

## SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH ON CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

**E**ffective classroom management consists of teacher behaviors that produce high levels of student involvement in classroom activities, minimal amounts of student behaviors that interfere with the teacher's or other students' work, and efficient use of instructional time. These criteria have the advantage of being directly observable.

Classroom management should be viewed as one major dimension of effective teaching, rather than synonymous with it. Teachers also provide instruction, evaluate students, choose curriculum, promote self-adjustment, and influence student attitudes. Hence, effective teaching encompasses varying degrees of different tasks. But the centrality of classroom management to the teacher's role, as well as its relationship with learning, make it worth our while to inquire further about teacher behaviors that produce well-managed classrooms.

The "modern" era of research on classroom management began with Kounin's (1970) study of 49 first- and second-grade classrooms. Each class was videotaped for a full day. The behavior of selected children was coded for work involvement and deviancy every 12 seconds during student recitation and seatwork. Teacher behaviors were scored on the following variables.

**"With-itness":** the degree to which a teacher communicates awareness of student behavior; measured by computing the ratio of the number of times the teacher "desisted" (stopped) deviant behavior appropriately

(caught the right student before the behavior spread or became more serious) to the total number of desist attempts.

**Overlapping:** teacher's ability to attend to more than one event or issue at a time. Such events occur when the teacher is busy in a recitation or involved with a group of children and deviant behavior or an interruption occurs. A high overlapping score means the teacher is able to handle simultaneous events smoothly, without becoming totally diverted by deviancy or "glued" to one activity.

**Smoothness and Momentum:** aspects of the teacher's movement through different activities. Smoothness in moving through a lesson means not interrupting seatwork or an instructional sequence with irrelevant or tangential information, and not becoming diverted by behaviors or events that are not interfering in any noticeable manner. Momentum refers to avoiding behavior that slows down a lesson. Such behavior includes dwelling on a topic beyond what is necessary for the children's understanding, and focusing on a smaller subpart of an activity or instruction when it might have been dealt with as a whole. Although smoothness and momentum are conceptually different, they are highly correlated.

**Group alerting:** the teacher's attempts to keep children attentive when not reciting, that is, "on their toes" and with the group. The teacher can alert students by choosing reciters randomly, creating suspense, using chorus responses, or signaling children that they may be called on. Negative alerting is indicated by focusing on one reciter, choosing reciters before asking the question, or using a fixed sequence to call on students.

**Accountability:** how well the teacher monitors and maintains student performance during recitations. Accountability behaviors include requiring children to show work or recite as a group, calling for hands to show readiness to perform, or circulating to check students' work.

**Valence and challenge arousal:** the ratio of times the teacher uses a motivational comment (for example, "You'll enjoy the next problem") during a transition, compared to the total number of transitions.

**Seatwork variety and challenge and Recitation variety and challenge:** the degree to which the child is presented with varied activities or task demands during a given time unit. A high score means relatively frequent shifts in activity focus or higher intellectual challenge as opposed to just listening, copying, or rote responding.

**K**ounin used each of the teacher variables as predictors with each of two student behaviors (work involvement and freedom from deviancy) in both recitation and seatwork activities. The results for work involvement and freedom from deviancy in recitation were similar. Correlations between these variables and with-itness, smoothness and momentum, and group alerting were high or moderate. Correlations with accountability, overlapping, and valence and challenge arousal were moderate. There were no significant correlations for seatwork variety or recitation variety.

The results for student involvement and freedom from deviancy during seatwork showed a different pattern, in part, from the results for recitation. With-itness and momentum/smoothness were moderately predictive of freedom from deviancy. The best

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predictor of involvement in seatwork was seatwork variety and challenge, at a moderately high level ( $r = .516$ ). It should be noted, however, that in an earlier videotape study using third- to fifth-grade classes, Kounin found a *negative* correlation between seatwork variety and challenge and involvement in seatwork.

Kounin's results were striking. Overall, he was able to predict management effectiveness at a high level with a set of relatively independent variables. This is evidenced by multiple correlations between the teacher variables and each of the student behaviors. The multiple correlations ranged from a low of .686 for involvement in seatwork to a high of .812 for involvement in recitation; the correlations for deviancy were in between. In addition, the teacher variables were carefully defined and described. Thus, considerable potential exists for translating the results into inservice and preservice teacher preparation programs.

We should note some cautions. The results are correlational; thus, we cannot be sure that the teacher variables caused the students' behaviors. It may be that when students are more work involved, it is easier for teachers to exhibit "with-it" behavior, that is, to make accurate and prompt desists. Other uncertainties are whether the results can be reproduced and whether they can be generalized to other settings, times of the year, or grade levels. Even accepting these results, how did the teachers and students develop the relationships and the patterns of behavior observed in the study? Subsequent research has shed light on some of these points.

### Lesson Formats and Management

Different lesson formats, such as small group recitations or seatwork, require different types of student and teacher behaviors. Lesson formats also elicit varying levels of student involvement. For example, Good and Beckerman (1978) observed greater amounts of pupil time-on-task in teacher-led large and small group activities than in either whole class or individual seatwork activities. Gump's analysis (1969) of a third-grade classroom obtained basically the same result: externally paced group activities had the highest pupil involvement (92 percent), followed

by total class activities (81 percent), and self-paced activities (73 percent). Findings from the Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study, described later, also indicated higher student engagement rates in group settings than in independent seatwork. Teachers react differently to inappropriate behavior in varying lesson formats. Solomon and Kendall (1975) found higher rates of discipline and criticism in traditional versus open classrooms, without an observed difference in child misbehavior. A comparison of teacher "desist" statements in several third- and fourth-grade classrooms showed higher rates in recitation activities than in other activities such as seatwork or free-time (Bossert, 1977). These findings indicate that teachers are more sensitive to student misbehavior in certain settings and lesson formats than in others, and that student involvement is influenced by the type of activity.

The student or teacher behavior differences between lesson formats may result from the stronger signals or cues for attentive pupil behavior inherent in certain lesson formats. Kounin and Gump (1974), using videotapes of 596 lessons, contrasted those having high, average, and low pupil involvement. They found that the more successful lessons provided continuous cues for appropriate behavior and insulated students from external intrusions. For example, an individual construction activity has continuous cues because each step leads to the next. It is insulated because the student's progress is not dependent on the behavior of others. Low involvement occurred when lessons featured varying input from other children (such as role play) or lessons with high intrusiveness (such as gross motor activity).

This study's results provide an explanation for the studies reporting higher levels of pupil involvement in teacher-led groups compared to seatwork. In the former, the teacher generally supplies a continuous set of signals for behavior, and can "steer" the group toward involvement. In seatwork, teacher control over cues is lessened. Consequently, unless the task is very highly structured, the student's attention is more easily diverted. The Kounin and Gump study also provides a basis for understanding teachers' greater sensitivity to inappropriate behavior dur-

ing recitation formats: teachers are probably trying to maintain continuous cues for appropriate behavior in recitation.

### Variables Enhancing Management

One of the most extensive studies of teaching in recent years has been the Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study (BTES). The major focus of this research was on identifying teaching behaviors that promoted pupil learning, but the aspect we are most concerned with here focused on identifying teacher behaviors associated with high student involvement. The BTES extensively observed numerous second- and fifth-grade classrooms. Analyses of interactive teaching behaviors and their relationships with student engagement rates showed that higher amounts of teacher academic feedback and more substantive academic interaction were associated with higher student engagement (Filby, 1978). More substantive instruction during seatwork was positively associated with student engagement, but discipline-related feedback was negatively related to engagement rate. In mathematics, high engagement was also associated with high teacher structuring.

Teacher stimulus control has been consistently related to greater student on-task behavior in numerous studies. Krantz and Scarth (1979) found consistent positive effects of prompting (task-relevant questions) on the task persistence of nursery school children. Transitions between instructional activities have higher rates of pupil off-task behavior than the activities themselves, but when teachers *structure* the transitions (for example, by providing directions or close monitoring and feedback), then the off-task rates are significantly reduced (Arlin, 1979). Also, teacher inattention to students resulting from a long contact with another student in a group results in higher off-task rates (Scott and Bushell, 1974). Teachers can use questioning and signals more frequently to produce higher on-task rates (Carnine, 1974; Carnine and Fink, 1978).

We shall give Kounin the last word. In a study comparing pairs of high task involvement and low task involvement lessons taught by the same teachers who used the same lesson formats, Kounin and Doyle (1975) found that the most important pre-

dictor of involvement was the degree of continuity of the lesson's signal system. In teacher-led activities (teacher reading, teacher demonstration) higher task involvement occurred when long periods of student talk (recitations) were avoided. In other words, the teacher retained control over pacing. In student-paced (individual construction) lessons, higher involvement was produced by lessons that were more tightly programmed in a step-by-step manner.

The research reviewed in this section indicates that more effective management is associated with a more substantive and structured focus, by high rates of academic feedback, and by maintaining continuous signals for appropriate behavior. The latter feature may be accomplished differently, depending on the type of classroom activity.

### Consequences

Researchers, particularly in behavior modification, have extensively studied incentive systems and other types of consequences, such as response cost. They have conducted much of this research using one or two teachers and a few students, often out of the regular classroom setting. Nonetheless, there is an impressive accumulation of evidence regarding the effectiveness of providing incentives contingent on acceptable performance. Researchers have conducted several carefully designed field experiments in regular classroom settings using adequate samples of teachers and students at different grade levels. In these studies (Benowitz and Busse, 1976; Breuning, 1978; Rosenfeld, 1972), improved achievement has occurred as a result of the use of some system of consequences. Improved student achievement is likely the result, at least in part, of increased task engagement although other factors may be involved. For example, establishing a system of consequences contingent on certain behavior or performance requires clear identification of the acceptable performance, and the resulting improved goal clarity itself may increase achievement or engagement (Rosswork, 1977).

Contingency management is frequently used to reduce disruptive behavior or to increase on-task behavior in school settings, and the literature abounds with positive results. An examination of this research indicates

that systems of consequences usually have several components. First, the desired behaviors are clearly identified. Second, students are given feedback about their behavior. Third, consequences that are rewarding are used consistently (and predictably), and are contingent on performance of the desired behavior. The elimination of undesirable behavior may occur when the newly acquired appropriate behavior takes its place. Undesirable behavior can also be treated by using a response cost system in conjunction with an incentive system. When such a system is used, the undesirable behavior is clearly specified, students are given feedback, and punishment (such as loss of tokens, points, or privileges) is made contingent on inappropriate behavior.

The use of consequences is common in schools. Good grades, points, awards, treats, sports letters, and privileges have powerful rewarding properties. The behavior modification literature provides evidence of their usefulness for management when used systematically.

### Beginning the School Year

All classroom management systems, good, poor, or in-between, have a beginning. The way in which teachers structure the first part of the year has consequences for their classroom management throughout the year. The research literature on the beginning of the year is not extensive, but existing studies attest to its importance.

A major management task at the beginning of the year is teaching children the rules and procedures of the classroom. In the elementary grades the teacher, in effect, socializes the children into the setting (Tikunoff and others, 1978). In an extensive study of 28 third-grade teachers (Emmer and others, 1980; Everson and Anderson, 1979) more effective managers spent considerable time during the first several weeks helping students learn how to behave in their classrooms. They had carefully thought out procedures for getting assistance, contacting the teacher, lining up, turning work in, and standards for conduct during seatwork, group work, and whole class activities. Thus, these teachers knew what children needed to function in the classroom setting and in its activities, and they proceeded to teach these "sur-

vival" skills as part of the content at the beginning of the year. Better managers were also more careful monitors of student behavior and dealt with inappropriate behavior, when it occurred, more quickly than did less effective managers. The usefulness of this type of with-it-ness at the beginning of the year, before a pattern of inappropriate behavior becomes established, is evident. Better managers also had stronger instructional skills, such as clarity in directions and presentation, and stronger communication skills, such as listening and expressing feelings.

At the junior high level, similar differences between more and less effective managers have been found, although with some differences in emphasis associated with the older students. In a study comparing a group of beginning teachers to a group of "best" teachers, chosen from nominations by students, Moskowitz and Hayman (1976) found several differences in teacher behavior. Compared to new teachers, best teachers focused more on setting expectations and establishing appropriate behavior on the first day. They also used and accepted student ideas more, joked more, and contrary to the advice "Don't smile until Christmas," they smiled more. (The "best" teachers also turned out to be better managers, based on on-task student behavior rates.) In a study of junior high school mathematics and English teachers, subgroups of more and less effective managers were identified based on year-long criteria (Emmer and Everson, 1980). Better managers set clear expectations for behavior, academic work standards, and classroom procedures during the first several class meetings, although they did not need as much time for these tasks as did elementary teachers. Better managers also were good monitors and dealt with inappropriate behavior promptly. Less effective managers' problems began early in the year, although not immediately. During the first week of school, off-task and disruptive behavior rates were low and not different in the more and less effective managers' classes. However, during the second and third weeks, such behaviors became significantly more frequent in the less effective managers' classes, but not in the more effective managers' classes. Management in lower ability

## HIGHLIGHTS OF RESEARCH ON CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT



Several teacher variables are important contributors to student involvement, disruptive behavior, and efficient use of class time. Important management tasks occur during the first several weeks of the year, when the teacher establishes (or fails to establish) expectations about behavior and teaches the students the classroom procedures. Thus, teachers must have a very clear idea of what is and is not

appropriate in a wide range of situations and activities. The teacher must then teach these behaviors and procedures systematically, just as academic content might be taught. Younger children will require more instructional time and more practice than will older students. During implementation and maintenance of the management system, monitoring, prompt handling of inappropriate behavior, an academic focus, reasonable consequences, and instructional skills—especially clarity—are needed. Throughout the year, the teacher's ability to control signals for appropriate behavior and to eliminate or restrict cues for inappropriate behavior is important for maintaining effective management.

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track classes and in highly heterogeneous classes was also examined. Both instructional contexts present additional management problems for teachers. In lower track classes, teachers frequently encounter uncooperative students and higher off-task rates. Evidence (Evertson, 1980) indicates better management results from shorter, more frequent recitation-seatwork cycles embedded within each class period. High heterogeneity of students' entering ability levels had a negative impact on the management effectiveness of teachers who were poorer managers, whereas better managers were able to assimilate the heterogeneity into their management systems (Sanford, 1980). Better managers at the junior high level in heterogeneous classes obtained more information regarding student performance to diagnose pupil differences, seated lower achieving students nearer the teacher, and provided them with supplementary instruction. The better managers also had stronger accountability systems, enabling them to keep track of student progress.

### Other Lines of Inquiry

Teacher planning and decision mak-

ing influence management strategies and, ultimately, student behavior. However, the processes by which those links are established, and their nature, are not well researched. We know that student involvement is a highly salient cue for teachers when they choose curriculum (Taylor, 1970) and make judgments about how well their instruction is progressing (Peterson and Clark, 1978). Teachers' estimates of their ability to control classrooms are reduced by lower student ability levels, and are affected by the nature of classroom activities (Cooper and others, 1979). Research on teacher thinking and decision making is increasing (see reviews by Clark and Yinger, 1979; and Borko and others, 1979) and will improve our understanding of their relationship to management practices.

School level management and its effects at the classroom level deserve further research. Duke and Perry (1979) present data indicating wide variation in control or discipline problems across California high schools, with only a few reporting major schoolwide problems. Several studies point to important school level effects (Brookover and others, 1978; Rutter and others, 1979), but we are

still unclear about the processes by which such effects are spread to teachers and classrooms. Significant elementary school management variables appear to be administrative leadership in instruction, coordination of programs, and setting and maintaining academic standards (Wellisch and others, 1978). The influence of schoolwide policies and rules at the individual classroom level is not clear. Many schools have schoolwide rules, but their effects have not been researched, and Duke (1978) has hypothesized several negative effects resulting from schoolwide attempts to control student behavior.

The influence students exert over the management of a classroom is another budding line of inquiry. Anyone who has read "The Child as Terrorist: Seven Cases" (Rader, 1975) cannot help but contemplate the impact one such child might have on a classroom. There is extensive evidence that adult responses to children are highly influenced by the nature of the child's behavior (Bates, 1976; Bell, 1968; Friedrich, 1976; Humphries and others, 1978) and that a unidirectional model of influence from adult to child is overly simple. Studies of pupil effects on teachers have confirmed that students exert influence and some control over classroom events (Fiedler, 1975; Klein, 1971; Sherman and Carmier, 1974). The extent of student influence and its effects on such variables as teachers' decisions about instruction, choice of activities, and how the influence process occurs need research. ■

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