NOVICE, RURAL NEW YORK STATE TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR
CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND HOW THESE PERCEPTIONS AFFECT THEIR JOB
SATISFACTION AND RETENTION

by
Shawn M. Bielicki
Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education

Liberty University
October 2014
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ABSTRACT

Shawn Bielicki. NOVICE, RURAL NEW YORK STATE TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND HOW THESE PERCEPTIONS AFFECT THEIR JOB SATISFACTION AND RETENTION. (under the direction of Dr. Rollen Fowler) School of Education, Liberty University, October 2014.

This qualitative phenomenological inquiry listened to the voices of five novice teachers from a rural area in New York about their encounters with classroom management and their perceptions of job satisfaction and retention. Data were triangulated through the use of four audio recordings, an online focus group featuring two online discussion board topics and two online discussion board replies, and two individual phone interviews per participant. Data analysis resulted in nine emerged themes. Findings indicated that participants felt (a) experience was necessary to succeed; (b) issues with classroom management are part of the job; (c) approaches to classroom management were unique to the individual; (d) teachers rely on each other for support; (e) classroom management was linked to job satisfaction; (f) dealing with disruptive students was emotionally taxing; (g) teachers love to teach; (h) teachers are resilient and desire to stay in the profession; and (i) teachers would welcome additional practical classroom management training. Implications highlighted the need for additional teacher training, the development of a peer network, and support for teachers dealing with the emotional aspect of the job. Suggestions for future research are provided.

Keywords: Qualitative, phenomenology, classroom management, discipline, novice teacher, retention, job satisfaction, rural, New York State
DEDICATION

This inquiry is dedicated to the memory of the late Dr. Jill Jones, a professor who changed my life in just a few days. She preached on prayer, petition, and thanksgiving. A gifted instructor, she had the unique ability to make each student in her class feel like she was talking just to him or her. Dr. Jones transformed this study into something meaningful. She taught me to get lost in the data until her coined, “Solomon-effect,” that is, data saturation, occurred. She also helped me follow my calling. I believed her when she said, “if God wants you at Liberty, you will be here.” Apparently, she was right about that and many other things. I hope she knows that with this publication, I ran to the roar.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the hard work, patience, and support of my chair and committee as they stuck with me throughout this journey, teaching me about good research and publication. I also wish to thank the participants of this study and their administrators for their exceptional effort and willingness to go above and beyond. Lastly and most importantly, I wish to thank my wife and children who are my inspiration, motivation, and support for sacrificing so much so that I could finish my education. I hope this publication does as it was intended to do and contributes to and advances the knowledge and literature in the field.
Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... 3

DEDICATION ......................................................................................................................... 4

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ....................................................................................................... 5

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................... 13

LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................ 14

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ...................................................................................... 15

Background to the Problem ................................................................................................. 15

Research Gap ........................................................................................................................ 24

Statement of the Problem .................................................................................................... 28

The Purpose of the Study ..................................................................................................... 29

Guiding Research Questions ............................................................................................... 30

Significance of the Study ..................................................................................................... 31

Definitions of Terms ............................................................................................................. 32

Research Plan ....................................................................................................................... 33

Overview of the Study ......................................................................................................... 35

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .......................................................................... 37

Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 37

Theoretical Framework ........................................................................................................ 39

  Bandura’s Social Learning Theory ................................................................................... 40
Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory. ................................................................. 40

Review of the Literature.................................................................................. 41

What is effective classroom management? ....................................................... 42

Classroom layout, organization, and environment. ........................................... 43

Effective teaching. ............................................................................................ 45

Teacher characteristics and reflectivity. ........................................................... 47

Common classroom management concerns....................................................... 49

Classroom management tactics and approaches................................................. 50

Classroom management programs..................................................................... 51

Assertive Discipline. ......................................................................................... 53

Discipline through Congruent Communication.................................................. 53

Discipline through Democratic Teaching ............................................................ 54

Discipline through Influencing Group Behavior. ............................................... 54

Discipline through Raising Responsibility. ....................................................... 55

Discipline through Shaping Desired Behavior. .................................................. 55

Discipline with Dignity....................................................................................... 55

Functional Behavior Assessment....................................................................... 56

Good Behavior Game. ...................................................................................... 57

Improving Discipline through Lesson Management.......................................... 57

Non-coercive Discipline. .................................................................................. 58
Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) or Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) ........................................................................................................... 58

Positive Classroom Discipline ........................................................................................................ 59

Responsive Classroom ..................................................................................................................... 59

Response-to-Intervention (RTI) ........................................................................................................ 59

Classroom management is critical .................................................................................................. 60

Classroom management and novice teachers ................................................................................... 61

Beginning teacher preparation ......................................................................................................... 63

Teacher training on classroom management .................................................................................... 64

Increasing teacher training .............................................................................................................. 65

Beginning teachers’ disconnects ...................................................................................................... 67

Beginning teacher practice and influences ..................................................................................... 69

Professional development .............................................................................................................. 70

Teacher autonomy .......................................................................................................................... 71

Connecting classroom management and teacher retention ............................................................ 72

Emotional aspect to classroom management ................................................................................... 74

Rural schools ..................................................................................................................................... 75

Job satisfaction ................................................................................................................................... 76

Job satisfaction and classroom management ................................................................................... 77

Job satisfaction and teacher retention ............................................................................................. 78
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction.................................................................................. 80
Research Design............................................................................... 81
Qualitative...................................................................................... 81
Phenomenological research........................................................ 83
Hermeneutical approach................................................................ 84
Philosophical and ontological assumptions............................... 84
Participants.................................................................................. 85
Setting / Sites............................................................................... 87
Researcher’s Perspective............................................................... 88
Data Collection............................................................................ 90
Research guiding questions....................................................... 90
  Preparation and training............................................................. 91
  Environment and tactics............................................................ 92
  Experiences............................................................................... 93
  Job satisfaction, career plans, and advice............................... 93
Audio recordings......................................................................... 94
Focus groups.............................................................................. 97
Individual in-depth interviews.................................................. 99
Data Analysis ............................................................................................................. 103
Coding......................................................................................................................... 103
Dependability and Credibility ................................................................................... 105
Ethical Issues ............................................................................................................. 107
Data storage. ............................................................................................................. 107
Confidentiality. .......................................................................................................... 108
Personal ethical position. ......................................................................................... 108
Summary .................................................................................................................... 108

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ......................................................................................... 109

Introduction of the participants ............................................................................. 110
Abby .......................................................................................................................... 110
Chloe. ......................................................................................................................... 111
Jael. ............................................................................................................................. 111
Lucy. .......................................................................................................................... 111
Mike. .......................................................................................................................... 112

Summary of Interviews and Data Collected ......................................................... 112
Abby .......................................................................................................................... 112
Chloe. ......................................................................................................................... 114
Jael. ............................................................................................................................. 115
Lucy. .......................................................................................................................... 116
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1  Data on Participants.................................................................87
Table 4.1  Results from Key Area: Teacher Training and Preparation.......... 120
Table 4.2  Results from Key Area: Environment and Tactics .................... 121
Table 4.3  Results from Key Area: Experiences........................................ 123
Table 4.4  Results from Key Area: Job Satisfaction and Career Plans......... 125
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1 Perceptions of Classroom Management ............................... 127
Figure 4.2 Perceptions of Job Satisfaction .......................................... 133
Figure 4.3 Perceptions of Teacher Retention ........................................ 137
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background to the Problem

Classroom management has received evolving definitions over the past half century. Jackson (1968) simplified classroom management to an analysis of life inside the classroom, but qualified the complexities of the process and its correlation to teaching, classroom dynamics and interpersonal relationships, unpredictability of occurrences, the swift pace of teaching, and history of activities and dealings. A generally accepted, albeit infancy definition can be found in the National Society for the Study of Education Yearbook, “the provisions and procedures necessary to establish and maintain an environment in which students learn” (Duke, 1979, p.12). Doyle (1986) expanded this to include the techniques and solutions necessary to establish and maintain classroom order. Jones (1996) accentuated the broad nature of classroom management to include research-driven practices, personal relationships, effective teaching methods, and organization, environment, and intervention techniques. Emmer and Stough (2001) returned to a simpler definition, “actions taken by the teacher to establish order, engage students, or elicit their cooperation” (p.103).

For purpose of this study, classroom management was generally accepted to include tactics for assuring physical, mental, and emotional security; practices for altering student defiance, disorder, and disruption; methods for instituting and encouraging self-control; methods of promoting an organized development of education and activities; system for planning and organizing, and educational strategies that contribute to appropriate student behavior (Manning & Bucher, 2007).
Educational research on classroom management is widespread and purposeful. It is largely a simplified approach to discovering commonalities between true classroom experiences and identifying best practices from teachers preventing or handling student discipline issues (Akar, Tantekin, Erden, Tor, & Sahin, 2010). Best practices involve specific strategies and teaching methods which are research-driven (Kounin, 1970; Jones, 1996). Research-based best practices on classroom management can therefore be demarcated as research-proven strategies implemented to improve student behavior and the overall classroom environment (Anderson, Evertson, & Brophy, 1979).

What classroom management in a given classroom looks like depends upon factors such as planning, organization, classroom layout, theoretical or tactical training, environment, strategies and tactics utilized, methodology of dealing with student disruptions and defiance, and methodology of handling disciplinary consequences (Manning & Bucher, 2007; Gulcan, 2010).

Teacher classroom autonomy remains a central tenant in the American education system (Marshall, 2009). This leads to mottled degrees of implementations and approaches. A standard school today features a mix, or melting pot, of classroom teachers with varied and non-standardized pre-service training and professional development experiences, coupled with a myriad of personalities, backgrounds, and approaches. The degree to which teachers may be conversant with or aware of current and effective approaches to classroom management fluctuates, as does the degree to which they choose to implement them (Moore, 2003).

Additionally, how aware teachers become during training remains a concern. Moore (2003) surveyed pre-service teachers and found that many teachers were simply unsure which strategies to use and when. This can lead to a myriad of classroom management problems. This also exemplifies the question of how strong the actual training of pre-service teachers is, and to
what extent they feel proficient. In other words, does the training have adequate depth, scope, quantity, and quality and practical application? Or is the training little more than words disgorged to teachers who are merely passively using their available or assigned time with little or no conviction or action planned afterward?

Even with training some teachers seem to continue to struggle in the general area of classroom management; whether they miss training or whether the training provided misses them. Dutton Tillery, Varjas, Meyers, and Smith Collins (2010) conducted a qualitative study on teachers’ perceptions of classroom management and various strategies and discovered that many teachers were oblivious to critical classroom management techniques, despite training. In other words, some teachers leave training as confused or ill-prepared as they were when they arrived.

Some teachers enter the field with a naïve view of classroom management and others feel a general sense of disconnect from the proven practices that veteran teachers often instill (Hoy & Weinstein, 2006). Whether novice teachers have a naïve view, a more modern or contemporary view, or a fresher perspective, new teachers often view classroom management differently than experienced teachers and sometimes have an optimistic view of how they can manage their classrooms (Alexander-Rami, 2011; Klassen & Ming Ming, 2010). Often what follows this disconnect or variance in approach is an erosion of confidence and classroom outcomes. Studies show differences between novice and experienced faculty in relation to their confidence and their ability to quickly handle situations as they arrive (e.g., O’Neill, 2011; Rosas & West, 2009).

Furthermore, current research and discoveries from educational, emotional, and psychological specialists continues to help usher in changes in classroom management practices and develop new classroom management approaches. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports is one current research-proven approach, especially in the area of special education,
which is transforming classrooms into manageable learning environments (Ducharme & Shecter, 2011; Emmer & Stough, 2001; Oliver & Reschly, 2010; Simonson, Fairbanks, Breisch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008). This is evidenced by the multiplicity of actions and classroom successes. This approach, as well as others will be more detailed later in the literature review.

Classroom management strategies also vary depending upon the teacher’s date of hire, training, school expectations, administrative approaches and support, and experience (O’Neill & Stephenson, 2011). Teachers are often trained with specific strategies and techniques to include the popular movement or pre-packaged classroom management programs and methodologies of a given time (Di Martini-Scully, Bray, & Kehle, 2000; Musser, Bray, Kehle, & Jensen, 2011). Training differs on certain principles or approaches and how to utilize or implement them from institution to institution, and in some cases from individual teacher to individual teacher (Merck, 2012). Because a mix of actual classroom experience and years on the job is commonplace in just about any reasonable-sized school (Klassen & Ming, 2010), a mix of training or approaches is equally ordinary and expected (Billingsley, Fall, & Williams, 2006; Katsiyannis, Zhang, & Conroy, 2003). Furthermore, there is no standard requirement or approach to classroom management, nor is there a standard approach or requirement how to specifically handle student discipline in most common or regular circumstances (Emmer & Stough, 2001).

Many different classroom management programs and approaches have been available to teachers and to school districts for quite some time. More recently, a shift has occurred in classroom management approaches as well, from early classroom approaches that concentrated on correcting behavior through methods of consequence to more proactive approaches involving preventive and corrective actions (Kerr & Nelson, 2002; Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Martella, Nelson, & Marchand-Martella, 2003). Today, Responsive Classrooms, Positive Behavior Intervention
and Supports, Functional Behavior Assessment, and Response-to-Intervention (Christo, 2005), are all mainstreamed programs or approaches which utilize numerous techniques and technologies to address the root cause of student behavior, especially with students of special needs, and attempt to correct it (Springer & Persiani-Becker, 2011).

Despite all of the research-based proven practices which exist, imitation is a still a common method of teacher induction and training (Putnam, 2009). Some teachers prefer to imitate their mentors, colleagues, supervising practice teachers, or previous instructors (Romeo, 1985; Sandoval-Lucero et al, 2011). This “mimic another instructor method” can sometimes reap positive results (Romeo, 1985; Sandoval-Lucero, et al, 2011), but it is in no way an assurance to success in the area of classroom management. Furthermore, it can also produce dismal results, depending upon the individual the novice or pre-service teacher chooses to imitate, or how well the teacher does imitating. Thus, this method is really not a solid or sound approach to effective classroom management (Weller, 1983).

Some teachers rely on personal experience to determine what approach works best. This approach draws similarities to on-the-job training or learning through trial and error (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). This approach can be comfortable for many teachers as they are able to mold their own approach based on their individual comfort level and personality and style to determine what works for them. While the approach can reap successful results, it is difficult to determine how many teachers fail to ever achieve success. It also represents a certain degree of ignorance towards the technical knowledge of research-driven strategies and techniques and the professional knowledge of student demographics, student needs and abilities, and student group dynamics (MacSuga & Simonsen, 2011).
While some successful practices or methods for management are developed by trial and error through actual classroom teaching experience, passed down from sage mentors, or imitated from trusted teachers (Sandoval-Lucero, et al., 2011), these methods are difficult to replicate, highly personal and unique to an individual, and often lack hard or empirical evidence. These practices sometimes predominantly involve entry-level or mainly reactive strategies which also lead to teacher burnout and lower job satisfaction (Clunies-Ross, Little, Kienhuis, 2008). Other practices or implementations of programs lacking empirical evidence, such as Canter and Canter’s Assertive Discipline or other classroom management approaches involving rules and consequences might be actually counter-productive to achieving good environmental results (McCaslin & Good, 1998).

Teaching is a profession that continues to change and evolve. While some teachers tend to stay current on up-to-date classroom management techniques through professional development opportunities and reading research on evolving effective models, others may not be contractually obligated or professionally motivated to do so. For example, according to the New York State Department of Education website (2010), new public school teachers in New York are required to pursue additional professional development and training to the accumulated amount of 175 hours every five years, although they are not required to undergo specific training or additional professional development in the critical area of classroom management. Older veteran teachers are not obligated to undergo the same rigor or quantity of training and are only expected to complete five hours per academic year, or according to their local collective bargaining agreement contract. Most public institutions have professional development expectations outlined in detail in a collective bargaining contract. Private school teachers are not
governed or regulated by State Education, and therefore, do not need to fulfill the same
requirements.

Teachers have much autonomy as to which areas they choose to pursue. They can rely
on specific or prescribed training offered by their individual school districts, commonly provided
during the annual day or days of new school year orientation or engage in other training provided
to them during set aside professional development day or days during the academic school year.
Private school teachers are not governed by the same rules, regulations, or expectations, although
many school offer training (Scheopner, 2010). Logically, the consequence of wide-ranging
training and expectations would indicate a result of some teachers relying on their pre-service
training or other learned survival tactics, rather than them staying up to date and current with
new and evolving approaches and technologies (Churchill, 2006; Poftak, 2005).

Furthermore, even though proven and research-driven strategies and technologies exist,
teachers are not always made aware (Dinham & Scott, 1996; Johnson, 2004). Since teachers are
trained at colleges and universities that are often manned with specialized, tenured faculty who
favor certain approaches, higher education can determine what new teachers are taught.
Research affirms that college and university professors have a certain amount of autonomy and
natural preference in delivering their teacher training or expertise to practice teachers (e.g.,
Sanders, 2006). Anyone who has the opportunity of working with a variety of teachers can attest
that professional development, mentoring, training, and pre-service programs largely differs
from university to university or from supervising teacher to supervising teacher (Winter, 2005).

In-house professional development in the area of classroom management is not always
made available or pursued once teachers secure employment inside a specific school district
(Scheopner, 2010). Individual school districts retain some control over what, how much, when,
and where professional development takes place. Depending upon the school district initiatives, leadership, district goals, or upcoming concentrations can often dictate which area or areas of professional development will be offered or addressed. Furthermore, teachers are also not always interested or obligated to take advantage of such opportunities, and not all teachers pursue training outside of what is offered to or required of them. Some schools, especially private ones, operate on very tight budgets and are simply unable to provide any professional opportunities for teachers to pursue outside of what is contractually or legally required.

An additional complication is that not all strategies will work for all teachers all of the time (Scheeler, 2007). This can be for a number of reasons. Working with actual students can often be less predictable than when training with classmates in scripted pre-service practice situations. Because of this variance, it is safe to conclude that some teachers may abandon certain techniques more quickly than they should. Novice teachers need to stick with systems that are proven and tested. They should attempt to continuously implement effective teaching and classroom management strategies, even if they fail a time or two. Persistence and effort will better lead to a structured approach and delivery.

In the end, teaching is still largely an individualized approach centered on the willingness or comfort-level of the instructor (Grieve, 2010; Masunaga & Hitchcock, 2011). The varied approaches and mixed degree of the implementation of classroom management programs is clear evidence to that premise (Hong, Greene, & Hartzell, 2011). Some teachers take bits and pieces of several approaches and frame them to fit their own individual style; others were trained or skilled in a specific approach and continuously implement it to the letter of the program (Alkharusi & al-Musawai, 2011).
In addition to research-proven effective models, time and experience seem to be major factors in a teacher’s classroom management approach (Froyen & Iverson, 1999; Kraut, 2000; Rosas & West, 2009). Veteran teachers have learned the art of classroom survival through trial and error, research, formal education and training, and / or professional development (Paulmbo & Sanacore, 2007). But if success hinges on experience, where does this leave our novice teachers?

Liu (2007) studied teacher retention and reported that one of the most effective ways to retain teachers is to improve their working conditions. An improvement to the working conditions implied an improvement to their overall classroom environment, which included the area of classroom management. Liu explained that the scholarship of classroom management, as well as empirical research surrounding student discipline, needs to be looked at more continuously, as well as more critically, as student discipline continues to be a cause of teacher stress and teacher attrition. But Liu failed to provide details into the actual or personal teacher perspectives and stances necessary to understand the teachers’ perceptions and frustrations. These perceptions are required elements in order to make appropriate program shifts or changes.

Caples and McNeese (2010) discovered that many novice teachers left their pre-service training program ill-prepared to run their own classrooms. In particular, they struggled with all levels and aspects of classroom management, which caused the teachers a great deal of stress, and ultimately caused them to leave the profession. In essence, the study linked classroom management of novice teachers to job satisfaction and teacher retention.

Studies have examined novice teachers and classroom management and come up with similar results, but these studies did not go deep enough into the topic (e.g., Borman & Dowling, 2008; Boyd et al, 2005; Ingersoll, 2001; Liu & Meyer, 2005; Kerstaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels,
2007; Schoepner, 2010; Stinebrickner, 1998; Wriqi, 2008). These studies collectively did not provide the rich, descriptive details necessary to fully understand the phenomenon of novice teacher struggles with classroom management and how it leads to their departure. Additionally, these studies failed to acquire the qualitative data that will shed light into frustrated teachers’ perceptions and expose their unique experiences.

**Research Gap**

It is well-published that teachers leaving colleges and universities feel ill-prepared to run their own classroom (Kaufman & Moss, 2010; Moore, 2003; Putnam, 2009; Stoughton, 2006; Tulley & Chiu, 1995); and it is well documented that many new teachers struggle with classroom management and handling student discipline issues (Lee & Powell, 2005; Putnam, 2009; Reupert & Woodcock, 2010; Stoughton, 2006; Zuckerman, 2007). The country is facing a shortage of qualified teachers and once one recognizes that classroom management is a leading cause of teacher attrition (Barmby, 2006; Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005; Newby, 1991; Rosser, 2004), especially for new teachers (Friedman, 1995; Haun & Martin, 2004; Reynolds, Ross, & Rakow, 2002; Rosser, 2004; Shen, 1997), it is not difficult to connect the dots; the education of students is being challenged.

While much research has been completed to support the claim that teachers struggle with classroom management and that classroom management causes teachers to leave the profession (Barmby, 2006; Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005; Newby, 1991; Rosser, 2004), a gap in the research still exists. A qualitative inquiry has yet to be conducted which listens to the actual voices of novice teachers who are in the trenches in rural schools. Building upon discoveries from other studies, researchers have called for this gap to be addressed.
Stoughton (2006) conducted narrative research into novice teachers’ beliefs of teaching and classroom management, and how these beliefs varied from their induction training to their actual experiences with classroom management in public schools. The findings called for further research in the area of novice teachers and classroom management. Specifically, Stoughton pointed out directions for future work which advances the understanding of how knowledge and experiences of novice teachers shape their classroom practices and attitudes. Further research might examine novice teacher perceptions of how their training and experiences affect their work or outlook. By addressing the pre-service training on classroom management, individual classroom experiences with classroom management, and personal perceptions on job satisfaction, this proposed inquiry aims to further this research and add participant voices to the discussion.

Friedrichsen, Chval, and Teuscher (2007) conducted a case study of beginning teacher strategies and teacher attrition and called for additional work in this area. In particular, Friedrichsen et al. called for further studies which examine initial teacher training, support, and strategies in relation to teacher turnover. This inquiry aimed to shed light into teacher training, perceptions, and experiences that ultimately leads to their job satisfaction and retention. In a subjective sense this inquiry is an attempt to answer unanswered questions which could lead to a testable hypothesis based on the results and coding of the qualitative data. Additionally, using an inquisitive approach with diverse forms of data collection, such as audio recordings, an online focus group through a discussion board, and two interviews, this study may advance the “what if” questions and formulate some connections that could lead to future correlational analyses of emerging themes identified in the course of qualitative interviews with novice teachers.

Caples and McNeese (2010) studied beginning elementary teachers by examining teacher attitudes toward misbehavior and then correlating it to their persistence of staying in the field.
The collection instrument included variables such as child misbehavior, job satisfaction, and career plans, but failed to go deeper into the study to include specific areas of classroom management. Factors such as organization, planning, and environment were not examined. Caples and McNeese called for further research in this area. Specifically, the study called for further research into how misbehavior, a profound component of classroom management, affects teacher retention and attitudes, but which utilizes different variables and different demographics. This would bring a fresh approach to the study’s intent and would further the academic research in this critical area.

This inquiry plans a qualitative approach which introduces additional variables, such as breaking down individual areas of classroom management to include organization, planning, and environment. Lastly, this inquiry utilizes different demographics than previous published studies, examining only teachers from rural schools in a single region in Upstate New York.

Dutton Tillery, Varjas, Meyers, and Smith Collins (2010) examined general education kindergarten and first grade teachers’ perceptions of behavior management, student behavior, and their intervention approaches. Dutton Tillery et al, contributed specific data on teacher perceptions on behavioral management, but called for future research into general education teachers for other grade levels and other school districts. The study failed to expand upon their perceptions as to how it actually affects their job satisfaction and future career plans. This proposed inquiry delves deeper into teacher perceptions, uses a different pool of participants from different school districts, and correlates their perceptions to how it actually affects their job satisfaction and future career plans.

A recent dissertation study by Slaven (2011) using similar variables on teacher perceptions specifically called for this gap to be closed. Slaven’s study examined teacher
perceptions in rural Title I middle schools surrounding the experiences that negatively impact their job satisfaction. The study recognized that classroom management, and in particular student behavior, was one of the areas which affected teacher views on the profession. The inquiry concluded that it was a significant enough of a factor to cause teachers to leave the profession. Slaven called for additional research into this area to determine why teachers felt that way and how these feelings specifically link to teacher attrition or retention.

This inquiry continued the research and addressed the gap. Qualitative data gathered through the use of interviews, an online discussion board, and audio recordings on beginning teacher perceptions of their classroom management and how it affects their job satisfaction and career plans advanced this research and work toward closing the research gap. A study of this nature helped identify important variables for further investigation that will use more rigorous and controlled studies. Using identified variables that come of this inquiry laid the groundwork for future studies that could scale up the exactitude in order to further study the phenomenon at a deeper level or with more arduous designs that look at cause and effect relationships where more assertions or generalizations can be made from varied samples.

It is important to note that scholarly educational research on teachers and practices needs to remains a fluid and in-motion process (Boyer, 1990; Ochoa, 2012). With the changing role of the teacher, wavering makeup of the student, melting culture, volatile climate, global influences, technological advances, and the evolution of societal values, educational research needs to continue to be fresh and re-evaluated (Hutchings, Taylor Huber, & Ciccone, 2011). Educators need to continue to lead, not just in the classroom, but also in the scholarship of teaching and learning.
Statement of the Problem

Many novice teachers find little success implementing effective classroom management techniques or grappling with student discipline issues (Lee & Powell, 2005; Putnam, 2009; Reupert & Woodcock, 2010; Stoughton, 2006; Zuckerman, 2007). Their inability to handle these situations causes many new educators stress and ultimately leads them to leave the profession (Barmby, 2006; Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005; Newby, 1991; Rosser, 2004). Even though much research exists to justify an extensive overhaul of pre-service teacher training, especially in the area of classroom management, this overhaul seems to be slow in coming to fruition (Sanders, 2006; Sandoval-Lucero et al, 2011; Winter, 2005).

Many novice teachers continue to enter the field of education without the necessary experience, skill set, and knowledge base to succeed on their own in the classroom (Kaufman & Moss, 2010; Moore, 2003; Putnam, 2009; Stoughton, 2006; Tulley & Chiu, 1995). Because of this divide a great exodus of classroom teachers occurs within the first few years on the job (Friedman, 1995; Haun & Martin, 2004; Reynolds, Ross, & Rakow, 2002; Rosser, 2004; Shen, 1997).

What we do not always know is the beginning teachers’ perceptions of their own personal classroom management. What are their personal thoughts and/ or concerns? What is it about their personal experiences and perceptions with classroom management that affects their job satisfaction? How do these perceptions lead to teacher retention? What specifically about their unique personal experiences and perceptions cause them to leave the profession? Little empirical research has addressed these concerns from the teachers’ perspective; no studies have addressed it using rural school districts in New York State.
The Purpose of the Study

This study utilized a qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenology approach (Zichi, Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000) to better comprehend how dealing with classroom management issues affects rural beginning teacher job satisfaction and retention. This qualitative inquiry listened to the voices of five purposefully selected beginning teachers from Upstate New York from small, rural schools. Teachers represented a mix of public and private elementary, middle, and high school regular education classroom teachers. District and teacher demographic is provided in the methodology section. Data collection was triangulated using: (a) four consecutive weeks of personal audio recordings, (b) an online focus group that features two original posts and two responses to another participants’ post on an online discussion board, and (c) two personal and individual interviews per participant. Data were then be coded to discover emerging themes. In addition to triangulation of data collection, transcriptions, member checking, and peer review added dependability and validity to the proposed study’s findings as recommended by qualitative guidance (e.g., Creswell 2005; Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; Polkinghorne, 1989).

By critically examining and coding the data, the findings articulated the participants’ perceptions of readiness and training and capture their true and actual experiences with classroom management. Additional topics evaluated included the participants’ tactics, methods of student engagement, and their planning, organization, and environment.

This study planned to reveal what successes or failures the participants experienced when dealing with disruptions or defiance, what successes or failures the participants experienced when handing out actual disciplinary consequences and if, where, and when they sought and found additional help. Lastly, it planned to associate how these experiences influence teacher
job satisfaction and whether or not these experiences and perceptions relate to their future career plans.

**Guiding Research Questions**

This phenomenological study was guided by three topical research questions:

1. What perceptions do rural classroom teachers in New York State have about their classroom management?
2. How do these perceptions affect their job satisfaction?
3. How do these perceptions affect their retention?

Four categories of actual research questions helped guide this study from its inception to its completion. Detailed question genesis, rationale, and analysis are adeptly provided in the methodology section. These research categories / questions include (a) preparation and training, (b) environment and tactics, (c) experiences, and (d) job satisfaction, career plans, and advice.

1. **Preparation and training.** What theoretical knowledge and tactical training in classroom management did the participants receive in their pre-service training? How prepared for classroom management did the participants feel they were when they left their pre-service setting? Did the participants discover any gap between theoretical training and practical experience? What knowledge or tactical training were the participants required to participate in while on the job? How did this training impact their day-to-day classroom management? Did the participants seek additional assistance, including any additional training, internal or external peer advice, or academic scholarly research? If so, how did that impact their day-to-day classroom management?
2. **Environment and tactics.** How did the participants’ planning, organization, and environment impact their classroom management? If so, how? What classroom management tactics did the participants employ? Were they trained in these tactics or did they acquire them while on the job? If so, how?

3. **Experiences.** What successes and failures did the participants experience with disruptive students and/or defiant students? What successes and failures did the participants experience in handing out the actual disciplinary consequences? Did they feel supported by their peers and supervisors?

4. **Job Satisfaction, career plans, and advice.** How did the participants’ experiences with classroom management affect their job satisfaction? Are there any particular areas of classroom management that affect their job satisfaction more than others? Are there any areas that the participants attribute teacher attrition to? Given the participants’ experiences what are their future career plans? What advice would the participants give someone considering entering the field of teaching? What types of teacher training or induction training would better prepare new teachers?

**Significance of the Study**

Given the current state of teachers nearing retirement age, shortages of qualified teachers, and the critical nature of teaching as a profession, this study’s importance is evident. The results of this research will be critical in providing high quality, timely, and targeted professional development, particularly in the necessary area of classroom management. This inquiry also had the propensity to generate real hypotheses that will advance the notions surrounding job satisfaction and teacher retention.
The findings of this inquiry were grounded in the voices of these novice teachers. This planned qualitative approach developed a better understanding of their true and unique experiences by gathering and coding rich and descriptive data of teacher perceptions in key areas and questions. This study built upon the research of previous inquiries by furthering the research and closing a gap (e.g., Caples & McNeese, 2010; Dutton et al, 2010; Friedrichsen, Chval, & Teuscher, 2007; Slaven, 2011; Stoughton, 2006).

The researcher discovered more about the phenomenon of the novice teacher struggles with classroom management and why it leads to their departure through the process of collecting and analyzing data collected from two individual teacher interviews, multiple discussion board posts and replies, and weekly audio recordings of thoughts, experiences, and concerns.

Ultimately, this study added personal voices and stories to the many published quantitative inquiries which tell us that beginning teachers struggle with classroom management and often leave the profession, but which fail to provide rich, descriptive details from the participants on their true and unique experiences or perceptions as to why.

**Definitions of Terms**

*Beginning teacher:* teachers starting out in full-time classroom teaching positions with little or no previous work experience (Corbell, Osborne, & Reiman, 2010).

*Classroom management:* “encompasses both establishing and maintaining order, designing effective instruction, dealing with students as a group, responding to the needs of individual students, and effectively handling the discipline and adjustment of individual students” (Emmer & Stough, 2001, p.103).

*Discipline:* instances of student misbehavior; tactics to prevent student misbehavior; outcomes often associated with a punitive consequence (Brown & Beckett, 2006).
Job satisfaction: the extent to which one is pleased or displeased with his or her individual job; factors include emotional factors, external forces, preparation and training, culture, and motivation; scholarly academic surveys have generated a list of questions and answers to support the use of term (Mahmood, Nudrat, Asdaque, Nawaz, & Haider, 2011).

Novice teacher: teachers with two or fewer years of teaching experience (Meyer, 2002; Nolen, Horn, Ward, & Childers, 2011).

Rural school: located in a less densely populated area, isolated from suburban and urban areas (Shepard & Salembier, 2011).

Teacher attrition: number of teachers who leave positions and need to be replaced (Jalongo & Heider, 2006).

Teacher autonomy: individual decision-making authority and control over one’s individual classroom, curriculum, and students (Gawlik, 2007; Leroy, Bressouz, Sarrazin, & Trouioud, 2007).

Teacher retention: number of teachers returning to their classroom for the following school year (Dadley & Edwards, 2007).

Research Plan

Much quantitative research already exists to show that new teachers struggle with classroom management (e.g., Lee & Powell, 2005; Putnam, 2009; Reupert & Woodcock, 2010; Stoughton, 2006; Zuckerman, 2007) and that classroom management is directly linked to job satisfaction and teacher attrition (e.g., Barmby, 2006; Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005; Newby, 1991; Rosser, 2004). However, there is limited research that has actually listened to the personal voices of novice teachers in the educational “trenches” to hear first-hand accounts of
their struggles and successes with classroom management in a qualitative manner and to learn
how these emotional experiences impact their job satisfaction and future career plans.

This study employed a hermeneutical, phenomenological approach designed to listen to
the voices of five novice teachers from rural schools in Upstate New York. This qualitative
approach allowed the researcher to fill the current research gap with rich, descriptive, and real
qualitative results.

Data were collected from triangulated sources: (a) four weeks of audio recordings; (b) an
online focus group which features two posts to an online discussion board and two replies; and
(c) and two individual interviews. Participants captured their thoughts and shared their unique
experiences through the use of weekly audio recordings for four consecutive weeks. Participants
partook in an online focus group which utilized an online discussion board. Participants
answered guided questions and prompts and replied to another participant’s post via an online
discussion board. Two individual interviews allowed the participants to share their personal
perceptions, opinions, thoughts, and experiences with classroom management and how it
affected their job satisfaction and career plans.

Data were gathered, analyzed, and coded. Triangulation of data analysis through (a)
transcriptions; (b) member checking; and (c) peer review added credibility to this study
(Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 2009, Patton, 2002). Full accurate transcriptions ensured the
collection and transmission of reliable data. Member checking cross referenced the transcripts to
ensure an accurate representation of the participant input and data. Emergent coded themes,
reviewed by peers during a peer review process, added validity to the study, as suggested by
qualitative researchers (e.g., Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 2009).
Overview of the Study

Chapter One of the dissertation introduces the struggle of novice teachers with classroom management. It emphasizes the incredible influence that this struggle has on job satisfaction. It explains how classroom management can be a determining factor on teacher attrition or retention. It outlines the purpose of this inquiry and provides the guiding research questions to the study. Additionally, it provides detailed descriptions of common terms used in this dissertation in an effort to clarify the research being presented.

The literature review in Chapter Two presents an in-depth examination of the previous work surrounding classroom management, environment, teacher preparation, novice teacher struggles, and teacher job satisfaction and retention. Examples of successful classroom management programs and paradigms are also presented. The chapter further provides the theoretical framework for the study and explains how the framework serves as a foundation for the research.

Chapter Three explains the chosen approach as a qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenological study on novice teachers’ perceptions of their classroom management and how it affects their job satisfaction and career plans. It justifies the design of the study, provides information on the participants and the sites, describes the data collection methods, lists the assumptions and researcher’s perspective, and shares the process for data analysis and coding.

The analysis in Chapter Four assesses the data and content gathered from the participants surrounding classroom management and the participants’ perceptions of job satisfaction and career plans from audio recordings and individual interviews. In particular, the participants’ views on their successes and failures, as well as their future career plans in regard to returning to teach in the same classroom the following school year are outlined.
The final chapter provides a discussion on the findings. It also answers the primary research questions, details the implications, and makes recommendations for further potential investigations generated from this qualitative inquiry.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

For purposes of this literature review, a thorough search of quantitative and qualitative research was conducted using various scholarly academic research databases, including Academic Search Complete, Academic OneFile, and ERIC. Keyword and title searches triggered results, concentrating on peer reviewed literature analysis and scholarly research. Keywords and topics included classroom management, teacher attrition, teacher retention, job satisfaction, beginning teacher, novice teacher, pre-service training, and rural schools.

As topics became more specialized, so did the searches. More detailed searches included various classroom management approaches, theories, and packages including Assertive Discipline, Discipline with Dignity, Discipline through Congruent Communication, Good Behavior Game, Non-coercive Discipline, Positive Classroom Discipline, Disciplining through Influencing Group Behavior, Discipline through Shaping Desired Behavior, Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA), Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) or Positive Behavior Supports (PBS), Responsive Classroom, or Response-to-Intervention (RTI).

A manual search was also completed using social science index and citation referencing from inquiries examining similar topical studies and from peer reviewed literature that significantly expanded or contributed to the research. Lastly, studies and books, on recommendations from colleagues, committee members, and the dissertation chair, provided a foundation and reference for examination.
In order to ensure a complete and thorough, but sundry body of literature to support all relevant premises and pertinent findings, an analysis approach outlined by Cooper (2010) was utilized. More than 2,500 articles and publications were reviewed and considered, with more than 250 found to have contributing attributes and cited in this study.

Educational research on classroom management is widespread. A journal search using the term “classroom management” in the Education Research Complete database furnishes more than 3,700 results. Effective classroom management is critical. It assures a safe and nurturing environment, allows for student behavioral modifications and corrections, and presents strong strategies and techniques for preventive discipline. This notion is supported by the literature (e.g., Broomfield, 2006; Manning & Bucher, 2007).

Pre-service programs train new teachers in classroom management using both theoretical and practical technologies, but for some reason, studies have found that experience remains one of the biggest factors in classroom management success (e.g., Froyen & Iverson, 1999; Kraut, 2000). Over time many teachers develop good classroom management techniques which seem to best work for them (Rosas & West, 2009). But if classroom management success requires practice and experience, where does this leave our novice teachers? Without strong and experienced techniques, can our novice teachers succeed or survive?

Research exists to substantiate the claim that classroom management success leads to an increase in overall job satisfaction (e.g., Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Research also exists to support the notion that novice teachers often struggle with classroom management and that some beginners are failing as a result (e.g., Holen, 2009). This is critically concerning since classrooms across the nation are filled with children that are forming personal relationships with adults. What happens when the adult they finally trusted leaves? Worse yet, many who struggle,
choose to leave the profession altogether, and few ever re-enter (Patterson, Roehrig, & Luff, 2003).

The research, however, is not yet complete. Researchers have yet to explain how these struggles with classroom management make these novice teachers feel and what their actual voices say. Until that is understood, teacher training programs and on-the-job faculty development cannot adequately address or tackle these concerns. This gap remains and questions remain unanswered. As long as this cycle continues, frustrations and strains on teachers, students, and on the overall classroom environment and outcomes will also continue.

**Theoretical Framework**

This overall inquiry is routed in research and based on the author’s premise that better preparation and training of novice teachers can help produce more effective teaching (MacSuga & Simonsen, 2011; Romeo, 1985; Weller, 1983). More effective teaching can produce successful classroom management results (Alkharusi & Kazem, 2011; Chalies, Bruno-Mead, & Bertone, 2010; Wong, Wong, Rogers, & Brooks, 2012). Successful classroom management can lead to higher job satisfaction (Klassen & Ming Ming, 2010; Steere, 1988; Wong, Wong, Rogers, & Brooks, 2012). Higher job satisfaction can lead to better teacher retention (Paris & Terhhar, 2011; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Current researchers in the field of classroom management, job satisfaction, and teacher retention have interpreted their findings through the support and guidance of a few predominant theoretical approaches. Notably, the approaches cited were Bandura’s (1977) *Social Learning Theory*, Skinner’s (1971) *Applied Behavior Analysis*, Herzberg’s (1966) *Two-Factor Theory*, and Vroom’s (1966) *Expectancy Theory*. Since Bandura’s *Social Learning Theory* and Herzberg’s *Two-Factor Theory* are most encompassing and readily fit into a study on classroom
management and teacher training, as well as job satisfaction and teacher retention, this inquiry utilized these two theoretical approaches as its guiding framework.

**Bandura’s Social Learning Theory**

The conceptual framework begins with Bandura’s (1977) *Social Learning Theory*. The theory elucidates human behavior in terms of incessant mutual interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental stimuli. Bandura found that when individuals observe others in a given setting, they interpret, learn, and develop. Through social interaction and during social contexts, individuals acquire and formulate beliefs and practices. Beliefs and practices convey attitudes.

Social learning theory is suitable for a study concentrating on classroom management. Student behavior is often a result of observation and interaction generated from the two primary components, imagery and verbal (Bandura, 1997). *Social Learning Theory* is especially suitable for a study involving novice teachers. Teacher training and practices, as well as general classroom environment can be explained and interpreted through social learning theory. Strategies such as modeling and observation are rooted in this framework.

**Herzberg’s Two-factor Theory**

Herzberg’s work is based on empirical research. It examined satisfaction and dissatisfaction surrounding workplace conditions. Although initially based on industrial settings, it has frequently been utilized as a basis for job satisfaction in educational research.

Herzberg (1966) found that job satisfaction can be broken down into two distinct categories of hygiene and motivators. The two terms have opposite meanings and cannot be placed on a continuum. Hygiene is associated with overall job dissatisfaction, whereas motivator is associated with overall job satisfaction. Internal factors, as opposed to external factors, are
respectively aligned with motivators and hygienes. Success in the classroom and personal achievement are sample motivators and factors, according to the Two-Factor Theory.

Research studying issues related to job satisfaction (cf., Malik, 2011; Jamal Shah et al., 2012) and job dissatisfaction (cf., Woods & Weasmer, 2004; Sergiovanni, 1967) agree with Herzberg’s theory. According to the theory, poor classroom management and general disrespectful or defiant students would have a negative impact or satisfaction on the job. Studies have supported this premise (cf., Ghazi, Ali, Shahzada, & Isar, 2010; Houchins, Shippen, & Cattret, 2004; Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels, 2007).

**Review of the Literature**

Classroom management and discipline remain a major challenge for teachers entering or working in the profession (Tillman, 2003). Research indicates that many pre-service teachers are leaving schools of education unprepared to take over a classroom on their own (e.g., Kaufman & Moss, 2010; Moore, 2003; Putnam, 2009; Stoughton, 2006; Tulley & Chiu, 1995) and one of the biggest areas of deficiency exists in regard to dealing with and handling classroom management (Lee & Powell, 2005; Putnam, 2009; Reupert & Woodcock, 2010; Stoughton, 2006; Zuckerman, 2007). Research findings also suggest that many new teachers have neither developed the necessary skill set to manage a classroom on their own nor do they fully implement proven management techniques that veteran teachers do (e.g, Buchanan, 2011; Alkaharusi, Kazem, Al-Musawai, 2011). In essence, they are not entering the classroom with the necessary tools to flourish in this critical area.

It is well documented that the nation is facing a teacher shortage (Schoepner, 2010; Ingersoll, 2003), which should heighten the concern about exiting novice teachers. And since so much research is published to support that poor classroom management is a leading cause of
teacher attrition (e.g., Barmby, 2006; Brown, Gonzalez, & Slate, 2008; Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005; Newby, 1991; Rosser, 2004), especially for the attrition of new teachers (e.g., Friedman, 1995; Haun & Martin, 2004; Reynolds, Ross, & Rakow, 2002; Rosser, 2004; Shen, 1997), a study of this nature that gathers the thoughts of novice teachers as to why is timely and significant.

What is Effective Classroom Management?

What constitutes effective classroom management varies from teacher to teacher and from classroom to classroom. It is generally accepted within the educational field that classroom management is considered to include student behavior and control, as well as the application of effective teaching strategies and functional classroom environment. Studies have supported this assertion (e.g., Brainard, 2007; Manning & Bucher, 2007).

When it comes to classroom management, here are many generally accepted, research-proven best practices. Briesch, Fairbanks, Myers, Simonsen, and Sugai (2008) identified general research-based classroom management practices that were grouped into five categories: (a) classroom layout, (b) classroom environment, (c) effective teaching, (d) tactics to increase proper behavior, and (e) tactics to decrease improper behavior. Some of these practices encompass preventive techniques and approaches, while others are reactive strategies.

It is also generally accepted and understood that there will be a learning curve for new teachers when implementing new classroom management techniques, programs, systems, or procedures. Simply put, novice teachers will face some challenges when establishing an effective learning environment or dealing with classroom management; however, these challenges can be diminished through the implementation of effective teaching and proven classroom management technologies (Friedrichsen, Chval, & Teuscher, 2007).
Classroom Layout, Organization, and Environment

Planning, layout, organization and environment are important. Research supports that many assertions, constituents, or concepts are critical key components to positive classroom environment. For example, Rowan, Jacob, and Correnti (2009) identified aspects of teacher interaction that can positively impact the classroom environment: social relationship between the teacher and the students, the curriculum and its presentation, teaching methods and strategies, and classroom organization.

One of the most critical components of effective teaching is the interaction of a teacher with his or her students. Rowan et al (2009) stated, “In an effort to identify educational settings that are most effective in improving student achievement, classroom process (that is, the way a teacher interacts with his or her students) is a key feature of interest” (p.13). That study indicated that positive teacher-student interaction leads to increased student achievement and better classroom management. This is an important premise for a study on classroom management, as well as job satisfaction and teacher retention.

A simple internet search will produce hundreds of thousands of results, even in the area of organization, layout, and environment. Not all of the results are empirically tested, but many of them appear to be derivatives of published articles. One study by Hennick (2007) presented tips to novice teachers on organization, deeming it critical to preventing behavior issues. The amounts of tips available seem to suggest that some teachers agree. What about layout and environment? Sterling (2009) found that classroom layout and environment were equally important. The study suggested that classrooms need to be planned appropriately to include traffic flow, distribution or materials, storage, safety, and efficiency. Some of this may or may not be within the control of a novice teacher.
If setting up a room according to an effective, efficient layout can produce positive results for a new teacher, as indicated by Sterling (2009), will doing the opposite produce a different result in terms of generating an effective learning environment? Ajmal, Basit, Chishti, Jumani, and Fazalur (2010) examined classroom management practices of secondary teachers and determined that classroom layout, general teaching environment, and teaching techniques all contribute to classroom environment. However, Ajmal, et al. did not go deep enough, and questions still persist, especially in the area of how these affect teacher attrition rates. Therefore, questions to the participants in this study analyzed how these aspects affected both their classroom management and career plans and close that gap.

Environment includes more than just the walls, desks, and artwork; it involves personal relationships and demeanor. A teacher’s social relationship is a very powerful tool. A teacher’s passion and belief in his or her students are as important as his or her content, “Believe your students can succeed” (Major, 2008, p.25). An old superintendent from New York, Donald Covell, used to preach on power and authority. Dozens of times during the early 2000’s, he claimed that social relationships are based on power; power is the ability to influence one’s behavior. He used to expound that students will work for someone whom they believe in and for someone who believes in them. Although never cited, he claimed that most teachers have experienced that students participate more in class for teachers whom they have a positive working relationship with. That suggests that good relationships foster increased student motivation.

It would appear that classroom procedures and pedagogies are environmentally intertwined within the teaching and learning process. Establishing acceptable student classroom behavior and enforcing consistent discipline, assist and prepare learning to place. Classroom
layout and organization are critical components to the classroom environment and process. Pedota (2007) found that maintaining an organized and well managed classroom is essential to increasing student achievement. Teachers need to model civility and proper behavior in the classroom at all times. An established plan needs to be in place and needs to be both understood and enforced by all concerned. Lastly, classroom management must not be looked at as a separate entity to effective teaching, but rather as a critical ingredient in it.

**Effective Teaching**

Minor et al. (2002) collected data on the characteristics of teachers which reflect good teaching and found that teachers who are student-centered, maintain good classroom management, and who are competent, knowledgeable, professional, ethical, and enthusiastic about teaching tend to be labeled as effective teachers. This study, however, failed to scratch the surface of which components or teaching methods are necessary to achieve that label. Helterbran (2008) added, “Good teaching matters. It matters to all students, but particularly to pre-service teachers who are in their final stages of preparation to assume their own classrooms” (p. 125). Novice teachers are faced with many new challenges, but implementing effective teaching techniques that could decrease student incivility should be at the top of the very long and important list.

Empirical literature advocates that teachers who utilize exemplary practices enjoy increase levels of student engagement and decreased levels of frustration (e.g., Bjuland, 2004; Raphael, Pressley, & Mohan, 2008; Roehrig et al., 2009). Ajmal et al. (2010) expanded on this premise a bit when they analyzed data from teachers and determined that all teachers need to master effective classroom management techniques, but suggested that good management comes
with effective teaching. This study made one important distinction in that if you teach well, the management issues or misbehavior will decrease.

But effective teaching in order to decrease classroom management issues and increase student learning is not a new concept. In fact, classroom management is viewed to be one of the key factors in effective teaching and student learning (Little & Akin-Little, 2008). As indicated in the study, managing behavior in order to increase learning has long been a goal of educators because educators believe that it works.

Effective teaching also involves numerous strategies, techniques, technologies, and approaches to students. A few ones that are commonplace in education today include cooperative learning, the integration of technology, differentiated instruction, mastery learning, hands-on applications, good communication, excellent planning and delivery, positive teacher-student interactions, and consistent expectations and rules. Palumbo and Sanacore (2007) found that effective teaching can lead to effective classroom management through engagement, organization, accommodation, motivation, and interaction. The study cautioned, however, that effective teaching is a journey; classroom management is an important factor along the way.

Before good teaching can occur, a set of standards and mutual understandings must be established and implemented. Teachers cannot effectively teach, and students cannot effectively learn if a classroom is not effectively managed and under control. Garrahy, Cothran, and Kulinna (2005) found that classroom management is one of the most critical mechanisms in effective teaching. The publication submitted that teachers need to connect with students on a personal level and teach them how they expect them to behave.

Unfortunately, classroom management is one thing which many teachers struggle with. Graham and Prigmore (2009) claimed that it was a leading cause of frustration for not only the
teachers, but also for the students. Since effective teaching cannot occur without it, effective teaching often fails to occur. Time spent during class on student discipline, student misbehavior and other classroom management needs is time spent away from teaching and learning.

One of the most common errors that teachers make is that their classroom management plan gives students too many chances (Graham & Prigmore, 2009). The continued correction of the same student for the same infraction without any real consequence only reinforces that poor behavior. Many teachers take years to develop this understanding or recognition. Ultimately student achievement suffers, and school climate and morale plummet.

Removing unstructured time and focusing on producing student results is critical to effective classroom management. Taking this one step further, Little and Akin-Little (2008) shared that classroom management not only deals with handling discipline issues, but also deals with encouraging teaching and learning to take place by preventing problems from occurring in the first place. The study further recommended using positive reinforcement, consistent correction, and immediate response to reap better results.

**Teacher Characteristics and Reflectivity**

What are some good and research-found teaching characteristics? Minor et al. (2002) collected data on the characteristics of teachers who reflected good teaching and found that teachers who were competent, knowledgeable, and student-centered, and who maintained good classroom management found success in the field.

But if novice teachers know about these characteristics, can they mimic and implement them and expect successful results? What if their classroom management is not as strong? The literature suggests that it is not that easy. Markedly, it is often difficult for novice teachers to demonstrate these characteristics without strong classroom management backgrounds, training,
or evidence of implementation or practice (Freidman, 1995; Perry & Taylor, 2001; Silverstri, 2001). Classroom management remains one of the foundation skills for good teaching.

Unfortunately, the caveat to developing strong classroom management abilities seems to be that it takes time and experience (Froyen & Iverson, 1999; Kraut, 2000). In other words, some teachers feel that good classroom management techniques are left to develop through trial and error experience, rather than to put forth dedicated effort and fully implement scholarly or research-driven classroom management technologies or practices. Others feel that even with an arsenal of knowledge and proven-practices, classroom management is still a skill that requires experience to develop. Charalambous, Philippou, and Kyriakides (2007) quantitatively researched pre-service teachers and determined that classroom management is a skill that can be developed and that is acquired through classroom experience.

The literature has established that teachers need to demonstrate a variety of pedagogical skills and personal traits in order to deliver effective classroom management; traits and practices that go beyond classroom organization and classroom management approaches (e.g., Friedrichsen, Chval, & Teuscher, 2007). Additional teacher characteristics that align with good classroom management tactics include being well-prepared, having strong content knowledge, using student engagement techniques, participating in classroom routines, showing an interest in students and the specific subject matter, showing enthusiasm, being willing to help, having an approachable demeanor, demonstrating confidence, and developing a safe environment (Pitzen, 2009). These characteristics and general classroom tactics of effective educators add significant depth to classroom management.

When pre-service teachers reflect on their classroom management abilities and rate themselves on which characteristics they possess, they tend to score themselves high (Witcher et
However, many pre-service teachers leave their training programs with a false sense of preparedness or an over-estimation of their abilities. This could be because reflectivity is important, but it is not a natural or expected tool taught in all pre-service programs. Many teacher preparation programs make only a modest attempt at training new teachers to use this tool.

Stronger training and experience in teacher reflectivity could be an answer to this. Using a naturalistic approach, Ballard and McBride (2010) found that teachers who used reflective questions on their own performance may end up being better practitioners. This approach would require teachers to carefully, but realistically analyze their own approaches and applicable outcomes. Bullock (2009) found that the contemplation of pedagogical approaches resulted in a more knowledgeable and skillful practitioner and recommended that it be a regular practice for novice teachers.

**Common Classroom Management Concerns**

Tulley and Chiu (1995) discovered the majority of the classroom management problems for novice teachers circle around disruptions, defiance, and inattentiveness. These three key areas need to be examined individually and at a deeper level, especially for the sake of new teachers. Handling minor discipline situations like these tend to be the biggest struggle of new teachers. Graham and Prigmore (2009) supported the research and found similar results, but also advanced the knowledge base a bit. That scholarship added that the teacher’s actions or method in dealing with infractions also exemplified the problem. Non-consequences for continual minor disruptions only amplified the number of occurrences and reiterated the teacher’s ineptitude in dealing with the minor student behavior or infractions.
For some novice teachers, their fears of struggling with classroom management, and in particular, student incivility, defiance, and discipline, sometimes become reality. By not dealing with the small problems, they tend to develop into big ones. Discipline soon consumes the classroom. Even though low level student misbehavior, such as minor disruption or non-compliance tends to be the most common form of occurrence (Bromfield, 2006; Walker & Sylweater, 1998); teachers spent much of their efforts and planning on preparing for the major, less common types of behavior, such as violent outbursts or serious confrontations.

**Classroom Management Tactics and Approaches**

Research has shown that teachers would implement effective programs if they were trained on them and confident in their delivery and success rate (e.g., Anderson & Hendrickson, 2007). Classroom management tactics are pigeonholed into two broad categories: preventive techniques that create positive learning environments and intervention techniques that deal with issues (Poom, Tan, & Tan, 2009). In other words, some tactics deal with the before and others deal with the aftermath. But what are some of these so-called techniques and which ones are research-tested to work?

Rosen and Taylor (1990) quantitatively studied classroom management practices of teachers in New York. The study determined that popular tactics included management techniques for appropriate and inappropriate academic and social behavior, verbal and concrete techniques for correction, and varied techniques, based on the grade level of the students.

While various programs for effective classroom management are marketed and implemented, it is difficult to measure the true success of a program without taking into account the individual using it. In other words, even when these proven systematic approaches and methods are implemented, results vary from room to room.
Collins (2010) claimed that one of the reasons for this is that the degree of implementation varies, as do the instructor’s knowledge and skill set with it. The study determined that while teachers recognized that they had great influence over their classroom management, the teachers claimed to be unfamiliar with a variety of classroom management techniques, *Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports, Response to Intervention*, and other intervention strategies despite being directly trained in these technologies or programs.

Additionally, some teachers misapply a certain technique, and others simply choose a less than desirable one for a particular situation. For example, Rockey (2008) observed the classroom management strategies of pre-service teachers and determined that on multiple occasions, a teacher used an ineffective classroom strategy for a specific incident.

**Classroom Management Programs**

A variety of research-driven programs and approaches exist which adequately address the two functions of classroom management: to prevent incidents which distract from learning from taking place inside the classroom, and to properly address issues with appropriate intervention and disciplinary techniques, should they occur. Some programs and approaches are backed by more solid empirical, peer-reviewed research, but no one program seems to attract all teachers or schools. The quantity of programs and approaches which exists demonstrates the variance in opinions on effective classroom management.

A shift in program or approach mentality has become mainstreamed, taking schools from reactively dealing with punishment for inappropriate student behavior to proactively setting up systems and processes that encourage appropriate behavior and which utilize effective methods of applicable correction when needed (Lake, 2004; Sugai & Horner, 2008). This shift is leading to more positive and caring approaches to discipline, which can lead to overall better classroom
environments (Paciotti, 2010). Some experts feel that discipline programs themselves have little impact on behavioral change and have more to do with appearance; and therefore, promote approaches over programs (Olive, 2010). Approaches which target behaviors with appropriate interventions specifically aligned with the student and situation, are becoming more popular (Walker, et al. 2009); especially approaches and technologies which target social and emotional aspects (Baker-Henningham & Walker, 2009; Nelson & Kauffman, 2009); and which recognize unique or special education students in mainstreamed classrooms (Hersh & Walker, 1982).

Different movements have taken place over time and different programs and approaches have been utilized by teachers. Springer and Persiani-Becker (2011) outlined several popular, mainstreamed classroom management programs which have utilized by classroom teachers to include Canter and Canter’s (1992) Assertive Discipline, Curwin and Mendler’s (1999) Discipline with Dignity, Ginott’s (1993) Discipline through Congruent Communication, Glasser’s (1998), and Non-coercive Discipline, Jones’ (2007) Positive Classroom Discipline. Although far less mainstreamed than the previously listed programs, other teachers found favor with Dreikur’s (2004) Discipline through Democratic Teaching or Marshall’s (2001) Discipline through Raising Responsibility.

Newer does not necessarily mean more popular (Springer & Persiani, 2011), as plenty of programs have enjoyed longevity in classrooms, such as Redl and Wattenberg’s (1959) Disciplining through Influencing Group Behavior, Kounin’s (1977) Improving Discipline through Lesson Management, or Skinner’s (1974) Discipline through Shaping Desired Behavior.

Evidence also exists to support competitive programs, such as Barrish, Saunders, and Wolf’s (1969) Good Behavior Game as an effective classroom management method, even in today’s classrooms (Embry & Straatemeier, 2001).

**Assertive discipline.** *Assertive Discipline* is credited to Lee and Marlene Canter. It is fairly well-known and is designed to assist teachers in dealing with students in a composed and expressive manner. It is primarily designed to create classrooms where effective teaching can occur. Students recognize consequences for their actions and the teacher focus is on the positive instead of the negative. The approach features modeling, designing a complete discipline plan, use of positive statements and supports, direct and purposeful interaction and instruction, and taking a proactive approach. Discipline consequences are delivered in a hierarchical fashion, starting small, but then growing in the severity of consequence as the number of infractions continues to multiply (Canter & Canter, 1992).

*Assertive Discipline* is becoming a debated approach. Peer-reviewed research on *Assertive Discipline* has produced conflicting results. Some studies have reported successful changes in student behavior after implementing the program (Desiderio, 2005; Swinson & Cording, 2002) but other studies were more critical, even debating the research and citing the lack of solid quantitative and empirical results (Render, Padilla, & Krank, 1989).

**Discipline through congruent communication.** The approach, designed by Haim Ginott, centers its foundation on effective and clear teacher and student communication. The avoidance of negative communication, such as criticism, and the respect and understanding of the personal relationships helps deliver better student responsibility, reason, and independence.
Elements of the *Discipline through Congruent Communication* include shifting the focus on the behavior, rather than the student and general classroom cooperation. Keeping learning in the present tense avoids student prejudice and develops respect (Ginott, 1993). Research on Ginott’s theories indicated favorable alliance to effective classroom communication and control, as well as a reliance on many effective teaching techniques, specifically in the realms of communication and classroom dialogue (Brown, 2005; Manning & Bucher, 2001).

**Discipline through democratic teaching.** Rudolph Dreikurs accentuated pursuing out the root causes of the socially unacceptable behavior. The approach identified the lack of belonging to the class as the central cause for student misbehavior. Grasping for power, attention, defiance, or destruction is often the result (Springer & Persiani, 2011). Therefore, the avoidance of discipline is solved through group inclusion. Management lacks any real prevention or recourse, punishment or reward. Self-discipline follows social merit and acceptance.

Elements of the approach for *Discipline through Democratic Teaching* include a joint effort of rule creations, appropriate consequences, self-control, social connections, and a collaborative effort between the teacher and the students (Dreikurs, Cassel, & Ferguson, 2004). Research on the specific approach itself implemented in its entirety is scarce, however democratic teaching and its usefulness in discipline indicates that it delivers healthy productive youth and classrooms (Hawkes, 2011).

**Discipline through influencing group behavior.** Similar to many approaches to classroom management, Fritz Redl and William Wattenberg’s developed an early system which recommended that teachers support students in taking responsibility and self-control for themselves. Since individuals can greatly affect the group as a whole, Redl and Wattenberg (1959) recommended that classroom management be addressed at the group level. As with many
early approaches, a pleasure principle is utilized. The teacher provides opportunities that provoke a variety of outcomes, ranging in levels of enjoyment. This approach links positive experiences to pleasurable outcomes, which is used to inspire students to act appropriately. This approach emphasizes teacher influence on students and recognizes individual influences on group dynamics.

**Discipline through raising responsibility.** Marvin Marshall’s approach focuses on the teacher helping students acknowledge and grow their social and personal responsibility, which in turn, can transform into positive student behavior. The three principle approach includes positivity, choice, and reflection (Marshall, 2001). It has been adopted and used in conjunction with extrinsic rewards in an effort to shape student responsibility and actions. The program utilizes non-coercive tactics, a hierarchical structure for behavior, the act of purposeful student reflection, and appropriate student conduct.

**Discipline through shaping desired behavior.** B. F. Skinner recommended an approach that preferred positive praise over punitive actions when dealing with issues of discipline. Behavior is influenced by analyzing reactions to given actions and situations (Skinner, 1974) and therefore, immediate reward and feedback reaps positive reinforcement. Elements of the approach involve breaking down tasks, incentivizing behavior with immediate rewards, continuing reinforcements, and the avoidance of punishments. Skinner is also known for *Behavioral Modification Theory.*

**Discipline with dignity.** This approach was designed to launch an idea of dignity in an effort for pupils to acquire classroom achievement designed by Richard Curwin and Allen Mendler. Teachers have an obligation to create a sense of value in an education and to deliver powerful and purposeful instruction which inspires students to take control of their own
behavior. Students behave to save face, that is, to protect their own dignity. Similarly, students act out to continue the process or live up to their reputation (Curwin & Mendler, 1999).

*Discipline with Dignity* has a goal of responsibility and obedience. The program features elements of preventing the escalation of classroom conflicts between pupils or teacher and pupils, motivating unmotivated or uninterested students, and consistently addressing behavioral issues. There remains a lack of empirical evidence to suggest that this program works as a direct approach to classroom management, however the individual aspects or elements within the program are frequently reviewed topics. Discipline should be done with dignity (Hockstad, 1961; Hudson-Ross & McWhorter, 1995; Purkey & Avila, 1971).

**Functional behavior assessment.** The use of *Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)* has been on the increase since the IDEA Amendments of 1997 (Alter, Conroy, Mancil, & Haydon, 2008). It is particularly applicable and required for special education students who are mainstreamed into classrooms in New York State. The Act mandated that students with academic and behavioral accommodations have their Individualized Education Program (IEP) list specific strategies which include behavioral assessments, interventions, and supports (Armstrong & Kauffman, 1999).

*FBA* targets behaviors and develops targeted behavior intervention plans which include identifying the behavior function, selecting an auxiliary behavior, designing an instructional plan, setting up an effective environment, determining appropriate consequences, and writing behavioral purposes (Peterson, 2007). The goal of *FBA* is to discover upholding consequences of certain maladaptive behavior, its function, and replace the behavior with a more acceptable and appropriate behavior. This approach requires locating various behaviors and regulating consequences that modify behavioral paths (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2011; Armstrong &
Kauffmann, 1999). This is not an easy approach to learn and requires training and a certain intellectual and observational skill set, but it is critical since all classrooms in New York State have varying levels of students with identified deficiencies and who are labeled academically or socially disabled.

**Good behavior game.** Not new to education, Barrish, Saunders, and Wolf (1969) invented the *Good Behavior Game*, which utilizes competitions and peer influence to prevent poor behavior and correct student comportment. It was first introduced in the late 1960s and has found modest success in some classroom setting since (Kleinman & Saigh, 2011; Leflot, Lier, Onghena, & Colpin, 2010; Tingstom, Sterling-Turner, & Wilczynski, 2002). The exigency pins two teams against each other, vying for the best behavior. Results have proven that its implementation markedly decreases classroom incivility (Donaldson, Vollmer, Krous, Downs, & Berard, 2011). The *Good Behavior Game* is more of a procedural competition which takes advantage of various types of reinforcers and is deeply rooted in applied behavioral analysis (Embry, 2002).

**Improving discipline through lesson management.** Jacob Kounin (1977) found that classroom management and instructional management influenced student conduct. Kounin focused on providing important and thorough instructions to students and on teachers effectively and thoroughly planning their lessons, organizing their classrooms, and engaging students in exciting lessons and fluid transitions. The model for the approach includes heightened teacher awareness, steady lesson pacing, and group dynamics. Students assume that teachers are in control and aware of their surroundings. Students are encouraged to act appropriately and to become involved in the class. Effective planning includes elements of overlapping, group engagement, transitions, and movement.
Non-coercive discipline. Any educational improvement in the area of discipline would require a change in the way classrooms operate. Glasser (1998) learned that teachers cannot force students to change or to submit, and therefore, proposed designing significant learning activities and heartening students to make answerable choices. Teachers should guide their students to success. Glasser also is known for Choice Theory.

Positive behavior supports (PBS) or positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS). According to the OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, this approach is a context for decision-making that guides selection, incorporation, and application of the best evidenced-based theoretical and behavioral practices for refining academic and behavior results for pupils (pbs.org). Much of the work on this framework was completed George Sugai. The framework utilizes four key elements: data, outcomes, practices, and systems in an effort to develop a range of supports, drive decisions with data, create an acceptable and organized environment, promote social skills, hold students responsible, and monitor behavioral progress (pbs.org/common/cms/documents/WhatIsPBIS/WhatIsSWPBS.pdf, 2009).

Similar to Response-to-Intervention (RTI), a tiered prevention process is utilized (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010). The approach is broader than RTI, as it entails more of a social culture aspect and involves an overall change in a school-wide philosophy and approach to dealing with students (Sugai & Horner, 2009). Application of this approach gives teachers a system which avoids overreaction, but which allows them to deal with situations in a responsive, supportive, attentive, and engaging manner. Research indicates that PBS frameworks are culturally responsive systems and practices that improve school overall student discipline and classroom control (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010; McIntosh, Filter, Bennett, Ryan, & Sugai, 2010; Simonsen, Sugai, & Negron, 2008).
Positive classroom discipline. Stressing teacher presence is the goal of this approach, designed by Fred Jones. Stopping instruction, invading personal space, staring at disruptive students, facial expressions, eye contact, and other non-verbal teacher behaviors are the key elements in the program. Jones (2007) also emphasizes strong classroom management through the practice of good classroom layout, organization and planning, consistent routines, and classroom chores, as well as a teaching component that directly teaches students responsibility and proper behavior through incentives. Elements of this program have been researched which suggest that its components are educationally sound and have been in practice for quite some time (Craine, 2000; Freiburg & Lamb, 2009).

Responsive classroom. Responsive Classroom is an approach used to increase social skills, attention, and time on-task, and to decrease student disciplinary issues. The Northeast Foundation for Children sponsors and trains on the approach. According to their website, the approach utilizes various elements, such as rule creation, meetings, modeling, positive language, choice, organization, and collaboration which satisfy the academic and socio-emotional needs of students (responsiveclassroom.org). Rettig (2004) examined Responsive Classroom and noted that the approach emphasized the advance and maintenance of operative classroom environments which allow students to maintain self-control. Responsive management techniques offer practical strategies for avoiding overreaction to minor disruptions and inconveniences caused by students (Allday, 2011).

Response-to-intervention (RTI). RTI is a tertiary program, meaning that it involves three categories of research-based interventions to help ensure student management and academic success. It features progressing levels of intensity, based on student response data, teacher input, student success rates, and direct observation. Its rise to popularity can be traced
back to the IDEA Act of 1997 and the reauthorization of the Act in 2004. *RTI* is an analytic and diagnostic approach to targeting behaviors. Screening, monitoring, and correctly placing and moving students on the applicable tiers is critical to its success (Kavale, Kauffman, Bachmeier, & LeFever, 2008). Tier I is general in nature, Tier II is needs-based, Tier III is support driven, and Tier IV is reserved for special education. Studies have shown that *RTI* and tiered intervention programs have success in correcting and preventing inappropriate behavior in the classroom (Fairbanks, Simonsen, & Sugai, 2008).

In addition to the above mentioned approaches, a myriad of other approaches exist (Springer & Persiani, 2011). To some extent, many of the programs are research-tested and proven to have a certain degree of success. A lot of which one a district or teacher settles on depends on the philosophy of the district, teacher training program, and especially the teacher who will ultimately will, full or partially, implement the methodology or approach.

**Classroom Management is Critical**

Classroom management is vital to teacher success, teacher retention, and student achievement; one of the most critical mechanisms in effective teaching and one that cannot be ignored or missed (Garrahy, Cothran, & Kulinna, 2005). Teachers cannot effectively teach and students cannot effectively learn, if a classroom is not effectively managed and effectually under control.

Despite the recognition of the significance of effective classroom management techniques, it tends to remain an obscure skill set for too many teachers. Little and Akin-Little (2008) gathered data to support this premise from teachers from the Midwest, South, and Southwest United States. Good classroom management is a necessary ingredient in good
teaching and in managing behavior, but unfortunately, the effort to increase effective learning continues to be a mysterious goal of educators, rather than a reality.

Little and Akin-Little’s (2008) article delved a little deeper. It shared that classroom management not only deals with handling discipline issues, but also deals with encouraging teaching and learning to take place by preventing problems from developing or occurring in the first place. This advanced the research and thought-process to indicate that good classroom management means no classroom management issues, just good teaching. But if that is the case, since novice teachers have had little experience or exposure to this, it is little wonder why they often struggle. Many novice teachers are simply putting out fires as they go along and are not really prepared to handle the many different and difficult management situations when they occur.

Discipline is not just a hot topic presented in college teacher preparation courses or regurgitated by building level principals. The biggest critics and proponents of classroom management tend to be the teachers. Among the teachers who have the strongest efficacy beliefs surrounding effective classroom management and its importance are the veteran teachers who have survived the teacher attrition phenomenon (Fives & Buehl, 2010). Good teachers recognize the critical role that classroom management plays within the educational system.

**Classroom Management and Novice Teachers**

Plenty of research has been conducted and published in peer-reviewed journals on beginning and novice teachers. Education Research Complete database boasts more than 1,600 articles on beginning teachers. Many beginning teachers enter the field with a naïve understanding of teaching as a profession. Brainard noted, “New secondary school teachers often need assistance in developing realistic approaches toward effective classroom management
and in setting a desirable climate for student” (2001, p. 207). They tend to focus on content over delivery and on instruction over classroom management (Putnam, 2009).

Unfortunately for many, their lack of reality and clear understanding of the true nature of the classroom environment causes them to fail before they finish their first few years in the classroom. Fives and Buehl (2010) expanded upon this stating that new teachers sometimes viewed teaching as more of a marvel than a serious and complex task.

Downey (2008) highlighted the struggle of novice teachers and classroom management in a study of teachers. While she contended that learning to teach is not an easy task, it is one that can be accomplished. If so, where do teachers start? Planning, organization, and classroom management need to be at the top of the list (Downey, 2008).

Classroom management is the one thing which many teachers, especially novice teachers, struggle with the most. The struggle affects students as much as teachers (Graham & Prigmore, 2009). The analysis claimed that it was a leading cause of frustration for not only the teachers, but also for the students. Since effective teaching cannot occur without good classroom management, effective teaching often fails to occur. Time spent during class on discipline and management needs is time spent away from teaching and learning (Barbeta, Leong-Norona, & Bicard, 2005).

Graham and Prigmore (2009) confirmed that college education preparatory programs unacceptably address this practice and most often fail to provide new teachers with the proper skills necessary to succeed. Unfortunately, the classroom management skill set is one that teachers sometimes develop while on the job, meaning they start without the necessary foundation. Teachers are students too, and just like students, there needs to be a learning curve for teachers.
Lastly, there is a social and emotional component to effective classroom management which is rarely addressed. The present literature simply fails to adeptly address this, leaving an additional gap in the research.

**Beginning Teacher Preparation**

A plethora of research exists on beginning teacher preparation. A keyword search using the term “teacher training” in the database Education Research Complete delivers more than 4,500 peer-reviewed returns. Similarly, the term “pre-service teacher” returns more than 4,000 refereed publications. Pre-service programs provide teacher training in various aspects of the teaching profession, to include classroom management. Pre-service programs also feature a teaching practicum and internship to acquire hands-on experience, prior to entering the teaching field.

There is no research to declare that all programs are designed similarly or on par, teach similar or somewhat similar approaches, or produce similar or somewhat similar results. Programs vary from school to school (Clement, 2010). Given the different placements and experiences, it is difficult to ascertain how prepared each teacher is when he or she completes his or her pre-service training. Some are well-prepared, others not so, and still others ignore what they have learned (Tillery et al, 2010).

It is well-known inside the profession that many teachers leave their pre-service training with mixed perceptions of their training. New teachers also end up with mixed results after they begin. It is also well-researched that classroom management is one of the most challenging aspects of the profession according to beginning teachers. Smethem asserted, “Aspects of the work that these beginning teachers found challenging were workload and pupil behavior” (2007, p. 475).
It is also complicated that no program can adequately provide substantial training to each specific situation that may or may not occur. Veeman explained, “Furthermore, it is unjust to think that teacher education could anticipate the future problematic situations of beginning teachers” (1984, p. 167). General approaches and methods of addressing student behavior are often what are taught. However, matching up the instance with an approach is not always easy, especially for those who lack experience in doing so.

**Teacher training on classroom management.** Pre-service programs provide research-based training on classroom management; however, to what extent the training is implemented and how successful the training is remains different questions. Honowar (2007) found that few schools appeared to be doing an adequate job in training teachers on effective classroom management. And classroom management in particular is an area of concern for teachers when it comes to their teacher training programs. Teachers are not satisfied with their training. Rockey (2008) expanded and clarified this premise by finding that pre-service teacher training programs lacked an emphasis on actual training in classroom management and that teachers left the programs with a cursory knowledge base and a lack of self-confidence to handle issues (Rockey, 2008). In other words, the training was theoretical, but not practical.

Is classroom management still a concern of veteran teachers? Melnick and Meister (2008) compared beginning and experienced teachers’ concerns and discovered that classroom management was actually the most pressing concern. The study also found that beginning teachers lacked the necessary knowledge and skill set to effectively deliver appropriate classroom management techniques on their own. As far as teacher training, the implications of the study called for additional training in a multitude of areas surrounding pre-service programs on classroom management.
Even if teacher training programs trained more on classroom management or did a better job with their training and preparation, would that make a difference? The research is not definitive, but suggests otherwise. Despite a continuous inundation of classroom management discussions at teacher preparation programs, beginning teachers tend to resort to entry-level strategies and techniques; usually initial corrective types, thus demonstrating their lack of skill, as opposed to veteran teachers (Reuport & Woodcock, 2010). This finding supported previous work and exploration by Zuckerman (2007) on strategies of successful student teachers.

These studies (e.g., Reuport & Woodcock, 2010; Zuckerman, 2007) did not mean or suggest that teacher training programs should not be revised or a better attempt in training be done. In fact, teacher training is critically important and these preparatory programs need to improve, especially in the area of experience. Graham and Prigmore (2009) reviewed teacher training programs and determined that they lacked, in general, substantial training with direct practices to acquire skills with classroom management and student behavior.

Despite the continued identification, concentrated discussion, and efforts to expand additional classroom management training into these programs by various researchers, the progress has not been enough. And in some cases, it seems that the conversation is occurring less frequently. Clement (2010) called for the topic to be re-visited, citing that beginning teachers often start their entry-level positions lacking a solid foundation in classroom management strategies and techniques.

**Increasing teacher training.** Additional time for teacher training would allow training programs to help in the area of classroom management. Clement (2010) studied classroom management from the perspective of teachers in the field and called on teacher training programs to increase the amount of training in the area of classroom management. The study compared
various offerings from various teacher preparation programs. Clement suggested that programs need to revise and mandate offerings on theories and practices with classroom management, prior to sending candidates out into the field. That would be a welcome change for parents of those students who sit the classes of struggling beginning teachers.

Using participants from a field practicum, Moore (2003) found that teacher preparation programs are attempting to better prepare pre-service teachers for classroom management, but that the programs still lack a real commitment to the process, and that they fail to provide ample time for experience with real-life hands-on classroom management situations. This time restraint or lack of emphasis creates an obstacle for novice teachers. Moore suggested that the preparation of teachers is serious enough to warrant extending the time on hand for practice placements and to better ensure that novice teachers use the methods, techniques, and strategies available to them.

Many studies indicate that if the practice time of pre-service teachers were extended, beginning teachers would be more apt to start off right (e.g., Moore, 2003; Clement, 2010). These studies corroborate the notion that experience is a key to effective classroom management. Garrahy, Cothran, and Kulinna (2005) suggested that extending time for the pre-service training would help, as would offering a variety of alternative settings. They suggested a combination of observation, coursework, and teaching experience with classroom management.

Caples and McNeese (2010) linked attrition to classroom management and called for additional training on this topic to better prepare beginning teachers in the field. That study continues the work of previous mentioned studies and provided a very simple, reasonable solution.
However, not all studies agree. It is important to note that not all researchers found that additional time helped the cause. Despite adding an additional methods course at two large universities, Stripling, Ricketts, Roberts, and Harlin (2008) found no significant improvement in the classroom management of the practice teachers. This carries the dilemma that new teachers require experience to improve with classroom management. Unfortunately, their lack of comfort and success with dealing with classroom management often sends them packing before they are able to improve.

One other solution that was floated was to increase classroom management instruction while the student was practice teaching. But that was easier said than done. Siebert (2005) found that classroom instruction on classroom management during the actual experience would prove beneficial for the practice teacher, but that it was not always practical. Teaching is a calling and a lifestyle, but it is also a job, and teachers have outside lives.

**Beginning Teachers' Disconnects**

Some beginning teachers disagree with older and more proven techniques utilized by veteran teachers, such as self-correction, visual cuing, and non-directive statements (Witcher et al., 2008). Many pre-service teachers are simply not sold on their cooperating teachers’ field experiences (Anderson, Barksdale, & Hite, 2005). Perhaps this designates a certain bravado or approach to teaching and an over-confidence in a new teacher’s better way of doing things. Either way, the studies submit that teachers find little value or merit in following the approaches that they are being trained in. Furthermore, according to one study, only 56% of student teachers surveyed found any applicable relation of actual classroom management to that of the expert theories learned in school (Putnam, 2009). That perception proposes that new teacher training in the area is not producing adequate results.
Additionally, Stoughton (2006) outlined many of the disconnections between beginning teachers’ beliefs and suggested theoretical practices. Using reflective writings, the author went deeper into the beginning teacher’s struggle with classroom management and noted that a large range of opinions and thoughts varied among beginning teachers (Stoughton, 2006). Stoughton claimed, “the findings of this study of how two groups of pre-service teachers were beginning to construct their teaching identifies in the face of conflicting knowledge claims raise further questions” (2006, p.1036). Many pre-service teachers struggled, but some did not. Some teachers seemed willing to confront troubling issues and others stopped short of undertaking such a challenge. Still, the author emphasized a need for training programs to take a stronger look at classroom management practices and how they prepare future teachers.

Beginning teachers tend to use a lot less tactics and techniques than one might think. Putnam (2009) reported only 26% of teachers planned to use a learned strategy or intervention in their future classrooms. This demonstrates a lack of belief in the teacher preparation system and a certain cavalier attitude on the beginning teachers’ behalf. This could also mean a general lack of confidence in the pre-service program approach to classroom management or a lack of trust in the professor who is teaching the preparation training.

Might some beginning teachers feel that their college instructor is outdated or not up to par? Kaufman and Moss (2010) highlighted the practical and theoretical gap in a study on pre-service teachers’ conceptions of classroom management. The authors found that classroom management was a concern of the teachers, but the participants disagreed with many of the management styles being taught and implemented (Kaufman & Moss, 2010). That is, teachers differed in their opinion and implementation of classroom management and favored their own paradigm or approach once they returned to their individual classrooms.
It is an almost insurmountable challenge for teacher preparation programs to prepare students for the multitude of student discipline issues and the variety of management issues. Anyone who taught students can tell you that a myriad of situations exist that makes it difficult to prepare for each one. Berry, Hopkins-Thompson, and Hoke (2002) submitted that programs are under-established, under-abstracted, and under-reinforced. The study made claims to the idea that no program can adequately prepare beginning teachers for the unknown innumerable classroom management concerns or potential situations. Depending upon the district, the class, or even the individual student, any number of instances can occur or not occur.

Therefore, some believe that an all-encompassing approach with general strategies might best suit teachers (e.g., Scheeler, 2007). Scheeler (2007) advised that preparing pre-service teachers with general methods can be helpful and preferable to specialized training. That scholarship recognized the reality of limitations of training programs and designated that there is simply no way to train teachers with a specific tactic or strategy for each specific situation, and that nothing will work for all situations, all of the time.

**Beginning Teacher Practice and Influences**

Looking at the issue from the pre-service teachers’ perspective, Caires and Almeida (2007) found that many practice teaching experiences were greatly influenced by the cooperating teacher and the supervising professor. This would largely leave the actual experience up to chance with some teachers drawing a high card and others a low one. Depending upon who ends up being the cooperating teacher or supervising professor, might very well dictate their protégé’s success or failure in the profession.

Many of the skills needed, as well as many good and bad habits are taught on the job. Putnam (2009) discovered after examining pre-service teachers’ theoretical training on
classroom management and comparing it to their actual implementation, a divide existed which indicated that information and guidance from cooperating classroom teachers and entry level skills classroom management skills tried on-the-job are more prominent influences than preparation programs like to admit.

Recognizing the incredible influence that a practice placement has on a beginning teacher, Ediger (2009) suggested that care be given into the student teaching placements and that cooperating teachers and university professors invest more time into their prospects and make the experience a more deliberate and beneficial endeavor. Perhaps many new or beginning teachers are currently being thrust into classrooms with less than cooperative or skilled practitioners out of convenience or necessity and with little oversight or accountability. Lu (2010) furthered the notion to include effective mentoring and peer coaching in an effort to broaden the base of influences and to provide additional beginning teacher support and encouragement.

**Professional Development**

Some schools provide additional professional development in the area of classroom management for new teachers. But there is no guarantee that this training matches the new teachers’ belief system. Nor is there a guarantee that it matches what was taught by a recent college professor. Additionally, it may or may not mirror a favored approach of a previous favorite teacher or some other person of paramount influence. There is also no guarantee that the beginning teacher has a suitable comfort level with the overall implementation of the new approach. Lastly, the new approach may simply not match the beginning teacher’s personality or style. Such an approach would do little to help beginning teachers overcome their personal struggles with classroom management.
There remains a divide between theoretical and practical applications. The two must come together. White-Watson and Fleming-Bradley (2008) asserted that the programs are simply discussing methods and not actually teaching them. When teachers instruct students, they model lessons for them, but when professors instruct their teachers, they check their secondary teacher strategies at the classroom door. White-Watson and Fleming-Bradley (2008) asked what better way to teach instructional strategies than to demonstrate them in teacher education classes.

Demonstrating strategies can make a big impact. Beginning teachers enter the classroom with certain preconceived notions, experiences, and philosophies regarding classroom management. Marks (2010) advocated that rather than providing beginning teachers with a how-to list of classroom management techniques, they should invest effort and time into teaching beginning teachers how to actually think about classroom management. That might produce different results.

One thing which even further exacerbates the situation of teacher stress and struggles is the reduction of high quality professional development in the area of classroom management for new teachers (Reynolds, Ross, & Rakow, 2002). With tightening budgets looming and cut-backs a reality, some districts even cut professional development in this critical area. These factors further hurt the teachers’ ability to perform quality classroom management and almost ensure that they have one foot out the door. This lack of training would leave new teachers to sink or swim and many of them might not float very well.

**Teacher Autonomy**

In our system of education, teacher autonomy remains a central component and reality in classrooms across the nation. How teachers implement these programs, and to what extent, remains largely unknown (Rowen, Jacob, & Correnti, 2009). Marshall (2009) published that the
process of teaching is centered on personal preference and is rarely systematic. An additional challenge is that classroom management is highly personal and difficult to measure. Researchers such as Rowan, Jacob, and Correnti (2009) have called for better measurement tools. This may be one of the dilemmas facing pre-service education training programs, as well as systematic educational reform. We simply do not know how to accurately measure classroom management in order to make assumptions and test them.

In the state of New York, teacher autonomy is a mainstay, but it is also an interesting concept. Teacher autonomy can be linked to stress, job satisfaction, empowerment, and professionalism. Pearson and Moomaw (2005) found that teachers enjoyed the freedom associated with autonomy. However, this can be a double-edged sword. With freedom comes autonomy; with autonomy comes isolation.

One solution might be a stronger induction and new employee training program. Lynn and Walsdorf (2002) found that a lack of transitions into the workplace, and a quick induction into the classroom, forced teachers to fend for themselves in an autonomic manner. This was a cause for isolation and feelings of loneliness, especially for beginning teachers who struggled. The study indicated the classroom management was a particular area of concern that exemplified these perceptions. Gross (2009) concluded that schools would greatly benefit from stronger induction programs which better provided cultural and social support to beginning teachers.

**Connecting Classroom Management and Teacher Retention**

Using findings and research from a 2003 National Commission on Teaching report, Strizek et al. (2006) reported that one out of three teachers leave the field within the first few years and far more teachers are leaving the profession than are entering. Even though the teaching profession does utilize its own version of an internship via student teaching, teachers
are not prepared to manage a class on their own once they leave the comfort and cooperation of a supervising teacher.

If it was not enough of a challenge for novice teachers to assimilate into the profession and to tackle difficult student discipline issues, districts sometimes assign these new and inexperienced teachers to the neediest and most challenging classrooms. Since these teachers have yet to develop strong classroom management techniques and strategies. It is little wonder why they struggle.

Weak or negative experiences with classroom management cause higher rates of teacher attrition (Killian & Baker, 2006). The mass departure of highly qualified, but inexperienced teachers due to classroom management is real and concerning (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). In fact, Darling-Hammond (2007) found that the attrition of teachers has forced some schools to pay for teacher recruitment rather than cover the necessary improvements for the school and the children. This promoted Smith and Ingersoll (2004) to call for additional focus on retention, novice as early as induction training.

Studies suggest that the actual shortage of qualified teachers is a direct result of teacher attrition, rather than a hard time finding able teachers (Boone & Boone, 2009; Wynn, Carboni, & Patall, 2007). This advocates that better retaining employees is the actual solution to the nation’s teacher shortage.

Better retaining may mean better support and a closer look at why they depart. Studies evidence that this problem is directly caused by discipline issues and a general feeling of a lack of support or hope (e.g., Patterson, Roehrig, & Luff, 2003). The results are the same when limited to first-year teachers. Student incivility and discipline remains one of the biggest concerns. Brown, Gonzalez, and Slate (2008) qualitatively examined teacher attrition of first-
year teachers in Texas and determined that problems with discipline were one of the main reasons for the fleeing instructors. And it is not a new concern. Harrel, Leavell, Van Tassel, and McKee (2004) examined teacher attrition over a five-year period and found that discipline was one of the most common reasons. Simply put, teachers leave because they are poorly equipped to discipline students or do a poor job doing so.

**Emotional Aspect to Classroom Management**

Giacometti (2005) researched factors which affect teacher job satisfaction and retention and discovered a myriad of reasons. However, the study accepted emotional factors as the biggest indicator of teacher retention. Novice teachers can feel overwhelmed and under-supported and much of this can be attributed to classroom management and student discipline. The emotional aspect to classroom management needs to be continuously addressed and taken seriously.

Classroom management struggles are causes of novice teacher fear and a lack of confidence (Ireton, Wilson, & Wood, 1997). This leads to low self-efficacy in the area of classroom management (O’Neill & Stephenson, 2011). Teacher stress is a leading cause of teacher attrition (Barmby, 2006; Carlson & Thompson, 1995; Haun & Martin, 2004; Reglin & Reitzammer, 1998). One of the biggest contributors to teacher stress is classroom management (Freidman, 1995; Gordon, 2002; Haun & Martin, 2004; Shen, 1997). Simply stated, classroom management is a common grievance as to why teachers leave. Effective classroom management can be a critical component in preventing workplace stress for teachers (Van Der Linde, 2000).

Teaching is an emotional job. Espinoza and Justice (2007) quantitatively examined the emotional intelligence of inductor teachers in Texas using an assessment process. The study determined that the various emotional aspects toward teaching need to be developed if teachers
plan to stay in the profession, primarily in the areas of assertion, empathy, commitment, ethic, self-esteem, stress, and deference. Weak emotional fortitude can ultimately be correlated to higher rates of teacher attrition.

Teaching is not only intellectually draining, but also is emotionally challenging (Caires, Almeida, & Martins, 2010; Intrator, 2006). This is especially true for novice teachers. There exists an absence of attention paid to the very real social and emotional aspect to teaching and to running a classroom (Graham & Prigmore, 2009). It should not be ignored, as it impacts not only the teacher, but also the students. It further leads to teacher stress and teacher attrition.

**Rural Schools**

Results from studies involving rural schools vary from larger districts because of the difference in demographics and differences in student and parent expectations. With a smaller staff, new teachers can find challenges with limited administrative support or undue authority or influence from supporting or cooperating teachers. Higher percentages of students with special needs and a lower likelihood of employment following high school graduation can lead to an increase of defiant and unmotivated students. Financial differences can play a part into dictating outcomes from studies.

Rural schools do not always attract or secure the same top tier talent as more suburban or urban schools. Davidson (2009) found that rural schools failed to secure top teaching candidates, faced higher rates of attrition, had difficulty replacing qualified teachers who left, had limited professional development opportunities for current employees, and had numerous teachers who experienced undue stress, particularly in the area of classroom management.

Rural school teachers also tend to be less supported and dissatisfied as opposed to more suburban or urban teachers (Huysman, 2007). Huysman quantitatively examined teacher job
satisfaction in rural schools in Florida. The study noted the general perceptions of rural teachers and increased levels of autonomy, which led to increased dissatisfaction. However, the study failed to barely scratch the surface or depth of classroom management. The scholarship called for additional research into various aspects of rural education, noting that much about teacher satisfaction and teacher success is intertwined in rural schools.

Research also warrants that rural teachers need to be satisfied in order to ultimately stay in their job (Bacon, 2011). Bacon conducted a quantitative study, exclusive to rural teachers and their persistence in staying in the career field. The study determined that job satisfaction is a key factor for teachers in early and middle years of experience. Similar findings have been published qualitatively. Slaven (2011) examined teacher perceptions from rural, Title I schools in Georgia and affirmed much of the research previously published on rural school teachers and their frustrations. Rural school teachers often felt isolated and overwhelmed. One of the key areas which they struggled with was classroom management. This struggle led to a poor overall view on the profession and low job satisfaction.

**Job Satisfaction**

Much educational research has been conducted on teacher job satisfaction. A simple Boolean search of peer-reviewed references in Education Research Complete database returns more than 3,700 on satisfaction. “Job satisfaction” refers to how pleased or displeased the teacher is with their individual circumstances and the job. It also entails the salient ingredients, or what causes the variance.

Job satisfaction is an attitude resulting from relishes and distastes with the profession (Mahmood et al., 2011). Job satisfaction is a socially cognitive mindset, simplified as to whether or not the teacher likes his or her job (Duffy & Lent, 2009). Job satisfaction is not an easy one to
definitively or quantitatively gauge or measure. Mays Woods and Weasmer (2004) determined that measurement of such is a multifarious development because teachers are not cohesive in their perspectives about what is pleasing or displeasing in their careers.

Furthermore, the measurement of job satisfaction can be highly personal and not based on the morale of the organization or even the profession. Perrachione, Peterson, and Rosser (2008) quantitatively studied elementary teachers in Missouri and acknowledged intrinsic and extrinsic factors that prejudiced job satisfaction and retention. In short, the study correlated job satisfaction in work-related areas to retention. The study cited teacher retention has more or less to do with the teachers’ overall view on the profession, rather than how satisfied they are with their own individual job.

One notable discovery on job satisfaction is that it can be determined somewhat quickly and formatively (Charalambos, 2007). Heathcoat (1997) submitted that job satisfaction is formulated through the perceptions developed from the experiences of teachers in their early careers. Negative school environments produced negative results. The study proposed that job satisfaction rates are intertwined with workplace conditions and teacher perceptions. This premise gave credence to the theoretical outline of this proposal.

Teacher perceptions are formed early. Giacometti (2005) noted that research from eleven peer-reviewed studies indicated a positive correlation to pre-service training and job satisfaction. The research relayed a notion that a teacher’s view of the profession and overall job satisfaction can be linked all the way back to his or her actual and initial pre-service preparation and training.

**Job satisfaction and classroom management.** Research has also linked teacher job satisfaction with the instructor’s success or failure with overall classroom management (e.g., Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Boyd, 2011). Klassen and Chiu (2010) found that teachers who
maintained better classroom control and management experienced longer careers and enjoyed greater overall job satisfaction. For districts facing teacher shortages this can be valuable. Drilling deeper, Boyd (2011) isolated factors and determined that the school culture and environment, as well as school characteristics, influenced job satisfaction and the teacher’s views on the profession. The study distinguished that one of the areas which directly correlated with job satisfaction was classroom management; thus concluding that good classroom management results in high job satisfaction.

Furthermore, teachers who seemed to be content, that is to mean, had considerable self-efficacy in regard to their classroom management abilities, possessed a greater or more positive view of the profession (O’Neill & Stephenson, 2011). This suggests that personal perceptions influence personal views, which is a critical assumption for teacher retention.

Classroom management and student discipline can be highly emotional and lead to frustration. Slaven (2011) qualitatively examined teachers from Georgia on their perceptions which affect their job satisfaction. An abundantly clear discovery from the study was that classroom management issues and discipline seemed to be commonplace for frustrated teachers. Frustrated teachers had lower perceptions of job satisfaction and greater inclinations to leave the profession.

**Job satisfaction and teacher retention.** Job satisfaction has an impact on teacher retention or teacher attrition. If teachers are satisfied, they are more likely to stay working in the profession and more likely to have a favorable view on the profession. Mau, Ellsworth, and Hawley (2008) quantitatively researched novice teachers and their persistence in staying in the career field. The paper connected persistence to various factors involving teacher work conditions and overall job satisfaction, but failed to provide rich, descriptive details.
Huysman (2007) conducted quantitative research on teacher job satisfaction and determined that multiple dynamics played a large role. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators and factors proved to be predictors of job satisfaction and teacher attrition or retention. Qualitative data is now needed to unite these quantitative findings and to provide rich, descriptive details to these published studies with real voices in order to fully understand all aspects.

Job satisfaction and teacher retention are not unique to a single school, county, state, or country, nor are they unique to rural, suburban, or urban schools. The issue extends across all barriers and boundaries. Bolin (2008) quantitatively studied teachers in China and found similar findings of teachers. Workplace conditions and stresses often determine job satisfaction and retention.

Summary

It is well-documented from quantitative and qualitative inquiries that novice teachers struggle with classroom management (Lee & Powell, 2005; Putnam, 2009; Reupert & Woodcock, 2010; Stoughton, 2006; Zuckerman, 2007). These struggles with classroom management lead to lower rates of job satisfaction and high rates of teacher attrition (Barmby, 2006; Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005; Newby, 1991; Rosser, 2004). A research gap exists which listens to the actual voices of novice teachers who are in the trenches. Filling this gap is vital in order to provide effective and targeted professional development in this area.

A need for this type of qualitative inquiry exists. Chapter Three details the methodology for this inquiry.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter delineates a qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenological study on novice, rural New York State teacher perceptions of their classroom management and how it affected their job satisfaction and future career plans.

Through the voices of five novice teachers from rural New York, this study identified their training and posed their thoughts, experiences, and perceptions towards classroom management. It collected data on their successes and failures, their tactics and methods of student engagement, and their views on planning, organization, and their environment. Additionally, this study unveiled how they dealt with disruptions, how they handled discipline issues, and how they confronted defiance or other student issues. Lastly, this study exposed how dealing with these classroom management issues affected their job satisfaction and retention.

The qualitative method of inquiry was chosen because the literature established a theoretical and practical divide, or gap, concerning novice teachers and their applicable teacher training (Bromfield, 2006; Kaufman & Moss, 2010; Moore, 2003). Building upon this premise, studies indicated that novice teachers struggled with classroom management (e.g., Lee & Powell, 2005; Putnam, 2009; Reupert & Woodcock, 2010; Stoughton, 2006; Zuckerman, 2007). Research also established a correlation between teacher struggles and job satisfaction and teacher retention (Duffy & Lent, 2009; Stripling, Ricketts, Roberts, & Harlin, 2008).
This qualitative study listened to the voices of novice, rural teachers and developed a better understanding of their personal and true individual experiences, thoughts, and perceptions of their classroom management. Given the critical nature of teaching as a profession, coupled with potential number of teachers entering the age of retirement and the potential influx of novice teachers that it will take to replace them, this study’s importance was grounded in the voices of these teachers. By collecting and analyzing data, this study furthered the research about the phenomenon of novice teacher struggles with classroom management and why these struggles led to their departure.

Research Design

This was a qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry that captured the voices of five novice teachers through interviews, an online discussion forum, and personal audio recordings.

Qualitative

A qualitative research design analyzed the participants’ input regarding their experiences with classroom management and how it affected their job satisfaction and career plans. Research expert Merriam claimed, “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (2009, p.5).

Since this study’s intent was to listen to and understand the perceptions of the participants, a qualitative approach was most suitable. Experts have noted that research focused on discovery and understanding from the perceptions of those being studied is best approached from a qualitative standpoint (Creswell, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009). Using a quantitative focus of this type of inquiry would not have produced the rich descriptive results
necessarily to capture or understand the essence of the lived experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, this study featured methods of focus, philosophical roots, goals, design, sample, setting, data collection procedures, mode of analysis, and presentation of the research findings as suggested and modeled in good qualitative inquiries (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 2009).

Similar to the representations established by Creswell (2005), Denzin and Lincoln, (2005) and Merriam (2009), this study followed several distinct characteristics. The study featured a holistic approach, rooted in phenomenology that analyzed an encompassing overview of a complex situation in order to simplify some common themes and questions for further research. Its goals were centered on description, discovery, and understanding. The study used an emergent research design with a process that is not tight, but uncluttered; and it used open-ended questions and prompts in an effort to carefully discover the participants’ meanings. It included a small sample size in order to acquire thick and richly descriptive data. The study featured the researcher as a primary collector, assessor, and interpreter of the data. It analyzed multiple sources of data that were collected from personal methods: (a) weekly audio recordings; (b) focus group sessions via an online discussion board; and (c) individual teacher interviews.

Qualitative studies have many advantages for a study like this one, but are not without limits. Qualitative studies are sometimes difficult or interpretive in finding meaning, subjective to the participants’ experiences or understandings, and are relative to the participants involved (Creswell, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009). They also lack the analysis of quantitative or hard data, resulting in the inability to prove or disprove various casual theories, as well as lack the ability to exempt alternative explanations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).
However, for a study such as this, using qualitative research was most appropriate. Qualitative studies are significant for concept development, policy creation, enhancement of instructional practice, and the enlightenment of social matters (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005). Unlike quantitative studies, a qualitative approach offered the ability to gather a deeper and clearer understanding from the individual participants from unscripted and open-ended responses. It was also beneficial that qualitative studies allowed refraining from hard and definite parameters on participant research (Creswell, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Additionally, the qualitative approach produced suppositions at the conclusion of the inquiry. This will allow further advancements and scholarship in the field at a later date. The qualitative approach served as a way of scaling up the thoroughness in an effort to more comprehensively examine the phenomenon at a plateau where more generalities can be made from samples to populations. Because this qualitative study did not concentrate on the analysis or discovery of comparative data, it was better able to provide rich descriptions to initial findings and can point to areas for future research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

**Phenomenological Research**

Phenomenology is a qualitative research method which examines the voices of the participants in order to discover the meaning of the phenomenon. This type of study acutely examined the phenomenon of novice teachers’ experiences with classroom management and why it leads to their departure or retention. Studying the object of the human experience helped reduce the individual experiences to a universal concept and allowed the grasping of the true nature of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990; Zichi Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000).

Rather than concentrate on an explanation or analysis of data, the phenomenological approach to inquiry allowed the researcher to examine the lived experiences of individual
participants through their own words and perceptions. This process allowed the researcher to
develop detailed descriptions of the essence of these shared experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenological studies have a large philosophical premise to them, meaning they are
rooted in the researcher’s ability to collect, analyze, and interpret thick and richly descriptive
data derived from a flexible and emerging design (Merriam, 2009; van Manen, 1990; Zichi
Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000). This approach was the best method available to spotlight the
details which the participants have experienced in common, or the phenomenon (Creswell,
2005).

**Hermeneutical Approach**

Hermeneutics is an approach to phenomenology which is oriented towards interpreting
the lived experience (van Manen, 1990; Zichi Cohen et al., 2000). The interpretation of data by
the researcher places them into the world of the participant (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Hermeneutics was a good fit for this study because it allowed the researcher to capture
and interpret the voices of the participants, as well as to find commonalities amongst the
participants. The hermeneutical approach served as the bridge to better make sense of these
occurrences.

**Philosophical and Ontological Assumptions**

Creswell (2005) stated that “Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview,
the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the
meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p.37). As previously
mentioned in the Theoretical Framework in Chapter 2 of this study, the paradigm was inferred
through Bandura’s (1977) *Social Learning Theory* and Herzberg’s (1966) *Two-Factor Theory.*
These theories effectively guided this study and helped shape its findings from a theoretical and conceptual framework. These theories agreeably aligned with a qualitative approach.

Ontological assumptions imply that the researcher use the words and generated themes of the participants as evidence (Creswell, 2005). Using an ontological assumption, or the discovery of the nature of the reality (Guba & Lincoln; 1988; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002), the questions of this study probed to discover the reality of the phenomenon. This study followed suit. Since people’s reality is formulated from their experiences and interactions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005) the study used the personal words from the novice teacher participants in order to provide the necessary evidence and formulate common themes.

**Emergent Research Design**

Utilizing an emergent research design allows both the data and process to evolve over time (Givens, 2008). Thus, as data is collected and analyzed, new questions and/or follow-up may be necessary to maintain a flexible, open approach to discover new commonalities and the direction of the research. This elasticity awards additional opportunities to generate testable hypothesis.

**Participants**

After IRB approval was secured, school district superintendents or headmasters in a rural area in Upstate New York were contacted based on proximity, starting at the center of a rural county. In all, 23 public school districts and 14 private schools were contacted to determine how many novice teachers, if any, were hired over the past few years. According to the school district administrators contacted, due to cutbacks, down-sizing and shrinking student populations, very few schools had any novice teachers or were willing to participate. Permission to conduct the participants was secured in writing. School headmasters and superintendents
provided recommendations of teachers who fit the criteria. Purposeful, but convenient sampling determined the five participants. This method is recognized as scholarly and increased the efficacy of evidence acquired from the study which featured a small number of participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005).

One of the limitations of convenience sampling is the lack of generalization to the target populations (Merriam, 2009). Thus, multi-faceted criteria set for participants will help ensure a cross-representation of the population, as seen in the purposeful selection of the participants for the study. Reaching across elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as private and public schools, to secure beginning teachers will help overcome this limitation.

To ensure confidentiality, each participating member was given a pseudonym. Criteria for selection of participants included:

1. Participants were certified teachers who completed a teacher training program at a traditional, accredited brick and mortar college or university;
2. Participants were novice teachers who had two years or fewer, full-time teaching experience, not to include substitute teaching;
3. Participants represented a cross-section of public and private school teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels;
4. Participants were regular classroom teachers teaching at rural schools in Upstate New York (although some may be dual certified as special education teachers); and,
5. Participants were hired for full-time teaching positions.

The current economic crunch and down-sizing at schools drastically limited the pool of potential schools and teachers for this study, but five participants who fit the criteria were secured. The group represented a mix of public and private schools at the elementary, middle,
and high school level. Demographics and particulars of participants are found below in Table 3.1. Experience indicates number of years completed in teaching. Grade level refers to the grade level of the students who the participant is teaching. Education refers to the degrees completed and type of school attended for degree. All participants were educated in traditional, brick and mortar institutions.

Table 3.1

Data on Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age/Gender</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Current School</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abby</td>
<td>23/F</td>
<td>0*</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Apple Middle</td>
<td>BA, Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloe</td>
<td>44/F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Apple Elementary</td>
<td>BS, Public MA, Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jael</td>
<td>25/F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1&amp;2</td>
<td>Christian Elementary</td>
<td>BS, Public MA, Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>24/F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7&amp;8</td>
<td>Christian Middle</td>
<td>BA, Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>24/M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Apple High</td>
<td>BS Public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *0 indicates that this is his/her first year teaching.

Setting / Sites

After permission was secured from the headmaster or superintendent, recommended teachers were contacted. The sites were determined based upon the locations of the participating teachers. Schools were located in rural areas in Upstate New York. Each school was located within 25 miles of each other. Each site was given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality.

One public school district consisting of one elementary, one middle, and one high school along with one private school were selected. The public school district is comprised of two physical buildings, one for the elementary school and one for the middle-high school. The district has 996 students in total. According to report cards from the New York State Education
Department (NYSED) website, the public school district hosts approximately 12% special education students and approximately 31% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The school district graduation rates hover between 84-88%. The district is primarily Caucasian at 93%. All teachers in the district were certified to teach in the state.

One private school was also selected. It is comprised of one K-8 building that houses the elementary and middle school. The student population is 80 students. The private school opted not to report their statistics on special education, ethnicity, or graduation rates. However, all teachers in the school were dually certified in their subject matter or grade level and special education.

Based on 2009 estimates from the US Census Bureau, the geographical area boasts an estimated 62,000 residents and is nearly 95% Caucasian. The geographical area measures in excess of 2,000 square miles. Nearly 75% of the area is composed of homeowners and the median income level for households is approximately $53,000. Agriculture remains the area’s largest private sector employer. Health care, government, and education comprise the largest public sector employers.

**Researcher’s Perspective**

The researcher possesses a Bachelor of Science degree in business education from the State University of New York College at Buffalo, a Master of Science degree in education from the State University of New York College at Brockport, a Certificate of Advanced Study in educational administration from the State University of New York College at Brockport, and is currently finishing a Doctorate of Education in educational leadership from Liberty University. The researcher holds permanent certifications as a teacher and as a school district level administrator, as well as provisional certification as a school building level administrator and
supervisor in New York State. The researcher also possesses more than fifteen years’ experience as a teacher, school-to-work program coordinator, department chair, mentor teacher, student retention coordinator, and dean of students, assistant principal, and teaching advisor.

During his tenure, he has experienced supervising pre-service teachers and working with developing novice teachers. These teachers have shared the feeling that a theoretical and practical divide exists between the college training received and their actual experience and immersion into the classroom setting. They have claimed that this divide is most notable in the area of classroom management. Some teachers have shared a feeling that they were on the own too soon and that their practice placement was a sink-or-swim endeavor. Too often these pre-service teachers required the assistance of the participating classroom teacher in order to maintain classroom control. Worse, during their early years on the job, they sometimes diminished their classroom management strategies to entry level techniques. Sometimes departmental chairs, mentor teachers, or trusted colleagues would need to provide additional support, counsel, or classroom management assistance. Some teachers left because of the stress associated with their classroom management experiences.

Currently the researcher is employed as a teaching advisor inside a Center for Teaching Excellence at a private four year university where he works with residential professors on improving their pedagogy. Some of the teachers that he works with are early career teachers who have uncertainty with effective teaching strategies, as well as classroom management concerns. The researcher has reviewed the research on various aspects of classroom management and is passionate about the topic.

Most influential, as a department chair, dean of students, and assistant principal, the researcher was intimately familiar with various aspects of classroom management and has
listened to the frustrated voices of teachers who struggled. He has seen young teachers leave the profession at alarming rates due to their dissatisfaction. These experiences have caused distress and have helped formulate the researcher’s interest in classroom management, young teacher development, and teacher retention. From this perspective, he is undertaking this study.

**Data Collection**

Good qualitative research requires multiple sources of data collection (Creswell, 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 2005). Multiple strategies and sources ensure a respectable and credible study. The researcher triangulated the data collection process by gathering data from different sources and methods. Data were collected from the participants via (a) four audio recordings of thoughts and experiences; (b) an online focus group featuring two discussion board posts and two replies; and (c) two individual in-depth participant interviews per participant.

**Research Guiding Questions**

Three guiding research questions for this study were:

1. What perceptions do rural classroom teachers in New York have about their classroom management?

2. How do these perceptions affect their job satisfaction?

3. How do these perceptions affect their retention?

Questions and posits implemented in this inquiry aligned with the proposed research guiding questions. The rationale behind the theoretical and empirical basis for asking the following questions was that the desired information aligns with other published research. In other words, the proposed questions evolved from or were somewhat similar to other questions exploited in published research; similar categories employed in empirical studies, or derived from research findings. This approach ensured that the proposed questions aligned well with the
guiding research questions, as well as with the perspective chosen categories. This approach also added validity and credibility to the proposed study. These four research categories/questions include (a) preparation and training; (b) environment and tactics; (c) experiences; and (d) job satisfaction, career plans, and advice.

**Preparation and training.** Questions on preparation and training were derived from the research methods, categories, questions, surveys, and findings of various studies surrounding novice teacher preparation and training. In particular, the studies included survey instruments and data on how novice teachers viewed their pre-service teacher training, how prepared they were once on the job, whether or not a gap between theory and practice existed, whether or not on-the-job training or professional development was provided, and what impact this training had on the teacher’s implementation and success.

Sandoval-Lucero et al. (2011) explored novice teacher perceptions on their preparation which served as a basis for questions in the areas of program training and influences. Witcher et al. (2008) used a mixed methods study to examine classroom management discipline styles. The study used a Beliefs on Discipline Inventory (BODI; Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986), as well as the Preservice Teachers’ Perceptions of Characteristics of Effective Teachers Survey (PTPCETS; Witcher et al, 2001) to determine pre-service teacher beliefs, preparedness, and discipline orientation. Similar to this proposed study, candidates were asked questions on their classroom management style and approach, as well as perceptions of effective techniques. Moore (2003) also surveyed teachers about their pre-service training in the general area of classroom management and effective teaching.

Dutton Tillery et al. (2010) interviewed teachers on student behavior, teacher training, and classroom management programs formulating general concepts from which this study
derived its questions on training and specific classroom management program. Stripling et al. (2008) performed a longitudinal study that questioned the efficacy of pre-service teachers, student engagement, classroom management, and training which also served as a basis for question generation. Friedrichsen, Chval, and Teuscher (2007) conducted a qualitative case study of novice teachers and collected data on initial, internal, and external supports systems and professional development which served as a basis for questions on professional development and supports.

Roehrig et al. (2009) interviewed beginning teachers on the degree of variance between their practices and their beliefs to help this study generate a question on a theoretical and practical gap. Stoughton (2006) discovered a gap between pre-service training and teacher perceptions on classroom management, which solidified the question’s validity. Putnam (2009) qualitatively examined the theoretical orientations and beliefs of pre-service teachers and inquired about their implementation of classroom management techniques derived from their pre-service training, as well as their perceptions of other influences to include their student teaching setting or additional training.

**Environment and tactics.** Questions on environment were derived from the research methods, categories, questions, surveys, and findings of various studies surrounding environment. In particular, the studies included survey instruments and data on how novice teachers’ environment, planning, and organization affected their classroom management.

Kaufman and Moss (2010) examined pre-service teachers’ perceptions of organization and classroom management which formulated the basis for questions in the category of environment. Ajmal et al. (2010) asked questions of planning, classroom management, and classroom environment which served as a foundation for questions on planning and general
classroom environment. The environment category was further refined due to Pitzen’s (2009) inquiry into the physical classroom environment of successful teacher practitioners.

**Experiences.** Questions and posits on experiences were derived from the research methods, categories, questions, surveys, and findings of various studies surrounding experiences. In particular, the studies included survey instruments and data on novice teachers’ experiences with classroom management, discipline attempts, consequences, successes and failures, and supports.

Tulley and Chiu (1995) asked teachers what kinds of discipline issues they experienced, what tactics they used, and how effective these strategies were. This line of questioning served as a basis for providing validity for this section. Clunies-Ross et al. (2008) reconnoitered the relationship between actual strategies implemented through observation and questionnaire. The study helped inspire questions which classroom management tactics were employed for this study.

Dutton Tillery et al. (2010) asked teachers in their in-depth qualitative interviews a question on the types of training received which served as the base for a question on training for this section. Reupert and Woodcock (2010) surveyed pre-service teachers on which classroom management strategies they employed and how successful or unsuccessful they were with these tactics. This line of questioning inspired the question of successes and failures in this study.

**Job satisfaction, career plans, and advice.** Questions on job satisfaction and future career plans were derived from the research methods, categories, questions, surveys, and findings of various studies surrounding job satisfaction and career plans. In particular, the studies included survey instruments and data on how the novice teachers’ experiences with classroom management affects their job satisfaction and teacher retention.
Caples and McNeese (2010) analyzed data using an Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten (ECLS-K) questionnaire which served as the foundation for questions surrounding attitudes and job satisfaction. Perrachione et al. (2008) surveyed teachers on influences that affect job satisfaction and retention using a shortened version of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) from the Department of Education. Questions surrounding student discipline and classroom management, as well as job satisfaction and retention were used as a basis for questions formulated for this inquiry. Stallone Brown et al. (2008) investigated teacher attrition and specifically asked questions on future career plans which helped articulate questions on career plans for this study.

Questions on future advice to other teachers were derived from the research methods, categories, questions, surveys, and findings of various studies surrounding advice. Unlike the previous categories of questions, the studies used for questions on advice formulated a general basis, rather than a direct link to the literature. Advice to future teachers is highly personal.

Clement (2010) called for teacher educators to expand offerings for classroom management for pre-service teachers. This call helped frame the question on additional skills and better teacher training to deliver effective classroom management. Liu (2007) conducted an analysis of the Teacher Follow-up Survey by the National Center for Education Statistics and discovered that classroom management was a critical concern for novice teachers. The analysis also examined retention. This published study helped inspire the advice section for this inquiry.

Audio Recordings

Creswell (2005) encourages the use of innovative data collection methods when conducting qualitative studies. Participants in this study recorded their thoughts and experiences regarding their classroom management using a digital recording device. The researcher provided
them with open-ended questions and prompts to respond to. This data method focused on their unique and individual experiences, including their tactics and strategies, planning and organization, environment, dealings with disruptive or defiant students, and handling of student discipline. Recordings detailed how the situations resulted and thoughts on the overall experiences.

Participants recorded themselves for approximately fifteen minutes per session for four separate sessions during the span of the research. Recordings were saved as a computer audio file and emailed to the researcher at the end of each session. Emails were be securely stored in password protected folders and backed up on portable media, which was stored in a secure, locked file cabinet.

In order to maintain a grasp on the participant’s involvement, the researcher entailed as much progress-monitoring as necessary. In general, the researcher sent the participants an email at the beginning of each week to remind them of their audio recording and a reminder at the end of the week, if one is not secured. If an extra two days passed, the researcher sent them another reminder. If participants cannot record during that given time frame, then that week was considered a loss and the process started over for the next week. The participant was asked to record twice during the next week to make it up.

As approved by the university’s Internal Review Board, the participants are asked to provide rich, descriptive details about their unique and individual experiences with classroom management that occurred during the week. Participants were asked to record their thoughts and perceptions to the following questions and prompts using an audio device. Participants were asked to respond to their fullest ability. Their recordings were approximately 15 minutes. The questions and prompts asked and provided were:
1. Please describe, in detail, any recent experiences the participants had with defiant, non-participatory, and/or disruptive students.

2. How did your planning, organization, and/or classroom environment contribute to these situations?

3. If situations of defiance, non-participation, and/or disruption occurred, discuss how you handled them.

4. What were the results of the situations?

5. What caused these situations to occur?

6. Were you trained for these individual situations? Did you handle the situations the way they were trained? Why or why not?

7. Is there anything about how you handled the occurrences that you perceive that you did correctly or incorrectly?

8. Share your thoughts and perceptions about the occurrences (to include feelings, hindsight, emotion, confusion, clarity, and the like).

9. How did these occurrences affect your overall job satisfaction?

10. Did these occurrences, or similar ones, have any effect on whether or not you will stay in the teaching profession? If so, how did these occurrences affect your ideas of staying in or leaving the profession?

Participants were reminded to save their responses using an audio device and directed to email their saved audio responses to the researcher at his university email address by Friday evening of each week.

These weekly audio recordings helped capture the voices of the participants from their classrooms while their experiences are still fresh in their mind. Qualitative data consist of quotes
from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge (Patton, 2002). The researcher anticipated that these recordings would provide a better understanding of their perceptions, in regard to their thoughts, celebrations and frustrations, and successes and failures.

Audio recordings are a good fit for this phenomenological inquiry. They served as a sort of personal audio journal. These recordings of thoughts and experiences were unobtrusive, useful, and authentic. There were additional advantages of this method of data collection, including being done in a timely manner, being continuous and comprehensive, and presenting a clear picture. Because these were recorded and transcribed, there was a decreased chance for misinterpretation or inaccurate data.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are group style interviews which are used to better obtain an understanding of the phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005). Because of proximity of the participants to each other (25 miles), the distance of the researcher to the participants (500 miles), the size of the time-related commitment of the participants in data generation, collection, transferal, and the amount of varied data sought to be collected, the researcher organized an online discussion board for the focus group for this study, rather than an in-person group. Two focus group sessions or online discussion board threads were collected during the four week period.

Each thread had a theme geared towards a specific aspect of classroom management. The two proposed discussion board themes were:

1. Planning, organizing, and environment and prevention tactics.
2. Dealing with defiance, disruptions, and discipline.

Participants were presented semi-structured, but open-ended questions, based upon the session via the online discussion board. Members shared their lived experiences with each topic,
including their thoughts, opinions, and feelings, what they thought they were prepared or not prepared for, and what they might do differently in the future with a post. There was no minimum or maximum word count, but rather participants were encouraged to answer each question to the best of their ability in rich and descriptive detail. Once other members in the focus group completed their individual posts, each participant was asked to respond to one other individual in the focus group on the online discussion board.

The prompts used in the online discussion forum are presented below:

This first set of questions is centered on the your planning, organization, and environment and prevention tactics.

1. Using examples, how does your planning, organization, and classroom environment affect your classroom management?
2. Using examples, which specific preventive classroom management tactics do you implement in your normal day-to-day classroom?
3. How do your thoughts, feelings, opinions, and experiences with the above affect your job satisfaction and views on the profession?

During the second focus group, the participants responded to the below listed set of questions centered on dealing with disruptive and defiant students, as well as handing out disciplinary consequences:

1. Using examples, how do you deal with defiant, non-participatory, and / or disruptive students?
2. Using examples, how do you handle handing out disciplinary consequences for disruptive, non-participatory, or defiant students?
3. How do your thoughts, feelings, opinions, and experiences with dealing with defiant, non-participatory, and/or disruptive students and handing out disciplinary consequences affect your job satisfaction and views on the profession?

All online conversations during these interactions were electronically saved as a document and printed to ensure accuracy and longevity.

Focus groups were a good choice for this study because they allowed the participants to experience a social environment to discuss their perceptions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005) on classroom management and how it affects their views on the profession, even if it is an online one. Social media and online forums are popular and people are generally accepting of them. To ensure everyone’s comfort level, all participants were informed up front of all of the expectations and handed a list of questions. Furthermore, because the data generated from focus group interviews were done in a socially constructed manner within the interface of the group, this method of data collection supported the social and personal philosophical framework of this study (Merriam, 2009).

**Individual In-depth Interviews**

Interviews are interactive conversations that involve a question and answer session and grant the opportunity for a more in-depth and better understanding of the participants’ experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Interviews are the most common form of data collection for qualitative studies (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 2009). Seidman (1998) posed that interviewing is a core component for phenomenological studies because it allows researchers to put the participants lived experiences and reactions into a set framework and provides assistance in comprehending their activities.
During the study the researcher conducted two interviews per participant in order to collect data on the perceptions of the participants’ experiences, thoughts, and opinions of their classroom management and how it affects their job satisfaction and career plans. The same questions were asked of each participant. Phenomenological interviews are in-depth interviews which are used to discover what was experienced, how it was experienced, and what meaning the participants assign to the experience (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005). Due to the proximity of the researcher to the participants (500 miles), these interviews were conducted on the phone. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes.

The researcher employed a semi-structured interview strategy with a limited number of initial-dichotomous response questions, mainly for acquiring demographical data. This method best acquired rich details (Seidman, 1998). The majority of the questions were open-ended qualitative questions. These open-ended questions allowed the participants the ability to share their experiences.

The questions followed the effective questioning categories of Patton (2002) and covered experiences, behaviors, opinions, feelings, knowledge, and demographics. In particular, they dealt with the participants’ perceptions of their classroom management experiences, tactics and student engagement, environment, disruptions, discipline, defiance, specific issues, job satisfaction, and retention. Questions were approved by the dissertation chair, committee, and the IRB.

Each participant was asked the same core questions to ensure reliability, but the researcher maintained the ability to ask for clarification, as needed. The order of the questions changed according to the participant in order to help ensure natural conversational flow. Ample time was provided to the participant to contemplate and respond to each question.
During the first interview participants were asked the following questions:

1. What theoretical knowledge and tactical training in classroom management did you receive in their pre-service training?

2. How prepared for classroom management did you feel you were when they left your pre-service setting?

3. After starting the job, how prepared did you feel that you actually were in the area of classroom management? If a gap existed between your theoretical training and practical experience, please describe.

4. Did you receive in-service training, mentoring, or professional development in the area of classroom management from their school district? If so, what were you trained in and did you find it useful or not?

5. Did you research any classroom management programs or approaches on your own? If so, which programs? Did you implement them? To what extent? Were they effective?

6. Did you seek additional assistance to include peer advice, additional training, or scholarly research? If so, how did that impact your day-to-day classroom management?

7. Which classroom management tactics do you regularly use in the classroom in order to maintain an effective learning environment (to include methods of effective teaching, student engagement, preventive techniques, de-escalation techniques, and the like)?

8. Which parts of your classroom management are imitated, that is implemented in a manner that the participants learned from watching another professional?

9. Which parts of their classroom management are individual and unique to you?

10. How did your planning, organization, and classroom environment contribute to or work against your classroom management success?
During the second interview participants were asked the following questions:

11. What successes did you experience with disruptive, non-participatory, and/ or defiant students?

12. What failures did you experience with disruptive, non-participatory, and/ or defiant students?

13. How did you determine the actual disciplinary consequences? Was anyone besides you and the student involved in handing out the disciplinary consequences? If so, who?

14. Did you feel supported in handing out consequences? If so, by whom?

15. What successes did you experience in handing out the actual disciplinary consequences?

16. What failures did you experience in handling out actual disciplinary consequences?

17. How did your experiences with classroom management affect your job satisfaction?

18. Given your experiences, what are your future career plans for the next year? How about five years from now?

19. What advice would you give on classroom management to new teachers or to someone considering entering the field of teaching?

20. What advice would you give to those providing teacher training on classroom management to include area districts, professors, or colleagues?

The researcher took notes during the interview as to identify passions and potential themes. Interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed verbatim. This ensured an accurate representation of participant experiences and captured the essence of their voices. Replacement names of the participants were used on the printed transcripts to ensure confidentiality.
The use of individual in-depth interviews is especially fitting for this study. Interviews allowed the researcher to capture the voices of the participants better than other methods of data collection, such as observations or documentation. Interviews also allowed the researcher to extensively capture the perceptions of the individual participants better than any closed survey or an assessment that utilizes a Likert-type scale. The recoding and transcribing of the interviews added credibility and dependability to the study.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves preparing and organizing the data, categorizing the data, and presenting the data into a readable format (Creswell, 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 2005). The data analysis process also involves interpreting the phenomenon being studied.

Coding

For this study the researcher followed the data analysis representation for phenomenological studies as presented by Creswell (2005):

1. Create and organize the data.
2. Read the data and make notes.
3. Form initial codes.
4. Describe the essence of the phenomenon.
5. Classify the data by grouping.
6. Interpret the data through description and structure.
7. Present a narration of the essence in figures and discussion.

The researcher began by collecting, organizing, and analyzing the data. During this stage, the researcher continually reviewed, examined, and analyzed the data. Important insights and thoughts about the data were written in the margin notes alongside the transcripts. As words
or concepts begin to reappear, they were used to form some initial codes and then develop a list of significant statements (Creswell, 2005). Phrases, paraphrases, and labels served as initial codes, which appeared more or less as general indicators at this point.

Next, the researcher analyzed the codes to find categories. The research data were copied, cut into sections, and sorted into piles according to common themes or topics. Closely related codes and labels were grouped into the same piles. Short descriptive names were assigned to the piles that captured the essence of the contents.

Within the categories, themes were discovered and a conceptual schema that links data formulated. Careful attention given to the guiding research questions helped direct the entire coding process. The categories and codes were then classified as major, minor, and leftover (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005). Major codes were those which were repeated, frequently cited by participants, significant, and aligned with research questions. Minor codes were secondary and less cited. Leftover were unique to an individual participant, not significant, and not aligned with any guiding research question for the study.

Concentrated efforts were given to major and minor codes. Data were examined by critically looking at these emerging themes and patterns and organized in various ways. The coding and data analysis continued until the study experienced data saturation. Once saturation occurred, piles were organized and prioritized, according to themes discovered. Codes were excluded, as needed. Remaining codes were connected a final time. Then researcher then developed a visual representation and description of the experiences and analysis, and concluded with writing the essence of the phenomenon and the textural and structural descriptions.
Dependability and Credibility

The dependability and credibility of the findings were verified through multiple perspectives, methods, and checkpoints, including (a) triangulation, (b) member checks, (c) peer review and feedback, and (d) transcriptions.

**Triangulation**

Merriam claimed, “Triangulation uses multiple sources of data means comparing and cross-checking data collected through observations at different times or in different places, interview data collected from people with different perspectives, or from follow-up interviews from the same people” (2009, p.216). Triangulation is one of the most widely known methods of credibility for qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). Triangulation in this study was accomplished through collecting and analyzing data from four audio recordings, two discussion board posts and replies, and two individual interviews. It was a good fit for this study because of my interpretative perspective taken in this study and because the study featured the collection of data from multiple methods and sources.

**Member Checking**

Member checks solicit feedback on the findings from the participants interviewed so that they can concur with the accuracy of the experience (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 2009). Member checking was a good fit for this study and a good method to ensure credibility in the findings (Creswell, 2005). It decreased the possibility of misinterpreting the voices of the participants. The process involved sharing the data with the participants and asking them to verify if the information is correct. Participants examined the notes collected and transcripts of their weekly audio recordings and individual interviews. The researcher used member checks to help increase the credibility and the dependability of the study.
Peer Review and Feedback

Using peer reviews as a method to substantiate credibility was fitting for this qualitative inquiry. Peer review or feedback delivered a peripheral check of the exploration progression and analysis (Creswell, 2005). The researcher gathered feedback from three external peers when coding was finished to help ensure the validity of the findings, as well as to help make sure that the researcher reached the essence of the experiences. Two of the peer reviewers were experienced in scholarly qualitative studies. The other peer reviewer was an experienced school practitioner and administrator.

The first reviewer is a full professor. He holds a MA in Spanish degree from California State University, Sacramento and an Ed.D. in higher education curriculum and instruction from Virginia Tech. He is an award winning teacher and published author. The second reviewer is an assistant professor and assistant director of community service. He holds an MA degree from Grand Rapids Theological Seminary of Cornerstone University in ministry leadership and a Ph.D. in organizational leadership with an emphasis in human resource development from Regent University School of Business. The third reviewer is a practicing K-12 school administrator in teacher professional development and evaluation. He also has experience as a teacher and assistant principal. He holds two MBAs from University of Rochester in economics and finance and a Certificate of Advanced Studies in education administration from State University of New York College at Brockport.

Peer reviewers were provided a full copy of the study, coding, and findings. A follow-up correspondence was then sent to the three reviewers to inquire about (a) to what extent they agree with the findings using a five level Likert-type scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree; (b) to what percentage would they put their agreement on, 0-100%; (c) if less than 100%
agreement, what should be included or removed; and (d) demographic data of the credentials on the reviewer.

All three peer reviewers “strongly agreed” with the findings. All three agreed to a 100% extent.

**Transcriptions**

Transcription involves digitally recording the interview and then transferring the recorded interview verbatim to hard copy. Transcribing data is a good fit for this study because of the type of methods used in collecting the data. Transcriptions ensure that everything spoken will be preserved for data analysis (Merriam, 2009). It is also less obtrusive than videotaping. Transcriptions worked well for the weekly audio recordings and individual interviews. Providing digitally recorded and then transcribed data helped ensure the credibility, as well as the dependability of the study.

Further credibility and dependability was accomplished by allowing adequate time to collect and analyze the data. Adequate engagement in data collection is a strategy for getting close to understanding the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

**Ethical Issues**

**Data Storage**

Data was backed up and categorically filed using a password protected computer drive. Data was also backed up on an external 4 GB USB drive used exclusively for this study. After interviews were transcribed, they were saved to both the computer and the external drive, as well as printed in hard copy format. The external drive, any notes generated by the study, and the interview transcriptions will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s personal office.
for seven years. A master list of the procedures and the types of information collected will be kept on file and stored with the study data.

**Confidentiality**

The study employed ethical standards regarding confidentiality for qualitative studies. Pseudonyms for sites and replacement names for participants, as well as signed non-disclosure statements helped ensure concealment.

**Personal Ethical Position**

The data collected and analyzed in the research provided the results and the findings. The researcher refrained from influencing the results in any manner or way.

**Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions of novice school teachers’ experiences and thoughts towards classroom management and how it affects their job satisfaction. The participants included five novice teachers from various schools in rural Upstate New York. Using audio recorded thoughts and perceptions, an online focus group featuring discussion board posts and responses, and multiple individualized in-depth interviews, data were collected, analyzed, coded, and categorized. Triangulation, member checks, peer review and feedback, and transcriptions ensured credibility and dependability.

Chapter Three outlined the methodology for the inquiry. Chapter Four provides detailed data on the findings.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The aim of this phenomenological study was to listen to the voices of five novice teachers about their perceptions of their classroom management and how these perceptions affect their job satisfaction and career plans.

The participants represented a mix of elementary, middle, and high school teachers from public and private schools. After permission was secured from headmasters or school district superintendents, the participants signed a consent form and participated in the study. Data from two in-depth individual interviews, four personal audio recordings, and two online discussion boards comprised the collection. Responses from questions were categorized into four areas: (a) teacher preparation and training; (b) environment and tactics; (c) experiences; and (d) job satisfaction and career plans.

The problem addressed in this study was that many novice teachers find little success implementing effective classroom management techniques or grappling with student discipline (Lee & Powell, 2005; Putnam, 2009; Reupert & Woodcock, 2010; Stoughton, 2006; Zuckerman, 2007). Their struggles to effectively deal with classroom management or student discipline issues cause many new educators to become frustrated and leave the profession (Barmby, 2006; Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005; Newby, 1991; Rosser, 2004). Research exists that suggests a change in pre-service teacher training is necessary, especially in the area of classroom management, but this has not yet happened or has not yet produced the desired results (e.g., Sanders, 2006; Sandoval-Lucero et al, 2011; Winter, 2005).

This study revealed novice teacher perceptions of their pre-service training, classroom environment and tactics, experiences, and job satisfaction and career plans. Data collected from
interviews, audio recordings, and online discussion boards were analyzed for relevance in relation to the three guiding research questions:

1. What perceptions do rural classroom teachers in New York State have about their classroom management?
2. How do these perceptions affect their job satisfaction?
3. How do these perceptions affect their retention?

Qualitative study interpretation software exists to aid coding; however it seemed that the most practical method for the researcher was to simply become immersed in the data and to code by hand using ink and scissors. After patiently and exhaustively familiarizing with the data, the researcher formed initial codes. A photocopy of the coded study of the data was made, cut into pieces, sorted into piles, labeled, and organized.

By grouping categories and chunks of data, the researcher was able to discover emerging themes, exclude non-applicable data, and link back to the guiding research questions. Detailed information on the coding process was provided in Chapter 3 and will also be revisited later in this chapter 4.

**Introduction of the Participants**

In a phenomenological study, data collected from the participants’ lived experiences and stories is paramount (Moustakas, 1994). By developing an understanding from their experiences and captured voices the researcher was able to develop emerging themes and apprehend the phenomenon. The participants in this study were novice teachers from a rural area of New York.

**Abby**

Abby is a brand new teacher, just 23 years of age. Fresh out of a private, four-year college, Abby co-teaches in a blended classroom at Apple Middle School. Her primary grade
level is eighth grade. Abby is a passionate teacher. Her passion does on occasion turn into emotion. Due to her inexperience, she comes across as a bit unsure. This uncertainty causes her to be less assertive, timid, and gentle. She can become a bit frustrated when her training and tactics do not deliver the results as planned, but she is a good teacher with a lot of potential.

Chloe

Chloe is a second career teacher. At 44 years of age, she comes across as a motherly figure. She earned her teaching credentials from a public four-year institution. She seems confident and in charge. She is a polished, poised, and good teacher; although she seems like teaching is a job rather than a lifestyle or calling. Chloe teaches second grade at Apple Elementary School and has done so for two years. Her experience in life carries over into the classroom. She is comfortable teaching and is successful doing so.

Jael

Jael teaches first and second grade at Christian Elementary School. She is 25 years of age and has one previous year of teaching experience. She completed her teaching degree at a four-year public college. Jael is a great student and a great teacher. She follows classroom management protocols, as trained. However, on occasion, she seems a bit unsure, especially when things do not go as planned or the results do not follow her efforts. Jael is comfortable in front of the class. She wants success and is not afraid to work for it. She seeks outside assistance and researches program implementations.

Lucy

Lucy is a caring, passionate teacher. At just 24 years of age, she has one year of previous teaching experience. She completed her teacher training program at a four-year, private institution. She teaches seventh and eighth grade at Christian Middle School. Lucy is only
young in years. She speaks of her class as if she were a seasoned, award-winning veteran. She comes across as a polished professional. Her actions and thoughts are intentional and deliberate. She has mastered personal relationships and is comfortable working at the difficult middle school level.

Mike

Mike has just one year of previous teaching experience and teaches ninth grade at Apple High School. He was trained at a four-year, public college. At just 24 years of age, Mike has quickly developed and implemented a series of classroom management techniques with great success, many of which are unique to him. Mike has a no-nonsense delivery, but is comfortable with using humor to lighten the mood. He is a great teacher and comes across as practical and matter of fact. He maintains excellent control of his classroom and is able to defuse most situations before they escalate.

Summary of Interviews and Data Collected

Abby

Abby is in her first year of teaching. She teaches eighth grade. She took one undergraduate class in classroom management. During her student teaching placement, she taught fourth grade and did a lot of reflective thinking. She scored low on her classroom management assessment. She felt unprepared for classroom management and realized that a gap existed between her theoretical training and experience. She felt she needed to experience many of the situations herself. She also thought that she should not involve the administration at her school or it would make her look like a weak new teacher.

Abby was provided a formal veteran faculty mentor, but also secured an unofficial mentor that provided her with a lot of guidance and advice. She encompassed a couple of friends
who are also young teachers from other districts in her network. She exchanged ideas and borrowed a different method of issuing passes from one of them.

Abby uses a variety of techniques to de-escalate situations including proximity, student removal, holding students accountable and use of hall passes. She keeps a well-organized and non-distracting classroom. She posts her rules, but had to change them. She confessed that her style is imitated from others she worked under. She did, however, create detailed reward systems for hard work and effort, as well as a BINGO motivator (Behavior in Ninth Grade Oriented).

Abby is clever and attentive to her students. She has also enjoyed some successes with student misbehavior. For example, she was able to motivate students into working. She also learned that she was able to assign lunch detention as a corrective measure and that corralled many discipline issues. However, she has also suffered some setbacks. Early on in the year, she would assign consequences, but would then sometimes back off. She later learned to follow through.

Abby finds classroom management issues frustrating. On occasion, her emotions over the situations cause her to cry, but only after the students left the classroom. And she does not always feel supported. One time a student had pornography and the administrator downplayed it as something students do. Another time she felt unheard regarding her input, thoughts, and concerns about a change in student placement.

Abby likes teaching, calling it a dream job. She feels that issues with classroom management are just part of the job and not serious enough to make her leave the profession. She plans to stay in the profession for years to come. She recommends new teachers ask for help. She found her colleagues very supportive. She values her field experience and
recommends that teacher training programs encourage new teachers to substitute teach to gain even more experience before starting.

**Chloe**

Chloe is a second career teacher with two years of experience. She teaches second grade. She learned about behavioral modification in graduate school. She had a successful pre-service placement. She was confident when she started the job, but noticed an adjustment period was necessary when she started the job.

Chloe was provided a formal mentor and received training on bullying that she felt was useful. She also has internal support that she uses for advice. For example, she asks the school psychologist about bullying.

Chloe implements various aspects of the *Yardsticks* (Wood, 2007) book and shares developmental recommendations with parents. She also uses features from *Responsive Classroom* (www.ResponsiveClassroom.org). She de-escalates situations with a traffic light system, preferential seating, positive reinforcement, and parental involvement. She keeps organized with a visible schedule that she uses student help to build. One unique idea to her is a class store. Students earn store money for behavior and academics.

Chloe has enjoyed her success with classroom management. She has really been able to work with parents, staff, and school district administration. Her students have also shown some remorse after they misbehaved. She feels supported. She finds that setting consequences at the novice deters students from misbehaving. She has not had a lot of failures, although some students needed a gentle adjustment or reminder and one parent does not seem to follow up with the student at home.
Chloe sees the connection between classroom management and job satisfaction. She feels that her level of support makes the difference in a positive way. She understands the emotional component to classroom management and advises others not to take things personal. She plans to stay in the profession and in the current district. She recommends future teachers be consistent, stay organized, admit their mistakes, and to not take things personal. She recommends future training programs address ADHD and address the emotional side of the job.

Jael

Jael teaches first and second grade and has one year of experience. She took a classroom management class during her undergraduate program, but also learned a bit more about it during graduate school. She became more proficient with management during her pre-service placement. She felt very prepared for her job.

Jael received informal training in *Responsive Classroom* and has researched other programs, such as *Whole Brain Learning* (www.WholeBrainNC.org). She also stays up to date with educational blogs. She has enjoyed a great deal of success implementing various aspects of these programs. She discusses things with her peers as needed.

Jael uses a variety of conditioning phrases that force the class to respond. She uses proven management tactics from *Responsive Classroom* to keep the class organized or structured. She de-escalates situations with assigned seats, enforces classroom rules, and positive reinforcement. She imitates some methods such as using specific phrases to gather attention. One unique classroom management to her is that she awards her students a number level for the volume of their voices. She keeps organized and visualizes her whole day. She finds that structure helps her.
Jael found success in turning students around with simple conversation or seat changes, as opposed to severe consequences. She only struggled with minor issues; notably, one student who seems to refuse to fall into line. The student’s unpredictability and unwillingness to correct seems to give her pause. Jael uses a progressive form of consequences and bases it on the situation. Consequences include loss of recess or something that the individual student values. She takes care of situations primarily on her own, but seeks guidance from her principal on occasion. She feels totally supported from her administration and colleagues.

Jael links classroom management to job satisfaction and recognizes an emotional side to the job. She has had a few minor failures. She was unable to change one student’s behavior. She has also had to walk away from a student and not let her emotions get the best of her.

Jael plans to stay in the profession. Due to low pay at a private school (under $20,000), she may need to eventually seek employment at a public school. She recommends new teachers plan out their day the night before, plan extra activities, and plan how to handle challenging situations. She recommends teacher training programs allow additional, real opportunities for experience and observation.

Lucy

Lucy teaches middle school. She has one year of classroom experience behind her. She completed a class during her undergraduate degree in classroom methods and management. She seemed very confident after leaving her pre-service setting. She felt a theoretical and practical gap existed since her undergraduate program concentrated on early grades and she ended up teaching middle grades. She also indicated that she was trained with behavioristic approaches, such as red light/ green light; however, her school did not favor those approaches.
Lucy was provided a mentor and sought peer advice, as needed. She works in a school that works well as a team. She did a lot of research and reading on her own, especially before starting her job.

Lucy implements a variety of techniques including effective teaching, student engagement, preventative techniques, and certain de-escalation techniques. She clearly labels things in her classroom to help with organization, sets clear expectations, rules, and procedures, implements a participation log, assigns seats, and asks students to raise hands. She uses attention-seeking and class discussion techniques that are imitated. She issues a procedural sheet for students to take home and creates behavior plans, as needed, that are unique to her.

Lucy found success in dealing with challenging students with her participation log, as well as through simple, caring conversation or her behavior plans. She also experienced a few challenges, usually when her emotions cause her to be irritable, short, or inconsistent. Although she rarely sends students to the principal’s office, occasionally she picks her principal’s or colleagues’ brains. She feels much support.

She recognized that classroom management plays a big part in her job satisfaction, stating that when she had bad days they was usually caused by something bad happening in the classroom with student misbehavior or when her emotions found the better of her.

Lucy plans on staying in the profession at this school. She recommends that new teachers observe and seek opportunities for experience. She recommends that teacher training programs provide additional opportunities and mentoring.

Mike

Mike has one year of experience teaching high school. He was trained to deal with diverse learners in college, but really did not receive a lot of practical classroom management
advice or training until his student teaching experience. He felt prepared to run his own classroom, but found it a reality check. He found that the students gave him a pass as a student teacher, but as a classroom teacher they no longer give him a pass. The theoretical and practical gap that existed, he felt, was due to the difficulty in replicating real high school classroom scenarios while in college. He also found it a big difference to be doing something real on your own with high school students, as opposed to practicing with a college classmate.

Mike was provided a formal mentor and participated in a new teacher training program; however, he was not provided specific training on-the-job in the area of classroom management. He maintains great working relationships with his colleagues and enjoys bouncing ideas off of others.

Mike posts classroom rules, remains calm at all times, uses seating charts, and keeps students engaged. He finds that these things take care of most issues. He uses rewards to encourage behavior. He imitates one particular aspect of his approach with a “whine tax” where he keeps a tally for complaining and another while he stares and scowls, as opposed to asking he class to quiet down. He also did research on the topic of classroom management using various books, but did not cite any specific programs. His overall approach is unique and perhaps cavalier. He calls it, “the eight-fold path for getting along in Mr. Mike’s room” and uses it as a way to introduce the unit on Buddhism in social studies class. In addition, he maintains a good working relationship and rapport with his students which translates into better behaved classrooms.

Mike enjoyed plenty of success with turning around student behavior through seating arrangements, humor, personal relationships, and building trust. He has been able to change some negative group dynamics and certain students to the better by monitoring and adjusting
them until they conform. He has struggled a bit with minor chatter or group work, but handles most situations through simple conversation. He feels supported, but the transportation situation makes it difficult to assign immediate consequences, such as detention, and the rural area makes it difficult to keep students who may have farm chores.

Mike sees connections between job satisfaction and classroom management. He enjoys working with students and finds them funny, so little things or minor misbehavior actually amuses him. He expects a certain amount of misbehavior, but too much can get to him.

Mike plans on staying in the profession at this district as long he can. He fears consolidation or additional down-sizing. He recommends new teachers command respect from their students, provide their classes with expectations, and not obsess over little details or minor incivility. He recommends teacher training programs spend less time on theoretical assumptions and more time on practical applications and tangible strategies to deal with students.

**Summary of Results in Key Areas**

**Teacher training and preparation**

Teachers were able to gauge how strong they were in the area of classroom management shortly after their undergraduate training programs. In general, the participants felt prepared or very prepared. However, when they started their actual jobs, things changed and they quickly realized that they were less-prepared than they first thought. This confirmed the notion that a theoretical and practical gap still exists in teacher training programs (cf., Kaufman & Moss, 2010; Moore, 2003; Putnam, 2009; Stoughton, 2006; Tulley & Chiu, 1995). The gap exists for a number of reasons including grade level of the training, wide range of scenarios, difficulty in replicating situations, different backgrounds, and the variance in school district philosophies.
Participants agreed that experience is a key necessity for success when you are dealing with classroom management. Most participants were provided some sort of formal training and/or mentor to help guide them with classroom management. All participants sought the advice from peers in an informal manner.

Table 4.1 organizes participants’ comments related to feeling prepared, experience, and collegial investment.

Table 4.1

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Results from Key Area: Teacher Training and Preparation</th>
<th>Abby</th>
<th>Chloe</th>
<th>Jael</th>
<th>Lucy</th>
<th>Mike</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling prepared</td>
<td>Felt unprepared</td>
<td>Felt prepared</td>
<td>Felt very prepared</td>
<td>Felt very prepared</td>
<td>Felt prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical/Practical Gap</td>
<td>A theoretical/practical gap existed</td>
<td>A gap existed a little</td>
<td>No gap</td>
<td>A gap existed since training was geared toward younger students; Also, school did not favor behavioral approaches</td>
<td>A gap definitely existed, calling it a reality check</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Necessary?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Necessary?</td>
<td>Needed to experience it</td>
<td>An adjustment period which required experience</td>
<td>Experience came during successful pre-service setting</td>
<td>Experience gives you practice and training</td>
<td>Needed to experience it; Classroom cannot replicate it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Investment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer advice, as needed</td>
<td>Formal mentor; Peer advice and teamwork</td>
<td>Peer advice, as needed</td>
<td>Peer advice, as needed</td>
<td>Peer advice, as needed</td>
<td>Peer advice, as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment and Tactics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants all agreed that planning and organization are important parts of good classroom management. Posting rules and setting expectations seemed commonplace.
Collectively they also connected maintaining an effective learning environment to minimizing classroom disruptions.

The participants used a variety of preventive techniques and popular tactics for good teaching or student engagement in order to prevent and/or de-escalate classroom incivilities. All participants used a combination of imitated techniques, tested programs, and personal preferences. Some participants relied more heavily on proven classroom management systems, such as *Responsive Classroom*; others only implemented certain aspects of a formal classroom management program. Table 4.2 organizes participants’ data on planning and organization, environment, tactics, and delivery.

Table 4.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results from Key Area: Environment and Tactics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts rules; Changed rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still learning; Behavior incentives need to change monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualizes day; Plans activities; Posts rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labels things; Sets rules and expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sets and posts rules; Plans additional activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping things organized and non-distracting; Flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses a visible schedule; Flexible;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses <em>Responsive Classroom</em>; Structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation log; Raise hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintains a collegial atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity; Student removal; Rewards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic light system; Preferential seating; Positive reinforcement; Parental involvement; Rewards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigns seats; Classroom rules; Positive reinforcement; <em>Responsive Classroom</em> tactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigns seats; Effective teaching; Student engagement; Preventative techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigns seats; Effective teaching; Engages student; Remains calm; Rewards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitated, Tested, or Unique?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitated; Tested (Yardstick, <em>Responsive Classroom</em>); Unique (class store)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitated; Tested (Responsive Classroom, Whole Brain); Unique (voice levels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitated; Unique (behavior plans and procedure sheets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitated; Unique (rules aligned with Buddhism unit)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Experiences**

Participants deemed any positive corrective change in student behavior as a success, as opposed to defining it as a sequence of events, such as issue, consequence, and closure. This suggested that the teachers were looking more toward long-term solutions than short-term consequences, meaning teachers were more interested in permanently fixing the situation versus dealing with the reactive disciplinary consequence. Failures involved the inability to create change or allowing emotions to enter the equation and cloud the situation. For the most part, participants utilized basic, minimal consequences for infractions including conversation, lunch detention, or office referral. Overall, the participants felt supported by parents, colleagues, and their respective administrators.

Table 4.3 organizes participants’ responses on their successes and failures with student behavior, handing out actual disciplinary consequences, and the administrative supports received.
Table 4.3

Results from Key Area: Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Abby</th>
<th>Chloe</th>
<th>Jael</th>
<th>Lucy</th>
<th>Mike</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Successes</td>
<td>Corrected student misbehavior</td>
<td>Student showed remorse and corrected misbehavior</td>
<td>Turned challenging student around</td>
<td>Helped student change and grow</td>
<td>Changed group dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failures</td>
<td>Assigned consequence, but back off; Emotions - cried;</td>
<td>Parent not helping child change</td>
<td>Student unwilling to change; Emotions - had to walk away</td>
<td>Emotions - irritable, short, or inconsistent</td>
<td>Struggled with chatter and group work; Frustrated with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>Lunch detention; Conversation</td>
<td>Looks; Talks; Office referral</td>
<td>Conversation; Loss of recess or some privilege</td>
<td>Conversation; Behavior plans; Participation log</td>
<td>Conversation; One-on-one meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Usually, but was not supported by admin on pornography issue; Felt unheard about student placement</td>
<td>Supported by the staff, parents, and district administration</td>
<td>Supported by administration and colleagues</td>
<td>Supported by administration and colleagues</td>
<td>Supported by administration, but the bus transportation situation, rural area, and student schedules made after school consequences a challenge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Job Satisfaction and Career Plans

Participants connected classroom management to job satisfaction. They also recognized that classroom management evokes emotions. These can be good or bad. All participants plan to stay in the profession, although financial concerns or down-sizing may cause them to leave their current school or district. Participants offered varied advice to new teachers including to ask for help, stay organized, be consistent, plan, seek opportunities and experiences, command respect, and set expectations. They also suggested keeping control of their emotions and to not
take things personal or obsess over minor details or infractions. They recommended that teacher training programs offer less theoretical and more practical experiences and observations.

Table 4.4 organizes participant responses surrounding their perceptions on job satisfaction and future career plans.
Table 4.4

Results from Key Area: Job Satisfaction and Career Plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Abby</th>
<th>Chloe</th>
<th>Jael</th>
<th>Lucy</th>
<th>Mike</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>Emotions are involved in job; Connects classroom management to job satisfaction</td>
<td>Recognizes emotional side to job; Connects support, organization, and classroom management to job satisfaction</td>
<td>Works at keeping emotions in check; Connects good classroom days to job satisfaction</td>
<td>Recognizes when she had a bad day it was because of bad behavior; Works at keeping emotions in check</td>
<td>Connects classroom management to job satisfaction; Emotion-Minor infractions amuse him, repeated ones do not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Plans</td>
<td>Plans to stay in profession</td>
<td>Plans to stay in profession</td>
<td>Plans to stay in profession; May need to work at different school due to low pay</td>
<td>Plans to stay in profession</td>
<td>Plans to stay in profession, but fears consolidation or down-sizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice to Future Teachers</td>
<td>Ask for help</td>
<td>Be consistent; Stay organized; Emotion- do not take things personally</td>
<td>Plan for each day; Plan extra activities; Plan how to handle possible situations</td>
<td>Seek opportunities for observation and experience</td>
<td>Command respect; Have expectations; Emotion- do not obsess, let things go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice to Training Programs</td>
<td>Encourage more experience through substitute teaching</td>
<td>Train on ADHD; Define the job in relation to the academic and emotional</td>
<td>Provide more opportunities for experience and observation</td>
<td>Provide more opportunities for experience; Mentoring</td>
<td>Less theoretical, more practical and strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emerging Themes

This phenomenological study aimed to advance the literature on novice teacher perceptions of their classroom management and how these perceptions affect their job satisfaction and career plans, namely teacher retention. Data collected from two in-depth interviews, two online discussion boards, and four personal audio recording were transcribed and analyzed using a tiered coding process to identify themes and subthemes. Data were analyzed from an inductive to a deductive method, as suggested by Merriam (2009). As themes emerged
during the coding process they were categorized, labeled, and sorted. Content was highlighted, grouped, and noted according to the purpose of the research in an exclusive and exhaustive manner.

Centered on the three research questions dealing with novice teachers’ perceptions of their classroom management and how these perceptions affect their job satisfaction and retention, nine themes emerged from the research:

- practice makes perfect
- plan for success; expect to fail
- one size does not fit all
- get by with a little help from my friends
- rewards come in small packages
- emotions run deep
- teachers love to teach
- staying alive
- help wanted

These themes, organized according to research question, are discussed further in the following section.

**Research Question 1: What Perceptions Do Rural Classroom Teachers in New York State have about their Classroom Management?**

For the most part the participants felt prepared to start out on their own in their own classroom. Responses indicated that most felt confident and eager. Then a reality check hit them when they were finally on their own with their own students. They recognized that an adjustment period and some real individual experience were necessary to find their legs and to
succeed. In other words, practice makes perfect. As far as classroom management and student misbehavior are concerned, participants perceived that these came with the territory; that they were just part of the job. Jael shared,

I can’t imagine that I would be in a classroom where I wouldn’t have to deal with things like that. Hopefully not on a daily basis or all the time but certainly, I think that will always be a part of the classroom when you have a variety of students.

As much as they planned for success, student incivility, disruption, defiance, and the like just tend to happen. Participants felt that teachers should plan for success, but expect to fail. Lastly, the participants tended to incorporate a customized and personal classroom management plan comprised of elements of imitation, research-tested programs, and unique aspects, rather than a one-size fits all program.

Figure 4.1 below provides a visual organizer for themes surrounding participant perceptions of the classroom management.

![Figure 4.1. Themes related to perceptions of classroom management](image-url)
Practice Makes Perfect

One of the prominent emerging themes discovered from data coding was that the novice teachers felt that personal experience in the area of classroom management was necessary to succeed. In other words, the theoretical lessons from their undergraduate training were simply not enough. Abby observed, “…you didn’t really learn it from reading a book, you had to actually experience it.”

And while the novice teachers did complete some experience at a teacher training program, the participants felt that their individual pre-service placements did not adequately prepare them for the reality of running and managing a classroom on their own. They felt that there is no substitute for actual experience. Chloe clarified, "it’s always eye opening to get into a first time experience.” For one of the participants, the first time experience in front of the class was remarkably eye-opening. Mike added,

It’s definitely a reality check…I think the one thing that is a little different is when you’re student teaching…I think the kids almost give you a pass; they give you a break. Whereas when you’re in charge, I mean, there’s no buffer zone; like there was no cooperating teacher to field questions that I wasn’t prepared to answer and, you know, getting bombarded with bathroom requests and things like that; and so it was definitely a shock to the system.

The two remaining participants thought they had successful placements and training, but even one of those ended up feeling shortchanged once he or she spreads his or her wings out on own. Lucy felt prepared, but quickly realized that her training lacked adequate preparation at the necessary grade level.
I felt pretty well prepared but there was certainly a gap because, um, I’m K-8 certification certified, and I felt like a lot of my classroom methods and management classes were geared to younger grades. And part of that might have been the professor. She was a first grade teacher or something like that before she was a professor, so I think a lot of what she shared with us was from her experience and some of that doesn’t translate very well into a seventh and eighth grade classroom.

**Plan for Success; Expect to Fail**

A second predominant emerging theme from data coding was that participants felt that planning and organization were critical to success with classroom management. Chloe posted to an online discussion board,

planning is critical to a smooth structured classroom environment. Having plans and back up plans allow students to anticipate their days and the work ahead. I have a daily schedule posted every day, chart of classroom helpers (that rotate weekly) and a calendar with special events marked. Having things organized and "a place for everything" allows students more ownership of their classroom and control of the environment.

Collectively these novice teachers felt that structure and organization were necessary and that it helped prevent many classroom disturbances from occurring. Lucy shared in an interview,

I also try to place kids near others that bring out the best in them as a learner. In addition to this, I've really made an effort to thoroughly teach procedures, explain expectations, and practice protocol from day one. One of my biggest desires is that I'll avoid classroom management challenges by being proactive in the beginning of the year. In terms of my
daily planning, I try to structure my classes so that there is regular changes in activity to avoid boredom.

One participant even planned individual placement and movements. Jael found that strategy helps her reduce student management issues. Jael shared during one of her weekly audio recordings,

when I plan, I definitely have to, um, consider where we’re going to be all the time; where the students are going to be and where I’m going to be. So I think that helps classroom management because I know if it’s going to be a whole group activity I know I’ll want assigned seating. If it’s going to be, um, hands-on I’ll know where I want them to be. So I, even the night before, I will just picture the entire day going through where we are and where I’m going to be and I try to keep it as structured as possible, because as I found especially during my recordings that I sent to you, we had the most problems where there was no structure. So I think planning and organizing definitely helps keep it, keep the day running smoothly and limit problems.

The participants implemented a myriad of preventive student management techniques and were very strategic in their planning, especially with seating arrangements. Abby keeps her class organized, materials accessible and labeled, provides work upon entry, and spreads her students out around the room. Mike shared,

I have to be very strategic with the set-up of my classroom. The most effective tool at my disposal is the seating chart. Whether it's separating chatty girls or putting students with hearing impairments in proper position, putting together my seating chart is like a game of chess…Sometimes it takes a few trials; certain students can't pay attention from the back of the room, while others feel like they are on stage while sitting up front.
One Size Does Not Fit All

A third predominant theme that emerged from data coding was that the participants each developed his or her own custom classroom management style using components of research-proven practices or programs, imitation of other teachers, and aspects or approaches unique to themselves.

For example, Chloe utilized certain aspects of a book called *Yardsticks* (2007) and a program called *Responsive Classroom*, imitated her use of stop light, preferential seating, and positive reinforcement, and used her own unique ideas of party invites for students who reach reading goals and a classroom store where children can spend money they earned for academics and behavior.

Jael, too, uses *Responsive Classroom* techniques, as well as some research she conducted called *Whole Brain Learning*. Jael combines that with imitating other teachers’ methods for gathering attention and her unique signing songs during classroom transitions. In similar fashion, Mike borrows things from a book *Teach Like a Champion* (Lemov, 2010), imitates seating arrangements, scowls, and mannerisms, and developed his own unique style he calls the “eight-fold path for getting along in Mr. Mike’s room.”

Lucy uses tactics from programs, the internet, and readings. She imitates several attention-getting techniques of other teachers. Her unique style includes the use of behavior plans and expectation sheets.

Abby found favor in her master teacher’s style and adopted a lot of her methods, especially in the area of expectations, procedures, hall passes, and tone of voice. She borrowed a game called *Homework Monopoly* from the internet and customized it a bit. She created some
unique behavior systems for rewarding effort with waffles and designed a game called BINGO (Behavior Is Ninth Grade Oriented).

**Research Question 2: How Do these Perceptions Affect their Job Satisfaction?**

Participants perceived that classroom management affected their job satisfaction. Participant responses correlated bad days at school to bad days with classroom management. Lucy shared, “…the days that were bad days, they were usually days that were bad because of something that had happened in the classroom, uh, with kids either not behaving or maybe me being, you know, more…irritable.” Participants felt successful when they were able to make a difference in a child and turn a student around. In other words, rewards came in small packages.

While participants in this survey, for the most part, felt supported by their administration, one emerging theme was that they valued and appreciated the support and advice from their colleagues more so. Lastly, participants concurred that classroom management evokes sentiments and passions, making it a very personal, taxing, and emotional aspect of teaching.

Figure 4.2 below presents a visual organizer of emerging themes for how participants’ perceptions affected their job satisfaction.
Get by with a Little Help From My Friends

One emerging theme that was discovered from data coding in the area of job satisfaction was that novice teachers appreciated the collegiality, advice, and assistance from their colleagues, neighbors, mentors, and administration. Lucy stated,

My principal was also there just to discuss difficult situations and give me some guidance and then obviously some support from my mentor, too. Just a lot of times I’d go to her and say, ‘This is going on. What do you think I should do?’ and she would really, uh, help come up with a good solution based on her knowledge. That was very helpful.

Participant responses emphasized the value they found in each other, outside of the school office. They formed some sort of unofficial or underground network, separate from any formal mentoring programs. They indicated that they felt supported and welcomed to bounce ideas off of each other. During an interview, Mike explained,
I have a really good relationship with the teachers around me here, my colleagues. Uh, I’ve actually known one guy down the hall since we were both in high school. So if I have an issue, if I have a particular student that is giving me issues, I will go to some of my colleagues. Um, I mentioned in one of my online posts that I have the guidance office right across the hallway from me, so if I have a recurring issue with somebody and I think there might be an underlying factor, something at home, uh, I can go right over there and see if they have any insight to that.

Participants appreciated having this network and felt fortunate to be able to utilize so many different people. Chloe correlated this collegiality to job satisfaction in a discussion board post, “I have been fortunate to have grade-level partners, a principal and classroom parents that support the disciplinary consequences I use in the classroom. I suppose this has a positive impact on my job satisfaction.” Chloe later added in an interview, “…my teacher aid was very experienced and helpful and kind and would offer suggestions and I felt like I could discuss things with her to help with, um, behavior management in the classroom.”

Abby recommended new teachers reach out to colleagues, “and not be afraid to ask for help. I asked for help so much this year…Just to like my colleague like ‘What would you do in this situation?’ They were really nice to give advice to me.”

Jael found collegiality and support internal as well, but also reached out to the internet, “I know that sounds a little silly to be so attached to different blogs, but, um, I try to find veteran teachers who are blogging about their daily experience and I, I take a lot from that.”

**Rewards Come in Small Packages**

A second emerging theme discovered during data coding was that teachers viewed success as making a difference in a student. The teacher’s reward was feeling satisfied with a job well
done. For example, Chloe found success when she saw remorse in a student who needed a change in behavior. Abby shared a rewarding situation, “had a student… completely refusing to do the work... She…wanted a pet hedgehog. So, I told her if she did her project I would give her a stuffed animal hedgehog and it actually worked out really well.”

Mike found success changing the behavior of four non-participatory, disruptive students and found it rewarding, I have these four kids that when they sit by each other, it’s just poison. They pass notes, they draw pictures to each other, they, um, they talk non-stop and, you know, I’m sure they’re having a great time, but it’s not really great for their, their progress. So what I had wound up doing actually was call them the compass rose ‘cause I put them in the four corners of the room and, um, it’s a little joke that we have, but I’ve found that their performance has gone up, they pay better attention. And they complain about it before and after class, but it’s better off for them; it’s better off for me. So that would definitely be a success.

Jael recorded that she found it rewarding to find success with three boys who were misbehaving in class too frequently when they were together, I had pulled them aside and told them that they were going to be separated and I actually felt like that was a success because… I didn’t have to give them this huge, horrible, traumatic consequence, but what we did was enough for them to realize, ‘OK. It’s time to get our act together.’ And I really felt like that made a difference, and so I felt like that was successful because they learned from that experience and as a result they changed their behavior.

Lucy shared during an interview a rewarding version of success with one student,
…situation that was a very big positive was with a student who is usually just a stellar student but had been struggling to turn homework in and just to stay focused, and so I sat down and chatted with her and just ended up having this great conversation where not only did she tell me what was going on with the academics, but she really told me more of what was going on in her life and helped me get a better picture and have more of an understanding of how I could help her as a teacher. So, while these things started off as negatives it was really neat to see the students, um, learn and grow from the situation then for me to understand them better was very good.

**Emotions Run Deep**

A third prominent emerging theme discovered in the data coding in the area of job satisfaction was that classroom management is not only personal, but also very emotional. The participants felt invested and were very passionate. Participant responses included frustrations over certain situations, repeated disruptions, and issues with consistency. Mike found it, “frustrating when school rules aren't consistently upheld throughout the building.”

During one of Abby’s weekly audio recordings she shared a personal, emotional moment of frustration, as a beginning teacher, that brought her to tears,

I just feel frustrated that I don’t know what to do. Um, occurrences like this make me really frustrated. I remember earlier in the year when things like this would happen, like if a student refused to give up their cell phone when they clearly had it out, um, and they burst into tears, um I would be like shaking and in tears at the end, like I’ve never cried in front of the students. I think I’ve really grown over the year and not like showing how much it personally affects me, and I know I’m not supposed to take it personally.
Participants struggled with uncertainty as to how to handle the situations; many of them very uncomfortable situations. Chloe shared,

I had a student who kind of challenged me and uh almost to stare me down. And it was a little bit unnerving and I kind of let it go for a while and I probably shouldn’t have let it go as long as I did. I wanted to see…when this would end and it made me uncomfortable and the other students uncomfortable… It’s very, it’s frustrating to me that I’m not getting the help for the child.

This study discovered that emotions ran fairly deep when it came to classroom management. Sometimes the teacher was forced to react or reflect. Lucy posted,

I still struggle with being consistent. It seems like I'm always reminding certain students about how they should and should not behave. As a result it makes me more irritated with them and less likely to be gracious. I often find that the difficult student could be in the midst of misbehaving with another student who I rarely have to correct and, as a result, I tend to reprimand the difficult student, while letting the other one off more easily. I need to work on consistency and acting in a thought out manner, instead of being reactionary.

She continued in an audio recording about similar feelings to a similar situation,

I didn’t blow it up into something huge even though it might have been feeling huge on the inside to me and um I, I don’t think the other student who was not being greeted is emotionally scarred or anything by this. It wasn’t the biggest deal in the world but it was upsetting to see a student be unkind to someone else. That’s certainly what we’re working against…and as I’ve mentioned this is a student who does struggle with
behavior and there is a behavior program in place, so it is frustrating when progress is really not being made.

In a discussion board post, Mike described how taxing dealing with issues can be on a novice teacher, “Dealing with the behavior and attitude problems of high-schoolers can be very taxing sometimes. There are days when I leave the building completely drained of all energy (and then have to go coach a modified basketball practice!).”

Jael concurred, but recognized that things will get better:

There are days when I feel so frustrated and stressed I want to scream, but it has never made me feel like I can't stay in the profession. I feel like each job comes with its difficulties and dealing with challenging students is just part of teaching.

**Research Question 3. How Do these Perceptions Affect their Retention?**

Participant responses indicated that they love teaching and they value the opportunity to do so. All participants attested that they will be returning to the profession and to their district, barring a change in climate or lifestyle. As long as they do not get down-sized, the teachers are staying alive and doing what they do best, teaching. Lastly, the participants expressed a need to re-visit teacher training programs and incorporate more practical training and less theoretical training. They felt that more help was wanted in the area of real classroom experience.

Figure 4.3 below presents a visual graphic for emerging themes for how participants’ perceptions of their classroom management affected their retention.
Teachers Love to Teach

The first prominent emerging theme discovered during data coding in the area of teacher retention was that teachers loved what they did – they loved to teach. And issues with classroom management cannot change that. For example, Abby’s love for the profession was evident and clearly spoken throughout her audio recordings, interviews, and discussion board posts. During one audio recording she was captured saying, “we just really need to love these students and show them there’s more to life than just like grumpiness. Um, so I really just want to help these kids. That’s why I’m a teacher.” During one of her interviews, she was quoted:

I love my job…we have a really great group of students here and you know we have troubling days and students that are especially troubling to our classroom management but um at the end of the day this is really a dream job and nothing has, um, hindered that too much.

And in one of Abby’s discussion board posts, she confessed,
Teaching is a lot more difficult than I thought, but it is a lot more awesome than I thought, too; because it is rewarding to see the students grow. I also have a lot of fun at this seemingly dream job!

Other participants concurred. Lucy found excitement and passion in student learning, “I love seeing my students actively participation in learning.” She loves her job and relationship with her students, “I love my job and most days I feel like I'm doing it well. The kids and I have a great relationship: fun but respectful.”

Chloe sees the child whole and appreciates the opportunity to help shape them. Her love of students comes out of her recorded voice and nothing seems to faze her. In response to how difficult situations affect her opinion on teaching, she opines that she loves to teach, “…doesn’t have any affect. Um, you know, these are minor instances with young children. Um, I think having a whole perspective of their lives; um, not just seeing them as a student in my class gives me some good insight to help them along.”

Mike added,

The classroom portion of my job is the most satisfying part. There are certainly frustrating days, and certain students that consistently push boundaries. But I expected that when I entered the profession- not every child is going to be an angel. I feel like that as long as I'm patient and set clear rules, behavior problems don't get to the point where they ruin my personal enjoyment.

Staying Alive

The second prominent finding in the area of teacher retention is that despite all the concerns over issues of classroom management or rumors of additional cutbacks, all participants have been offered contracts for next year to return to their current schools and have accepted the
offers. All are staying alive and staying in the profession. Despite everything negative that went with teaching, for these participants, the good simply outweighed the bad.

Abby specified that will be returning to the district and that she hopes to return to the same position in eighth grade. She plans to make teaching a career and reported, “my goal by five years is to have my Master’s done in Literacy and probably still be in the same school. I don’t know. We’ll see what God has.”

Chloe is a second career teacher who indicated that she plans to make teaching her last career, “next year I’ll be in grade two which I’m glad to be. Um, five years from now I will, I’d love to stay in this district and teach in the early childhood grade levels.”

Jael is planning to return to her private school for next year, but may need to secure a public school position for financial reasons down the road, if a lifestyle change warrants it. She mentioned,

I’ll definitely be teaching at this school, and five years I hope to still be teaching. Um, the only reason I might not be at this school is simply for financial reasons. Um, you know, raising a family it wouldn’t really be wise to stay there financially, but I certainly want to keep teaching.

Lucy loves her job and her school. She plans on returning next year. She would love to stay forever, pending no change in her lifestyle. She explained,

Next year I am going to be working again at my school and I do plan to stay there um really kind of indefinitely. I really love it there and really the biggest thing that would take me away I think from teaching would be when my husband and I want to start a family and so, not exactly sure when that will be; um, but it probably will be within the next five years, so that would be the thing that takes me away from teaching.
Mike will be returning to his school, as well. He explained that he loves the job, loves the district, and found a home. He would like to stay long-term, but is uncertain if he will someday be a casualty to down-sizing or consolidation,

I like working in the district. I like the people I work with. Uh, I coach three sports. Um, and I, I just emceed like the talent show here, so I definitely feel like I’ve found a home in this district. I just bought a house in the area, so I definitely see myself working here for the time being. Uh, five years from now, I mean, I don’t know if any teacher in rural…New York can really say, I mean there’s all these rumors of um consolidation and maybe, uh, the state forcing districts to combine.

Help Wanted

The final prominent emerging theme discovered during data coding was that novice teachers felt that teacher training programs needed more hours observing classroom management and real, hands-on experience. Lucy recommended, “…having more hours that are required for classroom management observation.” Currently, she felt that observations are too general in nature. She added, “I remember doing observation hours, but really there was so many things to observe; but if there was time…just observe classroom management, now like that’s all I want you to look for, that would be really very helpful”

In addition to supplementary time observing, most participants felt that when it comes to classroom management, there is no substitute for actual hands-on experience. Jael encouraged real experiences in any form,

So whether it’s just a teacher who’s speaking about a classroom experience or letting that new teacher get into the classroom as much as possible before they begin teaching or while they’re teaching. Um, kind of repeating what I said… just let them observe as
much as they can, because there’s so many great ideas out there… Actual classroom experience, I think, makes all the difference.

Additionally, Mike recommended that teacher training needs to be more practical and less theoretical,

I spent probably four weeks in one class talking about Vygotsky and the Zone of Proximal Development. That stuff’s important, but also knowing how to implement it is probably more important, so maybe a little less time away from the, the actual, uh, theoretical/ historical approach, which while, while still relevant I feel like maybe a little less emphasis on that would be useful and spending more time on tangible strategies that people can use.

Lastly, if programs cannot add time for additional experiences, one participant recommends that they encourage their students to secure experience at substitute teacher before starting their careers. Abby illuminated the advantages,

being in the classroom is really helpful and I substituted for half a year and I would encourage um people that are training teachers to encourage teachers to substitute because not only does it help you get a job but it helps you to get experience and know how to handle students in any kind of situation.

Chapter Four introduced the participants, shared summary findings, and revealed participant discoveries surrounding their perceptions of their classroom management and how these perceptions affected their job satisfaction and retention. Nine emerging themes were adeptly shared: (a) practice makes perfect; (b) plan for success, expect to fail; (c) one size does not fit all; (d) get by with a little help from my friends; (e) rewards come in small packages; (f) emotions run deep; (g) teachers love to teach; (h) staying alive; and (i) help wanted.
Chapter Five details the conclusions of the inquiry and provides suggestions for future scholarship.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Summary of the Findings

This qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenological study studied the experiences of five novice teachers from rural New York. The inquiry’s purpose was to better understand how dealing with classroom management affects teacher job satisfaction and retention. The participants represented a mix of elementary, middle, and high school private and public school administrators. The study triangulated its data collection using four weekly personal audio recordings, two in-depth interviews, and an online discussion board that featured two posts and two replies per participant.

The data collected from the study answered three guiding research questions of:

1. What perceptions do rural classroom teachers in New York State have about their classroom management?

2. How do these perceptions affect their job satisfaction?

3. How do these perceptions affect their retention?

During coding, nine emerging themes were discovered and reported on, including (a) practice makes perfect; (b) plan for success, expect to fail; (c) one size does not fit all; (d) get by with a little help from my friends; (e) rewards come in small packages; (f) emotions run deep; (g) teachers love to teach; (h) staying alive; and (i) help is wanted.

Discussion of Findings and Theoretical Implications

The aim of this study was to analyze novice rural teacher perceptions of their classroom management and discover how it affects their job satisfaction and retention. This study was based on the premise that better teacher preparation and training can produce more effective
teaching, as indicated by the scholarship of many researchers, notably MacSuga and Simonsen (2011). More effective teaching could produce more desirable results with classroom management, as distinguished by Alkharusi and Kazem (2011) and Wong et al. (2012). Success in the classroom could lead to perceived higher job satisfaction (Klassen & Ming, 2010), and higher job satisfaction could lead to better retention (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). The conceptual framework was based on Bandura’s *Social Learning Theory* (1977) and Herzberg’s *Two-Factor Theory*.

Participant responses supported this framework and agreed with these premises and above listed studies. Additional commentary follows in this section, broken up by the individual guiding research question. Further commentary and comparison can be found in the Comparison to Previous Research section.

**Research Question 1: What Perceptions Do Rural Classroom Teachers in New York State Have About Their Classroom Management?**

Three emerging themes were drawn from participant responses. First, participants felt that it takes experience to effectively manage a classroom. They also felt that they did not receive enough experience during their pre-service placements. Second, planning is an important aspect of classroom management, as is good teaching. Third, classroom management is highly personal and unique and that many consequences are done in a social manner.

In addition to aligning with the previously stated premises of MacSuga and Simonsen (2011), Wong et al. (2010), Klassen and Ming (2012), and Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011), the participant responses and emerging themes aligned with the conceptual framework of Bandura’s (1977) *Social Learning Theory*. This theory proposed that human behavior is mutual interaction based on stimuli from cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors. In a classroom setting,
the students interact in a structured environment with each other and with the teacher. They learn to behave through conditioning, organization, repetition, and social interaction. The teacher’s classroom management program and delivery elicits a certain expectation in a social setting through imagery and verbal rejoinders. Therefore, a teacher’s training, experience, planning, and delivery are important factors in a student’s ability to succeed or behave in a given setting.

**Research Question 2: How Do These Perceptions Affect Job Satisfaction?**

Teachers reported a positive relationship between classroom management and job satisfaction. In short, bad days at work are often a result of a bad day with classroom management. Three emerging themes were discovered from participant responses. First, teachers work in a collegial atmosphere and rely on each other for support and advice. Second, they view success as making a difference with students, namely turning around a struggling student. Third, they realize that classroom management is an emotionally charged aspect of the job.

These findings align with the previous premise that success in the classroom could lead to perceived higher job satisfaction (Klassen & Ming, 2010) and that classroom management is an emotional aspect (Brown et al., 2008). Additionally, the two premises align with the conceptual framework of Herzberg’s (1966) *Two-Factor Theory*. Herzberg examined job satisfaction and determined that it was a function of two categories: hygiene (negative factors) and motivators (positive factors); two opposite forces on a continuum. Common negative factors included job-related stress, situational pressure, lack of authority, and the like. Positive factors, such as feeling a part of something, feeling supported or appreciated, or working in unity were on the
opposite end. Most jobs have a mix of positive and negative factors; however, according to the theory the more negative factor present, the more likely attrition occurred.

Participant responses in this study agreed with the literature (cf., Malik, 2011). Struggles with classroom management would be a negative factor associated with overall job dissatisfaction, whereas a supportive, collegial environment and making a positive difference in a student or in a single group of students would be motivators associated with job satisfaction. In this study, participants experienced more positive factors and therefore, are more likely to return.

Research Question 3. How Do These Perceptions Affect their Retention?

Participant responses apprehended that they were all happy to be returning to the profession next year, preferably and most likely to their current school. They indicated that they had relatively high job satisfaction. Emerging themes included that teachers loved to teach and that they want to work. However, they also recommended that teacher training programs provide additional practical experience.

These themes supported the theoretical premises of this study. Most conspicuously, higher job satisfaction could lead to better retention (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Participants’ responses also supported the many studies that indicated that teacher training needs to be re-vamped (e.g., Kaufman & Moss, 2010; Scheeler, 2007; Witcher et al., 2008). In relation to the conceptual framework of Herzberg, the participants claimed to experience higher job satisfaction, largely based on their positive experiences and strong collegial atmospheres and environments, which will undoubtedly lead to better retention.

Comparison to Previous Research

Participant responses indicated a desire for better training, accompanied with more hands-on experience. The participants found a gap or disconnect in their preparatory programs.
 Teachers felt that better training would help them produce better results. These findings agree with MacSuga and Simonsen’s (2011) premise that better teacher preparation and training can produce more effective teaching. Participants agreed that there is no definitive method of preparing them for the insurmountable possibilities and situations which may occur. This agreement aligned with the published research in this area (e.g., Berry et al., 2002; Wong et al., 2012).

Participants reported that they were open to trying new things in the area of classroom management and practicing methods to deal with student incivility or disruption when needed. Participants indicated that they desired additional time on task to do so. This desire to improve and find methods that will work supports the research of Moore (2003) and Clement (2010) in the area of teacher professional development and time on task. Moore and Clement confirmed the importance in this critical area and called for additional time on task and a re-vamp of teacher training.

However, in contrast to Moore and Clement, Siebert (2005) addressed a practical complication. Siebert affirmed that studies that call for additional training often fall short of addressing the complex, practical side of actually expanding programs. Siebert adequately and pragmatically posed difficulties in expanding preparation programs, teacher training, and on-the-job professional development, citing that time spent is either in lieu of other training or in addition to the already substantial amount that teachers go through. Time is a commodity that prevents teachers from graduating and entering the field, costs additional resources, and causes a bigger teacher shortage.

Findings also support research that indicates that teachers implement a personal form or blend of classroom management techniques that they feel most comfortable with (Emmer &
Stough, 2001; Putnam, 2009). This conception follows the research of Churchill (2006) and Poftak (2005) that novice teachers resort to a smorgasbord approach to classroom management, combining pre-service techniques with unique aspects to stay afloat. However, this study added a third element. This study noted that the teachers used a blend of (a) some proven-methodologies and practices, such as mainstream scholarly or best practices programs; (b) some tactics imitated from other colleagues or mentors; and (c) some aspects designed by or unique to the individual participant. This is a notable finding, as the researcher was unable to uncover this finding or concept in any one, single article of the published literature.

Teachers found that their planning, organization, and strategic student engagement techniques helped them minimize incidents of classroom incivility and disruption. These are considered elements of effective teaching (Briesch et al., 2008; Manning & Bucher, 2007; Minor et al., 2002). Findings therefore agree with published literature that suggested that effective teaching could produce more desirable results with classroom management, as distinguished by Alkharusi and Kazem (2011) and Wong et al. (2012). These studies reported findings that indicated an improvement in organization and student engagement leads to a decrease in student defiance and general classroom chaos. Participant responses agreed that keeping students on-task and actively engaged in the learning process led to a decrease in student management concerns.

Lastly, teachers’ perceptions and lived experiences seem congruent with the premises that success in the classroom and mastery in classroom management could lead to perceived higher job satisfaction (Klassen & Ming, 2010; Mau et al., 2008) and higher job satisfaction could lead to better retention (Huysman, 2007; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). The participants in this study
have all enjoyed a certain degree of success, they love teaching, and plan to return to the profession next school year.

While this study supported much of the previous research, it also advanced the literature in this area. A gap existed that listened to the voices of novice teachers who are in the trenches. This study helped close that gap and discovered nine emerging themes surrounding classroom management, job satisfaction, and retention in the scholarship process. Furthermore, this study helped identify variables that could be subjected to more rigorous forms of research in order to improve teachers’ experiences and skills with classroom management. Further investigation could up the rigor and advance the research.

The inquiry opened the door for future research and studies to examine educational scholarship in the areas of (a) examining the emotional aspect of classroom management; (b) comparing first career to second career teachers in relation to confidence and management; (c) and analyzing collegiality and peer-investment in relation to job satisfaction and retention.

Implications

This study continued the mantra of the re-vamping of teacher training programs (cf., Sanders, 2006; Sandoval-Lucero et al, 2011; Winter, 2005). Participant responses indicated that they felt prepared to manage a classroom on their own and to control student misbehavior, but quickly learned that they were not as prepared as they originally once thought. Participants needed additional training, exposure, and time on task to practice with classroom management methods and strategies. This confirmed that a theoretical and practical gap exists between teacher training programs and teaching careers. Participants felt that too much time was spent on theoretical concepts in their pre-service training and not enough time was spent on real training. These responses were congruent to Moore (2003) and Clement (2010) suggested scholarly
findings in expanding the practice and actual hands-on portion of the pre-service teacher training experience.

Respondents felt that if actual experience is a necessary ingredient, then teacher training programs need to provide adequate time in order for these novice teachers to accumulate experience, become proficient, and develop a high level of confidence. Literature on classroom management tends to agree. O’Neill and Stephenson (2012) confirmed the impact of effective classroom management coursework in developing confidence in the classroom. Confidence comes with experience, preparation, and belief in one’s training or ability. Alvarez (2007) called for a more balanced approach to classroom management training that combines experience and exposure that meets teacher and student needs, especially in the areas of dealing with difficult students and awareness to increased aggressive behavior.

Additionally, this study happened to examine teachers who were successful and who will be returning to the classroom next school year. This was an unforeseen limitation and teachers with different intentions, such as not returning, may provide different responses. Teachers in this study sought out for themselves a support network of not only interested administrators, but also colleagues willing and able to provide guidance and assistance. If investing in peers and developing a collegial network of advisors is essential to a novice teacher’s success, then it should be looked at more closely. This could be an area of future scholarship and educational inquiry.

Many school districts, but not all, offer formal mentoring programs. However, these are formal programs and with formal prepackaged structure with assigned mentors. Thus, they are artificially forged relationships. The research in this study suggested that, interestingly, novice teachers valued the unofficial advice and support of neighbors and colleagues, more so than that
of their assigned mentors. While these participant responses align with much of the literature on effective mentoring from naturally forming relationships (Zachary, 2000; Zachary, 2005), they identify yet another possible gap in the literature. How do faculty mentoring programs and coaching affect novice teachers’ classroom management? And what risk do naturally forming relationships pose novice teachers if they are involved with ineffective classroom teachers or managers. These could be an area of future scholarship.

The responses also open the door to consider new possibilities on how to naturally form collegial or peer investments. This may be more practical than scholarly. One way that this can be done, or at least encouraged, is with faculty scheduling. If school districts could align their master schedules to allow clusters of teachers based on proximity to have the same planning periods, this could provide additional opportunities for these supportive relationships to naturally occur.

Planning and environment were claimed by participants to be essential to these novice teachers’ success. The participants found that over-planning, or the planning of extra activities, was particularly helpful. This aligns with Marzano and Pickering (2011) best practices literature in the area of over-planning for teacher success, reduction of down-time, and student engagement. If schools could invest in their novice teachers with a workbook of additional activities, based on the subject matter or grade level of the novice teacher, it would make things easier on the teacher. It would provide them with one additional tool to use when they run short during a class. This will help them keep their classroom running smoothly and avoid any classroom management disruptions.

Lastly, the teachers in this study indicated that classroom management is a very emotional component to the job. Much professional development is done in the area of lesson
planning, record keeping, student grading, and student engagement, designing rubrics, mastering parental contact, cooperative learning, and other individual aspects of teaching in order to help teachers succeed in the classroom. But what is done to help these teachers manage their emotions? If classroom management is one of the leading causes of job dissatisfaction, frustration, and attrition (cf., Barmby, 2006; Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005; Newby, 1991; Rosser, 2004), should not it be continually examined as to why? And if an examination, such as this, indicates that it is the emotional aspect of the job that causes faculty to leave their careers that they trained for, should not it also be addressed and verified?

Too often school districts subscribe to a flavor or the month or trial and error approach of starting with one prepackaged program or philosophy and then if that does not work or loses momentum, switching to another. The solution may not be found in some prepackaged classroom program or philosophy; it may found in some sort of training that helps teachers manage their emotions.

Managing teacher emotions and combatting burnout has limited scholarship when examined in comparison to that of overall or general classroom management (Winograd, 2003). However, recent literature appears that is linked and needs to be further studied (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). Most notably, Chang (2009) summarized the emotional side of teaching, and in particular dealing with classroom disruption or struggles with classroom management as simply exhausting. That is, the emotional side of teaching is a taxing and draining aspect that not only takes an emotional toll, but also a physical one. This study exposed an underlying call to further the research into the emotional aspect of teaching, aligning itself with Chang’s appraisal of teacher burnout and agreeing to the realization of the very personal side of teaching.
Limitations and Delimitations

Small Sample Size

The most significant limitation to this study is the fact that the participant’s sample size was only five novice teachers. While credibility is built in through triangulated data sources and reflective methods, a small sample size challenges the internal validity of the findings, restricting the ability to draw true, hard conclusions about novice teacher perceptions. For this study, a lack of participation from districts, as well as a limited number of potential novice teachers due to a state-wide budget crunch, caused the number to close at five. Despite the small sample size, the participants did represent a cross sampling of elementary, middle, and high school teachers from private and public schools in rural New York. It should also be noted that a study of five participants is an acceptable number for detailed, rich data collection for phenomenological research (Creswell, 2006; Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, a small sample size worked better, as the study was designed using unique qualitative methods (multiple interviews, a focus group, and audio recordings) that gathered a large amount of data. This study’s aim was to acquire rich, descriptive details and a larger sample size would have hindered the feasibility of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. A larger sample size would not only be unwieldy, it very well may slow the process of saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Furthermore, a larger sample is not always better, as it could result in repetitive and superflous data, as noted by Charmaz (2006) who recommended a smaller sample size to more directly reach saturation in studies, such as this one, with modest qualitative findings. In closing this limitation, it needs to be noted that in this study, the findings are unique to the individual participants. A different sample may produce different results. To help ensure the best study possible, given the small sample size, careful attention and a scholarly methods and approach were used to justify their conclusions.
Limited to Novice Teachers in Rural New York

Beyond the limitation of sample size, the participants were also limited to novice, regular education classroom teachers in rural schools located in Upstate New York, educated at accredited, traditional brick and mortar colleges and universities. For purposes of this study, novice teachers were defined as having two or fewer years of experience (Meyer, 2002; Nolen, Horn, Ward, & Childers, 2011). According to contacted school district superintendents, budget restraints are causing public schools to down-size and few, if any, districts are hiring new teachers. School districts in New York State operate with a last in, first out approach and many new or novice teachers have been laid off or are on the bubble of being laid off. Private schools in rural areas are relatively small and operate with few faculty members. This plan of selecting novice teachers with two or fewer years of experience (Meyer, 2002; Nolen, Horn, Ward, & Childers, 2011), as opposed to first-year teachers, ensured that a pool of purposely selected participants were available to study, collect data from, and analyze in order to discover academic findings. It is difficult to determine with the tightening job market if this current condition has any impact on a similar study, however numerous hypotheses can be drawn and tested from its premise.

Sampling Method

Participants were purposefully, but conveniently selected novice teachers from rural schools in Upstate New York. This method was chosen because it allowed the researcher to hand select participants who have experienced the phenomenon based on various selectors, such as proximity or select demographics, which were especially fitting for the small sample in order to achieve the rich detail desired (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). For this study, the first and only five available and willing participants were selected, who actually fit all
criteria. When convenience is factored into a study, it sometimes presents itself as a limitation. Therefore, additional parameters had to be built in to ensure a proper cross-sample of participants that represented a more normal scope of novice teachers in a given population. This was accomplished through the use of additional demographics, such as selecting participants from both private and public schools, mixed gender, mixed age, mixed education, mixed experience, and a cross sample of elementary, middle, and high school teachers.

New York State Operates Differently and More Independently

It is standard practice that regular education teachers teach in inclusive settings in New York State and therefore all teachers have students with special education needs and modifications in their classrooms. These needs and modifications can vary from struggles with learning basic skills and/or difficulties with regulating and managing emotions or behaviors. Depending upon the type of the student, the type of teacher, and the needs of the classroom, the results of replicated studies may vary greatly and may or may not produce similar results.

Additionally, New York State operates and governs their schools differently than many of the other states, incorporating a structure that allows most towns to operate their schools as individual central or common school districts, rather than by an overall or encompassing county school district. Their academic component also differs in that it is one of only a few states which utilize a Regents academic program offering, as opposed to a common national standard. Although this is currently in the process of changing, New York State education still operates more independently than other states with limited participation and involvement in any national movements or universal standards. Teacher unions and collective bargaining agreements are known to be much stronger than they are in many other states. New York State classroom
teachers operate with a great deal of autonomy. Therefore, a study that analyzes public school teachers from other states may or may not produce different results.

**Mentoring and Teacher Training Varies**

New York State, like many states, has recognized that novice teachers struggle and has implemented mandates into districts developing and implementing some sort of formalized mentoring program. In short, new teachers are now given a mentor to help them through their first few years. The actual mentoring program varies from district to district. Varied degrees of mentoring can influence the results of any study using novice teachers in New York State. Most common forms of mentoring programs include a seasoned and accomplished veteran teacher meeting on regular basis, often monthly, to console, reflect, and nurture the novice teacher through the political, academic, social, cultural, and philosophical landscape of working in the field of education. The results of mentoring were not factored into this study. A strong mentor program may influence future studies.

Furthermore, teacher training and certification may vary from institution to institution. This study limited participants to those who completed a traditional teacher training program at an accredited brick and mortar college or university. Results which utilize data collected from participants who studied and trained at other non-traditional or online programs may produce different results.

**Private Schools are Highly Unique**

Private schools operate even more independently than public schools. Some are associated with churches which provide limited government and oversight; others operate exclusively on their own, with some direction from outside boards or agencies. The varied organization and structure from private schools alone can sway the results of future studies.
Private schools tend to rely on a much less formal mentoring program and approach since their size is much smaller than that of a common or central public school. Private schools also operate more closely as a team, often simply because of their unique smallness in size. Private schools in different areas of the country are much larger than in New York. The larger the school, the more likely a different culture or organization can influence further inquiries.

Other Demographics Ignored

Lastly, this study ignored a number of demographic factors which could deliver different results. Teacher demographics surrounding, race, gender, cultural or racial background, and outside vocational or work experience can all have implications on study results. These factors were ignored, as this study concentrated on collecting real and initial qualitative research into teacher perceptions. It viewed teachers as teachers and novice teachers as novice teachers. Additional or follow-up studies may wish to use those, as well as others, as parameters. Using those as parameters at this time would have hindered the researcher’s ability to conduct this study, as well as hampered the use of selected methodologies which were best fitted to capture the participants’ voices and to acquire rich and descriptive details.

Recommendations for Further Research

This qualitative study analyzed responses from five teachers in a rural area of New York State. The participants all indicated that they would be returning to the profession and to their current schools next year. Their responses suggested that they felt supported and that they loved their jobs. However, this is not indicative of all novice teachers. Given the current state of teacher turnover, a logical progression would be to replicate the study using teachers who are not planning on returning to the profession and then doing a comparison analysis in the key areas of teacher training, environment, experience, and job satisfaction.
Similarly, it would be insightful to conduct a comparison study of novice teacher perceptions related to management efficacy of teachers who self-reported as struggling with classroom management versus non-struggling ones in order to further the research in the areas of teacher burnout and job satisfaction. What variables or factors that emerge could bring to light areas that could be targeted and addressed. For example, could there be teacher factors such as schedules, work load, or training? Or could there be student factors, such as differences in student populations, demographics, or special needs, that correlate to retention or attrition.

This study featured teachers who represented a mix of elementary, middle, and high school teachers from private and public schools. This study could be the beginning of a much bigger study that could break down the scholarship using more refined demographics, such as grade level or type of school. Future studies could use the qualitative data and themes as benchmarks to determine quantitatively to what extent future participants agree with each category. This would advance the research and literature and allow future scholars to make recommendations to teacher training programs and in-service training.

In this study, one teacher was a second career teacher with twenty years of additional age and life experience than the remaining participants. While still a novice teacher, this participant brought a lot of life experience and confidence into the classroom. For some of the novice teachers, this may have been their first job, or at least their first career. A study that differentiates between first and second career teachers in relation to classroom management, job satisfaction, and retention would shed light on the varying teacher populations and produce interesting results.
Emerging themes uncovered a number of areas ripe for additional research. Most notably, much is done in the way of training teachers to conduct and implement successful classroom management techniques, regardless of the success. However, the research uncovered the very real and personal side of classroom management and how emotionally charged and taxing it actually is. A logical progression in this area would be to investigate and analyze what is being done in schools and in teacher training programs in this key area of emotion. According to recent literature into the emotional side of the teaching profession (cf., Chang, 2009), not much is being done. Since so much of job satisfaction is based on personal contentment, studying the emotional aspect of the job, and in particular classroom management, could begin a blueprint that outlines best practices.

Participant responses indicated that collegiality was an important part of feeling supported. An emerging theme led the researcher to discover that successful, returning teachers utilized the help and advice of unofficial mentors and nearby colleagues, sort of an underground network. Future research could look at this aspect more closely and determine what they use them for, how valuable is their guidance, and how teachers who do not use this sort of network fair in comparison. Additionally, scholarship could attempt to draw correlations to effective or ineffective classroom management to the naturally formed relationship of effective or ineffective unofficial mentors.

**Conclusion**

Novice teachers in rural areas of New York State felt that classroom management was just part of the job. With experience, the teachers were confident that they can improve their craft, but still expected to fail periodically. Although research-based proven programs, strategies, and techniques exist, teachers opted to blend in personal or unique approaches.
Novice teachers found teaching to be rewarding, but emotionally taxing. A network of colleagues served as a support group for novice teachers. They found success through making progress with students. In the end, teachers love to teach and plan to continue, as long as the opportunity presents itself.
REFERENCES


10.1016/j.jvb.2009.06.001


10.1016/0030-5073(66)90013-4


You are invited to be in a research study of teacher perceptions of classroom management, job satisfaction, and retention. You were selected as a possible participant because you fit the below criteria:

1. Participants will be certified teachers who completed a teacher training program at a traditional, accredited brick and mortar college or university;
2. Participants will be novice teachers who have two or fewer years of full-time teaching experience, not to include substitute teaching;
3. Participants will represent a cross-section of public and private school teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels;
4. Participants will be regular education classroom teachers teaching at rural schools in Upstate New York (although some may be dual certified as special education teachers); and,
5. Participants will be hired for full-time teaching positions.

I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. This study is being conducted by Shawn M. Bielicki.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to listen to the voices of up to five novice teachers from a rural area in Upstate New York about their actual encounters and/ or struggles with classroom management and determine how these situations affect their job satisfaction and future career plans.

The three guiding research questions are:

1. What perceptions do rural classroom teachers in New York have about their classroom management?
2. How do these perceptions affect their job satisfaction?
3. How do these perceptions affect their retention?

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:
1. Four times during a period of four weeks, respond to questions and prompts for approximately 15 minutes per session. You will record your thoughts and perceptions on certain aspects of classroom management using audio equipment provided. Total estimated approximate time: 1 hour.
2. Twice during a four week period, create an online discussion board post and respond to another participant’s post. Posts will be centered on various aspects of classroom management. There will be no word count requirement. Total estimated approximate time: 1-2 hours.
3. Complete two individual interviews about various aspects of classroom management, jobs satisfaction, and future career plans. Total estimated approximate time: 2 hours.

You will be audio recorded for the four recordings and two interviews. These will be transcribed and later interpreted and coded.

Your total estimated time investment will be approximately 4-5 hours over a four week period.

**Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:**

This study has minimal risks to the participant. During the course of the study, the researcher may become privy to information that triggers the mandatory reporting requirements for child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse or intent to harm self or others.

The benefit to participants is minimal, but the study may have a benefit to the field of education. Participation in the study may advance knowledge of teacher training and preparation, classroom management, job satisfaction, and teacher retention. Some participants may be able to use their participation as reflective practice piece toward their annual performance review.

**Compensation:**

You will not receive any monetary compensation for participation.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. All participants will receive pseudonyms for themselves and for the district. All data collected will be saved on an external USB drive, locked in password protected folders, and locked in a stored file cabinet. It will be deleted after seven years.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the researcher, your school district, or Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw:**

To withdraw from the study, simply email the researcher at .... All recordings with be promptly deleted.

**Contacts and Questions:**
The researcher conducting this study is Shawn M. Bielicki. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at... You can also contact his advisor, Dr. Rollen Fowler at ...

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at ...

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I fit the above criteria to participate. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ I agree to be recorded for purposes of this study. Please check box.

Signature: ________________________________ Date: ____________

Signature of Investigator: ________________________________ Date: ____________

IRB Code Numbers: 1576

IRB Expiration Date: 05/22/2014
Appendix – B

Recruitment Letter

May 25, 2013

Dear teacher:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership. I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

Criteria to participate is listed below:

- Participants will be certified teachers who completed a teacher training program at a traditional, accredited brick and mortar college or university;
- Participants will be novice teachers who have two years or fewer full-time teaching experience, not to include substitute teaching;
- Participants will represent a cross-section of public and private school teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels;
- Participants will be regular education classroom teachers teaching at rural schools in Upstate New York (although some may be dual certified as special education teachers); and,
- Participants will be hired for full-time teaching positions.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to:

1. Four times during a period of four weeks, respond to questions and prompts for approximately 15 minutes per session. You will record your thoughts and perceptions on certain aspects of classroom management using audio equipment provided. Total approximate time: 1 hour.

2. Twice during a four week period, create an online discussion board post and respond to another participant’s post. Posts will be centered on various aspects of classroom management. There will be no word count requirement. Total estimated approximate time: 1-2 hours.

3. Complete two individual interviews about various aspects of classroom management, jobs satisfaction, and future career plans. Interviews will be audio recorded. Total estimated approximate time: 2 hours.
Your total estimated approximate time investment will be approximately 4-5 hours over a four week period. Your participation will be completely confidential, and no personal or identifying information will be published.

To participate, please respond via email to… and an informed consent document will be emailed to you. The informed consent document contains additional information about my research. You will need to sign and return it. While participants will not receive monetary compensation, they may make valuable contributions to the field of education. Some participants will be able to use their participation as part of the reflective practice for their school district’s annual performance review.

Sincerely,

Shawn M. Bielicki
Liberty University
Appendix – C

Audio Recording Prompts

You are asked to provide rich, descriptive details about your unique and individual experiences with classroom management that occurred during the week. Please record your thoughts and perceptions to the following questions and prompts using the audio device provided. Please respond to your fullest ability. Your recording should be approximately 15 minutes.

1. Please describe, in detail, any recent experiences that you had with defiant, non-participatory, and/or disruptive students.

2. How did your planning, organization, and/or classroom environment contribute to these situations?

3. If situations of defiance, non-participation, and/or disruption occurred, discuss how you handled them.

4. What were the results of the situations?

5. What caused these situations to occur?

6. Were you trained for these individual situations?

7. Did you handle the situations the way you were trained? Why or why not? Is there anything about how you handled the occurrences that you perceive that you did correctly or incorrectly?

8. Share your thoughts and perceptions about the occurrences (to include feelings, hindsight, emotion, confusion, clarity, and the like).

9. How did these occurrences affect your overall job satisfaction?
10. Did these occurrences, or similar ones, have any effect on whether or not you will stay in the teaching profession? If so, how did these occurrences affect your ideas of staying in or leaving the profession?

Please save your responses using the audio device provided. Please email saved audio responses to…by Friday evening of each week.
Focus Group – Discussion Board Topic #1

You are asked to create a discussion board post which fully answers and responds to the questions and prompts below. There is no word minimum or limit on this discussion board. You are also asked to respond to at least one other participant’s post.

Please share your thoughts, feelings, opinions, and experiences on the following topics. This first set of questions is centered on your planning, organization, and environment and prevention tactics.

1. Using examples, how does your planning, organization, and classroom environment affect your classroom management?
2. Using examples, which specific preventive classroom management tactics do you implement in your normal day to day classroom?
3. How do your thoughts, feelings, opinions, and experiences with the above affect your job satisfaction and views on the profession?
Focus Group - Discussion Board Topic # 2

You are asked to create a discussion board post which fully answers and responds to the questions and prompts below. There is no word limit to this discussion board. You are also asked to respond to at least one other participant’s post.

This second set of questions is centered on dealing with disruptive and defiant students, as well as handing out disciplinary consequences. Please share your thoughts, feelings, opinions, and experiences on the following topics.

1. Using examples, how do you deal with defiant, non-participatory, and/or disruptive students?
2. Using examples, how do you handle handing out disciplinary consequences for disruptive, non-participatory, or defiant students?
3. How do your thoughts, feelings, opinions, and experiences with dealing with defiant, non-participatory, and/or disruptive students and handing out disciplinary consequences affect your job satisfaction and views on the profession?
Appendix – F

Interview #1

During the first interview:

1. What theoretical knowledge and tactical training in classroom management did you receive in their pre-service training?

2. How prepared for classroom management did you feel you were when you left your pre-service setting?

3. After starting the job, how prepared did you feel you actually were in the area of classroom management? If a gap existed between your theoretical training and practical experience, please describe.

4. Did you receive in-service training, mentoring, or professional development in the area of classroom management from your school district? If so, what were you trained in and did you find it useful?

5. Did you research any classroom management programs or approaches on your own? If so, which programs? Did you implement them? To what extent? Were they effective?

6. Did you seek additional assistance to include peer advice, additional training, or scholarly research? If so, how did that impact your day-to-day classroom management?

7. Which classroom management tactics do you regularly use in the classroom in order to maintain an effective learning environment (to include methods of effective teaching, student engagement, preventive techniques, de-escalation techniques, and the like)?

8. Which parts of your classroom management are imitated, that is implemented in a manner that you learned from watching another professional?
9. Which parts of their classroom management are individual and unique to you?

10. How did your planning, organization, and classroom environment contribute to or work against your classroom management success?
Appendix – G

Interview #2

During the second interview:

11. What successes did you experience with disruptive, non-participatory, and/or defiant students?

12. What failures did you experience with disruptive, non-participatory, and/or defiant students?

13. How did you determine the actual disciplinary consequences? Was anyone besides the teacher and student involved in handing out the disciplinary consequences? If so, who?

14. Did you feel supported in handing out consequences? If so, by whom?

15. What successes did you experience in handing out the actual disciplinary consequences?

16. What failures did you experience in handling out actual disciplinary consequences?

17. How did your experiences with classroom management affect their job satisfaction?

18. Given your experiences, what are your future career plans for next school year? How about five years from now?

19. What advice would you give on classroom management to new teachers or to someone considering entering the field of teaching?

20. What advice would you give to those providing teacher training on classroom management to include area districts, professors, or colleagues?
Appendix – H

Superintendent/ Headmaster e-mail

April 1, 2013

Dear Superintendent/ Headmaster:

As a former …County school teacher/administrator, I am passionate about rural education. I am also passionate about beginning teachers, classroom management, and teacher retention.

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership. My study is on novice, rural teacher perceptions of their classroom management and how these perceptions affect their job satisfaction and retention. I am writing to ask for your recommendations for teachers who fit the below criteria, as well as for your permission for these teachers to participate. Participation will be 100% voluntary and teachers can withdraw at any time. All parts of the study can be completed outside of the work day.

Criteria to participate:

- Participants will be certified teachers who completed a teacher training program at a traditional, accredited brick and mortar college or university;
- Participants will be novice teachers who have two years or fewer full-time teaching experience, not to include substitute teaching;
- Participants will represent a cross-section of public and private school teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels;
- Participants will be regular education classroom teachers teaching at rural schools in Upstate New York (although some may be dual certified as special education teachers); and,
- Participants will be hired for full-time teaching positions.

With your recommendations and permission, I will contact your teachers who fit the above criteria by sending them a recruitment e-mail. Interested teachers will respond via email. Afterwards, I will send them a consent form to sign. The information collected will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be shared on the teacher or the district. All participants and districts will be given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. If your novice teachers choose to participate, they will be asked to:

1. Four times during a period of four weeks, respond to questions and prompts for approximately 15 minutes per session. They will record their thoughts and perceptions
on certain aspects of classroom management using audio equipment provided. Total approximate time: 1 hour.
2. Twice during a four week period, participants will create an online discussion board post and respond to another participant’s post. Posts will be centered on various aspects of classroom management. There will be no word count requirement. Total estimated approximate time: 1-2 hours.
3. Complete two individual interviews about various aspects of classroom management, jobs satisfaction, and future career plans. Interviews will be audio recorded. Total estimated approximate time: 2 hours.

The total estimated approximate time investment will be approximately 4-5 hours over a four week period, all of which can be completed outside of their normal work day.

While participants will not receive monetary compensation, they may make valuable contributions to the field of education. Some participants will be able to use their participation as part of the reflective practice for their school district’s annual performance review.

To allow participation for your district, simply copy and paste the below paragraph to district letterhead, sign the document, and mail it to... For a quicker response, it can also be scanned and emailed to… Please include contact information (phone and e-mail) for your teachers who fit the listed criteria.

In education,

Shawn M. Bielicki
Liberty University

Permission paragraph

As superintendent/ headmaster, I authorize Shawn M. Bielicki to conduct a study entitled, “Novice, Rural New York State Teacher Perceptions of Their Classroom Management and How These Perceptions Affect Their Job Satisfaction and Retention” in my district. I understand that the study is 100% voluntary and that teachers may withdraw at any time. I understand that the study will take place during the months of May and June, 2013, and that it can be completely done outside of the normal work day. I further understand that the study involves four audio recordings, two interviews, and two discussion board posts. Lastly, I understand that the study is completely confidential and no identifying information from the participants or districts will be shared or published.

The following participants are full-time, regular education classroom novice teachers who have two years or fewer of full-time teaching experience (other than substitute teaching):

Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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Sincerely,
Appendix I

Confidentiality Agreement – Transcription Service

PASQUE TRANSCRIPTION SERVICE

NON-DISCLOSURE / CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I, Hailey Pasque, acknowledge that I will be providing transcription services to Shawn M. Bielicki in connection with the following research:

Research Title/Description: (Dissertation) "NOVICE RURAL NEW YORK STATE TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND HOW THESE PERCEPTIONS AFFECT THEIR JOB SATISFACTION AND RETENTION"

Principal Investigator(s): Shawn M. Bielicki

I understand that I may receive sensitive or protected information in connection with my services, such as information regarding (a) the research design and findings, (b) a research participant’s personal information, thoughts, and feelings; or (c) persons known by a research participant. I understand that disclosure of any information I receive in connection with the research may result in harm to Shawn M. Bielicki and the research participants. I accordingly agree to the terms of this Confidentiality Agreement:

- I am permitted to disclose the information I receive in connection with the research to the following individual(s) only: SHAWN M. BIELICKI. I will not disclose the information I receive to anyone who is not authorized by this Agreement to receive it unless (a) the Principal Investigator gives me written authorization, or (b) disclosure is legally required.

- I will use precautions to prevent unauthorized parties from accessing the research-related information I have in my possession. At a minimum, I will keep all tangible information (such as documents, notes, audiotapes, and all media with electronic or digital information) locked in a file cabinet, and I will keep all electronic information (such as computer files and other digital information) password protected. Any transmission of transcripts will be password protected and done using encryption with a two-step data verification system.

- After completion of the transcription service, all data will be kept until verified and signed off by the principal investigator, and then deleted within 30 days.

This Confidentiality Agreement begins on the date I receive research information or begin providing my services to Shawn M. Bielicki, and it has no expiration date. Information that I knew before I began my services to Shawn M. Bielicki, or that is in the public domain through no fault of my own is excluded from the confidentiality requirements. This Confidentiality Agreement embodies the understanding and agreement of Shawn M. Bielicki and me, and it may not be amended or changed except by written instrument signed by both parties. Breach of this Agreement may, without limitation, result in termination of my services and other legal action against me.

(Personal identification information cropped).
June 1, 2013

Dear teacher:

Last week you were sent an email asking you to consider being part of a study. Below please find a copy of the information. Would you please take a moment to read through it and consider? Your participation would make a valuable contribution to the study.

Recruitment Letter

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership. I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

Criteria to participate is listed below:

- Participants will be certified teachers who completed a teacher training program at a traditional, accredited brick and mortar college or university;
- Participants will be novice teachers who have two years or fewer full-time teaching experience, not to include substitute teaching;
- Participants will represent a cross-section of public and private school teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels;
- Participants will be regular education classroom teachers teaching at rural schools in Upstate New York (although some may be dual certified as special education teachers); and,
- Participants will be hired for full-time teaching positions.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to:

1. Four times during a period of four weeks, respond to questions and prompts for approximately 15 minutes per session. You will record your thoughts and perceptions on certain aspects of classroom management using audio equipment provided. Total approximate time: 1 hour.

2. Twice during a four week period, create an online discussion board post and respond to another participant’s post. Posts will be centered on various aspects of
classroom management. There will be no word count requirement. Total estimated approximate time: 1-2 hours.

3. Complete two individual interviews about various aspects of classroom management, jobs satisfaction, and future career plans. Interviews will be audio recorded. Total estimated approximate time: 2 hours.

Your total estimated approximate time investment will be approximately 4-5 hours over a four week period. Your participation will be completely confidential, and no personal or identifying information will be published.

To participate, please respond via email to… and an informed consent document will be emailed to you. The informed consent document contains additional information about my research. You will need to sign and return it. While participants will not receive monetary compensation, they may make valuable contributions to the field of education. Some participants will be able to use their participation as part of the reflective practice for their school district’s annual performance review.

Sincerely,

Shawn M. Bielicki
Liberty University
Appendix – K

Follow-up Consent Form

June 1, 2013

Dear teacher:

Last week you were sent a consent form for you to sign and return. Included is a copy. Would you please take a moment to read through it, sign it, and return it to me at … You are encouraged to ask any questions you may have. Your participation will make a valuable contribution to the study.

Sincerely

Shawn M. Bielicki
Liberty University
May 22, 2013

Shawn M. Bielicki

IRB Approval 1576.052213: Novice, Rural, New York State Teacher Perceptions of Their Classroom Management and How These Perceptions Affect Their Job Satisfaction and Retention

Dear Shawn,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

(Cropped to conceal identification information)
Appendix – M

Interviews, Focus Groups, and Audio Recordings

Contact the researcher for complete data at smbielicki@liberty.edu.
Member Checking – Transcript Approval Letter

Teacher,

Attached please find your transcripts for the two interviews and four recordings. Would you please verify their accuracy by replying to this email with an “approved” message? Also attached find the audio file for the interviews. You should already have the audio for the recordings (you emailed those to me). If you need anything, please do not hesitate to ask.

In education,

Shawn M. Bielicki
### Member Checking – Transcript Approval Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Approval Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abby</td>
<td>Approved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloe</td>
<td>Thank you - everything looks good. Did not realize I said &quot;um&quot; so much Yikes!! Best of luck. Thank you for this interesting opportunity to reflect on my performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jael</td>
<td>Hi Shawn- I approve all transcripts. I really enjoyed participating in the study – it allowed me to reflect on my classroom management in a whole new way and I found it very helpful to my teaching. I also really appreciate your encouragement and support throughout the study. Thanks! Jael</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Hi Shawn, Those transcripts have my approval. I think it's pretty interesting that your transcriber is so thorough she includes the &quot;ums.&quot; Made me chuckle to see how everyday speech actually looks on paper. Take Care, Lucy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>APPROVED. Thanks Shawn.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank You Letter - Completion

Teacher,

I wish to thank you for your participation in a qualitative study on classroom management and job satisfaction. You provided critical and intuitive data via audio recordings, discussion board postings, and interviews. Through your involvement, you furthered the research in this area. You also demonstrated an impeccable dedication to the field, outstanding reflection on your contribution, and an excellent reliability to the overall process.

In education,

Shawn M. Bielicki