Directly Assessing the Five Critical Features of Effective Classroom Management

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INTRODUCTION

Classroom Management

Many teachers report that managing student misbehavior is one of the most challenging and stressful parts of their job (Reinke, Herman, & Stormont, 2013) and may be one reason teachers leave the field (Kratochwill, 2012). Ingersoll (2001) surveyed teachers who left education and found that 25% cited "dealing with student discipline" as a contributing factor to their decision to leave. Many teachers report they feel unprepared to address students' behavioral and mental health needs (Nagro, Fraser, & Hooks, 2019), which is likely related to the push to meet all students' needs in the general education setting. Teachers also report they need additional training in behavior management (Kwok, 2017) and it is critical that this request be met because continually dealing with student misbehavior is stressful (Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, & Merrell, 2008) and a reason some teachers leave the field of education (Dicke et al., 2014). One way to provide additional training to teachers in behavior management is to accurately assess and provide feedback regarding their current classroom management practices. By accurately assessing current practices and comparing them to evidence-based recommendations, consultants can provide teachers feedback to guide appropriate professional development and training.

The Five Critical Features

Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, and Sugai (2008) reviewed the classroom management literature using criteria they established to determine which strategies were deemed evidence-based and found five features critical to effective classroom management. The five critical features identified include the following: (a) maximize structure; (b) post, teach, review, monitor, and reinforce expectations; (c) actively engage students in observable ways; (d) use a continuum of strategies for responding to appropriate behaviors; and (e) use a continuum of strategies to respond to inappropriate behaviors. Within the five critical features Simonsen and colleagues described 20 classroom management strategies.

Classroom Management Measures

There are few tools that are used to observe classroom management with the specific purpose of guiding class-wide management recommendations. For example, The Brief Classroom Interaction Observation – Revised (Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Wachsmuth, & Newcomer, 2015) was created to support, monitor, and evaluate classroom management strategies. This measure is used as a tool for tier 3 intervention, but is not geared toward assessing the five critical features of effective classroom management broadly. Sanetti, Williamson, Long, Kratochwill (2018) developed an observation tool to study classroom management, but its purpose was to study classroom management. This measure was not intended to be used by school psychologists to assist with class-wide intervention planning. Creating a measure that specifically assesses the five critical features and evidence-based strategies is likely to be a useful tool for consultants. Consultants can use the tool to gather a thorough picture of the current classroom management practices and link the absence of certain strategies to training or intervention recommendations.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Many teachers struggle with behavior management, which can sometimes impact a teacher's decision to exit the field of education (Dicke et al, 2014). This project examines whether Simonsen and colleague's (2008) five critical features of classroom management can be translated into a direct observation. A direct observation tool which assesses the five critical features has the potential assist school psychologists in guiding intervention and professional development recommendations. Furthermore, the plan to pilot this observation tool will be discussed.

Research Questions

The following research questions will be answered in a future study:

1. Which evidence-based classroom management practices do teachers use?
2. Do school psychologists find the observation tool socially valid (useful) in guiding intervention recommendations?

FIVE IN 20: OBSERVATION TOOL

Observer Code: _____ Job Title: _____ Reason for the Observation: _____ (e.g., re-eval, consultation).
Reliability Observer Code: _____ Job Title: _____ Date: _____ School Code: _____ Observation Length: _____
Teacher Code: _____ Class Description _____ (e.g., 5th grade general ed). How many students in the classroom _____ ?
Directions 1) STRATEGY: Indicate if the classroom strategy was observed during the 20-min observation.
2) QUALITY: If a strategy was observed, indicate the quality of the observed strategy (1 = poor, 5 = great).
3) FREQUENCY: Using the operational definitions, tally the frequency of Praise and Reprimands observed during the 20-min observation.

	Critical Feature	Classroom Strategy & Description	Observed Yes or No	Quality		Comments/Notes
1	Maximizing Structure & Predictability	Easy Traffic Flow	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
		Structured	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
		Rules Posted	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
		Schedule Posted	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
2	Establishing and Teaching Expectations	Rules: Taught & Reviewed	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
		Active Supervision	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
3	Engaging Students in Observable Ways	Opportunities to Respond (OTR)	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
		Direct Instruction	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
		Class-Wide Tutoring	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
		Computer Assisted Instruction	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
		Guided Notes	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
4	Recognizing Appropriate Behavior using Various Strategies	Using Behavior-Specific Praise	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
		Token Economies	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
		Class-Wide Group Contingencies	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
		Behavior Contracts	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
5	Responding to Inappropriate Behavior using Various Strategies	Brief Corrections for Inappropriate Behavior	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
		Performance Feedback	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
		Planned Ignoring	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
		Differential Reinforcement	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
		Response Cost	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		
		Time Out from Reinforcement	☐ ☐	1 2 3 4 5		

Praise Frequency Behavior Specific		General	Reprimand Frequency Mild	Medium	Harsh	Gesture

PRAISE DEFINITIONS:

Behavior Specific: Any specific verbalization or gesture that expresses a favorable judgment on an activity, product, or attribute of the student (examples below).
*"Thank you for sitting criss cross *"Good job cleaning up *"Nice work helping *"That is a pretty picture!" *"I like how you raised your hand

General: Any nonspecific verbalization or gesture that expresses a favorable judgment on an activity, product, or attribute of the student (examples below)
*"Great! *"Nice Work *"Hi-five or Thumbs up (gesture w/ no verbalization) *"Gives token (no verbalization) *"Thank you *"Perfect

REPRIMAND DEFINITIONS:

Mild Reprimand: Any verbal comment (using a normal speaking tone) that indicates disapproval of a student(s) behavior. The verbal comment can be an instruction following student misbehavior. The reprimand is concise (brief). Also referred to as a "redirection" of student behavior. Disagreeing with a student with the absence of sarcasm or a critical tone would be identified as mild.
*"No thank you, *"Not now *"No, come sit down (child at desk, while other children are on carpet) *"That is not how we treat our friends

Medium (Sarcastic) Reprimand: Any verbal comment (using a sarcastic or critical tone) that indicates disapproval of a student(s) behavior. The verbal comment can be in the form of a question that is disapproving and has a mocking, rude, or critical tone. A sarcastic reprimand is marked if the teacher disagrees with the child using a critical tone.
*"I don't remember telling you to write about munkins! *"No, it's not cold in here (critical disagreement) *"Is that your best work? (critical) (child misspelled word, sarcasm)

Harsh Reprimand: Any verbal comment (using a louder than typical tone for the setting) that indicates disapproval of a student(s) behavior. Harsh reprimand is marked if the reprimand implies negative consequences (e.g., a threat).
*"One more outburst and no recess (threat) *"I won't tell you again *"Excuse me? (loud) *"How many times do I need to say _____

Gesture Reprimand: Any gesture (without verbalization) that indicates disapproval of a student behavior (e.g., hands on hips). Teacher may also gesture to physically guiding the child's body to a preferred area or action.
*"Hands on hips (disapproving look) *"Teacher physically guides child to correct location *"Shakes head when student interrupts

Data Analysis

R1: Which evidence-based classroom management practices do teachers use? The Five in 20 observation will be individually scored for each teacher participant. The total strategy score, the total quality score, and frequencies of praise and reprimand will be entered. Cohen's kappa coefficient will be used to calculate reliability between each observer and reliability-observer's total strategy score and total quality score. Inter-observer agreement for praise and reprimand frequencies will be calculated using percent agreement.

R2: Do school psychologists find the Five in 20 observation an acceptable and meaningful tool that has the potential to guide classroom management recommendations. The BIRS will be individually scored and averaged across observers and the last question will be analyzed descriptively.

METHODS

Participants and Setting

Approximately 30 observer-teacher dyads will be recruited. **Observer participant inclusion criteria** will include a) work within the kindergarten through twelfth grade school settings, and b) consult and conduct observations as part of their job description. **Teacher participant inclusion criteria** will include a) work within the kindergarten through twelfth grade school settings, b) teach general education, and c) lead whole-class instruction. Twenty-one observer-teacher dyads and nine observer-teacher reliability dyads will be recruited. Observer-teacher dyads will include one observer and one teacher. Reliability dyads will include one observer, one teacher, and a secondary observer. **All participants will receive $15 gift cards.**

Materials/ Measures

Demographics questionnaire. The demographics questionnaire has eight questions and is completed by observers and teachers. Participants list their sex, age, race, job title, experience, state of employment, description of the community (e.g., rural, urban, suburban), and whether they took a (pre-service) behavior management course.

Five in 20 observation. The observation lists five critical features and associated classroom strategies. The observer looks for evidence (e.g., teacher demonstrates or physical evidence) of each strategy. If there is evidence, the observer marks "yes." Next to each strategy there is a quality rating. If the observer indicated "yes," they also rate the quality of that strategy (1 = inconsistent with strategy description to 5 = consistent with strategy description). Throughout the observation, the frequency of praise and reprimand is collected. The total strategy score is obtained by summing the number of "yes" endorsements. The total quality score is obtained by summing the 1-5 strategy ratings. Praise and reprimand rates are also calculated.

Behavior intervention rating scale (BIRS). The BIRS, is a 24-item measure used to assess the acceptability of behavior interventions (Elliott & Treuting, 1991). The BIRS has high validity and reliability (i.e., coefficient alphas for each of the three scales are high, .97, .92, and .87, respectively; Elliott & Treuting, 1991). For the current study, the language on the BIRS was adapted to assess the acceptability of an observation tool (i.e., the Five in 20 observation tool), rather than a behavior intervention. Fifteen questions were retained from the original 24. Observers rate each item using a Likert-style format where they choose to what degree they agree or disagree with the statement. To score the BIRS the fifteen items are summed (higher scores indicate higher acceptability). Last, observers are asked to a) indicate whether the teacher would benefit from additional classroom management training; and if so b) what specific critical features/strategies would they likely benefit.

Procedures

Institutional Review Board review has been secured. Recruitment will occur in the following ways: a) advertised on the Illinois School Psychology Association listserve, b) advertised on the EIU School Psychology Facebook page, c) emailing EIU School Psychology alumni, d) encouraging EIU School Psychology alumni to advertise to other school psychologists who may be interested in participating.

Observers interested in participating will approach a teacher in the school they work and ask if they would like to participate with them. Researchers will email informed consent to the observer who will collect and return consent for themselves and the participating teacher. If the observer agrees to collect reliability data, the observer will collect and return informed consent for themselves, the participating teacher, and a second observer. The observer will use the Five in 20 observation to carry out a 20-min observation with the teacher participant. After the observation is complete, the observer (and reliability observer if applicable) will complete the BIRS and email the observation(s) and BIRS form(s) to the researchers. All forms will have teacher and observer IDs (no identifying information). Researchers will send gift cards to participants after completed materials are received.

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