcing disciplinary action. I have had two instances of students walking off during the time-out. Immediately, their parents were called and the students came in the next day (which was not a day that we met for class)
and apologized while looking me in the eye. This indicates a level of respect that I definitely did not have last year.

Participant Q:

Asking a student to stay after class. I have noticed this works very well. It also allows me time to think about what I would like to say. The student will usually reflect upon what they have done and are usually quick to apologize and assure it will not happen again.

Participant B:

I have found that direct communication with the student has proven to be effective. Talking directly with students promotes a relationship of mutual respect between myself and the student.

The seventh question in the interview was: “Have you noticed that communicating your behavioral expectations prior to any out of routine activity (assembly, walking in halls, media center) has been an effective component of classroom management?” This question addressed another key component of the classroom management plans. Research dictated that many times high school teachers are under the misconception that students at this level know the appropriate behavior that is expected of them. Addressing behavioral expectations prior to the activity reinforces what the teacher expects. The results of the interview were telling. Many of the respondents expressed the importance and difference this component of the classroom management plan made.
Participant P stated:

I do believe communicating with them and giving them what is to be expected has allowed them to understand what they need to do during activities that are out of routine. Because there is open lines of communication, I believe the students have asked more about what is expected of them during out of routine activities.

Participant B stated:

Definitely. This year, students sit with me at assemblies with little to no hassle. Students meet with me during a fire drill. The students know what their expectations are, and because of the precedents set and level of respect that is both received and given, they will try their damnedest to meet the expectations I set for them.

The eighth question was a follow up to a previous question about behavioral expectations. The question stated: “In your opinion, do you find that expressing your behavioral expectations prior to activities has helped with student behavior?”

Participant C stated:

I think expressing what I would like to happen and what my expectations are for activities has cut down on the acting out or acting up during those activities. One student in particular has done better since the beginning of the year; I allowed him to make mistakes and act up to see if he could behave and he had trouble. Once I did start telling the class what was expected and the consequences of not following that, he’s made more of an effort to act as expected and it has shown in his work ethic, and improvement on tests has taken place.
The ninth question was: “What impact did procedures have as far as limiting disruptions and maintaining a smooth lesson flow?” This question was also a follow up to previous discussions during Cycle I. Procedures, in conjunction with the hierarchy of consequences and expressing behavioral expectations prior to activities, were studied to determine how effective they were with high school aged students.

Participant A stated:

I think having the students understand what it is they have to do and how they have to do it is essential to limiting disruptions and having a smooth lesson flow. Given that they know what to expect, most disruptions are quick and squashed quickly. They understand that if there isn’t a smooth lesson flow, consequences from disruptions will occur; and they don’t really want the bad contact with parents.

Participant I stated:

The procedures have definitely maintained a level of respect the students have for me. Because I trust the students, the respect is reciprocated. The lesson is smooth because students respond well to routine. Disruptions, as stated before, are limited because I am no longer taking 15 minutes to send a student out of class and complete the necessary paperwork. The number of disruptions has been very low overall. I am sure that having the classroom discipline plan in place has worked toward ensuring that this is the case.

The final question stated: “Are there any other comments, concerns, feelings, attitudes towards classroom management and/or the process from August until now?”
These responses provided an opportunity for the participants to add/share thoughts they were not directly asked about. A couple of responses really stood out.

Participant A stated:

I think the kids have responded well to the hierarchy as well as the management plan; work production in class has been increasing since the beginning of the year, as well as positive contact with parents.

Participant B stated:

I think this project was probably one of the best things that I could have done as a second year teacher. At first, I was skeptical about outlining simple procedures such as when to ask to go to the bathroom, sharpen your pencil, and what to do when you do not understand or if you need a tissue. I also was skeptical about letting students know about the hierarchy because I was afraid I would not adhere. By keeping open communication with both my students and their parents, this year has gone very smoothly as compared to last year. I am very confident that the changes that were implicated are a direct cause of the positive change in the atmosphere and classroom environment. I am grateful for the opportunity to have participated in the study.

Participant O stated:

I have seen a complete change in my classroom management! I will be implementing this come September in all of my classes!
Survey I

The first of two surveys was distributed at the conclusion of Cycle II. All 18 participants were given the survey and all 18 were returned. The survey was compared to a pre-survey given prior to Cycle II, also prior to any professional development. Figures 1 through 8 reflect the answers given by the 18 participants.

Figure 1. Responses to Survey I, Question 1

Ninety-four percent of the participants answered agree/strongly agree (see Figure 1). This is a 44% increase or eight more participants. Along with expressing behavioral modifications this served as the biggest increase representing teacher attitude post Cycle II.
Prior to this action research project, all 18 participants responded positively when asked about the importance of classroom rules. Four more participants changed from agree to strongly agree (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Responses to Survey I, Question 2

**Figure 3.** Responses to Survey I, Question 3
The results of this survey response indicated that establishing rules did have an impact on preventing discipline infractions. Only one participant responded neutral with 17 out of the 18 responding agree or strongly agree (see Figure 3).

![Pie chart](image)

**The rules I enforce are clearly understood by the students.**

- 65% Strongly Agree
- 35% Agree
- 0% Neutral
- 0% Disagree
- 0% Strongly Disagree

*Figure 4. Responses to Survey I, Question 4*

All 18 participants responded agree or strongly agree (see Figure 4). This was important as a key to successful classroom management. Much emphasis was placed on this in the professional development. Referencing the interviews, the vast majority of the participants utilized modeling in the opening days of school to teach the rules, procedures, and expectations of the classroom.
The research suggests that when the students know and understand the rules, it puts the onus on the students to make the right decisions. Establishing the hierarchy of consequences keeps the handling of discipline consistent. The fact that over 10 percent of the participants answered neutral (see Figure 5) could have implications why the quantity of some of the discipline referrals submitted by participants was unchanged. The steps in one’s hierarchy could have a positive or negative impact on referrals submitted.
When comparing Figures 5 with Figure 6, only 31% responded strongly agree. This also indicates that perhaps the participants did not follow the hierarchy in every class, which could compromise the collection and analyzing of the discipline referrals.

*Figure 6. Responses to Survey I, Question 6*

*Figure 7. Responses to Survey I, Question 7*
Research suggests that there is a strong correlation with engaging lessons. If students are engaged, and the teacher can make a connection between the student and the lesson, then disruptions and discipline infractions are reduced. Sixty-nine percent of the participants of this study strongly disagreed (see Figure 7).

![Pie chart showing responses to Survey I, Question 8](image)

**Figure 8.** Responses to Survey I, Question 8

The final question, represented in Figure 8, is another key component of classroom discipline. All but one of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the importance. This represents enormous growth from the pre-study in which only 12% of the participants found this component important. This implies the research is correct in assuming high school teachers maintain that by this age students know what is expected. Cycle II implies the participants have had success making this practice a part of their daily routine.
Survey II

The second of two surveys was distributed at the conclusion of Cycle III. All 18 participants were given the survey and all 18 were returned. The survey was compared to the interviews conducted throughout Cycle III. Figures 9 through 14 reflect the answers given by the 18 participants.

![Pie chart](chart.png)

**Figure 9.** Responses to Survey II, Question 1

Ninety-four percent of the participants reported fewer disruptions as a result of implementing a classroom management plan (see Figure 9). Participants monitored classroom disruptions as part of their grade book. Only one of the participants responded neutral and zero disagreed.
Cycle III reported a greater percentage of participants following the hierarchy of consequences. Sixty-three percent strongly agreed that the hierarchy has led to greater consistency which results in less reactionary responses to disruptions and infractions (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. Responses to Survey II, Question 2

3. I have resorted to discipline referrals less this year than previous years since implementing a classroom management plan.

Figure 11. Responses to Survey II, Question 3
The responses as demonstrated in Figure 11 imply that only two-thirds of the participants feel they have resorted to fewer discipline referrals.

**Figure 12. Responses to Survey II, Question 4**

Post Cycle III heeded the same results as Cycle II in terms of utilizing procedures to control classroom management. Overwhelmingly, 69% of participants responded strongly agree, with 31% responding agree (see Figure 12).

**Figure 13. Responses to Survey II, Question 5**
A key component of Cycle III was integrating positive phone calls and e-mails on a regular basis. The hypothesis being tested is that the students would try harder for that positive recognition and thus improve classroom atmosphere and result in fewer discipline referrals and disruptions. Sixty-nine percent of the participants responded positively to making the phone calls and emails whereas 31% remained neutral (see Figure 13). This mirrored the responses from the interviews conducted during Cycle III.

The students who received the call continue to improve and display the positive behavior.

![Pie chart showing responses](chart)

*Figure 14. Responses to Survey II, Question 6*

The final survey questions resulted in 87% of the participants responding strongly agree/agree (see Figure 14). This is a strong indication that the positive phone calls home had an impact on the student.

**Discipline Referral Data**

I inputted the discipline referral data in Table 1. The Table represents all referrals submitted by the participants during the year prior to the study and during the study. It is
broken down by the cycles and illustrates whether the participant wrote more or less than the previous year. Participants are represented by letters to ensure confidentiality.

Table 1.

*Student Discipline Referrals Reported for Participant Group (N=18)*

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<td>Q</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>-44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The total referrals for the year were 6,739. On average, that means 37 discipline referrals per teacher. The 18 participants that were a part of this study totaled 371 of those referrals. That averages out to 20 referrals per participant. When compared to the year prior, the data were inconclusive. Overall, 54 less referrals were submitted. Eleven participants had their total number of referrals go down compared to seven participants whose numbers increased.

Leadership Data

The participants were asked to complete a Leadership Practices Inventory-Observer (Kouses & Posner, 2001) as a pre and post survey measuring my leadership (Tables 2 and 3). The responses were ranging from 0 to 10, with 0 representing “not at all likely” and 10 representing "extremely likely." There are 30 statements to rank. For the purpose of displaying results, answers were put into three tiers and an average score is represented in the final column.

Table 2.

Results of Pre Survey (Leadership Practices Inventory-Observer)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Responded 1-3</th>
<th>Responded 4-7</th>
<th>Responded 8-10</th>
<th>Avg Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sets a personal example of what he/she expects from others.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks about future trends that will influence how our work gets done.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeks out challenging opportunities that test his/her own skills and abilities.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops cooperative relationships among the people he/she works with.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praises people for a job well done.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spends time and energy making certain that the people he/she works with adhere to the principles and standards that we have agreed on.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describes a compelling image of what our future could be like.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges people to try out new and innovative ways to do their work.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively listens to diverse points of view.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes it a point to let people know about his/her confidence in their abilities.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follows through on promises and commitments he/she makes.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeals to others to share an exciting dream of the future.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searches outside the formal boundaries of his/her organization for innovative ways to improve what we do.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treats other with dignity and respect.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of projects.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks for feedback on how his/her actions affect other people’s</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows others how their long-term interests can be realized by</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enlisting in a common vision.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks &quot;What can we learn?&quot; when things don’t go as expected.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports the decisions that people make on their own.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicly recognizes people who exemplify commitment to shared</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>values.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds consensus around a common set of values for running our</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paints the &quot;big picture&quot; of what we aspire to accomplish.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes certain that we set achievable goals, make concrete plans,</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and establish measurable milestones for the projects and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programs that we work on.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives peoples a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to do their work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finds ways to celebrate accomplishments.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is clear about his/her philosophy of leadership.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.

*Results of Post Survey (Leadership Practices Inventory-Observer)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Responded 1-3</th>
<th>Responded 4-7</th>
<th>Responded 8-10</th>
<th>Avg Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sets a personal example of what he/she expects from others.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks about future trends that will influence how our work gets done.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeks out challenging opportunities that test his/her own skills and abilities.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops cooperative relationships among the people he/she works with.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praises people for a job well done.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spends time and energy making certain that the people he/she works with adhere to the principles and standards that we have agreed on.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describes a compelling image of what our future could be like.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges people to try out new and innovative ways to do their work.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively listens to diverse points of view.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes it a point to let people know about his/her confidence in their abilities.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follows through on promises and commitments he/she makes.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeals to others to share an exciting dream of the future.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searches outside the formal boundaries of his/her organization for innovative ways to improve what we do.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treats other with dignity and respect.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of projects.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks for feedback on how his/her actions affect other people’s performance.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows others how their long-term interests can be realized by enlisting in a common vision.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks &quot;What can we learn?&quot; when things don’t go as expected.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicly recognizes people who exemplify commitment to shared values.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds consensus around a common set of values for running our organization.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paints the &quot;big picture&quot; of what we aspire to accomplish.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes certain that we set achievable goals, make concrete plans, and establish measurable milestones for the projects and programs that we work on.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives peoples a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finds ways to celebrate accomplishments.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is clear about his/her philosophy of leadership.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of our work.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiments and takes risks, even when there is a chance of failure.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensures that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives the members of the team lots of appreciation and support for their contributions.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As I analyzed the data from the leadership surveys (Appendix F) and my reflective journal, certain leadership theories were prevalent. From the beginning of the study I have demonstrated strong emotional intelligence and moral/value-based leadership. Those statements scored high in both the pre and post survey.

The theories that I subscribe to that reflected growth from pre to post survey were transformational leadership and democratic leadership. To successfully implement this project, I made a conscious effort to provide a vision and include the participants in the decision making process. Through the two professional days and the multiple sub meetings, I acknowledged the participants’ opinions and allowed for their input to be utilized to drive the study.
CHAPTER VII

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Classroom management has consistently been identified via research studies as one of the most important factors in producing and maintaining a sound education atmosphere that is conducive for learning. The bulk of the research I looked at focused on classroom management at the elementary level. The significance of this study relies heavily on the audience it targeted: high school students. The action research project focused on what components of a classroom management plan identified from the research were effective when controlling a high school classroom.

Research Questions Addressed

*How does implementing a classroom management plan impact the learning environment as measured by teacher feedback?*

The participants of the study overwhelming responded positively in regard to implementing a classroom management plan. Ninety-four percent of the participants responded agree or strongly agree when asked on an anonymous survey: I have noticed less classroom disruptions because of the implemented classroom management plans. Fewer disruptions would suggest a smoother classroom environment.

Participant B sums it up best:

I think this project was probably one of the best things that I could have done as a second year teacher. At first, I was skeptical about outlining simple procedures such as when to ask to go to the bathroom, sharpen your pencil, and what to do when you do not understand or if you need a tissue. I also was skeptical about
letting students know about the hierarchy because I was afraid I would not adhere. By keeping open communication with both my students and their parents, this year has gone very smoothly as compared to last year. I am very confident that the changes that were implicated are a direct cause of the positive change in the atmosphere and classroom environment. I am grateful for the opportunity to have participated in the study.

Recommendation: Data suggest that implementing a formalized classroom management plan leads to greater success in managing the classroom. As a result, teacher feedback suggested fewer disruptions and greater control of the classroom by the teacher.

*How does implementing a classroom management plan impact the quantity of discipline referrals submitted?*

The total referrals for the year were 6,739. On average, that means 37 discipline referrals were submitted per high school teacher. Of the 6,739 discipline referrals, 371 were submitted by the 18 participants participating in the study. That averages out to 20 referrals per participant. That translates to a little less than half of what the nonparticipating teacher submitted. This could suggest that the classroom management plans were successful in this regard.

However, when compared to the year prior, the data were inconclusive. Totaling the 18 participants from the year prior, 54 less referrals were submitted. Of the 18 participants in the study, 11 participants had their total discipline referral count go down. In comparison, seven of the 18 participants reflected an increase. This could be explained by examining the hierarchy of consequences utilized. Of the seven participants who saw an increase in their discipline referrals submitted, five of those participants only used a
three-step hierarchy of consequences. This could suggest that, if followed consistently, discipline referrals could have been the next step when in the past, another strategy might have been implemented.

Recommendation: Unfortunately, the data were inconclusive when gauging impact a classroom management plan has on discipline referrals submitted. Although the number of discipline referrals submitted by the 18 participants were fewer when compared to the rest of the staff, when comparing the number of discipline referrals by each participants to the number they submitted the previous year, 11 participants submitted less, however, seven participants submitted more. Further analysis is needed.

*How does implementing a classroom management plan impact the learning environment as measured by student attendance?*

During the course of this study, the total number of referrals submitted by all teachers is shown in Table 4.

Table 4.

*Total Number of Discipline referrals by Category*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referral Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cut Class</td>
<td>1367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut - Ten or more minutes late</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tardy - One to Four times</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tardy - Five to Seven times</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tardy - Eight or more times</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The number of referrals submitted by the participants for all categories was 83. Eighty-three of the 2,286 total referrals submitted that were related to student attendance were from the participants. This indicates that 3.6% of the total referrals submitted were by 10% of the whole staff.

Recommendation: Given the extremely low percentage, the study’s data would indicate that implementing a classroom management plan that encompasses coming to class late and cuts as part of the rules and consequences portion could lead to fewer cuts and more students coming to class on time.

Which components of the classroom management plan have been identified as effective/ineffective in managing the behavior within a high school classroom?

Four components stand out from research and the data collected: rules, procedures, expressing behavioral expectations prior to activities, and a hierarchy of consequences. Rules are clearly specified and clearly communicated to everyone in the school. By clearly posting these rules and expectations, students and staff clearly understand what is not acceptable. The participants in this study made rules a part of the classroom syllabus that was reviewed by the students and sent home for the parents to sign off on. Rules were also clearly posted in their rooms. All of the 18 participants stated that establishing classroom rules had a positive impact on handling discipline in the classroom.

Ninety-four percent of the 18 participants stated that classroom procedures have had a strong impact on maintaining classroom structure. Of the 18 participants that took part in this action research project, 94% of the participants responded agree or strongly
agree when asked if expressing their behavioral expectations prior to activities encouraged positive behavior.

The participants all implemented a hierarchy of consequences that range from three to five steps. The majority of participants utilized a five-step hierarchy of consequences, and the data suggested this positively impacted discipline referrals utilized. The three-step hierarchy of consequences allowed for little space between a verbal warning and resorting to a referral.

Recommendation: The research suggested that the effective components of a classroom management plan at the high school level were: rules/procedures, a hierarchy of consequences, and communication with parents. These components were in each of the classroom management plans the 18 participants used; the data and feedback suggest these components to be most effective.

*How does positive communication to the student’s home affect student behavior and motivation in the classroom?*

The interview responses were generally positive about the affect positive communication had on student behavior and motivation in the classroom; 14 positively responded and four said there was no observable change. The final survey question, which asked whether the students who got the phone calls had sustained and/or increased positive behavior in the classroom, resulted in 87% of the participants responding strongly agree/agree. This is a strong indication that the positive phone calls home had an impact on the student.

Recommendation: The data suggest a positive impact on the class as a whole once positive phone calls became part of the routine.
How has my leadership style evolved as a result of this action research project?

I asked the participants to complete the Leadership Practices Inventory-Observer (Kouzes & Posner, 2001) as a pre and post survey measuring my leadership. The responses ranged from zero to ten. Zero representing “not at all likely” and ten representing "extremely likely." There are 30 statements to rank. Upon analyzing the data from the leadership surveys and the reflective journal that I kept throughout, certain leadership theories were prevalent. From the beginning of the study I have demonstrated strong emotional intelligence and moral/value-based leadership. Those statements scored high in both the pre and post survey. The two theories that seemed to improve as the study took its course were transformational leadership and democratic leadership.

Limitations

The biggest concern I had conducting this study was the absence of valid baseline data. This limited my ability to demonstrate statistical improvement. Overall, too many biases were identified. For example:

- Most of the participants taught different courses this school year
- Different students
- Varied number of students per class
- Students were different grade levels, different ages

Additionally, a possible limitation that existed was the difficulty of implementing a classroom management plan midyear. Doing so meant attempting to change the culture of the classroom that had been established over the course of the first twenty weeks of school.
Administrative support and following and reinforcing the code of conduct are necessary. Lack of administrative support could negatively impact the teacher’s ability to manage his/her classrooms. Since I am unaware of how each administrator handled the discipline referrals submitted by the 18 teachers participating in the study, I also do not know if that had any impact on this study.

The researcher is at the mercy of the participants. Due to the limitations of my schedules, I was unable to observe all 18 participants consistently. I was relying heavily on teachers implementing the classroom management plans every day, with regularity, and that the responses were truthful, just, and candid. However there is always the possibility that the participants were being overly positive in an attempt to help the study.

Comparing the discipline referrals from year to year, or from teacher to teacher could be misleading. Teachers may have had different courses, which could have had an impact. For instance, a low level remedial or a dynamics class may have had different types of students than an advanced placement class. Class size could have had an impact as well as the lessons and subjects taught. Engaging lessons keep students actively involved in the class and, in turn, limit discipline and disruptions. This study had no way of measuring how engaging each participant’s lesson was.

Bias

I did not include my own classroom data in the study to assist in eliminating my own bias. I relied heavily on interviews and surveys to gauge teacher opinion on effectiveness. All surveys were anonymous to increase the chances of candid, truthful responses. However the interviews and observations were not anonymous and could have
led to bias. The relationships present between the participants and I could have led to bias. I have known many of the participants for years. I am also the Department Coordinator for special education. Being in a supervisory role could have impacted the interview responses given.

Implications for Future Research

In order to validate much of what was learned from this project, it would have to be replicated. I would begin by starting this study from the beginning of a school year. Changing an already established culture is difficult. The findings might be different if the culture was established on the first day of school. I would also suggest implementing this study over a greater period of time.

I would also recommend replicating this study in a variety of settings. For example, this study should be replicated in other grade levels such as elementary and middle schools. Also, the study should be replicated in other high school settings such as rural and urban school districts as well as across various district factor groups (DFG).

Furthermore, this study did not take into account student achievement. Research from the literature review and past studies imply student achievement is positively impacted by teacher’s implementing a classroom management plan. This study did not focus on that. A future study would need to be done to measure the impact of classroom management plan on student achievement.
Next Steps

Utilizing the research I have done for this project as well as my future findings I hope to create a classroom management plan resource for the teachers in Generic Township High School. My ambition when I began this process was to create a resource that could benefit my school as well as high school teachers in general. Much of the research focuses on elementary school students. Although I feel there is no magic or one universal concept that cures all classroom management woes, if I could provide a set of guidelines that teachers could work within and tailor to their style of teaching and specific course, success could be had. I also intend on utilizing my research to assist the central administration in Generic Township High School to adopt a district discipline policy that is a fit for the district.

Reflection: What Would I Have Done Similarly and/or Differently?

There are certain aspects I would have done differently if I were to conduct this study again; there are factors that could impact the results if the study were to be repeated elsewhere. The number one factor was starting this project midyear. Results might have been better if the teachers were able to start this study in September as opposed to the start of the third marking period. Generally speaking, teachers establish the culture of the class within the first weeks of the school year. Having to change that culture and create one more structure or discipline midyear after one has been established could be very challenging, and could have impacted the results of this study.

A second factor that might have impacted the results of this study is mandating that the hierarchy of consequences be five steps. Three steps led to increased discipline
referrals and provided little space for the teacher. The strength of the hierarchy of consequences is consistency. With only three steps, the final step is reached sometimes before the teacher feels comfortable. The research suggested that five steps provided for more power in the teacher’s hands than three steps.

The last factor was the lack of quantity of meaningful observations. My current position within the school does not provide me the flexibility to visit and observe as many classes I would have liked, and as frequently as I would have liked. Increased observations may have led to me providing meaningful feedback during the process and adjustments along the way.
References

http://www.psysr.org/about/pubs_resources/groupthink%20overview.htm


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Appendix A

Interview Questions
Interview Questions

1. Have you made any changes to your classroom management plan since the beginning of the year (i.e. add/delete a rule or procedure, new step in hierarchy of classroom management plan)?

2. In your experience, have you noticed a difference in your classroom utilizing a formal classroom management plan?

3. Have you found it worthwhile maintaining a positive communication piece with the parents and students of your class? What difference has it made, if any, with your class?

4. How receptive were the parents to maintaining open communication?

5. How many steps are on your hierarchy of consequences? Have you found implementing a hierarchy has helped you stay consistent?

6. Have you found any one step of the hierarchy of consequences especially effective? (i.e. Keeping the student one minute after class.)

7. Have you noticed that communicating your behavioral expectations prior to any out of routine activity (assembly, walking in halls, media center) has been an effective component of classroom management?

8. In your opinion, do you find that expressing your behavioral expectations prior to activities has helped with student behavior? Why/why not?

9. What impact did procedures have as far as limiting disruptions and maintaining a smooth lesson flow?

10. Any other comments/concerns/feelings/attitudes towards classroom management and/or the process from August till now?
Appendix B

Survey I
Survey I

Classroom Management Plans

Thank you for taking the time to respond. Please be reflective in your responses to the 3 open ended questions on page 2. Once completed, please save this document lastname_survey1 (for instance: Latwis_survey1) and send it back to me as an attachment by Wednesday, December 9th.

Directions: Please place an “x” in the response that most accurately describes your feelings toward the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The procedures I implement have a strong impact maintaining classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>structure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establishing classroom rules has had a positive impact on handling</td>
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<tr>
<td>discipline in the classroom.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing classroom rules has had a positive impact on preventing</td>
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<tr>
<td>discipline infractions in the classroom.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The rules I enforce are clearly understood by the students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I utilize a hierarchy of consequences each class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I consistently follow the hierarchy of consequences each class to deal</td>
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<td>with discipline.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engaging lessons strongly reduce negative classroom disruptions by</td>
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<tr>
<td>students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clearly communicating my behavioral expectations prior to each activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>has encouraged positive and appropriate behavior.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Directions: Please reflect on the following statements and provide any thoughts you may have.

1. Have you made any changes to your classroom management plan since the beginning of the year (i.e. add/delete a rule or procedure, new step in hierarchy of classroom management plan)?

2. In your experience, have you noticed a difference in your classroom utilizing a formal classroom management plan?

3. Have you resorted to discipline referrals more, less, or about the same as you did in previous years prior to utilizing the classroom management plan?
Appendix C

Survey II
Survey II

Classroom Management Plans

Thank you for taking the time to respond. Please be reflective in your responses to the open ended questions on page 2. Once completed, please save this document lastname_MP2 (for instance: Latwis_MP2) and send it back to me as an attachment by Wednesday, February 10th, 2010

**Directions:** Please place an “x” in the response that most accurately describes your feelings toward the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have noticed less classroom disruptions because of the implemented classroom management plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have found implementing a hierarchy of consequences has helped you stay consistent when handling discipline.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have resorted to discipline referrals less this year than previous years since implementing a classroom management plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom procedures have had a positive impact on maintaining flow of lesson.</td>
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<tr>
<td>There was a positive impact on the class as a whole once positive phone calls became part of the routine.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The student who received the call continued to improve and display the positive behavior.</td>
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</table>
Appendix D

Sample Classroom Management Plan
Mrs. **********

9th Grade Language Arts

Language Arts (LAL I) Syllabus – 9th Grade

I. Course Description:

LAL I is a language arts class in which students study a wide variety of great literature from all over the world using a thematic approach. Skills that will be covered in this course are as follows:

a) Reading: Myths, news articles, novels, plays, poetry, and short stories

b) Literary elements and devices: Characterization, conflict, figurative language, foreshadowing, mood, plot, point of view, theme, tone, setting, symbol.

c) Writing purposes: Descriptive, expository, narrative, and persuasive writing. Writing process: Prewriting, drafting, editing, proofreading, and publishing.

d) Viewing and listening to media forms: Film, music, and Power Point presentations.

e) Speaking and presenting skills: Eye contact, intonation, posture, and vocal articulation.

f) Grammar and vocabulary: Expand knowledge of words and sentence structure to streamline writing, formalize speech, and prepare for state tests.

II. Course Texts:

The House on Mango Street, Sandra Cisneros

Lord of the Flies, William Golding

Romeo & Juliet, William Shakespeare

Martian Chronicles, Ray Bradbury

Short stories and poetry from our anthology, Literature and Language, McDougal Littell

Vocabulary Workshop, Level D

III. Grading System:

Assignments will be calculated on a weighted average as indicated below. Missing assignments will be averaged in as a zero.
50% Tests, essays, projects

Tests to combine multiple choice and short answer/open ended questions

Projects: Essays, short story, poetry, research paper

30% Homework, classwork, journal entries, and quizzes

20% Class participation: EVERYONE STARTS WITH 100%

➢ Be in your assigned seat when the bell rings
➢ Work with responsibility and care
➢ Come prepared with a ball point pen, LA notebook (page 5), and textbook
➢ Volunteer appropriate and meaningful thoughts during every class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal Assessment</th>
<th>Informal Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A 100-90</td>
<td>++ 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 89-80</td>
<td>+ 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C 79-70</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 69-65</td>
<td>- 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E 64-0</td>
<td>-- 50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV. Class Procedures:

A. Supplies and Texts: A dedicated LAL notebook is required (page 5). The school provides textbooks (McDougal Littell anthology), Vocabulary Workshop book, and novels. Books will be formally signed out to each student. Students are responsible for their assigned book # until it is collected. Novels will be collected at the end of the unit; the anthology and vocabulary workshop books will be collected at the end of the year. Lost book fees: Anthology $80, Vocabulary Workshop $10, and Novels $12 (prices are subject to increase).

B. Preparedness & Timeliness: Students are required to be on time and prepared every day with a black or blue pen, notebook (page 5), and textbook. According to GTHS policy, 4 lates = 1 cut (detention). Being on time for this class is especially important for two reasons: 1) Do Now, and 2) Tests and quizzes. The first few minutes of class will always be utilized for a “Do Now,” such as a writing prompt, to help focus the day’s learning. The first minutes of class may also be used for a journal entry, quiz or grammar and vocabulary exercises. Being on time is essential for success in this class.
C. Class Participation: All students receive a 100% at the start of the marking quarter. To retain this mark, students must participate in class at least once a day with an opinion, answer, or a question. Students must also bring a pen, notebook, and course text. Come to class prepared and contribute meaningfully at least once, or lose 10 points for each infraction. Full participation in class will increase your overall grade by 20%!

D. Leaving the Room: If you absolutely must leave the room, non-verbal cues are used to ask permission in order to minimize disruption. Peace sign for bathroom, thumb out for pencil sharpener, and the hang loose sign for Nurse. I will provide a thumbs up or down to indicate approval of your request. Important: In order to leave the room, students must have their ID. One person is allowed out of the room at a time and students are expected back within 5 minutes. If you are out of the room for more than 10 minutes, it represents a cut.

E. Literature Circles (Quarterly Reading and Study Groups): In the first week of class, we organize into groups of 3 or 4 students and remain together for the quarter. Students will have a chance to vote on who they would like to be in their group in quarters 2 and 4. The members of each Literature Circle will exchange contact information. They must supply each other with missing assignments and handouts when they are absent, and generally watch out for each other during the year. The Literature Circles will change each quarter.

F. Guidelines for Submitting Typed and Written Work: Students are asked to use a certain heading when preparing their written and typed class work, homework, and essays. Following the format (see page 6) ensures that your name, date, assignment name, and block number are provided on work submitted. Papers that are NF (non-format) will lose 10 points, or one grade letter. Format is important—it shows that you have followed directions and that you care about your work.

G. Extra Credit Opportunity: E.C.O. +5 POINTS ON FINAL MARKING QUARTER GRADE!!!

Once each marking quarter, an Extra Credit Opportunity (ECO) can be created to celebrate talents outside of the usual reading/writing area and to “echo” the stories we are covering in class. Because each ECO will be a unique project, a one paragraph proposal must be submitted for approval 30 days in advance before the end of the quarter. The project is due one week before the end of the marking quarter. The project must relate to authors, historical eras, and/or a creative exploration of theme the novels and stories that we are reading. Some ideas are: Painting, drawing, diorama, dance, pantomime, invention, sculpture, or Power Point slide show. The student must then write a two-paragraph reflection about how the ECO project relates to something we studied in class. Projects will not be accepted without a two-paragraph reflection.
H. Absences and Late Assignments Policy:

1. Absences: Students are responsible for obtaining notes and assignments from classmates, members of their Literature Circles, and/or from our Staff Webpage during an absence. Visit our Staff Webpage by visiting www.*******k12.nj.us, click on GTHS, click on Staff Webpages, click on “*******, Sharon,” and locate your class name and block in the navigation menu on the left side of the screen.

2. Late Assignments and Make Up Work: Work that is handed in late without prior arrangements will receive discounted credit: One day late: 75%; Two days late: 50%; Three days late 0%. A zero will be placed in the grade book for each missed assignment. Quizzes and tests must be made up within five days. If you need to make up a test or quiz, report to Room 105 after school from 2:15-3:15pm.

Students and parents are asked to speak with me in advance regarding an extenuating circumstance that may prevent the timely completion of an assignment. Thank you.
V. Classroom Rules:

**RULES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General (School Wide)</th>
<th>Specific (This Classroom)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Respect others and their property</td>
<td>1. Be IN YOUR SEAT when the bell rings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. *No personal technology devices</td>
<td>2. Bring pen, books, and notebook to class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do not use offensive or vulgar language</td>
<td>3. Sit in your assigned seat daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Keep the school clean</td>
<td>4. Follow directions the first time they are given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Wear your Student ID on a lanyard around your neck so that it is perfectly visible at all times</td>
<td>5. RAISE YOUR HAND to get up from seat, to speak, or to request to leave the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Eat or drink in cafeteria only</td>
<td>6. Be kind and respectful to classmates, teachers, administrators, and substitute teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Personal Technology Devices (Cell Phones and iPods):* DO NOT use cell phones or iPods in this classroom. They are not permitted in school and present a liability issue. School policy requires teachers to confiscate these devices and inform administrators and parents of their distracting usage.
## Consequences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+Communication skills</td>
<td>- Bad grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+Credit for Lang Arts towards graduation</td>
<td>- Stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+Trust and overall increase in your personal value by peers and school personnel</td>
<td>- Repeat the class next year and/or take summer school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+20% increase in your grade</td>
<td>- Discipline referral to principal/vice principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+Positive self esteem</td>
<td><strong>Disciplinary Action Plan as follows:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+Confidence</td>
<td>1. *Draft a one page Action Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Success in school leads to success in life!</strong></td>
<td>2. Phone call home to your parent/guardian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Reduction of -10 of your Class Participation grade for each infraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Discipline referral to Vice Principal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Action Plan:* Students who choose to break any one of these rules will write a one page “Action Plan” (page 8) in order to provide an opportunity to reflect upon their behavior and to create a plan to improve their self-control. *If the Action Plan is not completed, expect a disciplinary referral as well as a 50% reduction in the Class Participation grade.*

KNOW AND FOLLOW ALL CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL RULES.

**Parents and Students**

I am looking forward to a great year teaching 9th grade Language Arts I. My expectation is that each student comes prepared to contribute and learn. With the parent support and student cooperation, I plan to create an open environment for teaching and learning. I am available during after-school office hours and by email for students and parents to confer.
with me regarding the class. Another way to contact me is by phone and leaving a message on my voice mail. I am excited about working with each student and parent or guardian to make this class a successful learning experience for all.

Thank you.

**************, Language Arts Teacher

Contact Information and Signatures

Please fill out the contact information, sign below, and detach and return to verify that you have received and read this syllabus. **This page counts as a homework assignment and is due Mon., Sept. 14 for A day students and Tues., Sept. 15 for B day students.** Thank you.

Parent/Guardian Name(s)  

Parent/Guardian Email(s)  

Parent/Guardian Phone Number(s)  

Best Way to Contact

I have read the syllabus, and I understand the objectives, policies and procedures as stated.

__________________________________________  _______________________
Signature of Student  Date

__________________________________________  _______________________
Signature of Parent/Guardian  Date
Appendix E

Sample Classroom Procedures
Heading your paper Your paper should be headed with your name, the date, the bell, and the assignment name in the upper right hand corner.

Passing in class work When passing in papers, please pass them to the person in front of your row. Then pass to the left.

To ask a question, raise your hand. Calling out will be not be recognized.

Homework will be collected AFTER you have begun working on class work. You will be directed to take your homework out & place it on the upper right hand corner of your desk. It will then be collected.

If you need to go to the **bathroom**, raise your hand at the start or close of a topic in lecture, not during (unless it is an emergency).

If you need a tissue, please point to or cover your nose.

If you have trash to take to the trash can, please hold it at your desk until the end of the bell.

If you need to sharpen your pencil, please raise your pencil in the air.

The teacher will nod, and then you may get up.

WAIT! Before you leave this desk, be sure there is **NOTHING on the desk** or **around the desk on the floor**. Check to be sure that your desk in its correct row. **Push your chair in** when you get up to leave.
Appendix F

Leadership Survey
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Responded 1-3</th>
<th>Responded 4-7</th>
<th>Responded 8-10</th>
<th>Avg Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sets a personal example of what he/she expects from others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talks about future trends that will influence how our work gets done.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seeks out challenging opportunities that test his/her own skills and abilities.</td>
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<td>Develops cooperative relationships among the people he/she works with.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Praises people for a job well done.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spends time and energy making certain that the people he/she works with adhere to the principles and standards that we have agreed on.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Describes a compelling image of what our future could be like.</td>
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<td>Challenges people to try out new and innovative ways to do their work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Actively listens to diverse points of view.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Makes it a point to let people know about his/her confidence in their abilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Follows through on promises and commitments he/she makes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appeals to others to share an exciting</td>
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<tr>
<td>dream of the future.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Searches outside the formal boundaries of his/her organization for innovative ways to improve what we do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treats other with dignity and respect.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asks for feedback on how his/her actions affect other people’s performance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shows others how their long-term interests can be realized by enlisting in a common vision.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asks &quot;What can we learn?&quot; when things don’t go as expected.</td>
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<td>Supports the decisions that people make on their own.</td>
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<td>Publicly recognizes people who exemplify commitment to shared values.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Builds consensus around a common set of values for running our organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paints the &quot;big picture&quot; of what we aspire to accomplish.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Makes certain that we set achievable goals, make concrete plans, and establish measurable milestones for the projects and programs that we work on.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gives peoples a great deal of freedom</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
and choice in deciding how to do their work.

Finds ways to celebrate accomplishments.

Is clear about his/her philosophy of leadership.

Speaks with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of our work.

Experiments and takes risks, even when there is a chance of failure.

Ensures that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.

Gives the members of the team lots of appreciation and support for their contributions.