

General Education Teachers' Perceptions of Behavior Management and Intervention Strategies

Amy Dutton Tillery
Kris Varjas
Joel Meyers
Amanda Smith Collins
Georgia State University, Atlanta

In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with kindergarten and first-grade general education teachers to determine their perceptions of student behavior. This study describes the teachers' perspectives of and approaches to behavior management and intervention strategies (e.g., use of praise, rewards, implementation of classroom management, and knowledge about PBIS and RTI). A unique contribution of this study is the in-depth data that provide specific descriptions of the teachers' perceptions. Findings indicated that the teachers in this study tended to concentrate more on individual student behavior when describing behavior management strategies than on group or school-wide behavior. In addition, the teachers were unfamiliar with RTI and PBIS despite training occurring in the system on these initiatives during the study. Lastly, the teachers perceived themselves as strong influences on student behavior development and described the use of positive strategies. Meeting teachers' training needs for implementation of schoolwide PBIS and topics for future research are discussed.

Keywords *qualitative; teachers; positive; interventions; behavior*

Studies have demonstrated that young children with untreated behavior problems often experience significant adjustment problems and psychopathology later in life (Sprague & Walker, 2000; Tobin & Sugai, 1999). Evidence of impending social and emotional problems in children is present as early as the age of 2 (Briggs-Gowan, Carter, Guyer, & Horwitz, 2006). Because problem behaviors become more entrenched in a student's repertoire over time, early identification and treatment is imperative to ensure positive future outcomes (Forness et al., 2000). Consequently, teachers of children in the primary grades are ideally positioned to serve as the frontline defense for intervening with behavioral difficulties if provided with the proper training and resources (Severson, Walker, Hope-Doolittle, Kratochwill, & Gresham, 2007). An in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions of behavior is crucial to ensure that teachers meet the challenge of prevention and early intervention.

Prevention and early intervention efforts have recently received greater attention in regular education due to the

implementation of response to intervention (RTI), which was required by special education law (Albers, Glover, & Kratochwill, 2007; Gresham, 2004, 2005; *Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act Regulations*, n.d.; Reschly, 2004; Severson et al., 2007). RTI activities provide a continuum of evidence-based practices ranging from universal interventions to intensive, individualized interventions (Fairbanks, Sugai, Gardino, & Lathrop, 2007). The problem-solving approach to behavior difficulties, positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS), is congruent with RTI and has received much attention in the research literature (Drasgow & Yell, 2002; Gresham, 2005; Nelson, Martella, & Marchand-Martella, 2002; Sugai & Horner, 2002, 2006; Warren et al., 2003). Similar to prevention-focused consultation models (Meyers, Meyers, & Grogg, 2004) and rooted in applied behavior analysis (i.e.,

Authors' Note: Please address correspondence to Amy Dutton Tillery c/o Kris Varjas, Georgia State University, Department of Counseling & Psychological Services, P.O. Box 3965, Atlanta, GA 30302-3965; e-mail: kvarjas@gsu.edu.

reinforcement techniques; Sugai & Horner, 2002) and humanistic psychology (i.e., person-centered values; Carr et al., 2002), PBIS is a logical model for delivering behavioral support to all students (Sprague, 2006). The first tier, considered primary prevention, provides universal interventions schoolwide, such as teaching expectations, providing incentives, and utilizing evidence-based classroom management strategies. The second tier targets selected students with standard interventions (i.e., social skills, anger management groups), and the third tier provides intensive, individualized interventions to high-risk students (Fairbanks et al., 2007; Scott & Eber, 2003; Sprague, 2006; Sugai & Horner, 2002, 2006). Using PBIS within an RTI framework can be an effective and efficient method for determining eligibility for special education as well as achieving federal mandates for early intervention and accountability (Fairbanks et al., 2007; Gresham, 2005). Most important, PBIS is a preventive measure that can allow children to receive much-needed intervention before they reach a crisis state (Severson et al., 2007).

Understanding teachers' perspectives about behavior is an essential element of implementing prevention-focused initiatives because their perspectives likely influence their choice of behavior management strategy. Researchers have shown that some teachers view student behavior from a developmental perspective, such that particular behaviors are linked to stages that all children must progress through (Skinner & Hales, 1992). Another common view of student behavior held by teachers is that the problem behavior is due to within-child pathology, such as a disorder or syndrome (Athanasiou, Geil, Hazel, & Copeland, 2002; Crone & Horner, 2000; Skinner & Hales, 1992). Given such perspectives, teachers may believe that they have limited power to modify the behavior of their students. Yet, in examining the nature-nurture debate, teachers perceived the environment as having a greater role in behavior problems than genetic factors (Walker & Plomin, 2005). How this perspective fits with teachers' management practices is unknown, though it is likely that teachers may take ownership of intervening with the problem behavior if they truly consider the environment as an influence on behavior in school.

It has been reported in the literature that teachers recognize the importance of effective behavior management and often prefer positive interventions (e.g., reinforcement, praise; Rosen, Taylor, O'Leary, & Sanderson, 1990); however, other studies have shown that teachers tend to deliver low rates of praise (Gunter & Jack, 1994; Hardman & Smith, 1999). There also is evidence that some teachers choose interventions haphazardly with

little individualization and no direct link to specific criteria for establishing progress (C. Wilson, Gutkin, Hagen, & Oats, 1998; Myers & Holland, 2000). Researchers have reported that many of the interactions teachers have with students exhibiting behavior problems are negative (e.g., reprimands) and the management strategies are often punitive (e.g., time out, restraint, removal of privileges; Jack et al., 1996; Nungesser & Watkins, 2005; Rosen et al., 1990). While teachers also have been found to utilize positive strategies to reinforce appropriate behavior and discourage negative behavior (e.g., daily behavior report cards), they often apply them in a one-size-fits-all fashion (Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, & Sassu, 2006; Schottle & Peltier, 1991). The perceptions that underlie how teachers choose to manage behaviors remain to be explored in depth.

From teacher preparation to on-the-job experience, some general education teachers may lack the background to interact with students in an educative manner that emphasizes early intervention and prevention (Levine, 2006). For example, employing classroom management is considered to be necessary for instruction and learning to occur (Emmer & Stough, 2001). Effective classroom management relies on dealing with students as a group and is more preventive than reactive (Emmer & Stough, 2001). Although a literature base exists (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Lohrmann & Talerico, 2004) regarding the importance of and methods for developing effective classroom management, some teacher preparation programs do not adequately train teachers in several knowledge and skill areas, including using performance assessment techniques and classroom management (Levine, 2006; Meister & Melnick, 2003). Furthermore, there is variability in the content of teacher training programs (S. M. Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001), with some training programs leaving a disconnect between theory and practice, resulting in teachers who enter the field with insufficient practical experience (Levine, 2006). In fact, classroom management and discipline are areas that continue to be problematic for some teachers after they begin their careers (Garrahy, Cothran, & Kulinna, 2005; Goyette, Dore, & Dion, 2000; Lewis, 1999; Meister & Melnick, 2003).

Limited knowledge and training in classroom management combined with ineffective school discipline policies can lead to misconceptions about behavior and the use of unsuccessful and even harmful practices, such as inadvertent reinforcement of the problem behavior, which maintains a cycle of negative interactions (Alvarez, 2007; Myers & Holland, 2000). Traditionally, many schools have relied on punitive discipline practices to reduce problem behavior

(Crone & Horner, 2000; Skiba & Knesting, 2001; Sugai & Horner, 2002). Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2001) examined methods employed by school personnel to respond to problem behaviors and confirmed that many schools relied on suspension and surveillance cameras. They also reported that schools implemented strategies to reinforce appropriate student behavior, though neither disciplinary actions nor reinforcement strategies were regularly implemented with consistency or predictability. Instead, the strategies were often applied in a reactionary fashion as opposed to following a preventive plan (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001). Given the current status of general education in responding to misbehavior, moving toward a prevention- and early intervention-focused model may not be a natural progression.

A number of studies have addressed teachers' perceptions of problem behavior (e.g., Erden & Wolfgang, 2004; Johnson & Fullwood, 2006; Kokkinos, Panayiotou, & Davazoglou, 2005; Little, 2005; Lopes, Monteiro, Sil, Rutherford, & Quinn, 2004). Others have examined teachers' use of interventions in working with children with identified disabilities (C. Wilson et al., 1998; Pierce, Reid, & Epstein, 2004). Yet, none of these studies have examined in depth general education teachers' perceptions of positive or merely neutral behavior exhibited by typically developing students. While there appears to be an abundance of research regarding the effectiveness of various classroom interventions (Chafouleas et al., 2006; Stahr, Cushing, Lane & Fox, 2006; Westerlund, Granucci, Gamache, & Clark, 2006), there is a paucity of studies that have examined in depth the strategies and interventions teachers implement. Furthermore, prior research on teachers' perceptions of behavior and use of behavior management strategies have relied on procedures with predetermined response categories that defined the behaviors for the teachers participating in the studies (e.g., Nungesser & Watkins, 2005). Examples of studies that utilized prearranged responses included surveys (Nungesser & Watkins, 2005), vignettes and case reviews (C. Wilson et al., 1998), and rating scales (Skinner & Hales, 1992).

Researchers have employed qualitative methodology to examine teachers' perceptions and behavior management practices in the context of students with disabilities (C. Wilson et al., 1998; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006). However, qualitative methodology has not been utilized to examine perceptions of behavior and management strategies for all students from elementary general education teachers' perspectives. Therefore, the exploration of general education teachers' perceptions of behavior management and intervention using a qualitative approach will fill a gap that currently exists in the literature.

Qualitative research, which is guided by the participant's or insider's view, allows for exploration beyond what can be obtained by quantitative methods (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). In-depth interviewing, which is a primary method utilized in qualitative research, uses an open-ended response format that presents participants with an opportunity to voice their perceptions outside of the influence of specific case reviews or predetermined survey responses (S. L. Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). An advantage of utilizing semistructured interviews is that the questions are preformulated, allowing ease for the researcher's delivery yet also providing an open-ended format that can easily be expanded and enhanced by probes (S. L. Schensul et al., 1999). In addition, qualitative research allows the participants' views to drive the analysis while ensuring that the participants' responses are grounded in theoretical and empirical literature (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

In the current context of teacher training and school discipline practices, expectations for general education to undertake a prevention-focused initiative such as PBIS is a formidable task that requires extensive support from all teachers (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Because PBIS involves all personnel in the school context, it is a general education initiative; therefore, regular classroom teachers are integral members of the teams responsible for implementing such approaches (Hieneman, Dunlap, & Kincaid, 2005). There is a need for in-depth data regarding general education teachers' perceptions and approaches to behavior management to enhance teacher training practices for the development and effective implementation of schoolwide approaches to behavior management and intervention.

Purpose

The purpose of the current study was to explore general education teachers' perceptions regarding behavior management and intervention. Prevention and early intervention for behavior problems are important factors in ensuring positive school outcomes for children (e.g., Kern et al., 2007). The tendency for behavior problems to escalate and become more resistant to intervention over time makes prevention and early intervention a necessity (Fergusson, Horwood, & Ridder, 2005). Kindergarten and first-grade teachers are often one of the first service providers to interact with students exhibiting challenging behaviors and with sufficient behavior management skills may be able to divert the course of the problem behavior (Polirstok & Gottlieb, 2006).

Therefore, teachers are in position to be key facilitators for prevention-focused initiatives like PBIS but may be hindered by inadequate training in behavior management and punitive school discipline policies (Levine, 2006; Skiba & Knesting, 2001). Because teachers' perspectives likely influence how they manage behavior, these perspectives require in-depth investigation so that the teachers can receive training targeted to their needs. Exploring teachers' perceptions through interviews was designed to (a) examine their knowledge and perceptions about positive and negative behavior in school and (b) gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies teachers use to manage and intervene with behavior. Presently the literature does not fully address what teachers know about behavior and intervention strategies even though these are a major component of their teaching responsibilities (Garrahy et al., 2005). Therefore, it is important to gain further understanding of teachers' perceptions related to behavior and intervention strategies to inform prevention and intervention practices and plan for implementation of schoolwide positive behavior interventions and supports.

Method

Context

This study was conducted in a largely rural school system located in the Southeastern United States. The system educates approximately 10,000 students per year in 21 schools, 9 of which are primary (ranging from pre-kindergarten to third grade) and elementary (ranging from prekindergarten to fifth grade) schools. Students in this system are predominately Caucasian (87%), and almost half qualify for free or reduced lunch (46%). Students in this system have consistently scored above state and national averages on achievement tests each year.

This school system began training employees in RTI and PBIS during the 2005-2006 school year. Training began at the administrative level and filtered down to support staff and teachers at each of the schools. Each school administrator was responsible for training his or her staff. As a result, training varied from school to school. Data collection for this study began during the spring of 2006 and was completed during the fall of 2006.

Participants

Of the nine primary and elementary schools in the district, six were recommended for selection based on perceived administrative support for the project. A letter

explaining the purpose of the study was sent to the administrator at each of the six schools. Each administrator was then contacted by the principal researcher to further explain the study and answer questions. Administrators at five of the six schools agreed to allow the kindergarten and first-grade teachers to participate, which met the researchers' requirement to ensure representativeness by obtaining at least one school from each of the four geographic areas of the school system. After consenting to allowing the teachers to participate in the study, the administrators were no longer involved in the data collection. The researchers made initial contact with all kindergarten and first-grade teachers at the five schools ($N = 50$) by placing a volunteer letter in their personal mailboxes at their school. Eight of the volunteer forms were returned. The researchers then made contact with these teachers to schedule an interview. Additional participants were sought through e-mail follow-up to the volunteer letter and by recommendations from initial participants. From a total population of 50 general education teachers of kindergarten and first grade at the five schools, 20 general education teachers were recruited through this convenience and snowball sampling methodology (J. J. Schensul, 1999; S. L. Schensul et al., 1999). Based on established qualitative methods, the researchers identified 20 as the target number of participants in order to reach saturation in the data (Borgatti, 1999; Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Each school had an average of 10 kindergarten and first-grade teachers (range = 5 to 18) and approximately 4 participants were selected from each school. In all, 7 interviews were conducted with kindergarten teachers and 13 were conducted with first-grade teachers.

The participants for this study represented a range of education levels, 4 with bachelor's degrees, 10 with master's degrees, and 6 with education specialist degrees. All were female and Caucasian with varied years of experience ($M = 16.9$; median = 15.5). The participants' length of employment at the target schools ranged from 1 to 28 years ($M = 11.5$; median = 9.5). The participants were representative of the kindergarten and first-grade teacher demographics in this district, in which 99% of teachers are female and 99% are Caucasian.

Data Collection

Utilizing qualitative methodology, this research design involved face-to-face, in-depth interaction with the participants to examine their perceptions of behavior management and intervention. An inductive and interactive process of data collection was employed to capture the

Table 1
Interview Questions

How would you define behavior?
Describe behavior in school.
What are some things that cause the development of positive behavior in school?
What are some things that cause the development of negative behavior in school?
How do you support positive behavior in the classroom?
How do you interrupt negative behavior in the classroom?
How do you prevent negative behavior in the classroom?
Tell me about your classroom management system.
Give an example of how you've supported positive behavior, interrupted negative behavior, prevented negative behavior in the classroom.
What kinds of training have you received in behavior management?
How would you explain response to intervention (RTI)?
How would you describe positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS)?

perspectives of the participants and develop themes that represent the local context (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005).

Data collection was accomplished through in-depth, individual, semistructured interviews designed to engage each teacher in conversation about behavior management and intervention. The teachers were asked about factors they believe caused the development of negative and positive behavior, strategies they use to promote positive behavior, and strategies they use to interrupt and prevent negative behavior (see Table 1). The open-ended interview approach provided an opportunity for the interviewer to ask for clarification, examples, or explanations in greater detail. The interview questions presented in this article are a subset of the total questions asked; only those that pertained to the current research questions are presented here. Informed consent was presented to the participants prior to their involvement. Demographic information was collected via questionnaire.

The interviews, which ranged in duration from 30 to 75 minutes (average 60 minutes), were conducted by the principal researcher at sites chosen by participants (e.g., school classroom, school conference room). Each interview was tape-recorded, transcribed verbatim into Microsoft Word, and imported into Atlas/ti 4.1 coding software program to facilitate efficient management and analysis of the data (Muhr, 1997).

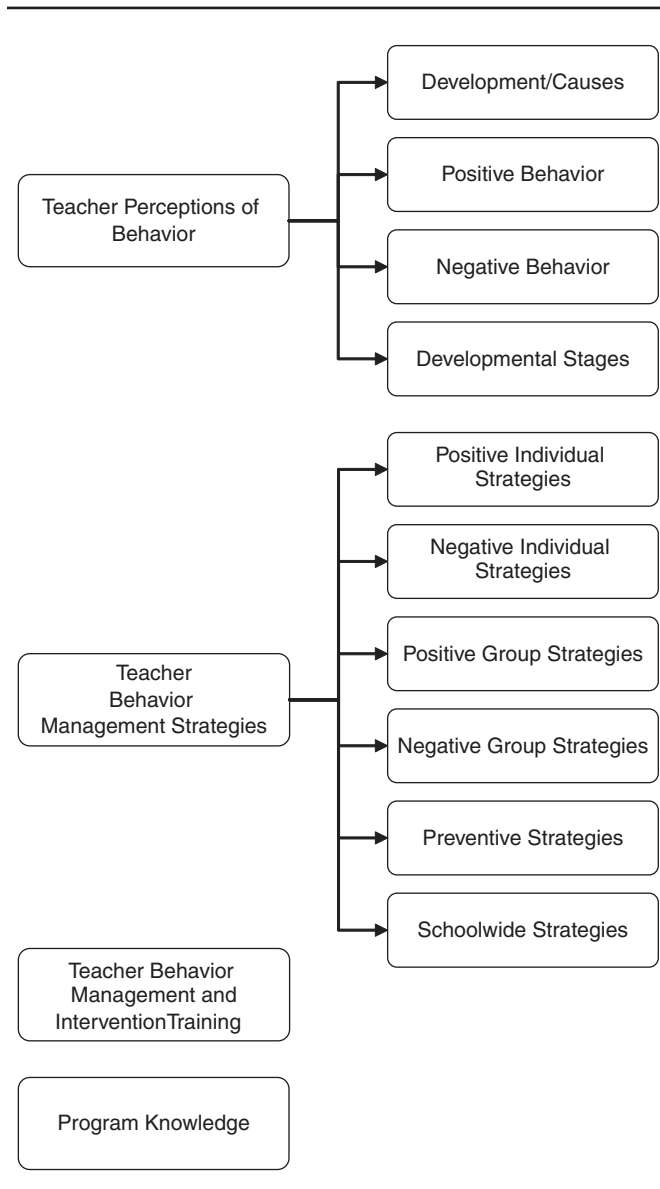
Data Analysis

Themes and codes were developed using a deductive-inductive approach to data analysis and interpretation of the interviews (Nastasi, 1999). Using the principles of grounded theory (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the interviews were collected, compared,

and analyzed allowing the teachers' personal theories of behavior to emerge. Deductive coding refers to the coding process that is based on theory, whereas inductive coding refers to the elements of the coding process that are based on the data (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). First, a framework of categories was developed based on the research questions that were derived through review of empirical and theoretical literature (deductive coding). Two of the researchers, who were school psychologists with advanced training in behavior assessment and intervention, coded the interviews. One of the coders also had experience in the district as a behavior consultant. Through careful review of the transcripts, emerging themes in the data were placed in the appropriate categories. The coders analyzed the transcripts independently and made notes regarding the fit between the data and the categories (deductive coding). During regularly scheduled meetings between the coders the notes were reviewed and incorporated into the existing coding categories so that the codes reflected the teachers' language (inductive coding). The researcher notes also served as an audit trail as a means of documenting researcher decisions throughout data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Based on these data, new codes were developed and existing codes were revised (inductive coding) using the constant comparison method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This recursive process continued until the coders reached agreement on a coding system through consistent interpretation and application of the coding definitions. Consensus coding was employed until the coders obtained 90% interrater reliability ($M = 97.8\%$) for all codes (Bakeman & Gottman, 1986). The remaining interviews were then coded by one of the coders. To prevent coder drift, the principal researcher then selected an additional interview to be coded by the second coder to calculate interrater reliability, which remained above 90% for this interview.

Procedures such as member checking, reflexive journaling, peer debriefing, and persistent observation were utilized to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005; Varjas, Nastasi, Moore, & Jayasena, 2005). Trustworthiness in qualitative research is analogous to the quantitative constructs of validity and reliability and employs techniques that seek to ensure that results are a credible representation of the participants' responses (Varjas et al., 2005). Member checking involved meeting with representatives of the population from which the data were collected (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). This was accomplished by meeting with local teachers who were not participants in the study and the school system special education director to present findings and interpretations. Multiple peer debriefing sessions were conducted by the four-member research team

Figure 1
Coding Hierarchy



Results

The coding hierarchy reflecting general education teachers' understanding and application of behavior management and intervention consisted of four Level 1 codes: (a) the teachers' perceptions of behavior, (b) teachers' self-reported use of behavior management strategies, (c) teachers' behavior management and intervention training, and (d) teachers' program knowledge. Level 2 codes identifying subthemes were also created under two of the four Level 1 codes (see Figure 1). There was no evidence of significant differences between the kindergarten and first-grade teachers, therefore results are presented by combining the findings.

Representative quotes from the kindergarten and first-grade teachers are provided to illustrate these results.

Teachers' Perceptions of Behavior

The teachers' perceptions of behavior were described in terms of development or causes, description of positive and negative behaviors, and the influence of developmental stages. Behavior, as defined by the teachers in this study, was largely regarded as "how a child acts." Teachers also stated that behavior is a reaction or response to environmental stimuli and situations (e.g., "The way a child reacts to certain situations"). Overall, the teachers did not differentiate between definitions of behavior by context, yet many alluded to environmental influences. For example, a kindergarten teacher stated that behavior is "how a person reacts to his environment." A first-grade teacher alluded to the impact of context on behavior stating, "I think behavior in school is kind of one of those things where we almost want every child to fit into our little box . . . it's just a totally different environment from everywhere else they are, you know." Overall, a common response from the teachers was that behavior is what is observed. Only one teacher reported that she believed behavior was driven by the child's inner feelings. As a first-grade teacher, she reported, "It's just how the person feels at the moment. I think behavior actually has a lot to do with your self concept."

Teachers' perceptions of behavior: Development/causes. The kindergarten and first-grade teachers reported that they believed the development of behavior (Level 2 code) was influenced by a number of factors, including those within the school context and those outside of the school. The participants reported that they believed behavior development begins at home as children learn about consequences at a young age. One teacher stated:

that provided opportunities to test for misinterpretation of the data and gather feedback. In addition, local school psychologists participated in peer debriefing sessions with one of the researchers. The audit trail addressing dependability and confirmability included the researcher's logs and reflexive journals providing ongoing documentation of the researcher's reactions and thoughts on the data collection and analysis. Persistent observation involved increasingly focused examination of the teachers' perspectives to establish sufficient depth of the data (Varjas et al., 2005). This was achieved by interviewing individual teachers until saturation of the data were evident.

Things that would cause positive behavior in school I would think would have to do with parents. If they have a good family background where there's respect for people in the family and they're expected to behave for their parents. And when they come to school, they just tend to fit right in, if they come from a family where there is social interaction and expectations of managing behavior.

At school, the teachers saw themselves as one of the strongest influences on student behavior, followed by school climate and peers. A teacher reported that she believed behavior in school developed as a result of the teacher's actions or lack of actions. For example, negative behaviors could emerge "if like the teacher doesn't have rules established . . . hadn't practiced the rules . . . doesn't reinforce." The teachers perceived their influence on behavior development as highly dependent upon how they interact with the children. For example, a teacher reported:

Modeling appropriate behaviors, rewarding appropriate behaviors . . . having high expectations, you expect them to do what they're supposed to do . . . they don't get away with anything, knowing that you are firm in what you say and you say what you're going to do and you do it.

School climate and peer interactions also were perceived by the teachers as influential on the development of behavior at school. A teacher recognized the influence climate has on behavior, stating, "I think if you have a kind of inviting, comfortable, accepting atmosphere that also helps. If you have sort of a punitive atmosphere, then that kind of brings fear and resentment, which sometimes causes misbehavior." Also causing both negative and positive behavior, teachers reported their perception that peers "have a very powerful influence." For example, a teacher stated:

It only takes one or two kids who are very hyperactive or very undisciplined to almost ruin it for everybody. You know, and it really has a big impact on even good kids . . . when they see other kids come to school and they get exposed to those different personalities and different ways of doing things and they pick it up a lot of times.

Generally, the teachers perceived behavior development to be influenced by multiple factors. Whether something specific as peer role models or something as broad as school climate, the teachers indicated that the relationship they have with their students continues to shape the students' behavior within the context of school and home forces.

Teachers' perceptions of behavior: Positive behavior. The participants of this study described positive behavior (Level 2 code; refer to Figure 1) as prosocial interactions with others and as following the rules. Prosocial behaviors included kindness, respect, and sharing. For example, one teacher reported that she viewed positive behavior as "respecting others . . . helping the other children." Similarly, another stated that positive behavior was "being polite . . . responding in a considerate manner . . . being careful to listen to others, being kind." In addition, the teachers believed positive behavior also implies that individuals are following the rules. For example, a teacher stated positive behavior includes "following the teacher's directions." Likewise, another teacher defined positive behavior in terms of obedience, stating positive behaviors are "on task behaviors . . . completing assignments, doing what's asked, obedience, I think obedience to authority." The teachers' responses did not differ in their descriptions of positive behavior at school and positive behavior in other contexts.

Teachers' perceptions of behavior: Negative behavior. The teachers' descriptions of negative behavior (Level 2 code; refer to Figure 1) reflected their perceptions of it in the context of school. They described negative behaviors as those that are antisocial and/or disruptive, such as aggression, defiance, and not following the rules. Responses such as "being disrespectful, name calling, temper tantrums . . . hitting" were frequently used to describe negative behavior. Negative behavior also was depicted as behaviors that are disruptive to teaching and learning such as, "always out of their seat . . . constantly ignoring directions or things that are going on." For example, a teacher stated that negative behavior was "anything that would inhibit instruction." A common response about negative behavior was provided by a kindergarten teacher, stating, "children that are not going to comply to the rules . . . children that would be defiant and would refuse to do what you ask them to do." In addition, the teachers in this study reported that the frequent reoccurrence of negative behaviors causes it to be perceived as more problematic. For example a teacher stated:

To me a problem behavior is one that is just constantly reoccurring. That they don't learn from losing recess or they don't learn from calling home or writing a note home or going to the office. It's just a constant, just the same thing over and over.

Antisocial behaviors, such as aggression, were described as particularly difficult to work with but infrequent in kindergarten and first grade.

Teachers' perceptions of behavior: Developmental stages. A child's stage of development also was perceived as a factor affecting behavior (Level 2 code; refer to Figure 1). The participants reported that maturity largely influences behavior and that it is important to know what to expect at different ages. For example, a kindergarten teacher illustrated this notion, stating, "I think you have to have an understanding of what's acceptable for a 5-year-old as opposed to a 10-year-old." The teachers reported that children's maturity has an impact on their ability to conform their behavior to the classroom's requirements. For example, a teacher reported, "I fully believe that at this age level, we require so much of them and their attention and I know that some of them are just not physically ready." Similarly, another teacher stated, "Some children are just . . . they're just more prepared, more mature . . . and are ready to accept the discipline than others." The participants explained that students in kindergarten and first grade display behaviors that are not necessarily observed in older children. For example, a teacher stated, "Like with first graders you have so much just little tattling and petty things that go on." Another agreed with this saying, "Children that are little still like to run everywhere." The teachers reported that understanding what to expect from children at different ages is essential and that they cannot consider behavior without considering the child's age.

Teachers' Behavior Management Strategies

The teachers reported utilizing a number of behavior management strategies. There were six Level 2 codes reflecting their descriptions: positive individual strategies, negative individual strategies, positive group strategies, negative group strategies, preventive strategies, and schoolwide strategies.

Teachers' behavior management strategies: Positive individual strategies. Individual positive strategies were those focused on responding to socially acceptable, positive behavior exhibited by individual students (Level 2 code; refer to Figure 1). In describing strategies they employ to support positive behavior the teachers in this study reported using praise and reward. Praising the students consisted of verbal and nonverbal gestures to indicate the teacher's approval of the student's behavior. For example, a teacher stated, "I just try to make . . . a point when I see someone doing what they're supposed to be doing and I always . . . bring attention on that child for the positive behavior and make it specific." Another teacher said, "coming by a child's desk and commenting on how well they're working or how much

you like the way they've written their paragraph or how they've used something correctly that you've taught."

Rewards were described by the participants as tangible objects, such as stickers or candy, and privileges like extra recess or free time. A common response from the teachers in this study was "We do smiley face stickers, sometimes they get special rewards like treats or given maybe a free ice cream, something like that." Another teacher's response encompassed both praise and reward by stating:

How I support positive behavior in the classroom. Well, I smile at them and I hug them. I brag on them. I reward them. I tell them, you know, you're going to be a good helper when it comes your turn because you're doing so and so. And I say this a lot; I like the way you're walking down the hall.

While the participants reported that praise was delivered to the students for prosocial behavior, rewards were delivered when the students did not exhibit negative behavior. A teacher illustrated this element stating, "At the end of the week, the children who haven't had any problems with behavior get an extra free choice center." Many times the teachers were referring to a behavior chart employed to discipline students for negative behaviors as the record for whether the students exhibited problem behaviors. For example, a teacher stated, "At the end of the day they get a smiley face if they didn't pull a stick. At the end of the week . . . they get a treat out of the treat box." Similarly, another teacher stated:

The child stays on green all day if all the rules are followed and homework is brought back and if there's no issues then the child stays on green and that means that they retain all of their recess and they also if at the end of the week they stay on green they have a smiley face sticker in their agenda.

Teachers' behavior management strategies: Negative individual strategies. Individual negative behavior strategies were defined as those a teacher employs to respond to socially unacceptable negative behavior exhibited by individual students (Level 2 code; refer to Figure 1). The behavior chart mentioned earlier was a major element of the participants' responses when they were asked to describe strategies they use to interrupt negative behavior. Nearly every teacher in this study described a graduated discipline system (i.e., response cost) that began with warnings and moved to increasing amounts of recess time lost for each infraction, with the final tier being an office referral and contact with home. For

example, a teacher described her behavior system in the following quote:

Each student has three sticks in a pocket on the wall . . . after the first warning if that student has to be addressed for negative behavior they are required to pull one stick. For each stick that they pull, they sit out five minutes at recess time or during centers. And after the third stick is pulled . . . we would call the parent . . . or might send the child to the principal's office.

Similarly, another teacher stated:

The first time, you may just give them a warning, the second time, it's 5 minutes off [recess] . . . for any subsequent behavior, it might be an additional 5 minutes off up to a point of like 20 minutes 'cause that's . . . all we have for recess.

While some teachers reported going directly to the discipline system with the first warning, others reported first allowing several warnings, which oftentimes depended on the behavior. For example, a teacher stated, "If it's something major, it's a quick 'Stop!' . . . but if it's not something major, they get several warnings." Strategies for warning the students were close proximity, verbal redirection, or praising another student for exhibiting appropriate behavior as a signal to the other student about what is expected. For example, "Move close to the child, sometimes just touch the child on the shoulder. Calling that child's name" were common responses.

The teachers in this study also discussed strategies that they employed to interrupt negative behavior that weren't necessarily connected to their classroom discipline system (i.e., response cost). Many of the teachers reported utilizing verbal reprimands to interrupt the student's behavior. For example, one of the teachers stated that she has "been known many times to just call kids down right in the middle of it [behavior]. . . . You know, stop, sit down, get back in your seat or stop talking . . . that's what I would say." Other teachers reported strategies such as "pulling them away from the problem. Making them aware of what the problem is." When probed for specific strategies one of the teachers stated, "There's also, well punishment. I guess, would be take away recess, take away centers, remove them from the situation." Sometimes the strategy teachers chose to interrupt negative behavior depended on what the teacher knew was most effective with the individual child. For example, one teacher reported:

It depends on what the child values really. A child that really values their recess, I go straight to it. If it's a child

that just needs to know they're going to have a bad note home, I'll just remind them that I'm going to have to mark in your folder today if the problem continues.

Teachers' behavior management strategies: Positive group strategies. Positive group strategies were defined according to the same criteria as those for positive individual strategies with the exception that the group strategies were applied to more than one student at a time (Level 2 code; refer to Figure 1). The teachers reported using praise and reward to support positive behavior for groups of students. Praising groups of students consisted of using specific verbal comments. For instance, a teacher stated that often when the students were engaged in group activities, she would say "Look, the blue group is doing a great job. Thank you for following directions and working so quietly." The teachers in this study described the strategies they used to reward groups of students in terms of those that occur spontaneously and as planned group incentives. An example of the teachers spontaneously rewarding the students is illustrated by one of the kindergarten teachers' responses: "If the children have good lunchroom behavior for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, then they may get some treats sometime on Friday afternoon." Another example of this type of strategy came from a kindergarten teacher, who stated:

If the class gets a compliment from another teacher or visitor for being good then they get a mark on the board and once those tally marks reach 15 they get a compliment party, which may be ice cream at recess or something like that.

Planned group incentives were goals that the students collectively worked toward meeting that earned the class a special privilege or reward. For example, a teacher reported:

We use a marble jar in here . . . the whole class benefits from it . . . if they're on task or working quietly, put their things away quickly and don't waste time that can be translated to marbles in the jar . . . when the jar is filled then the kids decide together how we're going to spend that full marble jar. . . . And what they're working toward is a show and tell day.

Another teacher used a similar strategy with the marble jar stating, "I have a jar and you start off with no marbles and then I'll say if we get 10 marbles, then we can have something extra. I'll tell them that they're helping the whole class earn the marble."

Teachers' behavior management strategies: Negative group strategies. Negative group strategies were defined as those the teacher employs to address negative, socially unacceptable behavior exhibited by more than one student at a time (Level 2 code; refer to Figure 1). They reported most often using warnings to inform the students that their behavior was inappropriate and needed to stop. The participants reported separating children who had difficulty getting along and providing reminders to children who were beginning to act inappropriately. For example, one of the teachers stated, "Let them know, you know, say I'm watching the big block center. Just to let them know that I'm paying attention to what they're doing." Teachers at one of the schools reported a strategy used by the entire grade level to respond to the behavior of groups of students. This was illustrated by one of the first-grade teachers who said, "We'll say give me five, four, three, two, one. We call it Give Me Five and that's how it redirects students back to what they're supposed . . . to be doing, get them focused again." Another teacher reported this strategy as well, saying:

We do a Give Me Five thing . . . if the kids are loud and rowdy and we need attention immediately, we'll say give me five and for the most part the response is everybody is quiet as soon as they hear the word five come out of your mouth.

Teachers' behavior management strategies: Preventive strategies. Preventive strategies were defined as strategies the teachers employ to prevent the occurrence of negative behavior in their classrooms (Level 2 code; refer to Figure 1). The participants described strategies they employ to prevent negative behavior in the context of how the classroom environment is managed. According to the teachers in this study, managing the classroom environment included providing a positive atmosphere with clear behavioral expectations, consistent and fair enforcement of rules, having an organized classroom structure, and being proactive to avoid known triggers for misbehavior. Furthermore, the teachers felt that these elements needed to be in place at the beginning of the school year. A teacher described this saying:

I guess it really has to do with setting up the standards at the beginning of the year and then being consistent with that on a daily basis and making sure that the child is thinking about those four or five things that we set as goals for our behavior.

Similarly, another stated, "To prevent it in your room, you have got to start out with the expectations you have for

your class and you have to let them know from the beginning what you expect." Frequent repetition of the rules and expectations also was reported as being necessary to maintain behavioral control and prevent negative behavior. This was illustrated by a first-grade teacher's statement that it was important to "Let them know what is expected before we begin any activity. . . . Remind them of the rules. Tell them what I expect and the consequences if they don't follow through." Preventing negative behavior also took the form of "reinforcing positive behavior," "showing them . . . respect," and "modeling to the kids the way you expect them to treat each other." The teachers seemed to convey that they directly have a part in how a student behaves in their classroom. For example, a teacher stated, "I try not to set them up to misbehave . . . prevent chaos . . . by doing things in a systematic way."

Teachers' behavior management strategies: Schoolwide strategies. Schoolwide strategies were defined to include strategies applied to address prevention and intervention of negative behavior as a whole school approach (Level 2 code; refer to Figure 1). Schoolwide behavior strategies reported by the participants were things such as schoolwide rules and expectations for student behavior, rewards, and use of daily agendas. The teachers often discussed the importance of having schoolwide rules. For example, one of the teachers stated, "The school has certain rules that everyone in the school has to abide by. For example, no running in the hall, you know that's something that's very consistent." Likewise, another teacher stated, "The overall school rules. In our lunchroom . . . the children know to expect. When the lights are out they stop talking. When the cone's on the table it's o.k. to talk." The teachers also reported that the schools used rewards to reinforce the students' compliance with schoolwide rules and expectations. An example of using schoolwide rewards was "We did have a reward system where if you got all good behavior marks on your report card then you got to get a free trinket or something." Daily documentation of student's behavior in agendas was also reported as a schoolwide strategy described as follows:

Behavior charts that we use schoolwide are a very strong message that we want to have a uniform set of behavior goals and we want to all honor those same five or six goals . . . a child can be in another teacher's class and if he misbehaves and chooses to not follow rules then they [teacher] can ask for the agenda and they can mark it themselves.

Some of the teachers had difficulty answering questions about schoolwide strategies with one saying, “We don’t really have a discipline policy in our school. In individual classrooms we do, but not a schoolwide discipline policy.”

Teachers’ Behavior Management and Intervention Training

The teachers in this study were asked about the kinds of training they have received in behavior management and specifically whether they had any training in college (Level 1 code). Many stated that they learned some basic behavior management principles such as positive and negative reinforcement in their class on special education while in college. Most of the teachers stated that they did not have a specific class in behavior management. In response to a question about training in college, one teacher stated, “No, college is sorely lacking in behavior management.” This type of comment was common. Only one teacher reported having had a class in behavior management as part of her undergraduate coursework. Many others had responses like one teacher, who stated, “It was touched upon in a special education class that I had.”

Teachers also reported receiving training once they entered the workforce. This took the form of workshops, consultants visiting the school, and seeking advice from their colleagues. Training through their employers in the form of consultants or workshops was reported to have been initiated in response to a perceived need. For example, one teacher stated, “At one time last year we had a lot of behavior problems at the grade level . . . we had a consultant come in. Other than that, I’ve never went to a training class.” Another teacher responded to the question about training she received in behavior management by saying:

I had a . . . BD [behavior disorder] kid in my room one year who was violent and depressed . . . I had to learn how to restrain him to keep him from hurting himself, to keep him from hurting other children . . . I did take that class and I learned how to restrain.

In addition, teachers reported that their training in behavior management was achieved through trial-and-error learning. A first-grade teacher stated “It’s been kind of a trial-and-error thing . . . I didn’t come in year one doing it right . . . it’s something that’s been a process.” Another first-grade teacher reported that trial-and-error learning is assisted by supportive colleagues as illustrated by the following:

You figure it out along the way. So your classroom educates you and probably the best help I’ve had is in talking to teachers who have some experience and sharing my woes with them and they give me advice. It’s just some good strong mentors that have helped me the most.

Teachers’ Program Knowledge

The teachers’ knowledge and understanding of models or systems for preventing and intervening with behavior was assessed (Level 1 code). The teachers were asked about their knowledge and familiarity with response to intervention and positive behavioral interventions and supports. The teachers were largely unfamiliar with either. Oftentimes, teachers described what they thought might be an answer to the question about RTI but did not demonstrate a clear understanding. For example, a kindergarten teacher said, “I would think how the child reacted to what you tried. If you get the behavior that you want then evidently it was successful.” Another teacher stated, “How the children react to a situation when you, when you intervene with them.” Other teachers stated that they simply did not know what it was. One teacher even said, “No, I guess I need to take another class.” The one first-grade teacher who expressed familiarity with RTI appeared to misunderstand the intent of the initiative and described it in terms of additional steps before referral to the Student Support Team (SST). She stated:

So the first intervention is instead of going straight to SST . . . we just contact the parents and discuss with them the problem and see if they can help fix it. And if we don’t and they can’t within about 10 days, then we’re going to have vertical teaming . . . and we would discuss it and they would give me ideas. We would progress monitor three times before we actually do a different strategy. After the first time and they’re not going upward, we would do a different strategy for about three weeks or so. And then we would go to SST [student support team] after that.

Teachers also were unfamiliar with PBIS. Often they simply replied that they did not know what it was. For example, one said “I’m not familiar with that.” Other teachers gave answers based on educated guesses. For example, one first-grade teacher stated “anything you can do to encourage a child . . . if you can change their behavior by saying I like the way so and so is doing this, and it changes their behavior, that’s a positive.” Other typical answers to this question were statements such as “praising students, providing them with extra things to

make them want to behave . . . modeling behavior . . . showing other students that are modeling good behavior, those kinds of things.”

In addition to the teachers’ comments about RTI and PBIS, the participants spoke about other behavior management programs. Character Education (i.e., a state-mandated curriculum designed to teach students about characteristics such as responsibility, dependability, honesty, etc.) was discussed by the teachers most often. Teachers often stated that this was a program their school participated in. For example, a teacher responded, “We have character education and we recognize kids.” Another stated, “Our Character Ed program is schoolwide.” Another reported that their use of the Character Education program is an important schoolwide approach to managing behavior stating, “We also have a character program that is very good . . . setting out the character behavior traits that we’re looking for schoolwide.” The teachers also mentioned other programs in isolation such as Positive Discipline, High Scope, and Assertive Discipline. For example, a teacher said “And then we went on to start studying the Positive Discipline approach and we read some books . . . and kind of shared a chapter or two that we had read.” The other programs were mentioned in similar contexts.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore general education teachers’ perceptions of behavior and their reported use of behavior management strategies. Existing literature has examined teachers’ perceptions of students’ problem behavior (Kokkinos, Panayiotou, & Davazoglou, 2005; Little, 2005; Lopes et al., 2004). The qualitative data derived from this investigation make several contributions to the research concerning the management strategies for positive and negative behavior used by teachers of young children. First, data were collected that provided a narrative picture of teachers’ perceptions of behavior and factors that contributed to behavior and behavior management. Second, greater consideration was given to individual student strategies by these teachers rather than group strategies, which may be a potential barrier to successful implementation of PBIS. As a schoolwide approach, PBIS requires a group perspective on behavior management that emphasizes the whole school as a system (Sugai & Horner, 2006). Third, the teachers in this study were not familiar with RTI and PBIS, even though training efforts in this school system were occurring during this investigation. Lastly, the

teachers in this study described influences on behavior and use of preventive strategies that are consistent with best practices in behavior management, including some PBIS principles. Each of these findings is discussed in the following in greater detail.

The in-depth examination and description of general education teachers’ perceptions is a unique addition to the research literature related to behavior management. The use of open-ended interview questions facilitated efforts to obtain detailed descriptions of teachers’ perceptions. Prior research in this area utilized surveys (e.g., Nungesser & Watkins, 2005), vignettes (e.g., C. Wilson et al., 1998), or rating scales (e.g., Skinner & Hales, 1992) to obtain teacher perceptions. These data collection techniques include predetermined response categories that were developed by the researchers rather than being informed by the study participants. Research approaches that utilize the open-ended response format associated with qualitative methodology (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Varjas et al., 2005) minimize the researchers’ influence on teacher responses and produce data that reflect the teachers’ voice rather than that of the researchers. The themes that emerged from the data in this study and the supporting quotes generated by the teachers captured their perspectives about behavior, its causes, and behavior management strategies without limits imposed by researcher-generated response categories. For example, an important finding from this study concerned the ways that teachers viewed themselves as a strong influence on the development of behavior (e.g., “modeling appropriate expectations, rewarding appropriate behavior . . . having high expectations”).

One noteworthy finding is that while the teachers were provided with an opportunity to discuss their views of behavior and its management, some of their views were expressed in a limited manner that provided no more detail than would be obtained through quantitative surveys. The teachers’ failure to provide more detailed descriptions of their perceptions may reflect limited knowledge regarding these areas of behavior management. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier the teachers in this study received little training in behavior management, and therefore, their limited perceptions may suggest the need for more training.

A noteworthy finding was that the teachers provided a broader range of descriptions of behavior management strategies for individual children, whereas strategies directed to groups of children or the school as a whole were few in number and limited in scope. Even though classroom behavior management relies on establishing and maintaining order for groups of students (Emmer &

Stough, 2001), the teachers in this study reported minimal information about behavior management strategies directed to groups of students. These included only two strategies directed specifically to groups (e.g., “Give Me Five” redirection prompts; “marble jar” group incentive for positive behavior) and the general use of reinforcement strategies like praise that were also used primarily with individual students. Several teachers reported that their school didn’t have any schoolwide behavior management strategies. The teachers who did report schoolwide strategies described strategies from their classroom as schoolwide strategies (e.g., classroom behavior charts used schoolwide). These findings suggest that teachers and other staff may not consider behavior or behavior management in the context of the group or the entire school even though this is a well-supported suggestion in the literature (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Nelson et al., 2002; Sugai & Horner, 2002). In addition, the range of individual strategies discussed by these teachers indicated that they had some understanding of behavior management strategies for individual students. Furthermore, that the teachers reported fewer group strategies suggests that they don’t have as much knowledge of group strategies, which has important implications for future research and training practices (e.g., Rubin, 2004).

The teachers’ use of individual strategies, such as the sticks mentioned earlier, reflected their beliefs about the importance of the role of immediate feedback in behavior development. For example, a teacher stated, “A lot of times you have to give immediate feedback, whether it’s positive behavior or negative behavior, they have to know what’s wrong or what’s good about what they’re doing.” The teachers in this study may feel that using praise and response cost serve as the appropriate feedback loop to provide students with acknowledgement regarding the appropriateness of their behavior. In addition, the teachers alluded to the importance of ensuring that students learn from their behavior. For example, a teacher reported:

A negative behavior . . . requires a negative response. Be it a loss of a privilege or the loss of a treat or . . . play time or something else . . . I think they have to learn that it is accompanied by a consequence . . . it’s something that I feel like they need to learn at a very young age.

Given that most of the teachers in this study reported limited training in behavior management it may be unfair to expect that they would view behavior in group terms. The teachers’ greater reporting of individual strategies

may have developed as a result of the strategies that they acquired during their beginning years as teachers by learning to cope with demands as they arose and by observing veteran teachers (Garrahy et al., 2005). Although observational learning has advantages, it also may inhibit new knowledge and perspectives by recycling ineffective practices and traditional perspectives through a new generation of teachers (Merrett & Wheldall, 1993). In addition, many of the teachers in this study reported that their only preservice education regarding behavior management was included as coursework in a special education class. Although these findings confirm existing literature regarding insufficient behavior management training for some teachers (Levine, 2006; S. M. Wilson et al., 2001), the finding that these teachers reported learning about behavior management when studying about children with disabilities may add to the teachers’ tendency to focus on individual student behavior. That is, these findings suggest that preservice and inservice education for teachers regarding behavior management need to emphasize all students, should be taught to preservice and inservice teachers in the context of regular education as well as special education, and should emphasize group and schoolwide approaches as well as individual approaches to behavior management.

The finding that teachers in this study were unfamiliar with RTI or PBIS is important given that these are approaches that are currently emphasized in many schools. It is common for schools to provide inservice training about these new approaches. The teachers’ lack of knowledge about these innovations is significant given that they were subject to this type of training while this investigation was conducted. The literature is replete with examples of best practices for RTI and PBIS implementation and staff training (e.g., Sugai & Horner, 2006), and it may be assumed that these effective methods will be implemented readily in schools. However, there has been little research to indicate whether teachers have the prerequisite skills and perceptions to embrace the challenges presented by RTI and PBIS. Given that the teachers in this study frequently responded to questions about RTI and PBIS with comments that clearly demonstrated limited knowledge and understanding regarding these initiatives (“how the child reacted to what you tried” or “anything you can do to encourage a child”), it is suggested that successful implementation of these innovations require system supports such as resources, training, and policies (Sugai & Horner, 2006) that involve general education teachers. A districtwide approach to training in RTI and PBIS targeted specifically toward teachers’ needs is necessary to ensure that

the teachers are ready to face the challenge of school-wide prevention and intervention (e.g., McCurdy, Mannella, & Eldridge, 2003).

The teachers in this study viewed themselves as strong influences on students' behavior at school. Furthermore, the teachers reported that modeling, rewarding appropriate behaviors, and having high expectations for their students' behavior are key factors in developing positive behavior at school (e.g., "They know what is expected of them and they rise to that call."). These findings support existing research (e.g., Walker & Plomin, 2005) and extend what is known about what teachers say they do that influences the students' behavior. In addition, the teachers' self-reported perceptions of their influence on behavior were reflected in their descriptions of strategies that they reported utilizing to prevent negative behavior. For example, preventive strategies employed by the teachers included providing a positive atmosphere with clear rules and expectations, consistently enforcing rules, and avoiding triggers for negative behavior. The teachers' perceptions and reported use of preventive strategies were consistent with the literature on best practices in behavior management (e.g., establish rules and guidelines for expected behavior, teach routines and procedures, monitor behavior; Emmer & Stough, 2001). Furthermore, these preventive strategies are important elements of PBIS, which asserts that part of the foundation of schoolwide PBIS is effective classroom management (Sprague, 2006; Sugai & Horner, 2002, 2006).

The findings of this research are potentially limited by several factors. First, using convenience and snowball sampling (J. J. Schensul, 1999; S. L. Schensul et al., 1999) may have inadvertently drawn teachers who were biased based on an interest in the topic of behavior management. Another factor that may be a limitation is the influence of the administrators at each school on the participants. The teachers in this study may have felt pressured to participate because their superior had given support for the teachers' participation. In addition, the perspectives of the teachers in this study who taught in a rural school district may differ from other teachers in suburban or urban areas. Larger districts in suburban and urban areas may have access to greater resources and training for their teachers. As a result, the findings herein may not be applicable to all general education teachers of kindergarten and first grade. Another consideration is the lack of cultural diversity in participants, which may hinder generalizability of the findings. Nonetheless, the present findings are supported by past literature (e.g., Nungesser & Watkins, 2005; S. M. Wilson et al., 2001; Walker & Plomin, 2005). Lastly, this study examined teachers'

perceptions and self-reported behavior management strategies. The researchers did not observe classroom behavior management practices of kindergarten and first-grade teachers in this study. Therefore, it is important to consider that the teachers' perceptions and an accurate understanding of behavior management strategies aren't necessarily equivalent. For example, it is possible that the teachers in this study may not fully understand the appropriateness of utilizing various strategies with different students and could unknowingly apply strategies that some students find reinforcing and others find unpleasant. Finally, comparison of the interview data with observational data would have allowed triangulation, which involves corroboration of data from multiple sources and is best practice in qualitative research and would have made the findings stronger (J. J. Schensul, 1999).

Future research should address the extent to which the perceptions of behavior and management practices presented in this study are generalizable to general education teachers in other grades and other school districts. In addition, qualitative methodology should be utilized to examine special educators' perceptions and knowledge of behavior management and intervention. Knowledge about their perceptions would be an important addition to the literature that would facilitate comparisons between general and special educators' views. Moreover, why general and special education teachers choose particular behavior management strategies should receive additional attention in future research. Furthermore, a positive school climate, effective classroom management, and student engagement are all potential positive outcomes of PBIS (Algozzine & Algozzine, 2007; Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005). However, a vital part of this equation is the need to examine students' perceptions of behavior management. What students consider effective behavior management strategies and how this affects their school engagement is a topic that requires further investigation that could potentially strengthen implementation of schoolwide behavior supports.

Lastly, the teachers in this study described behavioral perspectives that were consistent with the principles of PBIS, in that they viewed themselves as a strong influence on student behavior. At the same time, the teachers' focus on individual student behavior over group behavior may indicate that they are not ready to meet the demands of full implementation of PBIS. These findings substantiate the need for support for teachers and underscore the importance of targeting teachers' specific training needs as schools begin efforts to implement schoolwide behavior supports. That is, ensuring that teachers employ

effective classroom management and working with teachers to shift their perspectives to include a group focus for behavior management and appropriate reinforcement of positive behavior will require extensive training (Polirstok & Gottlieb, 2006). In addition to addressing teachers' needs through ongoing intensive training and support, teacher training programs should consider the present paradigm shift that is moving away from reactive strategies and toward preventive school-wide approaches to behavior management and adjust instruction accordingly.

References

- Albers, C. A., Glover, T. A., & Kratochwill, T. R. (2007). Where are we, and where to we go now? Universal screening for enhanced educational and mental health outcomes. *Journal of School Psychology, 45*, 257-263.
- Algozzine, K., & Algozzine, B. (2007). Classroom instructional ecology and school-wide positive behavior support. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 24*, 29-47.
- Alvarez, H. (2007). The impact of teacher preparation on responses to student aggression in the classroom. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23*, 1113-1126.
- Athanasiou, M. S., Geil, M., Hazel, C. E., & Copeland, E. P. (2002). A look inside school-based consultation: A qualitative study of the beliefs and practices of school psychologists and teachers. *School Psychology Quarterly, 17*, 258-298.
- Bakeman, R., & Gottman, J. M. (1986). *Observing interactions: An introduction to sequential analysis*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Borgatti, S. P. (1999). Elicitation techniques for cultural domain analysis. In J. J. Schensul & M. D. LeCompte (Eds.), *Enhanced ethnographic techniques: Audiovisual techniques, focused group interviews, and elicitation techniques. Ethnographer's Toolkit, Book 3* (pp. 115-151). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.
- Briggs-Gowan, M. J., Carter, A. S., Guyer, A. E., & Horwitz, S. M. (2006). Are infant-toddler social-emotional and behavioral problems transient? *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 45*, 849-858.
- Carr, E. G., Dunlap, G., Horner, R. H., Koegel, R. L., Turnbull, A. P., Sailor, W., et al. (2002). Positive behavior support. Evolution of an applied science. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 4*, 4-16.
- Chafouleas, S., Riley-Tillman, T. C., & Sassu, K. (2006). Acceptability and reported use of daily behavior report cards among teachers. *Journal of Positive Behavioral Interventions, 8*, 174-182.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crone, D., & Horner, R. (2000). Contextual, conceptual, and empirical foundations of functional behavioral assessment in schools. *Exceptionality, 8*, 161-172.
- Drasgow, E., & Yell, M. L. (2002). School-wide behavior support: Legal implications and requirements. *Child & Family Behavior Therapy, 24*, 129-145.
- Emmer, E., & Stough, L. (2001). Classroom management: A critical part of educational psychology, with implications for teacher education. *Educational Psychologist, 36*, 103-112.
- Erden, F., & Wolfgang, C. H. (2004). An exploration of the differences in prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade teachers' beliefs related to discipline when dealing with male and female students. *Early Child Development and Care, 174*, 3-11.
- Fairbanks, S., Sugai, G., Guardino, D., & Lathrop, M. (2007). Response to intervention: Examining classroom behavior support in second grade. *Exceptional Children, 73*, 288-310.
- Fergusson, D. M., Horwood, J. L., & Ridder, E. M. (2005). Show me the child at seven: The consequences of conduct problems in childhood for psychosocial functioning in adulthood. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 46*, 837-849.
- Forness, S. R., Serna, L. A., Nielsen, E., Lambros, K., Hale, M. J., & Kavale, K. A. (2000). A model for early detection and primary prevention of emotional and behavioral disorders. *Education & Treatment of Children, 23*, 325-346.
- Garrahy, D., Cothran, D., & Kulinna, P. (2005). Voices from the trenches: An exploration of teachers' management knowledge. *Journal of Educational Research, 99*, 56-63.
- Glasser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Gottfredson, G., & Gottfredson, D. (2001). What schools do to prevent problem behavior and promote safe environments. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 12*, 313-344.
- Goyette, R., Dore, R., & Dion, E. (2000). Pupils' misbehaviors and the reactions and causal attribution of physical education student teachers: A sequential analysis. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 20*, 3-14.
- Gresham, F. M. (2004). Current status and future directions of school-based behavioral interventions. *School Psychology Review, 33*, 326-343.
- Gresham, F. M. (2005). Response to intervention: An alternative means of identifying students as emotionally disturbed. *Education and Treatment of Children, 28*, 328-344.
- Gunter, P. L., & Jack, S. L. (1994). Effects of challenging behaviors of students with EBD on teacher instructional behavior. *Preventing School Failure, 38*, 35-40.
- Hardman, E., & Smith, S. (1999). Promoting positive interactions in the classroom. *School & Clinic, 34*, 178-181.
- Hieneman, M., Dunlap, G., & Kincaid, D. (2005). Positive support strategies for students with behavioral disorders in general education settings. *Psychology in the Schools, 42*, 779-794.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act regulations* (n.d.). Retrieved December 13, 2007, from <http://www.ideapartnership.org/oseppage.cfm?pageid=44>
- Jack, S. L., Shores, R. E., Denny, R. K., Gunter, P. L., DeBriere, T., & DePaepe, P. (1996). An analysis of the relationship of teachers' reported use of classroom management strategies on types of classroom interactions. *Journal of Behavioural Education, 6*, 67-87.
- Johnson, H. L., & Fullwood, H. L. (2006). Disturbing behaviors in the secondary classroom: How do general educators perceive problem behaviors? *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 33*, 21-39.
- Kern, L., DuPaul, G. J., Volpe, R. J., Sokol, N. G., Lutz, J. G., Arbolino, L. A., et al. (2007). Multisetting assessment-based intervention for young children at risk for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: Initial effects on academic and behavioral functioning. *School Psychology Review, 36*, 237-255.
- Kokkinos, C. M., Panayiotou, G., & Davazoglou, A. M. (2005). Correlates of teacher appraisals of student behaviors. *Psychology in the Schools, 42*, 79-89.

- Levine, A. (2006). *Educating school teachers*. Retrieved October 7, 2007, from http://www.edschools.org/pdf/Educating_Teachers_Report.pdf
- Lewis, R. (1999). Teachers coping with the stress of classroom discipline. *Social Psychology of Education, 3*, 155-171.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Little, E. (2005). Secondary school teachers' perceptions of students' problem behaviours. *Educational Psychology, 25*, 369-377.
- Lohrmann, S., & Bambara, L. M. (2006). Elementary education teachers' beliefs about essential supports needed to successfully include students with developmental disabilities who engage in challenging behaviors. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 31*, 157-173.
- Lohrmann, S., & Talerico, J. (2004). Anchor the boat: A classwide intervention to reduce problem behavior. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 6*, 113-120.
- Lopes, J. A., Monteiro, I., Sil, V., Rutherford, R. B., & Quinn, M. M. (2004). Teachers' perceptions about teaching problem students in regular classrooms. *Education and Treatment of Children, 27*, 394-419.
- Luiselli, J. K., Putnam, R. F., Handler, M. W., & Feinberg, A. B. (2005). Whole-school positive behaviour support: Effects on student discipline problems and academic performance. *Educational Psychology, 25*, 183-198.
- McCurdy, B., Mannella, M., & Eldridge, N. (2003). Positive behavior support in urban schools: Can we prevent the escalation of antisocial behavior? *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 5*, 158-170.
- Meister, D., & Melnick, S. (2003). National new teacher study: Beginning teachers' concerns. *Action in Teacher Education, 24*(4), 87-94.
- Merrett, F., & Wheldall, K. (1993). How do teachers learn to manage classroom behaviour? A study of teachers' opinions about their initial training with special reference to classroom behaviour management. *Educational Studies, 19*, 91-107.
- Meyers, J., Meyers, A. B., & Grogg, K. (2004). Prevention through consultation: A model to guide future developments in the field of school psychology. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation, 15*, 257-276.
- Myers, C., & Holland, K. (2000). Classroom behavioral interventions: Do teachers consider the function of the behavior? *Psychology in the Schools, 37*, 271-280.
- Muhr, T. (1997). *ATLAS.ti 4.1—Short user's manual*. Berlin: Scientific Software Development.
- Nastasi, B. K. (1999). Audiovisual methods in ethnography. In J. J. Schensul & M. D. LeCompte (Series Eds.) & J. J. Schensul, M. D. LeCompte, B. K. Nastasi, & S. P. Borgatti (Vol. Eds.), *Ethnographer's toolkit: Vol. 3. Enhanced ethnographic methods: Audiovisual techniques, focused group interviews, and elicitation techniques* (pp. 1-50). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Nastasi, B. K., & Schensul, S. L. (2005). Contributions of qualitative research to the validity of intervention research. *Journal of School Psychology, 43*, 177-195.
- Nelson, J. R., Martella, R. M., & Marchand-Martella, N. (2002). Maximizing student learning: The effects of a comprehensive school-based program for preventing problem behaviors. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 10*, 136-148.
- Nungesser, N., & Watkins, R. (2005). Preschool teachers' perceptions and reactions to challenging classroom behavior: Implications for speech-language pathologists. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 36*, 139-151.
- Pierce, C. D., Reid, R., & Epstein, M. H. (2004). Teacher-mediated interventions for children with EBD and their academic outcomes: A review. *Remedial and Special Education, 25*, 175-188.
- Polirstok, S., & Gottlieb, J. (2006). The impact of positive behavior intervention training for teachers on referral rates for misbehavior, special education evaluation and student reading achievement in the elementary grades. *International Journal of Behavioral and Consultation Therapy, 2*, 354-361.
- Reschly, D. J. (2004). Commentary: Paradigm shift, outcomes criteria, and behavioral interventions: Foundations for the future of school psychology. *School Psychology Review, 33*, 408-418.
- Rosen, L., Taylor, S., O'Leary, S., & Sanderson, W. (1990). A survey of classroom management practices. *Journal of School Psychology, 28*, 257-269.
- Rubin, R. (2004). Building a comprehensive discipline system and strengthening school climate. *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 13*, 162-169.
- Schensul, J. J. (1999). Focused group interviews. In J. J. Schensul & M. D. LeCompte (Series Eds.) & J. J. Schensul, M. D. LeCompte, B. K. Nastasi, & S. P. Borgatti (Vol. Eds.), *Ethnographer's toolkit: Vol. 3. Enhanced ethnographic methods: Audiovisual techniques, focused group interviews, and elicitation techniques* (pp. 51-114). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Schensul, S. L., Schensul, J. J., & LeCompte, M. D. (1999). Essential ethnographic methods: Observations, interviews, & questionnaires. In J. J. Schensul & M. D. LeCompte (Eds.), *Ethnographer's toolkit, Vol. 2* (pp.). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Schottle, D. A., & Peltier, G. L. (1991). Should schools employ behavior management consultants? *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 23*, 128-131.
- Scott, T. M., & Eber, L. (2003). Functional assessment and wrap-around as systemic school processes: Primary, secondary, and tertiary systems examples. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 5*, 131-144.
- Severson, H. H., Walker, H. M., Hope-Doolittle, J., Kratochwill, T. R., & Gresham, F. M. (2007). Proactive, early screening to detect behaviorally at-risk students: Issues, approaches, emerging innovations, and professional practices. *Journal of School Psychology, 45*, 193-223.
- Skiba, R. J., & Knesting, K. (2001). Zero tolerance, zero evidence: An analysis of school disciplinary practice. *New Directions for Youth Development, 92*, 17-43.
- Skinner, M., & Hales, M. (1992). Classroom teachers' explanations of student behavior: One possible barrier to the acceptance and use of applied behavior analysis procedures in the schools. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 3*, 219-232.
- Sprague, J. (2006). RTI and positive behavior supports: Yes, we get to do it here too! *The Special Edge, 19*, 10-13.
- Sprague, J., & Walker, H. (2000). Early identification and intervention for youth with antisocial and violent behavior. *Exceptional Children, 66*, 367-380.
- Stahr, B., Cushing, D., Lane, K., & Fox, J. (2006). Efficacy of a function-based intervention in decreasing off-task behavior exhibited by a student with ADHD. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 8*, 201-211.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Sugai, G., & Horner, R. (2002). The evolution of discipline practices: School-wide positive behavior supports. *Child & Family Behavior Therapy, 24*, 23-50.

- Sugai, G., & Horner, R. (2006). A promising approach for expanding and sustaining school-wide positive behavior support. *School Psychology Review, 35*, 245-259.
- Tobin, T. J., & Sugai, G. M. (1999). Using sixth-grade school records to predict school violence, chronic discipline problems, and high school outcomes. *Journal of Emotional & Behavioral Disorders, 7*, 41-55.
- Varjas, K., Nastasi, B., Moore, R. B., & Jayasena, A. (2005). Using ethnographic methods for development of culture-specific interventions. *Journal of School Psychology, 43*, 241-258.
- Walker, S., & Plomin, R. (2005). The nature-nurture question: Teachers' perceptions of how genes and the environment influence educationally relevant behaviour. *Educational Psychology, 25*, 509-516.
- Warren, J., Edmonson, H., Griggs, P., Lassen, S., McCart, A., Turnbull, A., et al. (2003). Urban applications of school-wide positive behavior support. Critical issues and lessons learned. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 5*, 80-92.
- Westerlund, D., Granucci, E. A., Gamache, P., & Clark, H. B. (2006). Effects of peer mentors on work-related performance of adolescents with behavioral and/or learning disabilities. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 8*, 244-251.
- Wilson, C., Gutkin, T., Hagen, K., & Oats, R. (1998). General education teachers' knowledge and self reported use of classroom interventions for working with difficult-to-teach students: Implications for consultation, prereferral intervention, and inclusive services. *School Psychology Quarterly, 13*, 45-62.
- Wilson, S. M., Floden, R. E., & Ferrini-Mundy, J. (2001). *Teacher preparation research: Current knowledge, gaps, and recommendations: A research report prepared for the U.S. Department of Education*. Seattle: Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington.
- Amy Dutton Tillery**, EdS, is a doctoral student in school psychology at Georgia State University. Her current interests include behavior interventions, promoting positive school climate, and drop-out prevention.
- Kris Varjas**, PhD, is an associate professor of school psychology at Georgia State University. Her current interests include national and international mental health promotion and developing culture-specific prevention and intervention programs in schools and communities.
- Joel Meyers**, PhD, is a Regent's Professor in the Department of Counseling and Psychological Services at Georgia State University. His current interests include the primary prevention of bullying and school violence, teacher consultation, organizational consultation, and school change.
- Amanda Smith Collins**, EdS, is a doctoral student in school psychology at Georgia State University. Her current interests include consultation, behavior interventions, and urban school psychology.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.