CHAPTER 1

Why Classroom Management Matters

We are going to be bold and put it out there: being able to effectively manage a classroom is *the* most essential aspect of teaching. Classroom management should be the first class taught to all teachers and should be the first consideration anytime that someone is teaching a new class. Certainly having a thorough understanding of the subject matter and being able to make difficult topics easy to understand are critical to effective teaching; however, if the classroom is not under control, no teaching can occur and no curriculum can be taught. Students will probably learn—but chances are they won't learn the lessons we intended for them to learn. Rather than learning reading, social skills, history, or science, they will learn how to survive in chaos.

If you are reading this book, chances are that classroom management concerns you. Some of you may be experienced teachers who are looking for ways to increase student engagement and decrease disruption and aggression. Others may be just learning how to teach and find the prospect of working with large groups of students daunting. Still others may be administrators or school-based consultants who see teachers struggling with student behavior in the classroom and want to find a way to help. No matter what your background or current situation, you have arrived at this place because you are looking for some answers to a challenge that extends beyond individual classrooms, schools, states, and even countries.

Classroom management is not just an individual struggle, but is arguably the top concern in education today (Melnick & Meister, 2008). There is no question that student behavior in schools presents a major challenge. Within a survey of early childhood and elementary schoolteachers, more than 90% of respondents reported that they had dealt with problem behaviors that interfered with classroom instruction (e.g., disruptive behavior, defiant behavior) within the past year (Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri, & Goel, 2011). These behavior problems are not all minor in nature either. According to a report from the National Center on Educational Statistics, one in every 14 students in public school in the United States in 2009 was suspended from school at least once and one in every 476 stu-

dents was expelled (Planty et al., 2009). Epidemics have been declared based on much more conservative estimates of prevalence.

To fight an epidemic, it is necessary to have a sufficient number of well-trained professionals who can put into place effective strategies to reduce the number of existing cases and prevent further spread of the problem. A quick Google search for the phrase "classroom management," however, swiftly brings nearly 30 million results before you can bat an eye. If you begin to scroll through the pages upon pages of results, you will find that just about everyone seems to be writing about classroom management. There are articles written by national teaching organizations (e.g., the National Education Association and the National Council on Teacher Quality), national periodicals (e.g., *Education Week*), and institutions of higher education (e.g., New York University, Vanderbilt University). You can also find numerous "tips," "secrets," and "strategies" on websites with promising names like Education Oasis and Teacher Toolkit, and popular social networking sites such as Pinterest and Edmodo. The sheer amount of information at your fingertips can become overwhelming. Where do you start? Who do you trust? How do you know that any of these self-proclaimed "quick fixes" will have any effect on the problems you are having?

Despite the abundance of information that we have available to us in the Information Age, practicing teachers still report that classroom management is the number one problem that they struggle with (New Teacher Project, 2013). Unfortunately, this constant struggle, combined with a seeming lack of solutions, can be a main contributor to teacher burnout (Aloe, Amo, & Shanahan, 2014; O'Neill & Stephenson, 2011). In fact, many teachers have even reported leaving the field due to frustrations with student behavior problems (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2000–2001). Although we can never know the individual circumstances of these teachers, it is possible that this unfortunate end to their stories might have been avoided had these teachers been armed with effective strategies for better managing their classrooms.

WHAT IS CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT?

Before we go any further, it is important to make sure that we are all talking about the same thing when we use the phrase "classroom management." Classroom management refers to practices that a teacher follows to ensure that (1) students behave in ways that are not disruptive to the learning of others and (2) teachers are able to focus on academically relevant material. Some criticize behavioral management techniques by claiming that the changes in student behavior do not generalize to other environments. We agree. The purpose of classroom management is not to teach life lessons; rather, classroom management allows life lessons to be taught.

Academic instruction is effective only when instruction occurs without interruption and students can practice new skills without distraction. A teacher can individualize instruction when other students are on task and quiet, social skills improve because social skills instruction can take place without incident, and fewer problematic social skills are modeled. Student mental health also improves because students are bullied less and social–emotional

learning such as self-relaxation and impulse control training can take place more effectively. As displayed in Figure 1.1, classroom management is the bedrock on which learning occurs. Classroom management isn't the teaching, but without it, students won't learn what we want them to learn. Our goal in this book is to provide you with strategies that will help to minimize the amount of time teachers spend transitioning from one activity to another, addressing problem behavior, and engaging in other noninstructional activities that detract from classroom learning.

Effective classroom management is also the foundation of a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). MTSS refers to the coordinated system of instruction, assessment, and intervention that allows schools to meet the needs of a variety of students (Lane, Menzies, Ennis, & Bezdek, 2013). An MTSS typically consists of three levels of service delivery, wherein the intensity of both assessment and intervention increases as one moves from one level to the next. Whereas Tier 1 focuses on providing universal supports to all students in a school, Tier 2 and Tier 3 direct increasingly focused and intensive supports at those students at risk for or demonstrating academic or behavioral problems. When student performance is judged to be nonresponsive to the supports provided at one level, the decision is made to move the student to the next tier of service delivery. One of the fundamental assumptions in judging nonresponse, however, is that the student has received high-quality, evidence-based instruction. This is where classroom management comes in. On the academic side, the effectiveness of classroom instruction will likely diminish without classroom management, meaning that many students without learning problems will begin to look like they have learning problems. In addition, on the behavioral side, a poorly managed classroom in which behavioral expectations are unclear will increase the likelihood of students displaying poor social skills, exhibiting behavioral problems, and struggling with mental health problems.

Although having a well-managed classroom may be important in the immediate place and time, you may wonder just how much of a difference it will really make in the long run. The simple answer is that well-managed classrooms can make a huge difference and

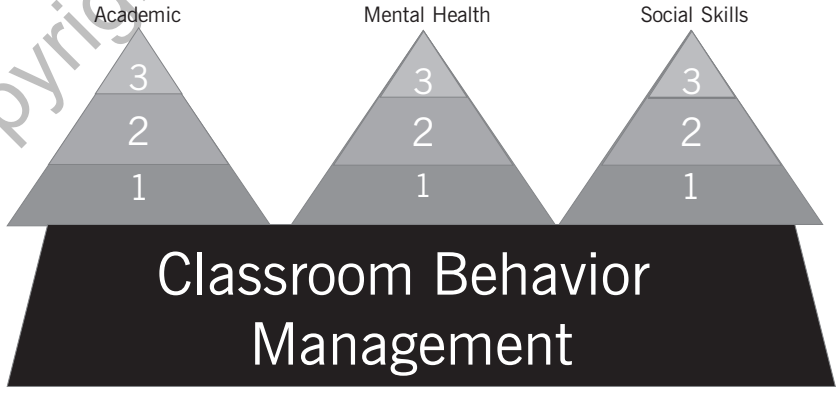

FIGURE 1.1. Classroom management is the foundation upon which quality learning and development occur.

these differences may be long lasting. Oliver, Wehby, and Reschly (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of those studies in which teachers implemented universal classroom management practices in typical public school settings (e.g., general/special education). Across 12 studies, the authors found that classroom management practices had a large and significant effect ($d = 0.80$) on student behavior. (If you are not sure what an effect size refers to, imagine that you were able to increase somebody's IQ from 100 to 112. That is what an effect of 0.8 looks like. In social science research, this effect is considered large.) Positive classroom management has also been shown to be significantly related to lower levels of bullying behavior (Ttofi & Farrington, 2012) and higher levels of school connectedness (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002). Furthermore, it has the potential to not only reduce existing problem behavior but also to prevent the development of new problems and disorders (Hester et al., 2004; Myers, Simonsen, & Sugai, 2011).

To provide one specific example of the potential power of classroom management, let us take a moment to describe a longitudinal study conducted with a large number of students in inner-city Baltimore (Dolan et al., 1993; Kellam, Rebok, Ialongo, & Mayer, 1994; Kellam et al., 2014). The researchers randomly assigned students to different first-grade classrooms, and then ensured that each classroom had a similar number of students who had displayed problem behaviors in kindergarten. Half of these classrooms were then randomly assigned to receive an evidence-based classwide behavioral intervention called the Good Behavior Game (GBG; see Chapter 6 for a complete description of this intervention) and the other half served as control classrooms. By the end of the spring semester of first grade, teachers reported significant decreases in aggressive behavior for those children receiving the GBG intervention. The most notable effects were found, however, for those students who began the year with the highest levels of aggressive behavior (Dolan et al., 1993). The students who displayed the most aggression in kindergarten were then tracked into sixth grade. Those aggressive kindergarten boys who had received the GBG were twice as likely to display aggressive behaviors in sixth grade than the nonaggressive students. However, those boys with high initial levels of aggression who did not receive the intervention were 25 times more likely to be aggressive in sixth grade than nonaggressive students (Kellam et al., 1994). Kellam and colleagues (2014) also followed up with those students when they were 19–21 years of age. Again, they found that those students who received the GBG in first and second grade were less likely to display sexual violence, be diagnosed with antisocial personality disorders, and have suffered from drug abuse (Kellam et al., 2014). This research shows that not only do teachers make a difference each and every day but that they make a difference that lasts.

WHAT IS *EVIDENCE-BASED* CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT?

Believe it or not, there are lots of things that we do in schools to try and improve student behavior that the research tells us are ineffective. Counseling, for example, is effective in treating disorders such as depression and anxiety; however, its effect is negligible on

classroom behavior and student performance (Baskin, Slaten, Sorenson, Glover-Russell & Merson, 2010; Prout & Prout, 1998; Stage & Quiroz, 1997). Many individuals have argued that adopting school uniforms decreases problem behaviors and improves student learning; however, analysis of data from the National Education Longitudinal Study found that uniforms appear to have little effect on student behavior (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 1998). Even most disciplinary practices, such as suspensions, are frequently accompanied by high degrees of recidivism, arrest rates, and anger directed toward school staff members (Blankenship & Bender, 2007; Skiba & Nesting, 2001).

Although many strategies can fall under the umbrella of classroom management, the specific focus of this book is on *evidence-based practices*—that is, we have deliberately chosen to present you with only those strategies that we see as evidence based. Evidence-based practice means that an educator uses knowledge and research-based interventions to inform his or her practice (PACER Center, 2011). The Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) requires that schools utilize practices that have a research base behind them. There are, however, many different ways in which the term "evidence based" has been defined and interpreted. The Council for Exceptional Children (2014), for example, outlines that studies must have been conducted using either group comparison or single-subject experimental designs. The U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Services (2003), on the other hand, has noted that strong evidence comes from two or more randomized controlled trials conducted in typical school settings. Within this book, we take a less conservative approach, considering evidence-based practices to be those interventions and strategies that have been shown to be effective across multiple controlled research studies. Although these studies may have been conducted using either group comparison or single-case designs, the majority of research we review has come from the single-case literature.

With all the talk about evidence-based practice nowadays, some readers may find themselves asking "What's the big deal?" The reason why evidence-based practice is so important is because it gives us some confidence that what we choose to try will actually work. Even when some interventions are used frequently in practice, there is no guarantee that these interventions will have positive results—and they may perhaps even be harmful in some cases. Although evidence-based practices are not guaranteed to work in every situation, there is a much higher likelihood given prior successes.

There is also an important distinction that should be made between what has been termed "effective classroom management" and "evidence-based classroom management." Much of what has been written about classroom management is based on observational studies that were conducted in the 1970s of effective teachers. The goal of this line of research was to identify teachers who were believed to be effective and then observe them in the classroom in order to better understand the practices in which they engaged. In the seminal study published in 1970, Jacob Kounin looked at the practices of teachers who were believed to be effective classroom managers as well as the practices of those teachers who were believed to be ineffective. What he found was that both groups of teachers used similar practices to address problem behaviors when they arose. There was, however, one main difference between the two groups that Kounin identified. Rather than waiting until

problems arose, those teachers with well-managed classrooms used preventative strategies that made problem behaviors less likely and on-task behaviors more likely to occur. In particular, Kounin (1970) focused on the way in which an effective teacher would move through a lesson: ensuring the active participation of students, managing smooth transitions, and remaining aware of what was going on in all corners of the classroom at all times. These findings were further supported by later researchers utilizing observational approaches to understanding those teacher behaviors most associated with student performance (e.g., Emmer, Evertson, & Anderson, 1980; Sanford & Evertson, 1981).

Although studies such as the one by Kounin (1970) certainly contributed to the dialogue around classroom management practices, it is important to highlight the correlational nature of this work—that is, although use of proactive strategies was related to higher levels of both teacher and student performance, it is impossible to say whether one actually caused the other. In the 1980s, however, researchers began to conduct the first experimental studies focused on classroom management. Emmer and colleagues, for example, found that those teachers who received specific training in classroom management strategies had higher levels of appropriate student behavior in their classrooms than those teachers in a control condition (Emmer, 1984). Since this time, numerous experimental studies have been conducted in order to better delineate both what effective classroom management should look like and how necessary strategies should be taught.

Although the research base is quite dense, findings from the experimental literature fortunately suggest that the recipe for effective classroom management is both understood and straightforward. Interestingly, three major reviews of the experimental and quasi-experimental research on effective classroom management practices (Epstein, Atkins, Cullinan, Kutash, & Weaver, 2008; Oliver et al., 2011; Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008) have all come to similar conclusions. As highlighted by Greenberg, Putman, and Walsh (2014), there are the "Big Five" classroom management strategies that have emerged from over 60 years of research in this area. First, positively stated expectations must be made clear by establishing, teaching, and practicing a small set of classroom rules. Second, predictable routines for navigating different settings and situations within the school day must be developed and taught. Third, teachers should use positive and specific praise to reinforce students for appropriate behavior. Fourth, inappropriate behavior should be responded to consistently with an appropriate level of consequence. Fifth, student engagement should be kept high by facilitating opportunities for active engagement and ensuring that the instructional content is interesting and meaningful. Most importantly, all of these practices are things that must be planned before students enter the classroom. Without deliberate, systematic lesson planning and preparation, classrooms may be chaotic where no learning can occur.

So if we know what works, we should assume that everybody is doing this, right? Unfortunately, what we know is that most teacher education programs are not equipping their graduates with the classroom management tools that they need. The National Council on Teacher Quality (Greenberg et al., 2014) published a report that investigated whether teacher education programs were training teachers in classroom management. They made three key findings:

1. Most teacher education programs are not deliberately teaching the science of classroom management in class and clinical settings.
2. Most programs function under the belief that "instructional virtuosity" will render the need for classroom management moot because all students will be enthralled with the flawlessly executed lesson that they will be unable to act out.
3. Teachers are encouraged to come up with a *philosophy* for classroom management based upon their own beliefs about child development.

The findings of this report raise a number of serious concerns. Imagine going to a physician complaining of a chronic heart problem. Rather than following a standard procedure that is based upon years of science, the doctor has instead been trained to come up with his or her own philosophy for solving heart problems based upon his or her own beliefs about how a heart works. Or, imagine if the physician merely believed that following a healthy diet and regular exercise would remove the need for any treatment. A practice that would be intolerable in medicine unfortunately continues to be standard practice in education, which boasts a substantial research-to-practice gap (Burns & Ysseldyke, 2008; Carnine, 1997; Cook & Odom, 2013).

Just as we would not want a doctor to enter surgery without the right instruments, we do not want teachers entering classrooms without the proper management tools. However, when it comes to student behavior, over 40% of teachers participating in the Schools and Staffing Survey (Epstein et al., 2008) indicated that they felt "not at all prepared" or "only somewhat prepared" to handle behavioral issues in the classroom. It should therefore come as no surprise that teachers find the job stressful, or even sometimes decide to leave the field. Intervention is sorely needed in order to change this trajectory. We do not fool ourselves into thinking that this book is the only answer, but we do hope that it will serve as a critical important tool in an educator's toolbox.

WHAT IS TO COME

Now that we have explained what we mean by evidence-based classroom management—and hopefully convinced you of just how important it is—you are probably eager to hear more about the concrete strategies that are available to you. Before we jump to this, however, we want to say a few words about what our goals for this book are and what you can expect as a reader.

This book seeks to avoid long and theoretical discussions about classroom theory, but to instead focus on tangible strategies that can immediately be put into place. We aim to equip beginning teachers with concrete strategies that have been proven effective through rigorous research. In addition, we see the information presented within this book as being valuable to experienced teachers and educators who may be looking to ensure that their practices are up-to-date, research based, and most importantly, effective. In the chapters to come, we present you with those classwide strategies that have shown the greatest promise in promoting and supporting appropriate student behavior. All of these strategies have been

repeatedly subjected to empirical testing and therefore can be classified as evidence based. Although prior research suggests that these strategies are likely to be successful in your setting, there are a few important caveats to keep in mind as we move forward into the book.

First, behavior is not something that is ever totally fixed. One of the most important things to keep in mind about classroom management practices is that they never *eliminate* problems. There are very few things that we as educators do that work perfectly. Human beings are extraordinarily complex, and when large groups of complex beings come together in places like schools, unexpected things may happen. When teachers implement evidence-based classroom management procedures with fidelity, there is a good likelihood that problems will be *reduced*. Although we would like to see a situation go from complete chaos to calm in 5 seconds, it is important to keep realistic goals in mind and to celebrate each small victory. After all, if we can reduce the number of acting-out behaviors from 10 per day to four per day, we have made a huge improvement.

Second, nothing lasts forever. As you will read in this book, having clear expectations that are taught and consistently reinforced reduces problem behaviors. Sometimes, however, these problem behaviors start to return after time has passed. For example, there may be times when our practices work for a month and then unexpectedly just stop working. When something like this happens, we first need to rejoice in the fact that we had a better month. After that, we either need to perform a series of reminders (booster sessions), or we may need to try something else entirely (new intervention). Imagine, for example, a middle school in which the students received extensive opportunities to learn and practice specific social skills at the start of the school year; however, come November, they have stopped using good eye contact and seem to be unable to accept "No" as an answer. In such a case, the team may either reteach the expectations, or they may change the way expectations are reinforced.

Third, this book is not specifically meant to address the needs of students with serious behavioral difficulties. Those students on the autism spectrum, or those who display impulsive behaviors, tend to perform much better in classrooms that are well managed; however, the strategies discussed herein are designed to address the needs of the general population. Although we recommend working with a school-based mental health consultant to support the needs of these students, the behavior plans that you implement will be more effective when procedures are clear, expectations are taught and reinforced consistently, and problematic behaviors are addressed fluently and immediately (Witt, VanDerHeyden, & Gilbertson, 2004). This book may therefore be considered a critical base to prevent many more serious problem behaviors.

The book is divided into several broad sections. In the remainder of the first section, Chapter 2 provides you with the theoretical underpinnings for the book and a brief overview of the principles of applied behavior analysis. We believe that understanding these principles is essential to the effective implementation of the strategies that are described in subsequent chapters. The second section, "Promotion and Prevention Strategies," describes the basic interventions that all teachers should use to prevent classroom behavior problems and to reinforce desired behaviors in an effective manner. Within the third section ("Strategies for Addressing Classwide Behavioral Concerns"), we outline additional, more

structured interventions that can be used if the strategies described in Chapters 3 and 4 are insufficient. Chapter 5 introduces classwide token economies, Chapter 6 addresses group contingencies, and Chapter 7 provides methods for helping students manage their own behavior. The final section outlines strategies that teachers can use to evaluate classroom behavior (Chapter 8), to determine whether the interventions are being implemented correctly (Chapter 9), and to individualize interventions for those students who need more structure or feedback than others in the class (Chapter 10).

Finally, it is important to mention that many of these chapters include coach cards. These coach cards break the interventions down into steps and offer checklists that may be helpful in planning as well as during implementation. These checklists can be used by teachers to make sure they don't "miss something" when putting a new procedure into practice. In addition, these coach cards can be used by coaches who are interested in helping a teacher with a new practice and providing integrity checks. We encourage you to make copies and use them within your own classroom or for your own practice.

CONCLUSIONS

We know that teaching children is a high calling. The fields of psychology and education know a tremendous amount about learning and behavior, though our practices in schools tend to fall behind our knowledge base. This book seeks to close that gap by providing teachers with the best science to date on managing classroom behaviors. We want to provide you with the best tools and information so you can provide your students with the best supports possible. Before we can equip you with specific tools, however, we do believe that a basic understanding of behavioral principles is necessary to successful implementation. We therefore spend Chapter 2 providing the reader with much of the theoretical basis for the rest of the text.

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