

GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LOW-INTENSITY BEHAVIOR  
MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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## Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore general education teachers' successes and challenges implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies while teaching in a public school setting. Guiding this study was Bernard Weiner's attribution theory, as the theory relates to teachers' perceptions and use of behavior management strategies. The central research question was, "How do general education teachers describe their experiences implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies?" Fifteen teachers participated in the study, and all teacher participants previously received training in low-intensity behavior management strategies from the district Board Certified Behavior Analyst. Data collection involved three approaches: open-ended surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups. Data were analyzed using van Manen's methodological guidelines for hermeneutic phenomenology, specifically *Phenomenology of Practice*. Teachers' descriptions of their challenges and successes implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies (precorrection, praise, breaks, accommodations) were organized into a hierarchal coding frame consisting of four primary themes and corresponding sub-themes: Teachers' Perceptions of Feasibility, Teachers' Perceptions of Effectiveness, Teachers' Philosophical Acceptance of Strategies, and Teachers' Use of Strategies. Findings revealed the importance of simplifying behavior plans, individualizing the behavior plan to the needs of the teacher, coaching teachers on classwide use of strategies, coaching teachers on combining strategies to maximize effectiveness, and providing a problem-solving forum for teachers districtwide.

*Keywords:* behavior management, general education teachers' perceptions, behavior plan implementation, low-intensity behavior management strategies, qualitative behavioral research

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### **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to teachers, who work so hard to meet the needs of the children in their classrooms. I am hopeful that an analysis of your feedback will help me better meet your needs.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to sincerely thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Barnett, and my committee member, Dr. Pearson. Your support, guidance, and encouragement throughout the dissertation process are deeply appreciated.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)

Behavior disorders (BD)

Common Core State Standards Initiatives (CCSI, 2010)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015)

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2007)

Positive Behavior Supports (PBS)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

Despite an abundance of research on evidence-based behavior management strategies and literature on teacher-focused implementation supports (e.g., teacher coaches, professional development workshops on behavior management), teachers continue to struggle to accommodate students with behavior challenges in general education classrooms (Collier-Meek et al., 2018, 2019; Cook et al., 2023). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997) mandates that all students with disabilities, including students with behavior disorders, be educated in the least restrictive environment (usually the general education classroom), to the maximum extent possible. However, problematic student behavior can impact the ability of a teacher to deliver instruction and the ability of all students in the class to learn. Teachers' struggles to deliver the low-intensity behavior management strategies recommended in the literature (pre-correction, praise, breaks, and accommodations) (Collier-Meek et al., 2019; Wehby & Lane, 2019), suggest a need to explore, in-depth, how teachers experience the behavior management strategies they are being asked to implement in their classrooms. Few studies have focused on the challenges and needs of general education teachers specifically, using a qualitative research design to fully understand teachers' successes and concerns.

Chapter One provides the framework for the phenomenological study of general education teachers' successes and challenges in implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies while teaching in a public school setting in central New Jersey. The first section provides a contextual background for the study. Next, the research problem, purpose of the study, and research questions are detailed. Lastly, the significance of the study is discussed.

## **Background**

Behavior management in the classroom has been given increased attention throughout history, and today, behavior management is recognized as an independent field of study within education sciences (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Problematic student behavior is a complex, critical issue that affects both student achievement and teacher well-being (Hanks et al., 2019; Jerrim & Sims, 2021). Bernard Weiner's (1974) attribution theory is useful for examining how teachers' perceptions influence the adoption of evidence-based behavior management practices.

## **Historical Context**

Although classroom management has always been recognized as critical for teachers, behavior management was not thought of as an independent field of study within the education sciences until the 1950s. Therefore, in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, theories and research on the topic of behavior management in the classroom were scarce (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). One of the earliest studies on the topic was Wickman's (1928) study entitled, *Children's Behavior and Teachers' Attitudes*, which suggested that teachers express the most concern about overt disruptive behaviors that interfere with the conduct of the class. Other early studies included Charters (1928) on character education and Watson (1926) on behaviorism.

It was not until the 1960s that behavioral researchers began to focus specifically on behavior management in the classroom (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). B.F. Skinner's (1938) groundbreaking work in the study of behavior modification led to the emergence of applied behavior analysis. Skinner's research with animals, particularly pigeons and rats, emphasized consequences (rewards or punishments), breaking larger tasks down into smaller steps, and reinforcing success with each small step in creating behavior change (Skinner, 1938). Behavioral researchers typically favor controlled, experimental research (Burney et al., 2023), and many



techniques deemed effective in research labs were not easily adapted to classroom environments (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). In addition to Skinner's work, several studies conducted by behavioral researchers during this time evaluated the effects of reward versus punishment and praise versus blame as techniques for effective parenting (Sears et al., 1957; Baumrind, 1971). These studies generally found praise and rewards to be more effective than punishment and blame. Kounin and Gump (1961) extended these findings to classrooms and concluded that nonpunitive approaches were more successful in improving students' behavior.

In the 1970s and 1980s, attention to behavioral practices in classrooms and schools continued to increase, and emphasis was placed on proactive, positive strategies (versus reactive, punitive consequences), creating contextually appropriate interventions, and incorporating stakeholder perspectives. The Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1997 included a grant to establish a national Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports to provide assistance to schools on evidence-based behavior management practices (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997) require schools to consider the use of positive behavior supports (PBS) and functional behavior assessments (FBA) when problematic behavior interferes with a student's learning or the learning of others in the classroom (Sugai & Horner, 2002). PBS emphasizes creating interventions that are contextually appropriate for real-life settings. The PBS model includes low-intensity behavior management strategies, which are strategies that are both effective and easy to implement in the classroom. PBS also emphasizes stakeholder perspectives and collaboration (Carr et al., 2002). Whereas behavior analysts have typically functioned as experts who design interventions and enlist the aid of consumers, in the PBS model consumers (parents, teachers, students) are active participants in creating interventions (Carr et al., 2002).

## **Social Context**

Studies on teacher burnout suggest that teachers experience high levels of stress, emotional exhaustion, and lower levels of self-efficacy when they report challenges with student behavior (Gilmour et al., 2022). Teacher burnout, especially emotional exhaustion, is highly correlated with teacher attrition (Gilmour et al., 2022). General education teachers frequently report that they do not feel confident in their abilities to meet the needs of students who struggle with behavior challenges (Al Jaffal, 2022; Shank & Santiago, 2022; Sobeck & Reister, 2020) and that they feel largely unheard (Hanks et al., 2019). Despite the simplification of behavior management practices (Ennis et al., 2018; Owens et al., 2021; Royer et al., 2018), and teacher-focused implementation supports (Collier-Meek et al., 2019; Kraft & Blazar, 2018; Upright et al., 2020), general education teachers struggle to implement behavior management strategies consistently (Collier-Meek et al., 2018). This information suggests the need to explore teachers' experiences implementing the four low-intensity behavior management strategies that present most often in educational literature: pre-correction, praise, breaks, and accommodations. Results can be used to better support teachers in managing challenging behavior in their classrooms.

## **Theoretical Context**

Different theories over time have been used to explore factors that support or hinder behavior plan implementation. Albert Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory has been used to explore teachers' instructional behaviors. The theory states that a person's beliefs in their abilities determine how well they can follow through with a plan of action in prospective situations (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977) suggests that teachers' confidence in their ability to deliver a specific intervention or practice can influence the implementation of evidence-based practices (Al Jaffal, 2022; Gilmour et al., 2022; Shapiro et al.,

2021; Sobeck & Reister, 2020).

Albert Bandura's social learning theory (1977) emphasizes the importance of modeling behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions (Bandura, 1977). When intervention procedures are modeled for a teacher it can effectively increase teachers' implementation of behavior plans (Collier-Meek et al., 2019). Modeling is most effective when it involves demonstrating the use of a strategy directly with a student the moment that problematic behavior is occurring, versus role-playing with teachers (Collier-Meek et al., 2018; 2019).

For this study, Bernard Weiner's (1974) attribution theory was used as a framework to explore how teachers' perceptions and beliefs impact their decisions about whether to use evidence-based behavior management strategies. Attribution theory is concerned with how individuals interpret events, and how this interpretation relates to their thinking and behavior. If an individual believes they will be successful, they will be more likely to approach a task. Conversely, if an individual believes they will be unsuccessful, they will be less likely to try (Weiner, 1974). There is a strong correlation between teachers' attributions for student academic and behavioral performance and teachers' instructional behaviors (Graham, 2020; Nemer et al., 2019; Wang & Hall, 2018). There is also evidence indicating that teachers' beliefs about student misbehavior influence their emotions and decision-making (Nemer et al., 2019) and that teachers' perceptions of the controllability of misbehavior impact the decision to adopt a behavior management strategy (Hart & DiPerna, 2016).

### **Problem Statement**

The problem is general education teachers struggle to implement behavior management strategies consistently, and logistical and philosophical considerations may limit the utility of these interventions. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2007), and the Common Core State Standards Initiatives (CCSI, 2010) hold teachers responsible for student outcomes (Upright, 2020). Teachers face an enormous amount of pressure from federal, state, and local accountability policies to improve student achievement (Jerrim & Sims, 2021). However, disruptive student behaviors can impact a teacher's ability to deliver instruction, and the ability of all students in the classroom to learn. Many teachers report feeling unprepared to address the needs of students with behavioral difficulties (Griffith & Tyner, 2019). Persistent behavioral struggles in the classroom can lead to reduced academic achievement, decreased student engagement, and teacher burnout and attrition (Blank & Shavit, 2016).

While studies have highlighted the effectiveness of Positive Behavior Supports in reducing challenging behavior, teachers face obstacles in their attempts to implement these strategies in their classrooms (Collier-Meek et al., 2018). Teachers frequently report difficulty implementing behavior interventions while managing competing classroom demands, and report that it is especially difficult to implement interventions with multiple steps (Collier-Meek et al., 2019). Most recently, studies have addressed low-intensity behavior management strategies that are easy to implement in the classroom while managing competing demands (Ennis et al., 2018; Wehby & Lane, 2019). While previous research has examined the efficacy of individual behavior management strategies (Ennis et al., 2018; Owens et al., 2021; Royer et al., 2018), few studies have analyzed teachers' perceptions of the behavior management strategies they're being asked to implement in their classrooms.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore general education teachers' successes and challenges in implementing low-intensity behavior

management strategies while teaching in a public school setting in central New Jersey. Low-intensity behavior management strategies are defined as behavior management strategies that are both proactive and easy to incorporate into the regular classroom routine (Ennis et al., 2018). Hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry was used to prioritize general education teachers' experiences implementing the four strategies that present most often in educational literature: pre-correction, praise, breaks, and accommodations. Understanding how teachers view and experience behavior management strategies can help improve the development of classroom-based behavior interventions and can inform efforts to support teachers in the use of evidence-based behavior management practices (Nemer et al., 2019). This study utilized Bernard Weiner's (1974) attribution theory as the theoretical framework. Attribution theory is useful for examining how teachers' perceptions influence the adoption of evidence-based behavior management practices.

### **Significance of the Study**

While IDEA (1997) underscores the importance of evidence-based behavior management interventions, teachers face challenges in their attempts to put these strategies into practice (Thomas & Lafasakis, 2019). Understanding how teachers view the low-intensity behavior management strategies recommended in the literature can help improve the development of classroom-based behavior interventions. This understanding can also help inform efforts to support teachers in the use of evidence-based behavior management practices (Nemer et al., 2019).

### **Theoretical**

According to attribution theory, teachers' perceptions of and explanations for students' behavioral difficulties can affect teachers' emotions, which in turn, predict their teaching

behaviors (Kulinna, 2020). Despite an abundance of research on students' causal attributions dating back to the 1970s, there is a lack of research on causal attributions in teachers (Wang & Hall, 2018; Graham, 2020). In the context of the current study, attribution theory suggests that teachers' perceptions of behavior management strategies impact whether they commit to using them. Teachers' perceptions of task difficulty (e.g., intervention plan complexity), the time needed to execute the intervention (Collier-Meek et al., 2019; McLennan et al., 2020), and perceived effectiveness of a behavior intervention (Nemer et al., 2019) are important factors that affect teacher motivation, performance, and ultimately treatment plan fidelity (Nichols et al., 2020).

### **Empirical**

This study narrowed a gap in the literature in two ways: (1) In terms of participants, few studies have focused on general education teachers specifically. General education teachers face unique challenges in that they are typically equipped with less specialized knowledge and training and have fewer school resources available to them (Al Jaffal, 2022). Only one study has explored general education teachers' perceptions of challenging behavior and teachers' reported use of behavior management strategies. The study was limited to kindergarten and first-grade teachers in a rural public school district (Tillery et al., 2010). It is critical to explore behavior plan implementation barriers specific to general education teachers within the context of their school communities and classrooms; (2) Most studies have utilized quantitative methods involving questionnaires and surveys with pre-determined response categories (Burney et al., 2023). While single-case designs are highly valued by behavioral researchers (Friman, 2021), using this method alone offers an incomplete picture (LeBlanc, 2020). Behavioral researchers have been criticized for being disconnected from the needs of consumers (Ram, 2020) and

missing the mark on the social acceptability of interventions (Leaf et al., 2021). In terms of behavior analytic study, qualitative research methods can answer different questions regarding the context around behavior from the perspective of teachers' challenges and needs (Burney et al., 2023).

### **Practical**

One of the challenges that school-based behavior analysts continue to face is how to encourage teachers to implement behavior plans consistently and correctly (Collier-Meek et al., 2018, 2019; Cook et al., 2023). Students cannot benefit from behavior plans if teachers struggle to implement them. Single-case research design is dominant in the field of behavior analysis, and most studies that have explored strategies for ensuring behavior plan implementation fidelity have utilized quantitative research designs (Burney et al., 2023). Though quantitative research is a powerful methodology for demonstrating statistically significant relationships between variables, it does not allow for in-depth analysis of how stakeholders perceive interventions. Throughout history, behavior analysts have been criticized for recommending interventions that are effective in controlled settings, but are not appropriate or feasible for the context in which the intervention is intended (Burney et al., 2023; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). Teachers' continued struggles with behavior plans suggest that the components of these interventions are challenging to put into practice. Qualitative research offers a complementary research tool to behavior analysts to explore the social validity of interventions (Burney et al., 2023). The methodology allows behavior analysts to problem-solve with stakeholders to create interventions that are contextually appropriate, valued, and meaningful.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions directly align with the purpose of the study, which is to explore general education teachers' successes and challenges implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies while teaching in a public school setting in central New Jersey. This study utilized Bernard Weiner's (1974) attribution theory as the theoretical framework.

Attribution theory is useful for examining how teachers' perceptions influence the adoption of evidence-based behavior management practices. Therefore, research question three reflects the theoretical framework.

### **Central Research Question**

How do general education teachers describe their experiences implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies?

### **Sub-question One**

What challenges have general education teachers experienced when implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies?

### **Sub-question Two**

What successes have general education teachers experienced when implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies?

### **Sub-question Three**

What do general education teachers attribute their use of evidence-based behavior management strategies to?

## **Definitions**

1. *Accommodations* – Low-intensity practices that involve altering the classroom environment or learning tasks to help reduce frustration for a student who is experiencing



learning or behavior challenges (Institute for Education Sciences, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2023).

2. *Board Certified Behavior Analyst* – Graduate-level, certified practitioners who help solve behavior-related issues in a variety of environmental contexts (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2023).
3. *Break* – A low-intensity strategy that involves allowing students to take quick, timed rest periods away from classroom demands (Owens et al., 2021).
4. *Functional Behavior Assessment* – An assessment used to determine what factors contribute to challenging behavior (Institute of Education Sciences, 2018).
5. *Low-Intensity Behavior Management Strategies* - Behavior management strategies that are both proactive and easy to implement in the classroom (Ennis et al., 2018).
6. *Positive Behavior Supports* – A set of proactive, research-based strategies for supporting students’ behavioral, social, and emotional needs (Center on PBIS, 2023).
7. *Praise* – A low-intensity strategy that can be used to reinforce appropriate behavior in various settings with students of all ages (Ennis et al., 2018).
8. *Precorrection* – A strategy that involves determining when challenging behaviors typically occur and providing proactive reminders about behavioral expectations before entering those specific situations (Ennis et al., 2018).
9. *Teacher Coach* – A subject-matter expert who works with teachers on an individual basis to model research-based strategies and practices (Kraft & Blazaar, 2018).

### **Summary**

Researchers have identified low-intensity behavior management strategies, as well as various support activities, that may help teachers implement these strategies consistently and

effectively. However, findings continue to suggest that teachers do not implement behavior support strategies at the levels necessary to achieve positive student outcomes (Collier-Meek et al., 2019). There is a lack of research that has addressed general education teachers' perceptions and experiences implementing these strategies in their classrooms. Understanding general education teachers' challenges and successes in managing student behavior while using low-intensity behavior management strategies can inform the development of school-based behavior interventions as well as teacher-focused implementation supports.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

A systematic review of the literature was conducted to explore general education teachers' perceptions of behavior management strategies and barriers related to implementation while teaching in a public school setting in central New Jersey. Chapter Two offers a review of the scholarly research related to this topic. The first section discusses Weiner's (1974) attribution theory, followed by a synthesis of recent literature on behavior management practices in schools, behavior plan implementation barriers, implementation facilitators, and studies on teachers' perceptions and beliefs. Lastly, the need for qualitative research to fully understand teachers' challenges and needs is discussed. A gap exists in the literature pertaining to general education teachers' perceptions of low-intensity behavior management strategies.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is grounded in Bernard Weiner's (1974) attribution theory as the theory relates to teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and subsequent behaviors. Attribution theory suggests that an individual's motivation to participate in a task is directly related to their confidence in a positive outcome (Weiner, 1974). If an individual believes they will be successful, they will be more likely to approach a task. Conversely, if an individual believes they will be unsuccessful, they will be less likely to try. According to the basic principles of attribution theory, an individual's attributes, or explanations, for success and failure determine how much effort they will expend on the task. Therefore, how individuals experience and interpret events directly impacts their behavior (Weiner, 1974, 1986). Attribution theory is useful for examining how teachers' perceptions influence the adoption of evidence-based behavior management practices.

## **Principles**

According to Weiner's (1974) theory, individuals attribute successes and challenges to four main causes: ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck. These four attributions are further divided into three dimensions: locus of control, stability, and controllability (Weiner, 1986). The theory implies that if one can influence an individual's attributions or the way they think about events, then one can influence their future behavior.

### ***Locus of Control***

The locus of control dimension refers to whether an event is perceived to be caused by internal or external factors (Weiner, 1979). Weiner (1979) suggested that individuals with an internal locus of control more often attribute their successes and struggles to their behavior (such as ability or effort). In contrast, individuals with an external locus of control often attribute their successes and struggles to forces outside of their control (such as task difficulty or luck) (Weiner, 1979). When individuals feel that they are in control of the outcome of their behaviors (when they make more internal attributions), they are more likely to work toward influencing those outcomes. The theory implies that more internal attributions lead to more successful behavioral outcomes (Heider, 1958; Weiner, 1979).

### ***Stability***

The stability dimension refers to whether an attribution is perceived to be permanent or changeable (Weiner, 1979). For example, ability and task difficulty are considered stable (fixed and unchangeable) in nature, while effort and luck are considered unstable (changeable) in nature (Heider, 1958; Rotter, 1966). Behaviors that occur consistently over a long period of time are perceived to be stable and less likely to change (Weiner, 1979). If an individual thinks that an outcome is unchangeable (stable), they are likely to put forth less effort because they believe that

their efforts will not change the outcome. If an individual perceives an outcome to be changeable (unstable), the individual is likely to put forth more effort because they believe that they may have a successful outcome with time and effort (Weiner, 1974).

### ***Controllability***

The third causal dimension, controllability, refers to an individual's ability to control the outcome of a behavior (Weiner, 1979). If an individual perceives an event to be controllable, then the individual believes that they can influence the outcome. If an individual perceives a behavior to be uncontrollable, they believe they have limited or no capacity to influence the outcome (Weiner, 1979). Effort is considered a controllable factor, while ability is considered an uncontrollable factor.

### **Relevance**

In the context of the current study, attribution theory is useful for examining general education teachers' use of low-intensity behavior management strategies. The theory implies that teachers' perceptions of behavior management strategies impact whether they commit to using them. Teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of an intervention (Collier-Meek et al., 2019) and the ease with which it can be incorporated into the classroom routine (McLenan et al., 2020; Nemer et al., 2019; Nichols et al., 2020) affect behavior intervention fidelity. Within the controllability dimension of attribution theory, teachers who believe they can have a positive impact on student behavior (that student behavior is changeable) and teachers who attribute students' behavioral improvements to their sustained efforts implementing behavior management strategies may be more likely to adopt and continue to use evidence-based behavior management practices. Teachers who attribute behavioral progress to forces outside of their control, such as

luck or student maturity over time, may be less likely to adopt and continue to use evidence-based behavior management strategies.

### **Related Literature**

To create behavior plans that are sustainable in public school general education settings, it is critical to understand teachers' challenges and successes with behavior management strategies. This review is divided into sections that focus on current behavior management practices in schools, behavior plan implementation barriers, behavior plan implementation facilitators, and studies on teachers' perceptions and beliefs. Each of the themes is interconnected with the purpose of this study and provides context for the phenomenological exploration of general education teachers' perceptions of low-intensity, evidence-based behavior management strategies.

### **Behavior Management in School Settings**

Classroom management policies and practices in public schools today are the result of gradual shifts in behavior intervention practices during the 1980s and 1990s and legislation that stemmed from behavioral research published during this time. In schools, behavior management strategies are geared toward addressing and minimizing behaviors that interfere with learning specifically (McMilan, 2020). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997) calls for the use of evidence-based behavior management strategies when a student's behavior negatively impacts their learning or the learning of other students in the classroom. Although IDEA (1997) underscores the importance of scientifically supported behavioral strategies, there is a substantial gap between research and practices in schools (Collier-Meek et al., 2018, 2019; Cook et al., 2023; Wehby & Lane, 2019), which indicates a need to examine the challenges and functional utility of current behavior management practices.

### *The Evolution of Classroom Management Practices*

During the 1980s, researchers and policymakers began to reconceptualize how to provide support and services to individuals with disabilities (Sailor et al., 2011; Neumeier & Brown, 2020). The dominant theme during this time was emancipation, which stemmed from the American civil rights movement (Sailor et al., 2011). There was increasing national discontent with large, institutionalized settings for individuals with disabilities (Bozkus, 2021; Neumeier & Brown, 2020; Sailor et al., 2011; Sugai & Horner, 2019). The deinstitutionalization movement was marked by publications that revealed the abusive and inhumane conditions in state institutions. *Christmas in Purgatory* (Blatt & Kaplan, 1966) portrayed the conditions in New York's Willowbrook Institution, and *Oklahoma Shame* (Dubill, 1982) revealed conditions in Hissom and other large institutions in Oklahoma.

In the 1980s, significant progress was made toward identifying scientifically verified methods of treating severe behavior disorders (Barlow et al., 2020; Sugai et al., 2009). Referred to as "behavior modification" (Barlow et al., 2020), researchers in the field of applied behavior analysis (ABA) reported success in treating a range of severe behavior problems, including physical aggression and self-injurious behavior (Sailor et al., 2011; Sugai & Horner, 2019). These severe behavior challenges had been considered sufficient grounds for institutionalization. Many of the published successes with behavior modification involved subjecting individuals to contingent punishment (later called "aversives"), such as painful electric shock (Sugai & Horner, 2019; Sailor et al., 2011).

These two movements, deinstitutionalization and behavior modification involving the use of punishment, formed a paradox, and there was controversy among scientific behavioral researchers and professional practitioners (Sailor et al., 2011; Sugai & Horner, 2009). With civil

rights at the forefront, practitioners and the public did not agree with the use of painful aversives, such as electric shock, in the treatment of individuals with disabilities (Sailor et al., 2011; Sugai & Horner, 2019). The use of corporal punishment was banned in public schools during the 1980s, and several federal lawsuits (i.e., *Beard v. Hissom* in Oklahoma) confirmed public discontent. The new challenge facing school-based practitioners in the early 1980s was to establish a method for managing problematic student behavior with strategies applicable to school settings but not having to rely on aversive methods developed through research conducted in institutions. There was an immediate need for research and development of behavior management techniques that would be acceptable to professionals and the public and would also be efficient and effective in classroom-based settings (Sailor et al., 2011)

Special educators (Donnellan et al., 1984) and behavioral psychologists (Carr, 1977; Iwata et al., 1982) published important research focusing on prevention-based approaches to behavior management. Publications emphasized the importance of determining why problematic behavior occurs and under what circumstances rather than focusing exclusively on how to extinguish a problematic behavior quickly. This body of research led directly to the development of functional analysis of problematic behavior and functional assessment of problematic behavior (Dunlap et al., 1993; Foster-Johnson & Dunlap, 1993; Iwata et al., 1982; O'Neill et al., 1997; Repp & Horner, 1999). Singh et al. (1990) suggested that the central challenge was “being able to provide treatments that are effective, rapid, and socially acceptable” (p. 8). Positive Behavior Support (PBS) became the term that described research and practice dedicated to scientifically verified, non-aversive behavior interventions.

### ***Focus on Function-Based Interventions***

One of the first manuals for practitioners to promote preventative, positive approaches to



behavior management was *Nonaversive Interventions for Behavior Problems: A Manual for Home and Community* (Meyer & Evans, 1989). The manual was based on research in the 1980s that reported successful treatment of behavior disorders by teaching functional replacement behaviors, such as communication skills (Carr & Durand, 1985; Donnellan et al., 1984; Horner & Budd, 1985; Sailor et al., 2011). While early forms of applied behavior analysis focused on treating problematic behavior through consequence-based strategies, Meyer & Evans (1986, 1989, 1993, 2004) published extensive research on preventative, function-based interventions. These interventions were focused on the analysis of why problematic behavior occurs and what socially acceptable replacement behaviors can be taught to the individual. Meyer and Evans (1986, 1989) developed what would later be called *functional behavior assessment*, which is a behavior analytic process used to determine the environmental circumstances maintaining problematic behavior (Sailor et al., 2011).

### ***Emergence of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) as a Distinctive Approach***

In 1987, the U.S. Department of Education provided a grant for a national research and training center dedicated to non-aversive behavior management (Sailor et al., 2011). Researchers at the center published an article describing the technology of non-aversive behavioral support and coined the term “positive behavior support (PBS)” (Horner et al., 1990; Sugai & Horner, 2019). PBS consisted of functional behavior assessment (FBA) prevention-based approaches, teaching pro-social skills, and systematically reinforcing small steps toward behavioral success. These features were based on behavior analytic research conducted in the 1970s and 1980s and the shift toward ensuring respect for human dignity. A PBS training curriculum was disseminated by state-based teams (Anderson et al., 1993). Research continued and PBS was proven to be an effective approach with a variety of populations, including students with emotional

and behavioral disorders (EBD) (Dunlap et al., 1991, 1993), young children with disabilities (Dunlap & Fox, 1999; Gettinger & Stoiber, 2006; Reeve & Carr, 2000), as well as individuals with and without disabilities who exhibit behavior challenges (Bambara & Kern, 2005; Lucyshyn et al., 2002; Repp & Horner, 1999; Sailor et al., 2011).

### ***A Tiered Model of Behavioral Support***

As PBS was applied in various settings, it became apparent that the success of behavior support plans depends on creating contextually appropriate interventions. A tiered model of behavior support was developed to address the very large number of behavior problems being reported in schools. With a tiered system of behavioral support, the intensity of intervention is matched to the level of support that the student needs. Tier 1 consists of universal, preventative behavior management strategies that can be implemented class-wide and school-wide. These interventions benefit all students. Tier 2 strategies are intended to target small groups of students who need support in developing positive behaviors. Students who do not respond to primary or secondary tier interventions receive Tier 3 support, which consists of more intensive and individualized interventions (Briesch et al., 2019; Sailor et al., 2011; Sugai & Horner, 2019).

### ***Legislative Changes***

The 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires schools to consider the use of positive behavior supports (PBS) and functional behavior assessments (FBA) when problematic behavior interferes with a student's learning or the learning of others in the classroom (Sugai & Horner, 2002, 2019). Since the passage of IDEA (1997), a large body of literature has been published that demonstrates the effectiveness of PBS in reducing challenging behavior (Caldarella et al., 2019; Downs et al., 2018; Ennis et al., 2018; Evanovich & Kern, 2018; Owens et al., 2021; Royer et al., 2018; U.S. Department of Education,

2023). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2005) expanded emphasis and funding for efforts to meet students' behavioral needs. ESSA (2005) emphasizes the use of evidence-based interventions and practices to support students who experience academic and behavioral challenges.

### ***PBS Today***

Today, PBS has become increasingly recognized and implemented in public schools across the United States (Kern et al., 2021; Lee & Gage, 2020; Ryan & Baker, 2020). Along with a substantial increase in schools' adoption of PBS, various implementation aspects have been improved (Sailor, 2011). In particular, the PBS model includes low-intensity behavior management strategies (Ennis et al., 2018; Lane et al., 2023; Lotfizadeh et al., 2020), which are strategies that are both effective and easy to implement in the classroom. PBS also emphasizes stakeholder perspectives and collaboration (Carr et al., 2022; Kern et al., 2021). Whereas behavior analysts have typically functioned as experts who design interventions and enlist the aid of consumers, in the PBS model consumers (parents, teachers, students) are active participants in creating interventions (Carr et al., 2002; Ryan & Baker, 2020).

**Importance of Teacher Support.** Despite the simplification of behavior management practices, teachers have consistently identified challenging behavior as one of the most concerning issues that they face (Al Jaffal, 2022; Shank & Santiago, 2022; Sobeck & Reister, 2020). Challenges with behavior management and student discipline are highly correlated with teacher burnout and attrition (Gilmour et al., 2022). New teachers report feeling inadequately prepared to support students who exhibit behavior challenges (Stevenson et al., 2022). Many teacher education programs do not require coursework or experience to develop behavior management skills, and in-service teachers typically receive limited professional development in

effective behavior management practices (Stevenson et al., 2020). Data from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education indicates that less than 15% of teacher preparation programs include coursework in behavior management for prospective teachers (Stevenson et al., 2020).

To address behavioral needs, the demand for Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) is increasing and more schools throughout the United States are employing BCBAs to support students with and without disabilities and to train teachers in effective behavior management techniques (Layden et al., 2024). Many BCBAs are part of school-based problem-solving teams (Layden et al., 2024). When a student is identified by school staff as being at risk for school failure due to behavioral difficulties, a Board Certified Behavior Analyst or school psychologist collaborates with the classroom teacher to put in place a behavior intervention plan (BIP). A BIP aims to decrease problematic student behavior and address skill deficits hypothesized to contribute to the student's behavioral difficulties (i.e., communication skills and social skills) (Thomas & Lafasakis, 2019). Examples of common behavior plan strategies include the use of a timer to help the student transition between classroom tasks and complete assignments promptly, the use of a behavior chart to reinforce and reward appropriate displays of behavior, the use of visual supports to remind the student of classroom rules, and functional communication training to teach the student to express wants and needs appropriately. BIPs range in complexity and may include multiple strategies that should be implemented by the teacher before and during times that are typically problematic for the student (Collier-Meek et al., 2018).

**Critical Issues.** Although IDEA (1997) underscores the importance of evidence-based behavior management approaches, there is a substantial gap between research and practices in

schools, which may be partly due to inadequate teacher training (Nichols et al., 2020). A lack of knowledge and experience with effective behavior management practices can lead to a reluctance to try new behavior management strategies (Nichols et al., 2020). Despite the simplification of behavior management practices (Ennis et al., 2018; Owens et al., 2021; Royer et al., 2018) and efforts toward teacher-focused implementation supports (Collier-Meek et al., 2019; Kraft & Blazar, 2018; Upright et al., 2020), general education teachers struggle to implement behavior management strategies consistently (Collier-Meek et al., 2018). There may be factors that inhibit the adoption of evidence-based behavior management practices. Data indicate that the vast majority of students with behavior challenges are placed in general education classrooms (Decker, 2023; Lanterman et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2014). Therefore, there is a need to examine the difficulties that general education teachers face when implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies.

### **Behavior Plan Implementation Barriers**

Researchers have just recently started to explore barriers pertaining to the adoption and sustained use of behavior management interventions (Bottiani et al., 2019; Collier-Meek et al., 2018, 2019; Egan et al., 2019; Fox et al., 2022; McLennan et al., 2020; Wilcynski, 2017). Literature has addressed external, internal, and systemic factors that hinder behavior plan implementation. Across studies, there is a lack of agreement about which implementation barriers are most prominent.

#### ***External Barriers***

Some researchers suggest that logistical barriers that teachers experience are the most salient, such as difficulty managing competing responsibilities, implementing behavior plans with multiple steps (Collier-Meek et al., 2019; Egan et al., 2019), and simply remembering to

implement the intervention (Collier-Meek et al., 2018). Perceived time demands and materials needed to execute the intervention (McLennan et al., 2020) and perceived response effort (Wilcynski, 2017) are additional factors that impact whether a teacher consistently implements behavior management strategies. The compatibility of the intervention with the intervention context has also been found to be related to consistent behavior plan implementation (Collier-Meek et al., 2018). For example, an intervention designed for a school setting must consider the competing responsibilities of the classroom teacher, who is the primary implementer of the behavior plan. Finally, interventions that result in behavior change quickly and are perceived to be highly effective are more likely to be implemented consistently (Collier-Meek et al., 2018).

### ***Internal Barriers***

Other research findings suggest that teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and emotional responses are the primary determining factors for whether teachers adopt and continue to use evidence-based behavior management practices. Internal barriers include the perceived "fit" of the intervention for a given student (McLennan et al., 2020; Wilcynski, 2017), the belief that individualized interventions are unfair to other students, and the view that behavior challenges are due to internal characteristics that are beyond the teacher's control (Mitchem et al., 2002). There is evidence that suggests that teachers' emotional state can impact implementation. Factors such as stress and burnout were found to be negatively related to treatment integrity (Bottiani et al., 2019; Egan et al., 2019). Intervention knowledge may also influence teachers' perceptions of behavior interventions, with perceived effectiveness and understanding of the intervention procedures and rationale related to higher treatment integrity (Collier-Meek et al., 2018; Egan et al., 2019). It has also been documented that teachers' philosophical acceptance of the intervention is highly correlated with behavior plan implementation (Collier-Meek et al., 2018).

### ***Systemic Barriers***

Within individual school communities, there are factors that can support or impede behavior plan implementation (Fox et al., 2022). Interventions that align with the school district's mission and are chosen, at least in part, by teachers are more likely to be implemented with fidelity (Collier-Meek et al., 2019). When teachers are given resources to support interventions, such as materials, space, and support staff, this may also facilitate intervention implementation (Collier-Meek et al., 2018; Egan et al., 2019). There is a positive correlation between administrators' involvement and teachers' sustained delivery of interventions (Collier-Meek et al., 2018; Putra & Hariri, 2023). When administrators encourage staff to implement interventions consistently, teachers are more likely to commit to behavior plans (Lawson et al., 2022). Other school and classroom characteristics, such as the setting (general education vs. special education), available school support staff (presence or lack of instructional aides) (Wilczynski, 2017), and available teacher training or coaching (Kraft & Blazaar, 2018) may also be related to intervention implementation. This information underscores the importance of creating contextually appropriate behavior plans (Thomas & Lafasakis, 2019) that consider the characteristics of the classroom, the implementer (teacher, classroom aide), and the needs of the child for whom the behavior plan is intended. There appears to be a lack of research examining implementation barriers specific to general education teachers within the context of the school communities and classrooms.

### **Behavior Management Strategies**

Given teachers' struggles implementing multi-step interventions, there has been a recent shift toward identifying behavior management strategies that are both proactive and easy to implement in the classroom. In research, proactive, easy-to-implement strategies are referred to

as low-intensity behavior management strategies (Ennis et al., 2018; Institute of Education Sciences, 2018). Low-intensity behavior management strategies are effective when working with individual students with behavior challenges, as well as supporting multiple learners in the classroom with behavior challenges (Caldarella et al., 2019; Ennis et al., 2018; Zakszeski et al., 2020). Four strategies are present most often in educational literature: pre-correction, praise, breaks, and accommodations.

### ***Pre-Correction***

Pre-correction is a strategy that involves determining when challenging behaviors typically occur and providing proactive reminders about behavioral expectations before entering those specific situations (Ennis et al., 2018). There is agreement in the literature that using pre-correction, especially in combination with behavior-specific praise for meeting behavioral expectations, results in decreased instances of challenging behavior in the classroom (Sherod et al., 2023; Sobeck & Reister, 2020; Wahman, 2021), and that pre-correction is an evidence-based practice (Ennis et al., 2018). Pre-correction has been demonstrated to be effective across different grade levels, settings (classroom and non-classroom settings), and with different intervention agents (teachers, parents, researchers) (Ennis et al., 2018; Evanovich & Kern, 2018). Precorrection is an effective strategy to decrease instances of challenging behavior in children and adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders across a variety of settings (Virgin, 2023; White, 2019). Pre-correction can be used with individual students as well as class-wide (Sherod et al., 2023; Sobeck & Reister, 2020; Wahman, 2021). For example, a teacher can remind a student, “We are going to start the lesson now. Remember, try to stay quiet and not call out or talk to your friends.” As a class-wide strategy, the teacher can remind the class,



“Remember, we are going to be active listeners when our guest speaker comes by staying quiet when the speaker is talking.”

### *Praise*

Praise is a low-intensity strategy that can be used to reinforce appropriate behavior in various settings with students of all ages (Ennis et al., 2018). Praise involves a teacher acknowledging and complementing instances of desirable student behavior, either verbally, through a gesture (such as giving the student a thumbs up), or by giving the student a tangible reward (such as a sticker on a behavior chart). Praise is powerfully motivating to a child (Ennis et al., 2018; Flores et al., 2018; Royer et al., 2018). Students who experience academic and behavioral challenges are often reprimanded (Caldarella et al., 2019; Downs et al., 2019), which makes meaningful and appropriate praise even more important (Schaefer, 2023). Teachers who consistently use praise have better relationships with students (Sun, 2021; Yassine et al., 2020), lose less instructional time (Caldarella et al., 2020), and experience fewer behavioral issues (Ennis et al., 2019). Praise is effective in reducing disruptive behavior class-wide, as well as with individual students (Royer et al., 2018), including students with or at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders (Caldarella et al., 2019; Downs et al., 2018). Though praise can have a powerful effect on students, it is an under-utilized strategy (Collier-Meek et al., 2018, 2019; Zakszeski et al., 2020). There are three types of praise: personal praise, effort-based praise, and behavior-specific praise.

**Personal Praise.** Personal praise focuses on students’ abilities and talents versus their efforts. An example of personal praise is a teacher saying to a student, “You’re so smart!” Research has shown that personal praise is ineffective (Brummelman et al., 2016; Morton et al., 2020). When students focus on factors outside of their control (such as their abilities), personal

praise can negatively impact their motivation and self-esteem (Zarinnabaldi et al., 2020). This is especially true for struggling learners who lack confidence in their abilities and skills (Li & Bates, 2019). Personal praise can make students less willing to risk trying new things because they believe that their success with a task is directly related to their abilities or skills (Zarinnabaldi et al., 2020).

**Effort-Based Praise.** In contrast to personal praise, effort-based praise is an effective, evidence-based behavior management strategy. Effort-based praise emphasizes and acknowledges a student's efforts toward meeting academic and behavioral goals rather than their natural abilities (Etemadfar et al., 2023; Kakinuma et al., 2022). Effort-based praise also focuses on the student's process of working toward a goal rather than the outcome. Effort-based praise is especially effective for motivating students who struggle to complete assignments or tasks. Praising a student's efforts toward task completion can help a struggling learner maintain momentum toward achieving a goal (Kiefer et al., 2023). For example, a teacher can say, "I see how hard you are working on your writing. Keep it up!"

**Behavior-Specific Praise.** Like effort-based praise, behavior-specific praise is an effective, evidence-based behavior management strategy. Behavior-specific praise involves the teacher explicitly acknowledging what the student has done correctly (Ennis et al., 2018; Royer et al., 2018). For example, it is more effective if the teacher states, "Great job staying quiet during the lesson," versus stating, "Great job," without mentioning the desirable behavior they are acknowledging. Higher rates of behavior-specific praise are significantly correlated with fewer instances of disruptive behavior (Floress et al., 2018; Royer et al., 2019). Commonly, 3:1 or 4:1 is recommended as a desirable behavior-specific praise-to-reprimand ratio, but students

with emotional and behavioral disorders may need higher ratios to improve their classroom behavior (Caldarella et al., 2019; Downs et al., 2018).

### ***Breaks***

Providing breaks is a low-intensity strategy that involves allowing students to take quick, timed rest periods away from classroom demands (Owens et al., 2021). Providing breaks throughout the school day can reduce disruptive behavior and increase students' ability to stay on task (Carlson et al., 2015; Goodwin et al., 2016; Howie et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2012). However, some argue that for breaks to reduce disruptive behavior effectively, it is important to teach the student to request a break when needed versus pre-scheduling breaks for the student (Stormont et al., 2015; Owens et al., 2021).

One well-known intervention intended to teach students to request a break appropriately is the Class Pass Intervention. The intervention has gained popularity because it is effective and requires minimal teacher time, effort, and school resources. The intervention involves using a visual prompt (Class Pass card) to remind the student to request a short break appropriately. The Class Pass intervention has been proven to effectively reduce disruptive behavior and increase academic engagement in typically developing students and students with disabilities of all ages (Collins et al., 2015; Cook et al., 2014; Narozanik & Blair, 2018).

In addition to improving individual student behavior, regularly scheduled breaks can improve student behavior class-wide (Chaves & Taylor, 2021; Chen et al., 2023; Hall, 2023). Breaks are most effective when they are part of students' daily schedules (Hall, 2023). Breaks should be scheduled after times when students are more active or overstimulated (Chaves & Taylor, 2021; Chen et al., 2023; Hall, 2023). For example, students might have 10 minutes of quiet time when they return to the classroom after lunch and recess. There is also evidence

suggesting that movement breaks are effective for increasing alertness and concentration after prolonged periods of inactivity (Peiris et al., 2021; Fedewa et al., 2018; Lynch et al., 2022).

Research on how often students should take breaks and how long breaks should be is lacking.

### ***Accommodations***

Providing accommodations is a low-intensity practice that involves altering the classroom environment or learning tasks to help reduce frustration for a student who is experiencing learning or behavior challenges (Institute for Education Sciences, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2023). Examples of accommodations include shortening assignments when a student experiences fatigue or allowing a student with fine-motor weaknesses to dictate written language assignments. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 mandates that schools provide reasonable accommodations to remove barriers for students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). However, there is controversy surrounding the use of accommodations (Harrison et al., 2013; Lovett et al., 2020). Some researchers express concern that many students with behavior challenges are given inappropriate accommodations rather than an intervention plan to improve their behavior (Harrison et al., 2013; Lovett et al., 2020). Nevertheless, there is a strong evidence base supporting the judicious use of accommodations to improve student behavior in general and special education settings (Institute of Education Sciences, 2008).

Though accommodations are commonly discussed in terms of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 Plans, there is research suggesting that it is beneficial to offer accommodations to all students, regardless of whether students have an identified disability (Sanger, 2020; Unal et al., 2020; van Munster et al., 2019). In literature, class-wide accommodations are referred to as universal accommodations (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2018; Fahsl, 2007). Many simple class-wide accommodations do not

require extensive preparation time. For example, a general education teacher can provide all students with the option to use a writing template to assist students with organizing their thoughts and writing on-topic. Teachers can provide all students with the option to work in a quiet area of the classroom versus at a table with their classmates.

### **Teacher-Focused Behavior Plan Implementation Support**

To help facilitate educators' adoption of low-intensity, evidence-based behavior management practices, experimental research has emphasized ongoing professional development for in-service teachers, and there have been efforts to improve the outcomes of professional development practices. There are two modalities for delivering teacher training in schools: traditional large-scale professional development workshops and individualized teacher coaching. Within these two approaches, there are various strategies for providing professional development in a way that leads to more positive outcomes.

#### ***Traditional Professional Development Workshops***

The widely accepted model for delivering training to teachers in the implementation of low-intensity behavior management strategies involves whole-district professional development workshops (Kirkpatrick et al., 2019; Kraft & Blazaar, 2018; Mitchem et al., 2001). Teacher workshops typically include a description of behavior management strategies, a rationale for the use of these strategies, and an opportunity to practice implementing these behavior management techniques through the examination of case studies. One of the challenges associated with large-group professional development is educators' difficulty implementing behavior strategies effectively in their classrooms following these trainings (Kirkpatrick et al., 2019; Kraft & Blazaar, 2018; Mitchem et al., 2001). Teachers report difficulty selecting an appropriate intervention, insufficient time to implement interventions, difficulty using behavior recording

forms, and not knowing what to do with the data once collected (Mitchem et al., 2021). Follow-up when teachers are trying to apply new behavior management skills in their classrooms is often lacking (Mitchem et al., 2021). A second issue is that traditional teacher professional development workshops often have little connection to the needs of individual teachers and classrooms. Therefore, this approach has been found to have minimal effect on teacher skill enhancement (Brock et al., 2017; Kraft & Blazaar, 2018).

Strategies have been identified to improve the effectiveness of large-group professional development workshops. Providing targeted professional development sessions that consider the group's knowledge, needs, beliefs, attributions, and behaviors may lead to better outcomes (Castillo et al., 2017; Simonsen et al., 2019). A targeted professional development approach focuses on identifying patterns in the needs of the group and teaching key behavior management skills that address the group's specific needs (Simonsen et al., 2019). For example, if data suggests that the majority of K-5 teachers struggle with accommodating students with attentional weaknesses in a given year, a professional development workshop on strategies for accommodating students with attentional weaknesses would be presented to address this specific need.

Another strategy for improving the effectiveness of large-scale workshops is competency-based training (DiGennaro Reed et al., 2018; Kirkpatrick et al., 2019). Behavior Skills Training is one competency-based approach where the presenter describes the target skill, demonstrates the skill, and then requires workshop participants to practice and demonstrate mastery of the target skill (DiGennaro Reed et al., 2018; Kirkpatrick et al., 2019; Reed & Blackman, 2018; Slane & Lieberman-Betz, 2021). There are practical considerations with implementing competency-based training, such as the amount of time needed for participants to

repeatedly practice the target skill, receive feedback from the presenter, and demonstrate mastery (Kirkpatrick et al., 2019). Evidence continues to suggest that ongoing follow-up through classroom observations, modeling target skills for teachers, and problem-solving conversations are necessary to help teachers implement behavior plans accurately and consistently outside of professional development workshops (Castillo et al., 2017).

### ***Teacher Coaching***

Teacher coaching, a more individualized approach to helping teachers, has been proven to be an effective implementation support for teachers (Kraft & Blazaar, 2018; Thomas & Lafasakis, 2019). It involves an expert working with teachers on an individual basis to model research-based strategies and practices (Kraft & Blazaar, 2018). One purpose of a coach is to help teachers consistently and effectively use evidence-based behavior management strategies in their classrooms. Teacher coaching can include various support activities, such as direct modeling, implementation planning, and raising awareness (Collier-Meek et al., 2018, 2019). Although researchers have previously studied individual coaching programs, they have just started to evaluate their effects experimentally. Results from over 60 studies indicate that with one-to-one coaching, “the quality of a teacher’s instruction improves by as much as the difference in effectiveness between a novice and a teacher with five to ten years of experience” (Kraft & Blazar, 2018, p. 71).

Although teacher coaching is being used more widely, especially in the realm of student behavior management, there is a lack of agreement about the role of a teacher coach, which coaching activities are most effective, and how coaching activities should be delivered. There is evidence suggesting that the type of coaching activities used may impact the degree of implementation fidelity (Johnson et al., 2017). Questions remain about the feasibility of

providing individualized teacher coaching on a large scale, given limited resources and budgets in school settings (Myers et al., 2020; Upright et al., 2020). Within this framework, there is a need to incorporate teachers' feedback about the feasibility and agreeability of what they are being asked to implement in the classroom.

**Direct Modeling.** Modeling how to implement behavior management strategies is positively associated with behavior plan implementation fidelity (Upright et al., 2020). Modeling involves the coach demonstrating the main components of the intervention as a tool for teachers to observe. Some research suggests that modeling has the greatest impact on treatment fidelity (Johnson et al., 2017). Teachers who had strategies modeled for them by their coach implemented behavior plans more consistently and accurately (Collier-Meek et al., 2018, 2019). Modeling is believed to help demonstrate the effectiveness of the intervention and is likely to increase buy-in and implementation (Johnson et al., 2017). Modeling is most effective when it is provided during instances when challenging behavior is occurring versus role-playing hypothetical situations with teachers (Reddy et al., 2019).

**Implementation Planning.** Other strategies reported to be effective include modifying/simplifying the intervention format and modifying the intervention timing. These findings suggest that implementation support should focus on how to incorporate the intervention into classroom routines (i.e. scheduling the intervention procedures and modifying the complexity of the intervention). Simplifying intervention complexity seems to correlate with improved treatment fidelity (Collier-Meek et al., 2019). Identifying the main components of evidence-based interventions to simplify them is a way to reduce the number of intervention steps while retaining positive outcomes. Teacher treatment integrity is also improved by helping teachers learn the specific details of when and how to implement the intervention and helping



teachers plan how to navigate around potential behavior plan implementation barriers (Long et al., 2016).

**Raising Awareness.** Knowledge of students' skill deficits may increase positive emotional responses in teachers, which in turn positively impacts teachers' instructional behaviors (Wang & Hall, 2018). Teachers use more positive approaches to behavior management when they interpret student misbehavior as unintentional (Hart & DiPerna, 2016). This information suggests that practitioners can include discussions about student skill deficits in teacher training to generate awareness among personnel who work with students displaying challenging behavior. One well-known intervention, Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS), involves a framework through which teachers "consider challenging classroom behavior relative to a student's skill deficits in one or more critical areas such as flexibility, social skills, or language processing" (Greene & Albon, 2006; Greene & Winkler, 2019; Higgins, 2021). Teachers and students then attempt to identify a mutually agreeable solution to prevent and address recurring problems in the classroom. Collaborative problem-solving conversations through the CPS model have been shown to decrease problematic student behavior and teacher stress (Hart & DiPerna, 2016).

**Tiered Model of Teacher Coaching.** Recent literature has started to evaluate the effects of using a tiered model of teacher coaching to provide support to a large number of teachers in school districts (Myers et al., 2020; Upright et al., 2020). The purpose of a tiered teacher support model is to match the level of implementation support needed to the appropriate level of intensity and implementation support strategies. Pilot studies have demonstrated success when using a multi-tiered framework of support for teachers (Myers et al., 2020; Upright et al., 2020). Under the multi-tiered framework of implementation support, all teachers receive the same

evidence-based training (i.e. direct training) before initial intervention implementation, followed by more individualized support as necessary. Teachers whose intervention implementation is insufficient following school-wide training (Tier 1) are provided individualized support through one or two sessions involving modeling (Tier 2). If a teacher's implementation continues to be insufficient after receiving Tier 2 support, ongoing assistance is provided in the form of weekly performance feedback (Tier 3). Limited school resources require that teachers and practitioners discuss what activities and schedules will be most effective while remaining feasible (Upright et al., 2020). By differentiating levels of support for students and educators, specialists can effectively support all students and staff. (Myers et al., 2020).

### **Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs**

Despite the simplification of behavior management strategies and teacher-focused professional development initiatives, the challenge that remains is that teachers do not implement behavior plans consistently (Cook et al., 2023; Garwood, 2023), suggesting a need to explore teachers' experiences and perceptions. Although studies have indicated that teachers' perceptions and beliefs are important constructs for understanding how teachers commit to behavior management approaches (McLennan et al., 2020; Mitchem et al., 2002; Nemer et al., 2019; Wilcynski, 2017), research in this area is sparse. While there is extensive research on the effectiveness of low-intensity behavior management strategies, there is comparatively little research on evidence-based interventions to support teachers in their use of these strategies. Even less is known about what perceptions contribute to educators committing to the use of behavior management strategies.

A limited number of studies have examined general education teachers' perceptions of inclusion (Hutzler et al., 2019; Nilsen, 2020; Saloviita, 2018; Woodcock, 2019). There is a

significant association between teachers' perceived teaching competence and teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with learning and behavioral challenges in general education classrooms (Hutzler et al., 2019). Teachers who feel confident in their abilities to teach students with academic and behavioral difficulties show more positive attitudes toward inclusion, while teachers who do not feel confident in their abilities to accommodate students with special needs report less favorable attitudes toward inclusion (Hutzler et al., 2019; Saloviita, 2018; Woodcock, 2019). General education teachers report that students with behavioral and learning difficulties often need more support than the other students in the class but that they are unable to provide the level of support that these students need while managing competing responsibilities (Nilsen, 2020; Woodcock & Woolfson, 2020). General education teachers' difficulty meeting the needs of students with learning and behavioral challenges may be partially due to a lack of communication and coordination with special education teachers (Nilsen, 2020) and a lack of professional development opportunities to learn strategies to accommodate students with special needs in general education settings (Aldabas, 2020; Mahoney, 2020; Woodcock & Woolfson, 2020).

Other research has examined special education teachers' use of behavior interventions when working with students with disabilities in special education settings (Aldabas, 2020; Lawson et al., 2022; Robertson et al., 2020). In describing what led them to choose to use a particular intervention with a selected student, teachers commonly report that they perceive the intervention to be effective for managing student behavior (Lawson et al., 2022; Nemer et al., 2019). Teachers also describe that they had used a particular behavioral intervention before and observed that it was effective, which caused them to use the intervention with another student (Lawson et al., 2022). Other teachers report that school leaders want teachers to use behavioral

interventions and that administrative involvement is a motivator (Collier-Meek et al., 2018; Lawson et al., 2022; Putra & Hariri, 2023). A prominent barrier that special education teachers report is the perception that a behavior plan cannot adequately address the cause of student misbehavior. Teachers state that behavior challenges can be caused by factors beyond teacher control, such as difficulties within the student's home environment, and teachers perceive BIPs to be less effective in these instances (McLennan et al., 2020; Robertson et al., 2020; Wilcynski, 2017). In general, findings indicate that special education teachers are confident that they are prepared to teach students with severe disabilities in inclusive classrooms (Aldabas, 2020; Byrd & Alexander, 2020; Fowler et al., 2019; Zagona et al., 2018).

It appears that only one study has explored general education teachers' perceptions of challenging behavior and teachers' reported use of behavior management strategies. The study was limited to kindergarten and first-grade teachers in a rural public school district (Tillery et al., 2010). The kindergarten and first-grade teachers in the study reported that they believed behavioral development begins in a child's home and that they learn about consequences at a young age. At school, teachers perceived themselves as having a strong influence on student behavior. The general education teachers in the study described using a combination of behavior-specific praise and punishment for managing classroom behavior. When asked about pre-service teacher training in behavior management, most teachers reported learning about rewards and punishments but not about any other behavior management strategies. Most teachers described selecting behavior management strategies on a trial-and-error basis (Tillery et al., 2010).

To date, no studies have explored general education teachers' perceptions and use of the low-intensity behavior management strategies recommended in the literature. In the current context of school discipline practices, general education teachers are expected to implement

prevention-focused behavior management strategies (Tillery et al., 2010). Given the lack of pre-service teacher training in behavior management techniques and the limitations of in-service teacher professional development, this can be a formidable task. There is a need for an in-depth exploration of general education teachers' beliefs and decisions regarding behavior management to improve teacher training practices (Tillery et al., 2010).

### ***Significance of Teachers' Perceptions and Beliefs***

As more schools shift toward the use of low-intensity behavior management strategies, it is important to investigate how teachers perceive these strategies and how teachers' perceptions impact their use of these strategies. A significant but often overlooked factor that impacts whether teachers implement behavior interventions consistently is the social validity of school-based interventions. Social validity refers to the extent to which behavior interventions are acceptable and meaningful to stakeholders (Falletta-Cowden & Lewon, 2022). Within school settings, teachers are the primary stakeholders because teachers are responsible for delivering interventions. Assessing social validity involves gathering information about potential behavior plan implementation barriers and teachers' varying perceptions regarding behavior interventions (Miramontes et al., 2011).

Behavior analysts have historically prioritized developing scientifically sound behavior interventions (Carter & Wheeler, 2019), and less emphasis has been placed on the social validity of behavior interventions (Burney et al., 2023). There is an important link between social validity and behavior intervention plan fidelity and sustainability (Burney et al., 2023; Carter & Wheeler, 2019; Falletta-Cowden & Lewon, 2022). If behavior intervention strategies are not perceived as philosophically acceptable, feasible, or effective, there is little chance of teachers implementing these strategies correctly and consistently, even if behavioral strategies are shown to be

objectively effective. Behavior interventions that are socially valid and incorporate teacher voice have a greater likelihood of receiving support and buy-in from teachers and school staff (Carter & Wheeler, 2019; Falletta-Cowden & Lewon, 2022). Therefore, the effectiveness of behavior interventions in a school setting is significantly dependent upon considering how teachers perceive these interventions.

### ***Aligning Behavior Interventions with Teachers' Perspectives***

The field of behavior analysis is at a critical juncture as the focus shifts from identifying behavior management strategies that are technically sound to ensuring that these strategies are implemented with fidelity (Eiraldi et al., 2019; Fallon et al., 2019; Pas et al., 2019). One step toward achieving intervention sustainability may be to develop a better understanding of teachers' perceptions of behavior management strategies and how these perceptions influence teachers' practices (Daniel & Lemons, 2018; Feuborn et al., 2017). Behavior analysts, especially those who design interventions for school settings, have been criticized for being disconnected from the needs of consumers (Ram, 2020) and missing the mark on the social acceptability of interventions (Leaf et al., 2021). Therefore, there is a need for behavioral scholars to align interventions more closely with stakeholder values, needs, and priorities using qualitative research methods (Burney et al., 2023; Malmqvist, 2019; Shwartz et al., 1995). Emphasis on stakeholders' perspectives is not a new concept. B.F. Skinner's writings in the publication *Verbal Behavior* (1957) reflect the need to consider stakeholders' perspectives in designing interventions. In referring to this shift from controlled experimental research to interpretive research, Skinner states, "I was interpreting a complex field using principles that had been verified under simple, controlled conditions. At this time, I am concerned with interpretation, rather than prediction or control" (Skinner, 1957, p. 282).

While behavioral scholars have been urged to utilize complementary research methods that allow for more in-depth exploration, this call has been largely dismissed in the field of behavior analysis (Burney et al., 2023; Gioia, 2020). Qualitative research methodologies have been criticized by behavioral researchers as being less rigorous (Burney et al., 2023; Gioia, 2020). Most studies that have explored beliefs, perceptions, and human behavior, especially in applied behavior analysis, have relied on quantitative single-case research designs that utilize Likert scales and questions with pre-determined response categories (Burney et al., 2023). While single-case designs are highly valued by behavioral researchers (Friman, 2021), using this method alone offers an incomplete picture (LeBlanc, 2020). Qualitative research can afford scholars a complementary research tool to consider what is valuable, acceptable, and feasible (Burney et al., 2023). Through the use of hermeneutic phenomenological methods, behavior analysts can directly show how or why behavior interventions are appropriate within the context of specific schools, healthcare settings, and communities.

### **Summary**

While IDEA (1997) underscores the importance of evidence-based behavior management interventions, teachers face challenges in their attempts to put these strategies into practice (Thomas & Lafasakis, 2019). As a result, there has been a shift in the literature toward identifying simplified behavior management strategies (Ennis et al., 2018) and teacher-focused implementation supports (i.e., teacher coaches) (Kraft & Blazaar, 2018). Understanding how teachers view behavior management strategies can help improve the development of classroom-based behavior interventions. This understanding can also help inform efforts to support teachers in the use of evidence-based behavior management practices (Nemer et al., 2019). Bernard Weiner's (1974) attribution theory implies that how individuals experience and interpret events

directly impacts their behavior (Weiner, 1974, 1986). Therefore, attribution theory will be used as the guiding framework for examining how teachers' perceptions influence the adoption of evidence-based behavior management practices.

The existing research presents two limitations: (1) In terms of participants, few studies have focused on general education teachers specifically. General education teachers face unique challenges in that they are typically equipped with less specialized knowledge and training and have fewer school resources available to them; (2) Most studies on teachers' perceptions and beliefs have utilized quantitative methods involving questionnaires and surveys with pre-determined response categories (Burney et al., 2023). A limited number of studies have utilized qualitative research to examine the perspectives of special education teachers. However, there appears to be a paucity of qualitative research that has examined the perceptions of general education teachers specifically. Given that students cannot benefit from behavior plans if teachers struggle to implement them, teachers' perceptions of the low-intensity behavior management strategies identified in the literature are an area that warrants exploration.



## CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

### Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore general education teachers' successes and challenges in implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies while teaching in a public school setting in central New Jersey. This chapter offers a review of the methods that were used to conduct the study. The first section details the research design and research questions, followed by a description of the setting, participants, and researcher positionality. Next, data collection approaches and data analysis procedures are discussed. Lastly, procedures for ensuring the trustworthiness of the research are detailed.

### Research Design

This study was qualitative in nature. Qualitative data in the form of verbal reports are becoming increasingly valued to direct the creation of behavior interventions that are relevant and acceptable to stakeholders (Burney et al., 2023; Ferguson et al., 2018; Nicolson et al., 2020; Snodgrass et al., 2021). Phenomenological research is used to collect rich information to fully capture how individuals experience a phenomenon (Husserl, 193; Heidegger, 2005; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2015). Phenomenological inquiry aims to answer the question, "What is that experience like?" (van Manen, 2014, p. 35). Since the purpose of the study was to explore general education teachers' successes and challenges implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies while teaching in a public school setting in central New Jersey, phenomenology was appropriate. I used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to interpret the data and convey the meaning and implications of the participants' experiences. Van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic *Phenomenology of Practice* is characterized by a professional and practical

orientation, as it seeks to answer questions about how research findings can be translated into practice. *Phenomenology of Practice* is relevant and important to behavior analysts because it allows behavior analysts to practice more reflectively and to create contextually appropriate interventions based on how these interventions are received by the teachers who are responsible for implementing them in their classrooms. An analysis of teachers' experiences of behavior management strategies was used to inform the development of behavior interventions that are sustainable in public school general education settings. Stakeholder perspectives can help to inform teacher coaching and professional development initiatives. *Phenomenology of Practice* has been used in psychology, education, and healthcare to inform and improve professional practices. (Errasti-Ibarrondo et al., 2018; Sundler et al., 2018).

As a research methodology, phenomenology originated from the work of German philosophers Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger (Errasti-Ibarrondo et al., 2018). Two branches of phenomenological research emerged: transcendental (descriptive) phenomenology, which is based on Husserl's work, and hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology, which is based on Heidegger's work (Heidegger, 2005; Husserl, 1931). In the early 1950s, scholars from several Dutch universities began to use phenomenological research to improve their professional practices. For these scholars and practicing professionals, the phenomenology of Husserl, Heidegger, Minkowski, and Merleau-Ponty became tools to explore and address issues within their professional fields (van Manen, 2007, 2014). This movement in history is known as the School of Utrecht or The Dutch School (Errasti-Ibarrondo et al., 2018). The Dutch School is marked by a shift in phenomenology that is not purely philosophical but also practical. Dutch researcher Max van Manen was an influential leader in hermeneutic-phenomenological research. He developed a methodology known as *Phenomenology of Practice* as a tool for scholars

“interested in *doing* phenomenology in service of their professional disciplines” (van Manen, 2007, p. 23; 2014, p. 197). Van Manen’s *Phenomenology of Practice* is a rigorous methodology that has been used in psychology, education, and most widely in nursing (Errasti-Ibarrondo et al., 2018; Sundler et al., 2018). The practical orientation that van Manen gives to phenomenology is relevant and important to behavior analysts because its goal is “to nurture a measure of thoughtfulness and tact in the practice of our professions and everyday life” (van Manen, 2014, p. 31).

## **Research Questions**

### **Central Research Question**

How do general education teachers describe their experiences implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies?

### **Sub-question One**

What challenges have general education teachers experienced when implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies?

### **Sub-question Two**

What successes have general education teachers experienced when implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies?

### **Sub-question Three**

What do general education teachers attribute their use of evidence-based behavior management strategies to?

## **Setting and Participants**

The study took place in one public elementary school district in central New Jersey. Fifteen teachers were invited to participate on a volunteer basis. Purposeful sampling was used to identify and select participants.

### **Setting**

A public elementary school district in a suburban city in central New Jersey was used as the site of this study. The school district was chosen based on the convenience of access and the willingness of the district to participate in the study. The site was also chosen because all general education teachers receive ongoing professional development in the use of low-intensity behavior management strategies by the district's board-certified behavior analyst. The district consists of 10 schools and 9,386 students. 84% of students in the district are minority students (16.4% Caucasian, 5.0% African American, 71.4% Asian/Pacific Islander, 4.8% Hispanic/Latino, 0.1% American Indian, and 0.1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. 2.2% of students identify as being two or more races). 3.1% of students are federal free and reduced lunch recipients, and 5.9% of students are English language learners.

There are 779 classroom teachers in the district. All teachers in the district are certified to teach, and 84% of teachers have three or more years of teaching experience. There are 400 elementary (K-5) teachers. The student-teacher ratio is 12:1 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022; NJ Department of Education, 2022).

### **Participants**

Purposeful sampling was used for the identification and selection of participants for the study. Purposeful sampling, which involves the researcher intentionally selecting participants based on their experience or expertise, is commonly used in qualitative research (Patton, 2001).

Two forms of purposeful sampling, criterion sampling and maximum variation sampling, were combined for the selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon.

Fifteen teachers were recruited for the study. Qualitative literature recommends a range from one to 20 participants, depending on the time frame for completing the study (Moustakas, 1994). Participants were selected from a pool of 74 general education teachers who referred students for behavioral support through Intervention and Referral Services during the 2023-2024 school year.

Teachers who met the following inclusion criteria were recruited for the study: (a) the teacher has signed informed consent to participate in the study; (b) the teacher has referred a student to the Intervention and Referral Services team due to behavioral concerns (i.e. the student exhibits challenging behavior across academic settings requiring intervention beyond the universal level of classroom management); (c) the teacher is a general education, K-5 classroom teacher; (d) the teacher has received individualized coaching and support on low-intensity behavior management strategies from the district Board Certified Behavior Analyst. A critical requirement in phenomenology is that all participants have experienced the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, these criteria ensured that all participants were familiar with low-intensity behavior management strategies and have experience implementing these strategies in their classrooms.

Maximum variation sampling was used to capture the widest range of perspectives possible and increase the transferability of findings. To ensure that the sample was representative of K-5 teachers, I selected teachers from a variety of grade levels with varied degrees of teaching experience. Eight lower elementary school teachers (grades K-2) and seven upper elementary

school teachers (grades 3-5) were selected for participation in the study. To safeguard privacy and anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant, as well as the school district.

### **Recruitment Plan**

I obtained approval from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) before the start of the study. Part of the IRB process included submitting documents that were used to gain consent from the school district and teachers. I began by obtaining written approval to conduct the study from the school district superintendent. Next, recruitment began by obtaining consent from 15 teachers who meet the criteria for voluntary participation in the study. Teachers were invited to participate via email. Data collection procedures took place immediately upon receiving consent from the first participant.

### **Researcher's Positionality**

The term *positionality* refers to the researcher's identity in relation to the topic being studied, the research participants, and the research design (Holmes, 2020). For the reader to understand how the researcher's identity impacts the research process and results, researchers must make known the identity they have chosen to adopt within a given research study (Wilson et al., 2022). Researcher positionality accounts for motivations, beliefs, values, and interests, which in turn influence how a researcher chooses a topic, conducts the study, and analyzes data (Holmes, 2020). Therefore, intentionally reflecting on positionality is an important part of the research process.

### **Interpretive Framework**

I utilized a constructivist interpretive framework to explore general education teachers' perceptions of behavior management strategies and barriers related to implementation while teaching in a public school setting. A central assumption of this study is that individuals

construct their subjective realities based on environment and context. Individuals' beliefs, experiences, and interpretations can constitute a reality independent of a universal, objective truth (Peck & Mummery, 2022). An individual's thoughts and perceptions shape their actions, thereby shaping their reality (Peck & Mummery, 2022). In education and social sciences, this belief indicates the need to recognize and accommodate the viewpoints of different stakeholders (Burney et al., 2023; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Acknowledging the subjective nature of reality found in constructivism (Peck & Mummery, 2022), qualitative inquiry is necessary to align behavior interventions more closely with teachers' needs and priorities (Burney et al., 2023; Malmqvist, 2019; Shwartz et al., 1995). In terms of behavior analytic study, it is important to consider what is valuable, acceptable, and feasible.

### **Philosophical Assumptions**

In qualitative studies, researchers attempt to become aware of and acknowledge the philosophical assumptions that inform and guide their research. Researchers consider what they bring to the study, such as their belief systems, values, and past experiences. A researcher's philosophical assumptions can influence what types of problems a researcher studies, what research questions are asked, and how a researcher goes about collecting and analyzing data. There are four philosophical assumptions that provide the framework for understanding a qualitative research study: ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological.

#### ***Ontological Assumption***

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality (Lawson, 2019). My ontological assumption is that there is one reality that exists independent of perceptions, but individuals' understanding of reality is mediated by their beliefs, interpretations, and experiences. One's actions and decisions are driven by the way one thinks about themselves and the world (Lawson,

2019). Therefore, there is value in understanding the reality of what is experienced and the way in which it is experienced (Moustakas, 1994). In the context of this study, teachers' perceptions of evidence-based behavior management strategies are important constructs for understanding how they commit to using them. What works in terms of behavior management in any given context must consider the implementer's unique beliefs, values, and perspectives.

Phenomenological inquiry was used to prioritize teachers' perspectives of behavior interventions.

### ***Epistemological Assumption***

Epistemology is concerned with the understanding of the nature of knowledge (Fantl, 2023). I will adopt a pragmatist epistemology. By focusing on the practical implications of beliefs, pragmatism is useful for answering questions about how research findings can be translated into practice. An interpretive phenomenological analysis of teachers' experiences of behavior management strategies yielded information to inform the development of behavior interventions that are sustainable in public school general education settings. Stakeholder perspectives can help to inform teacher coaching and professional development initiatives. Although a pragmatic stance is typically associated with a mixed methods research design (Creswell & Poth, 2018), pragmatic qualitative research is particularly useful in the field of implementation science (Ramanadhan et al., 2021). A qualitative phenomenological approach is critical to the examination of the dynamic context in which behavior interventions are integrated.

### ***Axiological Assumption***

Axiology is concerned with the role that social values and biases play. The axiological dimension considers the goals, values, objectives, beliefs, and opinions of the researcher (Nyein et al., 2020). Consistent with self-reflexivity, I acknowledge my standpoint as a Board Certified



Behavior Analyst in a public school setting. My research paradigm and central research question were motivated by my desire to improve the development and implementation of school-based behavior plans in general education settings. My experience as a district board-certified behavior analyst brought valuable insights to the collection and interpretation of data. Information obtained from analyses of teachers' experiences of low-intensity behavior management strategies yielded information to inform the development of behavior interventions that are sustainable in public school general education settings.

I acknowledge that when I conduct and analyze research, I construct my own meaning and reality of others' experiences (Peck & Mummery, 2022). Memo writing (Creswell & Poth, 2018) was used to fulfill the ethical obligation to represent the participants' experiences as genuinely as possible. Member checking was used to ensure that the data accurately reflects the participants' perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The goal was to deliver an authentic representation of the participants' lived experiences and to attempt to understand the complexities of another's constructions of the world.

### **Researcher's Role**

Because the researcher is the instrument in qualitative studies, the researcher's relationship to the setting and participants, beliefs and motivations, and attributes impact the collection of empirical data (Pezalla, 2012). The phrase *researcher-as-instrument* refers to the researcher as "an active respondent in the research process" (Pezalla, 2012, p. 2). The researcher is responsible for facilitating interaction that creates a conversational space where participants feel safe to share stories of their experiences (Pezalla et al., 2012).

My involvement with this project emerged from my interest in creating behavior interventions that are sustainable in public school general education settings. Within the research

setting, I am employed as a Teacher Resource Specialist–Board Certified Behavior Analyst. When a general education teacher experiences difficulty accommodating a student who exhibits behavior challenges, my role is to determine strategies that the teacher can implement to help the student achieve behavioral and academic success in school. My insider perspective, or emic (Rossman & Rallis, 2017), served as a valuable asset in the research process, as I have an established relationship of honesty and trust with the participants. I have no position of authority within the school district. I serve primarily as a professional ally to the teachers in our mutual work to accommodate and best serve students who experience behavior challenges.

Turning to the literature, it struck me that although behavior analysts have been urged to address the social validity of interventions by asking stakeholders if an intervention is meaningful, appropriate, and acceptable (Burney et al., 2023; Kelly et al., 2019; Nichols et al., 2020), there are few behavior analytic studies that have adopted qualitative research methods to better inform practice. Therefore, I used the existing literature to develop an interview protocol designed to capture how teachers experience low-intensity behavior management strategies. An interpretive phenomenological analysis of the data helped me determine how to better meet the needs of teachers and students in the school district where the study took place.

### **Procedures**

I obtained approval from Liberty University IRB before the start of the study. Part of the IRB process included submitting documents that were used to gain consent from the school district and teachers. Study instruments were included in the IRB application. I began by obtaining written approval to conduct the study from the school district superintendent. (See Appendix A for IRB approval, Appendix B for participant consent form, and Appendix C for research site permission request letter).

Next, recruitment began by obtaining consent from 15 teachers who meet the criteria for voluntary participation in the study. Teachers were invited to “opt-in” to the study on a volunteer basis via email (See Appendix D for the participant recruitment email). Data collection procedures began immediately upon receiving consent from the first participant.

Data collection involved three different approaches to develop a comprehensive understanding of general education teachers’ perceptions of low-intensity behavior management strategies: open-ended surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups. Each teacher participated in all three activities. Given that participants were located across six elementary buildings, all individual and focus group interviews were conducted via Zoom video conferencing software. Participants were encouraged to participate in the Zoom conferences from a location that allows for privacy. Participants had the option to access Zoom video calls on their cell phones or their computers. All interviews were recorded on a cell phone and a backup device (iPad) for later review. Open-ended survey responses were returned to the researcher via email.

Individual interviews and focus groups were transcribed using Otter.ai's automated transcription software. All transcriptions were checked for accuracy. Data was analyzed using van Manen’s (2014) methodological guidelines for hermeneutic phenomenology. Once 15 teachers participated in the survey, individual interview, and focus group, the data collection was closed and completed. Themes generated from each data collection approach (surveys, individual interviews, and focus group interviews) were cross-analyzed to determine repeating and reoccurring themes and sub-themes. Utilizing van Manen’s (2014) guidelines for hermeneutic phenomenology, specifically *Phenomenology of Practice*, all textural descriptions involved

careful reflection and interpretation to determine the meaning of the data in relation to professional practice.

### **Data Collection Plan**

Hermeneutic phenomenology is conducted through “empirical (collection of experiences) and reflective (analysis of their meanings) activities” (Guillen, 2018, p. 220). Primary methods for data collection include conversational interviews, descriptions of personal experiences, and close observation (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). Further, qualitative research requires rigorous application of a variety of data collection approaches. Triangulation, or multiple means of data collection, enhances the credibility and validity of research findings (Patton, 1999). Therefore, this study utilized three different data collection approaches to develop a comprehensive understanding of general education teachers’ perceptions of low-intensity behavior management strategies: surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups. The open-ended survey was used to gather initial data related to the central research question. The interview was used to collect more in-depth insight into the perspectives of individual participants. Lastly, the two focus groups, comprised of lower elementary school teachers and upper elementary school teachers, were used as a tool to explore the level of agreement or disagreement in responses within the two groups and between the two groups.

### **Survey Data Collection Approach**

An open-ended survey was sent to 15 teachers in the target school district who met the criteria for participation in the study and agreed to participate by signing an informed consent document. The survey was emailed to teachers via Google Forms. I accessed the completed surveys via the responses tab on Google Forms. The purpose of the survey was to gather initial data related to the central research question. Survey questions focused on gaining an initial

understanding of which strategies (pre-correction, praise, breaks, accommodations) teachers perceive to be useful to them in terms of meeting the needs of a student with behavior challenges and which strategies teachers perceive to be problematic.

### ***Survey Questions***

The following questions pertain to the four behavior management strategies listed in Table 1. For clarity, the table of behavior management strategies and their respective definitions will be provided in the survey.

1. Which strategies (pre-correction, praise, breaks, accommodations) are the most useful to you in terms of meeting the needs of a student with behavior challenges, and why? SQ2
2. Which strategies (pre-correction, praise, breaks, accommodations) present as problematic for you to implement, and why? SQ1
3. Explain how you feel about implementing pre-correction as a behavior management strategy. CRQ
4. Explain how you feel about implementing praise. CRQ
5. What are your thoughts about implementing breaks? CRQ
6. What are your thoughts about implementing accommodations? CRQ

**Table 1**

### ***Low-Intensity Behavior Management Strategies***

Behavior Management Strategy	Definition
Pre-correction	Providing proactive reminders about behavioral expectations before situations that are typically problematic for the student (Ennis et al., 2018). Ie. "We're going to start the lesson now. Remember, I need you to try to stay quiet and not call out or talk to your friends."
Praise	Directing a positive statement or action (smile, thumbs up, token) toward a student

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Breaks	who meets behavioral expectations (Ennis et al., 2018). Allowing a student to take a quick, timed rest period away from classroom demands (Owens et al., 2021).
Accommodations	Altering the classroom environment or learning tasks to help reduce frustration for a student who is experiencing learning or behavior challenges (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). Ie. Shortened assignments, providing the student with sentence frames for written language assignments

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### **Individual Interviews Data Collection Approach**

One-on-one interviews were conducted with the 15 teachers chosen for the study to gather more in-depth insight from the perspectives of individual participants. A semi-structured interview guide was used to inquire about teachers' experiences implementing behavior management strategies in their classrooms. All questions were open-ended. Prompts and probes were used to elicit details and seek clarification. An advantage of using this interview method that it is systematic yet allows for flexibility and spontaneity during the interview (Patton, 1999). In phenomenological research, interview questions should be open-ended, and although the researcher may develop a series of questions in advance, there should be flexibility for these questions to be varied, altered, or abandoned when the participant shares their experience (Moustakas, 1994). The individual interviews were conducted via the Zoom video conferencing platform, were audio recorded, and lasted approximately 60 minutes.

#### ***Individual Interview Questions***

The following questions pertain to the four behavior management strategies listed in Table 1, which will be displayed for participants during individual interviews.

1. How did you become interested in becoming a classroom teacher?
2. How many years have you been teaching?

3. Describe a classroom situation when using any of these strategies worked particularly well for you in terms of meeting the needs of a student with behavior challenges. SQ2
4. Describe a situation when implementing any of these strategies was problematic for you. SQ1
5. What are your thoughts about the feasibility of each of these strategies? SQ1, SQ2
6. Describe a situation when implementing any of these strategies was either feasible or not feasible. SQ1, SQ2
7. How do you feel about the agreeability of each of these strategies in terms of your personal teaching philosophy? SQ1, SQ2
8. Describe a situation when you either agreed with or did not agree with implementing one or more of these strategies in terms of your personal teaching philosophy. SQ1, SQ2
9. How do you feel about the effectiveness of each of these strategies in terms of meeting the needs of a student with behavior challenges? SQ1, SQ2
10. What are your thoughts about using these strategies class-wide to accommodate multiple learners in the classroom with behavior challenges? SQ 1, SQ2
11. Keeping in mind the four strategies (pre-correction, praise, breaks, accommodations), what factors make you abandon a behavior management strategy that you've been using or avoid a strategy altogether? SQ3
12. What factors make you continue to use a particular strategy? SQ3
13. Studies suggest that one of the challenges teachers face is that many teacher education programs do not provide coursework to develop behavior management skills (Nichols et al., 2020; Stevenson et al., 2020). What training did you receive in behavior management before becoming a classroom teacher? SQ1

14. Literature suggests that general education teachers face unique challenges in terms of accommodating students with behavior challenges (Jaffal, 2022). What challenges have you faced that you feel are unique to being a general education teacher? SQ1

Questions one and two were opening questions designed to develop rapport and create a neutral environment (Moustakas, 1994). These questions helped form a fuller picture in terms of understanding how teachers experience and commit to behavior intervention strategies.

Questions three through 10 reflected the behavior plan implementation barriers reported in the literature. The feasibility of a behavior intervention (Collier-Meek et al., 2019), teachers' philosophical agreement with the intervention (McLennan, 2020; Wilcynski, 2017), and teachers' perceived effectiveness of the intervention (Hart & DiPerna, 2016; Nemer et al., 2019) influence teachers' decisions about whether to adopt a behavior intervention strategy. Across studies, there appears to be a lack of agreement about which barriers are most prominent.

Teachers' perceptions of whether behavior management strategies are feasible and acceptable to implement vary depending on the setting (general education vs. special education), available school resources (presence or lack of instructional aides) (Wilcynski, 2017), and available teacher training or coaching (Kraft & Blazaar, 2018). Therefore, the purpose of questions three through 10 was to explore how general education teachers experience the barriers reported in the literature within the context of their classrooms and school community.

Questions 11 and 12 were grounded in Bernard Weiner's (1974) attribution theory as the theory relates to teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and subsequent behaviors. Attribution theory has been used in literature as a framework for understanding how practitioners in educational settings explain their behavior and the behavior of others. These questions were intended to



explore what factors contribute to teachers continuing to use a particular behavior management strategy and what factors lead to a teacher abandoning or avoiding a strategy.

Lastly, the purpose of questions 13 and 14 was to explore challenges unique to general education teachers. Literature suggests that general education teachers face different challenges in that they are typically equipped with less specialized knowledge and training and have fewer school resources available to them (Al Jaffal, 2022). Literature also indicates that many teacher education programs do not require coursework or experience to develop behavior management skills. In-service teachers typically receive limited professional development in effective behavior management practices (Stevenson et al., 2020). A lack of knowledge and experience with effective behavior management practices can lead to a reluctance to try new behavior management strategies (Nichols et al., 2020).

### **Focus Group Data Collection Approach**

Two focus group interviews were conducted, and all teachers chosen for the study had an opportunity to participate. Since lower elementary school teachers are likely to experience different challenges from upper elementary school teachers, groups were organized according to teachers' grade levels. One group consisted of lower elementary school teachers (grades K-2), and the other focus group consisted of upper elementary school teachers (grades 3-5). Methodological literature suggests a focus group size ranging from six to 12 participants (Patton, 1999). Therefore, each group included six to eight teachers. The purpose of the focus groups was to obtain a group consensus regarding the feasibility, effectiveness, and teachers' philosophical acceptance of each of the low-intensity behavior management strategies. Patterns in responses between the two groups were assessed to determine if behavior plan implementation barriers that teachers experience are grade-level specific. The focus group questions were a reflection of the

implementation barriers reported in the literature, specifically difficulty managing competing responsibilities (Collier-Meek et al., 2019), philosophical disagreement with individualized behavior interventions (McLennan et al., 2020), and disagreement with the perceived “fit” of an intervention for a given student (McLennan et al., 2020; Wilcynski, 2017). While what was reported in the literature was obtained from quantitative studies, this study attempts to uncover how teachers, as a group, feel about these challenges within the context of the school setting being studied. Therefore, the focus groups helped form a fuller picture of how these behavior management strategies are received by teachers. The focus groups were conducted via Zoom video conferencing platform, were audio and video recorded on the Zoom platform, and lasted approximately 60 minutes.

### ***Focus Group Interview Questions***

The following questions pertain to the four behavior management strategies listed in Table 1. As with the surveys and individual interviews, the table of behavior management strategies and their definitions will be displayed during the focus group interviews.

1. Keeping in mind the grade level that you teach, what are your thoughts about which of these four strategies are most and least feasible? SQ1, SQ2
2. Keeping in mind the grade level that you teach, what are your thoughts about which of these strategies are most and least agreeable in terms of your personal teaching philosophy? SQ1, SQ2
3. Given the grade level that you teach, how do you feel about the effectiveness of each of these strategies in terms of meeting the needs of a student with behavior challenges? SQ1, SQ2
4. Can you describe how often you use each of these strategies? SQ1, SQ2

5. How do you feel about using each of these strategies as class-wide behavior management strategies? SQ1, SQ2
6. Explain which strategies you feel are most effective for managing multiple learners with challenging behaviors in the classroom. SQ2
7. Explain which strategies you feel would not be effective for managing multiple learners with behavior challenges in the classroom. SQ1
8. What are the factors that make you continue to use a particular behavior management strategy? SQ3
9. What are the factors that make you abandon or avoid a particular behavior management strategy? SQ3

### **Data Analysis**

Data obtained from open-ended surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups was analyzed using van Manen's (2015) methodological guidelines for hermeneutic phenomenology. This section details how data was analyzed inductively, reflexively, and reflectively. Data analysis following van Manen's (2015) guidelines involved six methodological aspects. Van Manen's (2015) guidelines are not meant to be understood as a series of steps to be followed in a predetermined order but rather as methodological aspects to consider when conducting hermeneutic phenomenological research (van Manen, 2015).

1. Turning to the nature of lived experience: First, it is important for the researcher to focus on the phenomenon of interest with deep commitment to their professional field (van Manen, 2014).
2. Investigating participants' lived experiences: The phenomenon is explored through various data collection methods. Van Manen (2014) emphasizes that all research should

concentrate on the participants' experiences as they are lived. Each teacher participated in an open-ended survey and an individual interview, and all teachers were invited to participate in a focus group. Data obtained from open-ended surveys was exported to Microsoft Word for further review and analysis. Individual interviews were audio-recorded, and focus group interviews were audio and video-recorded. Each interview and focus group interview was transcribed using Otter.ai automated transcription software. Transcriptions generated by Otter.ai were checked for accuracy by listening to each interview recording and ensuring that the written transcripts accurately reflect participants' responses. Participants were provided with finalized interview transcripts to ensure that the data accurately reflects their perspective. Finalized transcripts were exported to Microsoft Word for further review and analysis.

3. Defining, reviewing, and reflecting on essential themes: Each finalized survey, interview, and focus group transcript was read several times to understand the entire data set. In the spirit of reflexivity, memoing was used to record thoughts, insights, and interpretations of the data (Clark & Braun, 2016; Saldana, 2021). The primary goal of reflexivity is for the researcher to become aware of how their values, beliefs, and biases may impact the outcome of a study (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Preliminary codes (descriptive words and phrases) were assigned to participants' statements to determine how the data relates to the central research question. All data was coded manually. An inductive coding approach was used to create codes that are solely reflective of the data versus using a pre-existing coding frame. Inductive, data-based coding can best represent meaning as communicated by the participants, free from any pre-conceived hypotheses (Braun & Clarke, 2013, 2019). During this step, repetitive statements and those that do not relate to the central

research question were removed. This helped to separate data related to the experience under investigation from irrelevant information. Preliminary codes were then grouped to create intermediate codes. Clusters of similar intermediate codes were grouped into themes. Themes were checked against the data set to ensure that they were an accurate reflection of the participants' experiences. Themes were identified according to their significance to the central research question and the purpose of the study. Identified themes were reviewed to ensure that they accurately represent the data set. Overlapping themes were merged. The final themes were refined and analyzed to determine how the themes relate to one another and the central research question.

4. Describing the phenomenon through textural descriptions: For each participant, an individual textural description was created using verbatim excerpts and quotes from their survey responses, individual interviews, and focus group responses. Data obtained from each participant's responses was interpreted to create a description of the participant's experience of implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies in their classroom.
5. Maintaining orientation to the research objective: Throughout the research process, the researcher must set aside theories, opinions, and preconceptions and focus on the participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon in question.
6. Balancing the research context by considering the parts and the whole: A table was created detailing the themes from each participant's responses. This illustrated recurring and prominent themes across all participants. Commonalities among participants' experiences were described in this step. Data was merged and synthesized to create a

comprehensive description of the participants' successes and challenges in implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies in their classrooms.

Themes generated from each data collection approach (surveys, individual interviews, and focus group interviews) were cross-analyzed to determine repeating and reoccurring themes and sub-themes. A hierarchy of common themes and sub-themes was created in order of importance. This process allowed for comprehensive conclusions regarding the research questions. According to van Manen, any descriptive act is an interpretation because transferring lived experiences into text requires reflection and interpretation (van Manen, 2014, 2015). In accordance with van Manen's guidelines for hermeneutic phenomenology, specifically *Phenomenology of Practice*, all textural descriptions involved careful reflection and interpretation to determine the meaning of the data in relation to professional practice. Memo writing (Creswell & Poth, 2018) was used to fulfill the ethical obligation to represent the participants' experiences as genuinely as possible. Member checking was used to ensure that the data accurately reflects the participants' perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The goal was to deliver an authentic representation of the participants' lived experiences.

### **Trustworthiness**

While quantitative approaches rely on validity, reliability, and generalizability for determining sound scientific research, methodologists have established a different set of criteria for judging the rigor and value of qualitative studies. In their seminal work, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that given the nature and goal of qualitative research, it is not appropriate to measure the value of a qualitative study by using quantitative guidelines. Rather, qualitative researchers strive for "trustworthiness and authenticity of results" (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 78). Researchers can engage in certain procedures within their research activity and in

their reporting that create trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted four criteria for establishing trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Equally important is the ethical integrity of the research, which is based on the principles of human freedom and dignity.

### **Credibility**

Credibility is the extent to which the researcher provides comprehensive and sound interpretations of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is concerned with the accuracy with which the researcher portrays the participants' viewpoints. In this study, credibility was achieved through data triangulation and member checking.

### ***Triangulation***

Data was obtained through multiple methods (surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups) to fully explore general education teachers' challenges and successes in implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies in their classrooms. Data triangulation allows for the identification and confirmation of repeating patterns and trends in participants' responses across data sources. If findings converge, it generates credible conclusions about how teachers view and experience the four low-intensity behavior management strategies that present most often in educational literature: pre-correction, praise, breaks, and accommodations.

### ***Member Checking***

Member checking was used to explore the credibility of the results. During individual interviews and focus group interviews, I asked clarifying questions to ensure that the data accurately reflects participants' viewpoints. This immediate member checking (Lincoln & Guba (1985) was important for confirming specific aspects of the data with participants. Participants were provided with finalized interview transcripts to ensure that the data accurately reflects their

perspectives. Research participants were also be provided with a pre-publication copy of the research to obtain their feedback regarding the accuracy of the data.

### **Transferability**

Transferability refers to the “applicability of research outcomes” from one context to another (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.298). Transferability can be accomplished through the use of thick descriptions when reporting research findings (Geertz, 1973). I provided a detailed account of general education teachers’ challenges and successes implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies. A detailed account of teachers’ experiences implementing behavior management strategies allows readers to determine how the findings of the study may apply to other settings, individuals, and situations. It is important to note that while the researcher can create the conditions for transferability, the reader must decide how the research relates to their contexts. Lincoln and Guba explain, “The original enquirer cannot know the sites to which transferability might be sought, but the appliers can and do” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 297).

### **Dependability**

Dependability refers to the consistency of data interpretation and the consistency of research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure dependability, qualitative researchers need to provide sufficient details regarding the research context and processes. This study includes detailed descriptions of the research site, participants, methods, and procedures for data collection and analysis. Dependability was also established through an inquiry audit, which involves a thorough review of the research processes and results by the dissertation committee and the Qualitative Research Director.



## **Confirmability**

Confirmability is the degree to which the research findings are based on the participants' words rather than potential researcher biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I employed two techniques to establish confirmability. First, an audit trail was utilized so that my procedures, data collection, data analysis, and final report can be transparently tracked. Second, I was reflexive when conducting this study. Reflexivity is the process by which a researcher continuously examines their feelings, reactions, and motivations throughout the research process and reflects on how these constructs influence the generation of knowledge (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Consistent with self-reflexivity, I acknowledge my standpoint as a Board Certified Behavior Analyst in a public school setting. My research paradigm and central research question are motivated by my desire to improve the development and implementation of school-based behavior plans in general education settings. I acknowledge that when I conduct and analyze research, I construct my meaning and reality of others' experiences (Peck & Mummery, 2022). To achieve reflexivity, I recorded memos throughout the research process to ensure that the data accurately reflects the participants' perspectives versus my perspectives and beliefs about behavior management strategies (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

## **Ethical Considerations**

When conducting qualitative research, it is important that the study is guided by ethical principles that assure human freedom and dignity. The Tri-Council Policy Statement has established guidelines that direct research boards to ensure that participants are treated ethically (Peter, 2018). These guidelines cover three main areas:

1. Respect for participants: This principle considers the freedom and autonomy of individuals. This manifests as informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality (Peter, 2018).
2. Concern for welfare: Researchers should ensure that participants receive the maximum benefit and the least amount of risk when they participate in a research study (Peter, 2018).
3. Justice: Researchers should be sensitive to power differences and minimize these differences whenever possible (Peter, 2018).

### ***Permissions***

This study obtained approval from Liberty University's IRB before starting. Part of the IRB process included submitting documents that were used to gain consent from the school district and teachers. I began by obtaining written approval to conduct the study from the school district superintendent. Next, recruitment began by obtaining written consent from the 15 teachers who met the criteria for participation in the study. Teachers were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

### ***Other Participant Protections***

Pseudonyms were used in the study to safeguard the anonymity and privacy of both the participants and the school district. Qualitative research involves very descriptive data, which can make participants easily identifiable. In this study, unimportant details were obscured to protect participants' anonymity (Peter, 2018). Physical data was secured in a locked filing cabinet, and electronic data will be encrypted. Data will be destroyed after three years.

## Summary

In designing this study, careful consideration was given to ensure that the design choice, data collection approaches, and data analysis strategies align with the research questions. Each data collection approach aimed to explore teachers' challenges and successes with behavior management strategies from a different angle. The survey was intended to capture initial data related to the central research question. While the individual interview questions encouraged teachers to share classroom situations where they've experienced various challenges and successes implementing behavior interventions, the focus groups attempted to uncover whether any of the challenges that teachers experience are grade-level specific. Themes generated from each data collection approach (surveys, individual interviews, and focus group interviews) were cross-analyzed to determine repeating and reoccurring themes and sub-themes. This process allowed for comprehensive conclusions regarding the research questions.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore general education teachers' successes and challenges implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies while teaching in a public school setting. This chapter contains a description of the participants, data in narrative and tabular form, and research question responses.

### **Participants**

Fifteen general education K-5 teachers participated in the study. I used maximum variation sampling to capture the widest range of perspectives possible. I selected teachers from a variety of grade levels and school buildings with varied degrees of teaching experience. Eight lower elementary school teachers (grades K-2) and seven upper elementary school teachers (grades 3-5) participated in the study. Participants' level of teaching experience ranged from four months to 37 years. (See Table 2, Teacher Participants). Each teacher participated in all three data collection approaches: a survey, individual interview, and focus group interview. Each teacher had also referred a student to Intervention & Referral Services (I&RS) for behavioral concerns and received individualized teacher coaching on the implementation of low-intensity behavior management strategies from the district Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA).

**Table 2.*****Teacher Participants***

Teacher Participants	Years Taught	Grade Level	School Building	Pre-Service Training in Behavior Management (Y/N)	Training from District BCBA in Low-Intensity Behavior Management Strategies (Y/N)
<i>Lower Elementary Teachers (Grades K-2)</i>					
Charlie	37	K	Knollwood	N	Y
Alex	10	1	Primrose	N	Y
Jamie	3	1	Knollwood	N	Y
Jordan	7 months	1	Knollwood	N	Y
Frankie	4 months	2	Knollwood	N	Y
Maddox	7	2	Primrose	Y	Y
Parker	5	2	Oak Creek	N	Y
Taylor	19	2	Oak Creek	N	Y
<i>Upper Elementary Teachers (Grades 3-5)</i>					
Riley	18	3	Wyndmoor	N	Y
Reese	22	3	Knollwood	N	Y
Rowan	2	3	Wyndmoor	N	Y
Cameron	10	3	Wyndmoor	N	Y
Devon	15	3	Wyndmoor	N	Y
Bailey	3	4	Stony Brook	N	Y
Jesse	25	5	Wyndmoor	N	Y

**Charlie**

Charlie is a general education kindergarten teacher at Knollwood Elementary School. Charlie has been a classroom teacher for 37 years. She stated that she did not receive pre-service training in behavior management strategies prior to becoming a classroom teacher but that she learned strategies through experience:

I think some of it is just your experience of your lifetime of children and, you know, like sometimes a child's behavior will remind you of someone else that you had previously and what worked for them, and I usually try that first.

Charlie referred a student to Intervention & Referral Services during the 2021-2022 school year due to the following behavioral concerns: disruptive behavior, inappropriate physical contact with classmates, and leaving the classroom without permission.

### **Alex**

Alex is a general education first-grade teacher at Primrose Elementary School. She has been a classroom teacher for 10 years. Alex also spoke about not receiving training in behavior management strategies prior to becoming a classroom teacher. During her individual interview, she shared, “No, I didn’t learn anything like that when I was in college. It was all about focusing on the academic part.” Alex referred a student to Intervention & Referral Services during the 2022-2023 school year due to the following behavioral concerns: refusal to complete classroom assignments and leaving the classroom without permission.

### **Jamie**

Jamie is a general education first-grade classroom teacher at Knollwood Elementary School, and she has been teaching for three years. Jamie expressed frustration with not receiving training in behavior management strategies prior to becoming a classroom teacher:

So, no, I haven't had any training. I've had students run out of the room, I've had students, like, throw items. And, you know, before working with you, *I really didn't know* how to address that! I mean, obviously, I wanted to keep my students safe. I want to keep them safe. But it was, you know, getting to be a lot.

Jamie referred a student to Intervention & Referral Services during the 2022-2023 school year due to the following behavioral concerns: disruptive behavior (shouting loudly during classroom lessons, throwing classroom supplies) and leaving the classroom without permission.

### **Jordan**

Jordan is a new teacher at Knollwood Elementary School, with just seven months of teaching experience. She teaches in a general education first-grade classroom. Like the other participants, Jordan stated that she did not receive pre-service training in behavior management strategies prior to becoming a classroom teacher:

I mean, as far as the like, the training in college, I found it's very focused on like, the relationships and knowing students' stories. And, you know, kind of more just an overall perspective of how you should view students and where those behaviors come from, which is great and definitely aligns with my philosophy. But I think I was really, like, floundering in the beginning of the year because I needed concrete, like, here are things that you should do.

Jordan referred a student to Intervention & Referral Services during the 2022-2023 school year due to the following behavioral concerns: disruptive behavior during lessons (including shouting and throwing classroom supplies), refusal to complete classroom assignments, and leaving the classroom without permission.

### **Frankie**

Frankie is another new teacher at Knollwood Elementary School, with just four months of teaching experience. She teaches in a general education second-grade classroom. Frankie also expressed frustration that her teacher training program did not provide training in behavior management strategies:

I think they need to do more behavioral training because, like, I came in and I knew *absolutely nothing*, like, what to do with him...how to help him. So I think that they need to focus more on that in college, especially because, you know, a lot of the kids have behavior issues. It was *not* about classroom management. It was about putting on a show when you're teaching a lesson and being overly enthusiastic. There was nothing on behavior.

Frankie referred a student to Intervention & Referral Services during the 2023-2024 school year due to the following behavioral concerns: inappropriate physical contact with peers, refusal to complete classroom assignments, and leaving the classroom without permission.

### **Maddox**

Maddox is a general education second-grade teacher at Primrose Elementary School. Maddox has been a classroom teacher for 7 years. She described that the coursework in her teacher training program did not address behavior management, but she learned behavior management strategies by observing other teachers during her pre-service practicum. Maddox explained:

I feel like everything I learned behavior management-wise was in the field, like the practicum that I did, because my college had us starting practicum sophomore year. And we had at least one practicum setting every semester throughout the whole time. So, I feel like I learned a lot about instruction in college and, like, how to make the lesson. But all of that, like, behavior management stuff came from watching teachers do it in their classrooms.

Maddox referred a student to Intervention & Referral Services during the 2022-2023 school year due to the following behavioral concerns: inappropriate physical contact with peers, refusal to



complete classroom assignments, and disruptive behavior (talking over the teacher and walking around the classroom during lessons).

### **Parker**

Parker is a general education second-grade teacher at Oak Creek Elementary School, and she has been a classroom teacher for 5 years. Parker did not receive pre-service training in behavior management strategies prior to becoming a classroom teacher, but she sought out professional development opportunities on her own to learn about behavior management. Parker shared:

Yeah, I didn't get any training. But what I did was look for outside resources because I realized, with my group of students, that I was, you know, not equipped to help them with some of these things that were going on in their home lives and affecting them at school. No one very explicitly talked about what to do. There weren't workshops that very explicitly talk about what to do. So you don't know what kinds of things you can do with students, what kinds of goal charts you know, like until you're going through it.

Parker referred three students to Intervention & Referral Services during the 2022-2023 school year. Two students were referred for inappropriate language (swearing) and disruptive behavior (making noises during classroom lessons). A third student was referred for disruptive behavior, including throwing classroom supplies, loudly kicking classroom furniture during lessons, and shouting during lessons.

### **Taylor**

Taylor is a general education second-grade teacher at Oak Creek Elementary School. Teaching is a second career for Taylor, and she explains that she completed the alternate-route teacher certification program. Taylor has been a classroom teacher for 19 years, and she also did

not receive pre-service training in behavior management strategies prior to becoming a classroom teacher. Taylor referred a student to Intervention & Referral Services during the 2021-2022 school year due to the following behavioral concerns: inappropriate language (swearing), leaving the classroom without permission, and learning challenges.

### **Riley**

Riley is a general education third-grade teacher at Wyndmoor Elementary School. Riley has been a classroom teacher for 18 years. He explained that he did not receive pre-service training in behavior management strategies prior to becoming a classroom teacher, but that he learned some behavior management strategies from working as a one-on-one paraprofessional prior to being a classroom teacher. Riley shared:

No, I didn't get any training, but I...I spent three and a half years as a para. I was learning on the fly all these things... But that did give me some resources and some background knowledge myself. So when I did start teaching, I'd be like, 'Oh, well, let me try this, what I did with this child.' But working one-on-one with an autistic child, and the strategies you use with them aren't necessarily the exact strategies you're gonna use in your gen. ed. classroom. So again, it's, you have your limited bag of tricks based on your own educational experiences, your own experiences with different kids.

Riley referred a student to Intervention & Referral Services during the 2022-2023 school year due to concerns about the student's use of inappropriate language, including swearing and profanity.

### **Reese**

Reese is a general education third-grade teacher at Knollwood Elementary School. Reese has been a classroom teacher for 22 years. She stated that she did not receive pre-service training

in behavior management strategies prior to becoming a classroom teacher, but that she is a “huge Responsive Classroom (Charney et al., 1998) follower.” Reese voiced her concerns about the lack of pre-service training in behavior management that teachers receive:

I think those of us who are older, more experienced teachers aren't struggling with the same things as the younger teachers are, because I also don't think that colleges *teach* teachers how to differentiate, modify, accommodate. We've kind of learned that through the years, but I don't think that...I don't think that people do that.

Reese referred a student to Intervention & Referral Services during the 2021-2022 school year due to the following behavioral concerns: difficulty remaining focused and on-task while completing classroom assignments and difficulty maintaining personal space with peers and adults.

### **Rowan**

Rowan is one of the newer teachers at Wyndmoor Elementary School, with just two years of teaching experience. She teaches in a general education third-grade classroom. Rowan explained that her teacher preparation program did not provide training in behavior management strategies, but that she took an elective course on behavior management outside of her required coursework. Rowan shared the following:

So my college didn't really give us any specific, you know, class on behavior. One thing that stood out to me... it wasn't required, but it was a classroom management class. The professor taught us different types of management skills, like having a student-teacher relationship, and making the curriculum, you know, tailored towards the students. And then one thing that I do... every year I feel like there will be some sort of behavioral experience. So since I'm a new teacher, I have, like, kind of like a binder of, like,

techniques and tips and you know, behavioral charts, sticker charts, and every year I just put more and more and more and more in it. Because you don't get training on it, it's hard...

Rowan referred a student to Intervention & Referral Services during the 2023-2024 school year due to the following behavioral concerns: difficulty remaining focused and on-task while completing classroom assignments, disruptive behavior (walking around the classroom during lessons, talking to classmates during lessons), and leaving the classroom without permission.

### **Cameron**

Cameron is also a general education third-grade teacher at Wyndmoor Elementary School, with 10 years of teaching experience. When asked if she received training in behavior management strategies, Cameron stated:

No, definitely not. It was all about the academics. And we're in a situation now where we have students who are exhibiting academic or behavior struggles, and because you're a gen-ed teacher you're blocked with what services you can receive in your classroom. And you have a room full of kids....It's a larger group. I think that is very unique to general education.

Cameron referred a student to Intervention & Referral Services during the 2023-2024 school year due to concerns about the student's use of inappropriate language and refusal to complete classroom assignments.

### **Devon**

Devon is another general education third-grade teacher at Wyndmoor Elementary School. Devon has 15 years of teaching experience. Like the other participants, Devon states that she did

not receive training in behavior management strategies prior to becoming a classroom teacher. Similar to Charlie, Devon shared that she learned behavior management strategies through experience: “Through the years you learn what works and what doesn’t. And of course, after really getting to know a child and having that relationship.” Devon referred a student to Intervention & Referral Services during the 2023-2024 school year due to concerns about the student’s learning challenges and inappropriate physical contact with classmates.

### **Bailey**

Bailey is a general education fourth-grade teacher at Stony Brook Elementary School. Bailey has been a classroom teacher for three years. Prior to her position as a classroom teacher, Bailey delivered remedial instruction to general education students in a small group setting for 23 years. Bailey states that she did not receive training on behavior management strategies while studying to become a teacher. Like Reese, Bailey reports that she learned classroom management strategies through in-service training on the Responsive Classroom model (Charney et al., 1998). Bailey referred a student to Intervention & Referral Services during the 2022-2023 school year due to concerns about the student’s refusal to complete classroom assignment, disruptive behavior during classroom lessons, and use of inappropriate language.

### **Jesse**

Jesse is a fifth-grade general education teacher at Wyndmoor Elementary School with 25 years of experience. Like the other participants in the study, Jesse reports that she did not receive training in behavior management strategies prior to becoming a classroom teacher, but that she learned behavior management strategies through experience and in-service teacher coaching, Jesse referred a student to Intervention & Referral Services during the 2022-2023 school year

due to concerns about the student's difficulty remaining focused and on-task while completing classroom assignments and disruptive behavior.

## **Results**

Data were obtained from three different sources to achieve data triangulation: surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Teachers' descriptions of their challenges and successes implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies (precorrection, praise, breaks, accommodations) were coded manually and inductively. Four themes emerged: Teachers' Perceptions of Feasibility, Teachers' Perceptions of Effectiveness, Teachers' Philosophical Acceptance of Strategies, and Teachers' Use of Strategies. These themes are consistent with the behavior plan barriers and facilitators reported in recent literature. Teachers' responses were then organized into a hierarchal coding frame consisting of themes and subthemes. (See Table 3, Themes and Subthemes).

Responses across the three data sources (surveys, interviews, focus groups) were further analyzed to create groupings within each subtheme. For example, within the subtheme of Feasibility of Precorrection, teachers' responses lent themselves to a further breakdown of the subtheme into three distinct groupings: teachers who applied precorrection classwide, teachers who noted the importance of anticipating the student's difficulties, and teachers who talked about the challenge of remembering to implement precorrection. This level of analysis allowed me to explore and report the fine nuances and complexities of teachers' perspectives within each theme and subtheme. For each theme and subtheme, the groupings within the data are reported in a synthesis matrix. The purpose of the data matrices is to be transparent about the data that presented and to show the level of agreement among participants.

**Table 3*****Themes and Subthemes***

Themes	Subthemes	Groupings	Related Research Questions
<b>Teachers' Perceptions of Feasibility</b>			CRQ
	Feasibility of Precorrection	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Classwide precorrection</li> <li>2. Anticipating the student's difficulties</li> <li>3. Difficulty remembering to implement precorrection</li> </ol>	SQ1, SQ2
	Feasibility of Praise	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Praise feels natural</li> <li>2. Challenges with praise in the form of a behavior chart</li> </ol>	SQ1, SQ2
	Feasibility of Breaks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Taking a break is a skill that needs to be taught</li> <li>2. Challenges managing students' breaks</li> <li>3. Classwide breaks</li> </ol>	SQ1, SQ2
	Feasibility of Accommodations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accommodations are feasible</li> <li>2. Accommodations can be problematic</li> <li>3. Difficulty reconciling accommodations with grade level expectations, report card grading, and standardized testing requirements</li> </ol>	SQ1, SQ2
<b>Teachers' Perceptions of Effectiveness</b>			CRQ
	Effectiveness of Precorrection	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maturity and impulsivity impact the effectiveness of precorrection</li> <li>2. Precorrection is effective (with a target student, classwide, or in combination with other strategies)</li> </ol>	SQ1, SQ2
	Effectiveness of Praise	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Praise is motivating to a child</li> <li>2. Praise builds students' self-esteem</li> <li>3. Importance of praise being behavior-specific</li> </ol>	SQ1, SQ2

Themes	Subthemes	Groupings	Related Research Questions
	Effectiveness of Breaks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Breaks are necessary and helpful classwide</li> <li>2. Breaks reduce a student's frustration</li> <li>3. Students can use breaks to avoid classwork</li> </ol>	SQ1, SQ2
	Effectiveness of Accommodations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accommodations reduce frustration by setting realistic goals</li> <li>2. Difficulty reconciling accommodations with report card grading and students' need to fit in with their peers</li> </ol>	
<b>Teachers' Philosophical Acceptance of Strategies</b>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Behavior management strategies give students what they need</li> <li>2. Behavior management strategies benefit the whole class</li> </ol>	CRQ
<b>Teachers' Use of Strategies</b>	Teachers' Attributions for Continued Use of a Strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continuing to implement a strategy because it is effective</li> <li>2. Combining strategies and using them situationally to maximize effectiveness</li> </ol>	SQ3
	Teachers' Attributions for Abandoning or Avoiding a Strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Modifying versus abandoning a behavior management strategy</li> <li>2. Holding off on a strategy that has the potential to become unmanageable</li> <li>3. Importance of the strategy fitting into the classroom routine</li> </ol>	SQ3

### **Theme 1: Teachers' Perceptions of Feasibility**

Feasibility refers to how easy it is for a teacher to implement a behavior management strategy while managing competing classroom responsibilities. When discussing feasibility, teachers addressed the feasibility of each behavior management strategy separately. Teachers



agreed that precorrection (giving a student proactive reminders), and praise (particularly verbal and gestural praise) are easy to implement, both for individual students and classwide. Regarding the feasibility of breaks, teachers' responses were discrepant. Teachers' responses differed widely in terms of feasibility of accommodations.

### ***Sub-Theme 1: Feasibility of Precorrection***

All 15 teachers expressed that precorrection (giving a student proactive reminders) is easy to implement. Within the subtheme of Feasibility of Precorrection, teacher responses lent themselves to a further breakdown of the subtheme into three distinct groupings: teachers who applied precorrection classwide, teachers who noted the importance of anticipating the student's difficulties, and teachers who talked about the challenge of remembering to implement precorrection. For example, during Charlie's interview, she talked about implementing precorrection classwide: "I think precorrection as a strategy for the whole class is really easy." Alex discussed the importance of anticipating the student's difficulties: "So giving them like reminders, you know, after you figure out a pattern with a kid and what's going to set them off, I think that definitely proactive reminders are feasible." During Cameron's interview, she talked about the challenge of remembering to implement precorrection: "So I really like precorrection. I tend to sometimes forget about it. But I think it *is* easy and beneficial. So I feel like if you like remind yourself or maybe give yourself like a reminder so that you do it before starting the lesson, I think it could be a really effective strategy." (See Table 4, Feasibility of Precorrection Synthesis Matrix in Appendix H).

### ***Sub-Theme 2: Feasibility of Praise***

Regarding the feasibility of praise, all 15 teachers shared that praise is easy to implement, especially verbal or gestural praise (e.g., thumbs up, high five). Several of the teachers expressed

that praise is feasible because it feels natural and it is a fluid part of the day. Some teachers felt that when praise is in the form of a behavior chart, while still feasible, it can be difficult to remember to implement or challenging to coordinate implementation within the context of the classroom routine (especially when there are multiple learners in the class with behavior challenges). Teachers emphasized the importance of a behavior chart being simple. Several teachers also shared that behavior charts can make other students jealous. During her interview, Jamie talked about praise feeling natural:

The praise, by far, I would say is the easiest part for me. It's like you almost don't have to remember to say it because you're just so proud of them. It just comes out. I think that's why it feels easier....because it's more natural to do.

In the focus group, Riley described some of the challenges associated with behavior charts:

Praise, I mean, you have to praise all your students...just a little thumbs up or a little, like, head nod or a little smile...just something, you know, so that they know that it's being acknowledged...that's easy. But if it is like a token system, you always get that one kid who's like, 'Well, why don't I get that token? Why don't I get to do this?' So you know, that's a different part of the problem.

(See Table 5, Feasibility of Praise Synthesis Matrix in Appendix I).

### ***Sub-Theme 3: Feasibility of Breaks***

Regarding the feasibility of breaks, teachers' responses were discrepant. Six of the 15 teacher participants noted success with teaching a child how to take a break appropriately. In the lower elementary focus group, Alex described, "I think breaks are always easy as long as you've coached them in how to take a break. You know, this is where you take a break, this is how you take a break." Seven of the 15 teachers shared challenges with managing students' breaks. In the

upper elementary focus group, Jesse elaborated on difficulties associated with breaks outside the classroom:

So I had one student whose breaks were becoming...for me....like I don't know where he is in the building. It was like okay, go take a quick walk around the B-wing, and then the child was in the A-wing and then talking to the security guards...so that was not an option. That had to be modified. It was like take a break in the hall where I can still see you.

Two teachers discussed successfully implementing breaks classwide. Jordan talked about classwide implementation of breaks: “Breaks? Our class does those every single day and I would say breaks are, like, definitely necessary and are really feasible to do every day, multiple times a day.” (See Table 6, Feasibility of Breaks Synthesis Matrix in Appendix J).

#### ***Sub-Theme 4: Feasibility of Accommodations***

Teachers’ responses differed in terms of feasibility of accommodations. Several teachers felt a wide range of accommodations were very manageable to implement classwide, and that it felt natural to implement different accommodations for different students depending upon student needs. Jordan shared during her interview, “Every day we're doing many different types of accommodations, even just like without even knowing... just naturally always implementing those things... giving all of our students certain prompts, different places to work and participate.” Other teachers noted problems and frustrations associated with accommodations, particularly providing accommodations for the target student while balancing the needs of the many other students in a classroom with only one teacher. Maddox described:

It's hard being just one teacher with 24 other kids to like, keep going over and say, 'Okay, you can have a five-minute break now, but then we're gonna go back to our work.' So I think that it's effective, but I think it's really hard in a just one teacher setting.

Shortened assignments, teacher re-checks, and student breaks after completing shortened assignments were mentioned as difficult to implement and oversee. Two teachers expressed difficulty individualizing accommodations for the target student.

A separate grouping emerged based on teachers who expressed difficulty reconciling accommodations with grade-level expectations, report card grading, and standardized testing requirements. Upper elementary teachers, in particular, noted the challenges of grading a student who receives accommodations (particularly shortened assignments) and feeling like it's unfair to a student who receives accommodations in class but is expected to complete standardized testing with no accommodations. (See Table 7, Feasibility of Accommodations Synthesis Matrix in Appendix K).

## **Theme 2: Teachers' Perceptions of Effectiveness**

When addressing effectiveness, teachers talked about the effectiveness of each behavior management strategy separately, as they did with feasibility. Teachers agreed that precorrection, praise, breaks, and accommodations are effective behavior management strategies. Thirteen teachers experienced success implementing precorrection.

### ***Sub-Theme 1: Effectiveness of Precorrection***

Thirteen of the 15 teacher participants felt that precorrection (giving students proactive reminders) is an effective strategy. Teachers who reported success described using precorrection on an individual basis with a target student, using precorrection classwide, and using precorrection in combination with other strategies, such as praise and/or modeling. A separate

grouping emerged based on teachers who expressed that students' impulsivity and level of maturity impact the effectiveness of precorrection. Lower elementary teachers, in particular, noted challenges such as reviewing rules and expectations proactively, but ultimately contending with the student becoming over-excited in the moment. For example, during Taylor's interview she shared:

The effectiveness depends on how much in control the child is. I could give them reminders, but two seconds later, it doesn't matter. So I think like, you know, kids who are partially in control, and you give them that reminder, like right beforehand, I think it'll help for a little while. But they would maybe need that reminder then mid-lesson, you know, or so. It depends on how impulsive the child is and whether or not this is something that they can really control.

(See Table 8, for Effectiveness of Precorrection Synthesis Matrix in Appendix L).

### ***Sub-Theme 2: Effectiveness of Praise***

Teachers unanimously agreed that praise is an effective behavior management strategy, both classwide and with individual students. When discussing the effectiveness of praise, teachers described praise as being motivating to a child, and important for building a struggling learner's self-esteem. Parker shared the following during her interview:

I think that praise, like, I can think back and I don't remember any of the things that I learned in certain grades, but I remember the things that my teacher said to me, and I remember how they made me feel. So I think that praising them, in the whole group...sometimes with those kids who have behavior challenges that can be really exciting to like, get the rest of the kids, you know, giving them a spotlight or, you know, kind of cheering them on. And I think it's important to call attention to the good things.

We all want to feel good about what we're doing. And I think sometimes the kids who are struggling with those behaviors, they're hearing all the bad things. We need to make the good things just as loud.

Three teachers felt that praise is most effective when it is behavior-specific. For example, in her interview, Reese explained, "I think praise is the most effective when you say, 'I'm noticing this' or 'I appreciate that.' Like I think it has to be to the point of the targeted behavior or the task." One teacher mentioned the importance of praise being delivered in a timely manner, soon after the child exhibits the desirable behavior. (See Table 9, Effectiveness of Praise Synthesis Matrix in Appendix M).

### ***Sub-Theme 3: Effectiveness of Breaks***

Teachers unanimously agreed that giving breaks to students throughout the school day is necessary and effective. Some teachers described implementing breaks for individual students, while others mentioned providing pre-scheduled breaks for the entire class, and allowing additional breaks for individual students, as needed. Rowan explained the following:

I give breaks to all my students, not just the specific one. So when they come back from lunch, it's a mindfulness break. So all the students, not just one targeted student, are doing something relaxed, the lights are off and there's calm music. I give all my students a movement break in the afternoon in between two subjects. So all of my students can benefit from them, not just one or two. I think the breaks really help. And then, you know, if they ever need a break, or I think that they, like, need to get out of the classroom for a second, I'll say go walk to the bathroom and come back.

Six teachers shared that although breaks are effective for reducing frustration and overstimulation, students can sometimes use breaks to avoid completing in-class assignments.

Frankie shared, “Breaks help, but he's very...he has a lot of avoidance behaviors.” (See Table 10, Effectiveness of Breaks: Synthesis Matrix in Appendix N).

#### ***Sub-Theme 4: Effectiveness of Accommodations***

All 15 teacher participants unanimously agreed that accommodations are effective, especially for addressing classwork avoidance, because accommodations involve setting realistic goals to reduce a student’s frustration. Maddox shared in her survey:

I think accommodations are the most useful and effective when meeting the needs of a student with behavior challenges. Often these students are not able to produce the same amount of work as other students and become frustrated and shut down if the assignment is too much. Shortening assignments, providing sentence frames, and even giving the student a special place to work in the classroom is helpful in reducing the frustration level and avoiding breakdowns.

Three upper elementary teachers reiterated that although accommodations are effective, there are challenges, such as reconciling accommodations with report card grading and implementing accommodations in a way that does not embarrass upper elementary students by making them stand out from their peers. During her interview, Bailey described:

He has to have the accommodations because he needs that private space to work, he needs to be separated from distractions. When he’s in the private office, he actually can *do* some work for me. But he *does not like it*. The private office works, yes, but he does not want to stand out. He does not want to look different. So out of all of these strategies, accommodations are very, very tricky in gen. ed.

(See Table 11, Effectiveness of Accommodations: Synthesis Matrix in Appendix O).

### **Theme 3: Teachers' Philosophical Acceptance of Strategies**

All 15 teachers stated that they agree with implementing precorrection, praise, breaks, and accommodations, in light of their personal teaching philosophies. When discussing philosophical agreement, teachers referred to the four behavior management strategies as a whole, versus talking about individual strategies. Some teachers emphasized the importance of giving individual students what they need. For example, Jesse shared, "Personally, I'm 100% on board. The goal is to give the kids what they need. And without a doubt, we always have one or two students who need these strategies. They're kids, right? They're 10 year olds, 11 year olds." Other teachers reported success implementing the strategies classwide, depending upon students' needs, as a means to reach the entire class. Charlie described:

I would say they all fit in perfectly with my personal teaching philosophy. I mean, I want to reach the whole class and help them all, you know, reach the potential that they have.

And so you know, these strategies I would use for any kid in my class, not just a kid who is maybe having a meltdown.

(See Table 12, Philosophical Acceptance Synthesis Matrix in Appendix P).

### **Theme 4: Teachers' Use of Strategies**

Teachers were asked what factors would make them continue to use a particular behavior management strategy and what factors would make them abandon a behavior management strategy they had been using or avoid a strategy altogether. The effectiveness of the behavior management strategy emerged as the primary factor contributing to the sustained use of a strategy (or strategies).

#### ***Sub-Theme 1: Teachers' Attributions for Continued Use of a Strategy***



When teachers were asked what factors contribute to them continuing to use a particular behavior management strategy, 12 of the 15 teachers stated that if they feel a strategy is effective and has a positive impact on the target student and the entire class, they will continue to use it.

During her interview, Taylor shared:

I mean, if it's something really effective, even if it wasn't quite as feasible, I think I would do everything I could to kind of, like, make it more feasible, like figure out a way to, like, you know, streamline it somehow...if it was effective. Like because gosh, if it's effective it's gonna make your life easier in the long run, right?

Teachers reported combining strategies and selecting strategies on an as-needed basis to maximize effectiveness. In her interview, Riley described using strategies in combination: "It was really a combination of all them working together to have the most effective solution."

Jordan described using strategies situationally: "They can all be feasible and they can all be effective, depending on how they're implemented in the moment." Two teachers reported that effectiveness and manageability both determine whether they continue to use a strategy, while one teacher stated that feasibility is the primary determining factor for continuing to use a strategy. (See Table 13, Teachers' Attributions for Continued Use of a Strategy: Synthesis Matrix in Appendix Q).

### ***Sub-Theme 2: Teachers' Attributions for Abandoning or Avoiding a Strategy***

When teachers were asked about factors that would make them avoid or abandon a particular behavior management strategy, they described modifying an ineffective or unmanageable strategy versus abandoning or avoiding the strategy. Riley shared:

So there's times where a strategy might work for a little bit, but then you know, it, it loses effectiveness, the child gets bored with it, they're no longer motivated by it. It doesn't

mean it's not a good strategy. It means it's not the right strategy for the time. So not abandoning, but maybe rethinking it.

Three teachers reported temporarily holding off on a behavior management strategy that has the potential to become unmanageable. Parker described:

I feel like it always takes me a while to work my way up to actually giving breaks because I know how much trying to manage the breaks can take out of me. And if you introduce it, like, in the beginning of the year, I feel like it's something that is very hard to phase out.

Three teachers discussed the importance of the behavior management strategy fitting into the classroom routine. (See Table 14, Teachers' Attributions for Avoiding or Abandoning a Strategy: Synthesis Matrix in Appendix R).

### **Research Question Responses**

Themes and sub-themes were cross-analyzed to examine how teachers' perceptions of feasibility, effectiveness, and philosophical acceptance influence their use of behavior management strategies. Table 3, Themes and Subthemes displays the alignment of each of the themes and subthemes with the central research question and sub-questions.

#### **Central Research Question**

How do general education teachers describe their experiences implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies? Teachers were in agreement with implementing precorrection, praise, breaks, and accommodations in light of their personal teaching philosophies. Some teachers referred to the four behavior management strategies as giving individual students what they need. Other teachers reported success implementing the strategies classwide, as a way to meet the needs of the entire class. For example, during her interview Jesse

shared, “For me, I will pull these strategies in wherever and whenever, with any kids that need it.” Teachers shared classroom examples of when they combined strategies to maximize effectiveness, or modified an ineffective or unmanageable strategy versus abandoning the strategy altogether. Although the majority of teachers felt that precorrection, praise, breaks, and accommodations are feasible, effective, and philosophically agreeable, teachers detailed specific challenges pertaining to each behavior management strategy.

### **Sub-Question One**

What challenges have general education teachers experienced when implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies? Teachers discussed challenges associated with each behavior management strategy. Regarding precorrection, lower elementary teachers, in particular, noted that students’ impulsivity and level of maturity can impact the effectiveness of precorrection. Teachers described giving students proactive reminders about behavioral expectations, but ultimately contending with the student becoming over-excited in the moment. Some teachers mentioned difficulty remembering to implement precorrection. In her interview, Charlie described, “Precorrection in kindergarten, me reminding them can maybe help get them on the right track sometimes, but not keep them there necessarily.” Regarding praise, teachers expressed that praise in the form of a behavior chart is less feasible than verbal or gestural praise, but as long as the behavior chart is simple, it is manageable to implement. Seven teachers reported difficulty managing and supervising students’ breaks, given their competing classroom responsibilities. Participants also noted that students sometimes use breaks to avoid completing classroom assignments. Jordan noted, “Sometimes they just want more and more breaks and not to do their work.” Teachers reported the most challenges implementing accommodations, such as providing accommodations for the target student while balancing the needs of the many other

students in a classroom with only one teacher. Upper elementary teachers, in particular, noted the challenges of reconciling accommodations with report card grading, standardized testing requirements, and students' desire to fit in with their peers.

### **Sub-Question Two**

What successes have general education teachers experienced when implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies? All 15 teachers agreed that praise, breaks, and accommodations are effective behavior management strategies. More specifically, teachers felt that praise is effective for motivating students and building their self-esteem and that breaks and accommodations, used as needed, are necessary and effective for reducing students' frustration. Of the 15 participants, 13 teachers felt that implementing precorrection is an effective strategy. During her interview, Jamie stated, "It's amazing how something so small is so important. When I would implement precorrection I would notice that the student is able to sit quiet and listen or sit quiet and follow directions."

Regarding feasibility, all of the teachers were in agreement that precorrection (giving a student proactive reminders) and praise are easy to implement, both for individual students and classwide. Six of the 15 teacher participants reported success managing individual students' breaks by proactively teaching students how to take a break appropriately. Seven teachers felt a wide range of accommodations were very manageable to implement classwide, and that it felt natural to implement different accommodations for different students depending upon student needs.

### **Sub-Question Three**

What do general education teachers attribute their use of evidence-based behavior management strategies to? Twelve of the 15 teacher participants stated that if they feel a strategy

is effective and has a positive impact on the target student and the entire class, they will continue to use it. Alex explained during her interview, “Even if it’s more work for me, if it’s gonna help that child and in return help the whole class because that child isn’t having outbursts or throwing things in the classroom, I think it’s a positive for everyone.” Two teachers reported that effectiveness and manageability both determine whether they continue to use a strategy, while one teacher stated that feasibility is the primary determining factor for continuing to use a strategy. When teachers were asked about factors that would make them avoid or abandon a particular behavior management strategy, they described modifying an ineffective or unmanageable strategy, versus abandoning or avoiding the strategy. In the lower elementary focus group Parker described:

I found it was effective for both of them, but it was becoming really unmanageable for me. So I changed it to make them more independent with their behavior charts and their breaks. When you know that something’s working it’s really hard to let it go altogether.

### **Summary**

Teachers’ descriptions of their challenges and successes implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies (precorrection, praise, breaks, accommodations) were organized into a hierarchal coding frame consisting of four primary themes and corresponding sub-themes: Teachers’ Perceptions of Feasibility, Teachers’ Perceptions of Effectiveness, Teachers’ Philosophical Acceptance of Strategies, and Teachers’ Use of Strategies. Teachers’ responses across the three data sources (surveys, interviews, focus groups) were further analyzed to create groupings within each subtheme for the purpose of exploring and reporting the fine nuances and complexities of teachers’ perspectives within each theme and subtheme. Finally, themes and sub-themes were cross-analyzed to examine how teachers’ perceptions of feasibility, effectiveness,

and philosophical acceptance influence their use of behavior management strategies. Although the majority of teachers felt that precorrection, praise, breaks, and accommodations were feasible, effective, and philosophically agreeable, teachers shared specific challenges associated with each behavior management strategy. The detailed information that teachers shared provides a springboard for helping teachers and addressing their challenges.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore general education teachers' challenges and successes implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies while teaching in a public school setting. This chapter includes an interpretation of the findings, implications for behavior analytic practice and policy in public school general education settings, and recommendations for future research.

### Discussion

#### Summary of Thematic Findings

Teachers' descriptions of their challenges and successes implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies (precorrection, praise, breaks, accommodations) were organized into a hierarchal coding frame consisting of four primary themes and corresponding sub-themes: Teachers' Perceptions of Feasibility, Teachers' Perceptions of Effectiveness, Teachers' Philosophical Acceptance of Strategies, and Teachers' Use of Strategies. Teachers' responses across the three data sources (surveys, interviews, focus groups) were further analyzed to create groupings within each subtheme for the purpose of exploring and reporting the fine nuances and complexities of teachers' perspectives within each theme and subtheme. Themes and sub-themes were cross-analyzed to examine how teachers' perceptions of feasibility, effectiveness, and philosophical acceptance influence their use of behavior management strategies.

#### *Theme 1: Teachers' Perceptions of Feasibility*

Regarding feasibility, all 15 teacher participants agreed that precorrection (giving a student proactive reminders) and praise are easy to implement, both for individual students and classwide. When discussing the feasibility of breaks, teachers' responses were discrepant. Six of

the 15 teacher participants noted success with teaching a child how to take a break appropriately, while seven of the 15 teachers shared challenges with managing students' breaks. Teachers' responses differed widely in terms of feasibility of accommodations. Several teachers felt a wide range of accommodations were very manageable to implement classwide, and that it felt natural to implement different accommodations for different students depending upon student needs. Nine of the 15 teacher participants noted problems and frustrations associated with accommodations, particularly providing accommodations for the target student while balancing the needs of the many other students in a classroom with only one teacher.

### ***Theme 2: Teachers' Perceptions of Effectiveness***

Regarding effectiveness, all 15 teachers agreed that praise, breaks, and accommodations are effective behavior management strategies. More specifically, teachers felt that praise is effective for motivating students and building their self-esteem and that breaks and accommodations, used as needed, are necessary and effective for reducing students' frustration. Of the 15 participants, 13 teachers felt that precorrection is an effective strategy for proactively reminding students of behavioral expectations.

### ***Theme 3: Teachers' Philosophical Acceptance of Strategies***

All 15 teachers stated that they agree with implementing precorrection, praise, breaks, and accommodations in light of their personal teaching philosophies. Some teachers emphasized that precorrection, praise, breaks, and accommodations are an effective way to give individual students what they need. Other teachers reported implementing the strategies classwide because behavior management strategies benefit all students in the class.

### ***Theme 4: Teachers' Use of Strategies***



When teachers were asked what factors contribute to their continued use of a particular behavior management strategy, 12 of the 15 teachers stated that if they feel a strategy is effective and has a positive impact on the target student and the entire class, they will continue to use it. Teachers reported combining strategies and selecting strategies on an as-needed basis, to maximize effectiveness. Two teachers reported that effectiveness and manageability both determine whether they continue to use a strategy, while one teacher stated that feasibility is the primary determining factor for continuing to use a strategy.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

Van Manen's (2014) *Phenomenology of Practice* was used as a model to interpret the findings and determine how the results can inform the development of behavior interventions and teacher coaching practices in the general education setting. The findings and corresponding implications noted below are based on three distinct categories of teachers' responses: teachers challenges pertaining to each of the four behavior management strategies (precorrection, praise, breaks, accommodations), teachers' successes with implementing each of the four strategies, and finally, the need for policy to address the importance of ongoing teacher training and support regarding each of the four strategies. The findings and implications of the study are grouped to reflect these three categories of teachers' responses.

#### ***Interpretation 1: Teachers' Challenges with Precorrection***

Although all 15 teachers agreed that precorrection (giving a student proactive reminders) is easy to implement, teachers talked about the challenge of remembering to implement precorrection. Teachers expressed the need to remind themselves to implement the intervention. A second challenge that teachers reported is that students' impulsivity and maturity impact the effectiveness of precorrection. Teachers talked about giving students proactive reminders, but

ultimately contending with the student becoming over-excited in the moment. Teachers in the study who felt that precorrection is both feasible and effective elaborated on the importance of anticipating students' difficulties. For example, Riley stated, "You know your kids...you know what's gonna set them off. So to be able to just quickly touch base and just set up a reminder to make sure they're hopefully set up for the best they can be is going to help your whole lesson."

### ***Interpretation 2: Teachers' Challenges with Praise***

While teachers agreed that praise is easy and effective to implement (especially gestural and verbal praise), some teachers shared that when praise is in the form of a behavior chart, it can be challenging to remember to implement or coordinate within the context of the classroom routine. For example, Charlie shared, "I think when it moves into, like, a behavior chart that has many time periods throughout the day, it loses its, you know, some of its feasibility. You know, smile, thumbs up, hug, 'I noticed you did this.' All of those things are easy as can be."

### ***Interpretation 3: Teachers' Challenges with Breaks***

Teachers unanimously agreed that giving breaks to students throughout the school day is necessary and effective for reducing overstimulation and frustration. However, seven of the 15 teachers reported difficulty managing and supervising students' breaks, given their competing classroom responsibilities. Six teachers reported that students can use breaks to avoid completing classroom assignments or listening to lessons. Other teachers noted success with teaching a child how to take a break appropriately. For example, Alex described, "I think breaks are always easy as long as you've coached them in how to take a break. You know, this is where you take a break, this is how you take a break."

### ***Interpretation 4: Teachers' Challenges with Accommodations***

While teacher participants unanimously agreed that implementing accommodations is

effective for addressing classwork avoidance and reducing students' frustration, teachers reported the most challenges implementing accommodations. Teachers shared difficulties providing accommodations for the target student while balancing the needs of the many other students in a classroom with only one teacher. Upper elementary teachers, in particular, noted the challenges of reconciling accommodations with report card grading, standardized testing requirements, and students' desire to fit in with their peers. Each of the teachers who described successfully implementing accommodations added that they implemented accommodations classwide. For example, Rowan shared, "With the accommodations, you know, it's like sentence starters or graphic organizers and that's very manageable because I do those for all of my students."

### **Implications for Practice**

This section details implications for behavior analytic practice in public school general education settings. Implications one through four address teachers' challenges specific to the four low-intensity behavior management strategies. Although most teachers felt that precorrection, praise, breaks, and accommodations were feasible, effective, and philosophically agreeable, teachers shared challenges associated with each behavior management strategy. Implications five through eight include suggestions for teacher coaching practices based on the successes that teachers reported when implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies.

#### ***Implication 1: Addressing Teachers' Challenges with Precorrection***

**Remembering to Implement Precorrection.** Teachers shared that it can be difficult to remember to implement precorrection before beginning a lesson. To address this challenge, it may be helpful if teacher coaching involves setting up a visual cue as a reminder for the teacher

to implement precorrection. For example, a teacher might place a brightly colored post-it on the classroom whiteboard as a cue for the teacher to remind students of behavioral expectations before the lesson begins.

**Navigating Students' Impulsivity When Implementing Precorrection.** Teachers would benefit from coaching that discusses and explicitly models combining precorrection with other strategies, such as precorrection combined with praise and/or modeling. Precorrection is an effective strategy for setting behavioral expectations, but praising students frequently for meeting expectations ensures that students will continue to demonstrate the desired behavior. For example, a teacher might state, "Before we begin our lesson, I'd like to give everyone a reminder. During the lesson I need everyone to stay quiet and keep their eyes on me." Halfway through the lesson the teacher could say, "I'd like to give everyone a compliment. I really like how everyone's voices are quiet, and everyone's eyes are on me." In this example, frequent praise throughout the lesson ensures that students continue to meet the behavior expectations that were discussed before beginning the lesson.

**Anticipating Students' Difficulties.** It is important to coach a teacher when and how often to implement precorrection. In terms of classwide behavior challenges, teachers can be taught to proactively implement precorrection before situations that the whole class is likely to experience difficulty. For example, if students often run and push classmates when transitioning from a group lesson back to their desks, then before sending students back to their desks, the teacher can give students another reminder about behavioral expectations. The teacher may state, "When I send you back to your desks, I'm going to be watching for students who are quickly and quietly walking to their desks and taking out their materials. Who wants to be a role model for us

and demonstrate walking quickly and quietly back to their seat and getting started on their assignment?”

For students who have BCBA-created behavior plans, it is essential that the behavior plan includes times that are typically problematic for the student (such as writing periods or specials). It is important for the teacher to be aware of patterns in times when the student typically experiences difficulty. Information about the student’s behavioral patterns will help the teacher identify the best time to give the student proactive reminders about behavioral expectations and to be especially mindful of praising the student frequently for meeting behavioral expectations during that specific period.

***Implication 2: Addressing Teachers’ Challenges with Praise***

Given teachers’ competing responsibilities in the classroom, it is critical that if a behavior chart is necessary, that it is as simple as possible for the teacher to implement while still being effective. For example, if a student typically has difficulty during lunch, recess, and specials, a behavior chart might target these specific periods only. At the end of each period, the student might simply color a smiley face next to the name of the class period.

***Implication 3: Addressing Teachers’ Challenges with Breaks***

To ensure that breaks do not interfere with classwork completion, it is important that the BCBA-created behavior plan specifically states that a student should only be given a break after listening to the lesson and after completing a predetermined portion of the classroom assignment. If a student’s behavior plan involves individual breaks, the behavior plan should emphasize the importance of proactively discussing with the student rules and boundaries around breaks. For example, a teacher might explain to a student that they can walk up and down the hall where the teacher can still see them versus walking around the building unsupervised. It may be helpful to

suggest to the teacher implementing breaks classwide, as classwide breaks may reduce the need for individualized student breaks.

***Implication 4: Addressing Teachers' Challenges with Accommodations***

Each of the teachers who described successfully implementing accommodations added that they implemented accommodations classwide. Making different types of accommodations available to all students (e.g., alternative seating options, setting up a number of desks in the hall as private work spaces, providing headphones, study carrels, and/ or sentence frames to all students) may improve the feasibility of implementing accommodations. Providing classwide accommodations is also likely to reduce upper elementary students' anxiety about standing out from their classmates.

***Implication 5: Individualizing the Behavior Plan for the Teacher***

Despite clear patterns in participants' responses, each teacher's perspective of low-intensity behavior management strategies was, to some extent, unique. Therefore, in addition to a behavior plan addressing the needs of a student, the behavior plan needs to be individualized to the needs of the teacher, their skill set, and their comfort level because the teacher is the person responsible for implementing the behavior plan.

***Implication 6: Coaching Teachers on Classwide Use of Strategies***

Teachers reported successfully implementing strategies classwide for each of the low-intensity behavior management strategies. Teachers described classwide use of strategies as both feasible and effective. It is important that teacher coaching includes instruction on how these strategies can be applied to the class as a whole so that not only the target student benefits, but all learners in the class benefit. Applying strategies classwide is useful when there are multiple learners in the classroom with behavior challenges. Classwide use of strategies is especially

effective in upper elementary grades where a student could be embarrassed by a teacher's individualized attention.

***Implication 7: Coaching Teachers on Combining Strategies to Maximize Effectiveness***

Teachers in the study reported combining strategies and selecting strategies on an as-needed basis to maximize effectiveness. For example, Riley described using strategies in combination: "It was really a combination of all them working together to have the most effective solution." Similarly, Bailey shared, "For each child, it's a combination of one or two of these strategies that works." Teachers would benefit from instruction regarding choosing combinations of strategies to best address a child's needs and/or the needs of the class.

***Implication 8: Simplifying the Behavior Plan***

When discussing the feasibility of behavior management strategies, teachers spoke about their challenges delivering individualized intervention strategies for the target student while balancing the needs of the many other students in a classroom with only one teacher. Maddox stated the following:

It's hard being just one teacher with 24 other kids to like, keep going over and say, 'Okay, you can have a five-minute break now, but then we're gonna go back to our work.' So I think that it's effective, but I think it's really hard in a just one teacher setting.

Similarly, Jordan expressed, "It's difficult because there are so many different needs in the class. It can get overwhelming for teachers." Given teachers' competing responsibilities, it is critical that when behavior management strategies for an individual student are recommended, they are as simple as possible while maintaining effectiveness. Interventions with many steps that require the teacher to shift focus from the class to the individual student throughout the day are unlikely to be implemented consistently.

## **Implications for Policy**

This section includes implications for behavior analytic policy in public school general education settings. Teachers reported that there are challenges unique to being a general education teacher, such as a lack of pre-service training in behavior management and confusion regarding grading a student who is meeting behavioral expectations, but not grade-level requirements. Teachers would benefit from ongoing training and support regarding the use of low-intensity behavior management strategies.

### ***Implication 1: Reconceptualizing Professional Development***

Teachers participating in this study report that general education teachers are entering the field untrained in behavior management strategies. Fourteen of the 15 teacher participants did not receive any training in behavior management strategies prior to becoming a classroom teacher. Therefore, it is imperative to equip teachers with in-service training that includes easy-to-implement, effective behavior management strategies. Teachers would benefit from ongoing opportunities to discuss their classroom management challenges, as well as receiving support as they practice applying specific, concrete behavior management strategies in their classrooms. In addition to modeling the effective use of behavior management strategies for teachers in their classrooms, offering ongoing BCBA support/problem-solving sessions to all teachers district-wide is one potential solution for addressing teachers' lack of pre-service training in behavior management.

### ***Implication 2: Providing Clear Guidance Regarding Accommodations in General Education***

There is a need for clear guidance on report card grading when a general education student receives accommodations in the classroom, particularly shortened assignments. Upper elementary teachers, in particular, expressed confusion and frustration regarding how to grade a



student who is able to complete shortened assignments, but is not meeting grade-level requirements.

### **Theoretical and Empirical Implications**

The theoretical implications noted below align closely with Bernard Weiner's (1974) attribution theory. The implications are based on teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of behavior management strategies, as well as their belief in their ability to positively impact a student's behavior. The empirical implications section addresses how this study supports and adds to literature on behavior management practices in schools.

#### ***Theoretical Implications***

This section details how the study's findings connect to the theory used to guide the research. Bernard Weiner's (1974) attribution theory was used as the framework for this study. Attribution theory suggests that an individual's perceptions of a task correlate with how much effort they exude toward completing the task. In the context of the current study, attribution theory was used to examine how general education teachers' perceptions of behavior management strategies impact their use of behavior management strategies.

The results of this study support and add to the existing body of knowledge on attribution theory by examining the perceptions and behavior of general education teachers specifically. A key finding of this study is that teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of an intervention and the ease with which it can be incorporated into the classroom routine affect behavior intervention fidelity. When teachers were asked what factors contribute to their continued use a particular behavior management strategy, 12 of the 15 teachers stated that if they feel a strategy is effective and has a positive impact on the target student and the entire class, they will continue to use it. Two teachers reported that effectiveness and manageability both determine whether they

continue to use a strategy, while one teacher stated that feasibility is the primary determining factor for continuing to use a strategy.

The link between teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of a behavior management strategy and their use of the strategy has important implications for teacher coaching. Teachers would benefit from coaching conversations that involve discussing why implementing the intervention is useful, and likely to lead to a positive outcome. Teachers are more likely to implement a behavior management strategy consistently if they understand the reasoning behind the intervention. Given that teachers are more likely to abandon a strategy that they perceive to be ineffective, it is important to make teachers aware that behavior interventions work with time and consistency, rather than immediately. Communicating this information to the teacher, and discussing with the teacher what they can expect in terms of behavioral progress, are likely to prevent the teacher from prematurely abandoning a behavior intervention that they perceive to be ineffective.

A second finding that relates to attribution theory is that teachers who believed their efforts implementing behavior management strategies would lead to a positive outcome were more likely to consistently use behavior management strategies. This finding aligns with the controllability dimension of attribution theory, which suggests that teachers who believe they can have a positive impact on student behavior (that student behavior is changeable) and teachers who attribute students' behavioral improvements to their sustained efforts implementing behavior management strategies may be more likely to adopt and continue to use evidence-based behavior management practices. Teachers who attribute behavioral progress to forces outside of their control, such as luck or student maturity over time, may be less likely to adopt and continue to use evidence-based behavior management strategies. Teachers in the study demonstrated

internal attributions when they talked about modifying interventions versus abandoning them and applying different strategies in different situations, as needed.

The link between teachers' internal attributions and their sustained use of behavior management strategies lends itself to additional implications for teacher coaching. When a child responds positively to intervention, for example, it is beneficial to talk to the teacher about how the child's behavioral progress is linked to the teacher's consistent implementation of behavior management strategies versus external factors that are outside of the teacher's control. Teachers who believe students' success is linked to their implementation of behavior management strategies are more likely to adopt and continue to use behavior management strategies consistently. Finally, consistent BCBA monitoring of the intervention, and responsiveness to a teacher who is asking for feedback and support, are critical for ensuring sustained behavior plan implementation. When a strategy is not working as planned, it is important for the BCBA to model modifying the strategies in the behavior plan versus abandoning the behavior plan altogether.

### ***Empirical Implications***

The logistical challenges described by teachers in this study are consistent with the behavior plan barriers reported in recent literature, which include difficulty managing competing responsibilities (McLennan et al., 2020; Wilcynski, 2017), difficulty implementing behavior plans with multiple steps (Collier-Meek et al., 2019; Egan et al., 2019), and challenges remembering to implement the intervention (Collier-Meek et al., 2018). Recent research suggests that intervention knowledge may influence teachers' perceptions of behavior interventions, with perceived effectiveness and understanding of the intervention procedures and rationale related to higher treatment integrity (Collier-Meek et al., 2018; Egan et al., 2019; McLennan et al., 2020;

Wilczynski, 2017). Consistent with this finding, the teachers in this study described effectiveness of a behavior management strategy as a primary determining factor for continuing to use a strategy.

This study added to the empirical literature on behavior management practices in schools. To date, no studies have explored general education teachers' perceptions and use of the low-intensity behavior management strategies recommended in the literature. In the current context of school discipline practices, general education teachers are expected to implement prevention-focused behavior management strategies (Tillery et al., 2010). Given the lack of pre-service teacher training in behavior management techniques and the limitations of in-service teacher professional development, this can be a formidable task. This study involved in-depth exploration of general education teachers' beliefs and decisions regarding behavior management to improve teacher training practices. Through the use of hermeneutic phenomenological methods, the detailed information that teachers shared and the resulting implications demonstrate how and why behavior interventions and teacher coaching practices are appropriate within the context of the general education setting.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

This section addresses limitations of the research study, the scope and boundaries of the study, and purposeful methodological decisions to achieve the research goals. Limitations are defined as potential shortcomings of the study. Delimitations are defined as purposeful decisions about what to include and not include in the study, to maintain focus on the research objective.

#### ***Limitations***

One limitation of this study was the small sample size (fifteen participants). While quantitative research typically requires a large number of participants to achieve statistical

significance (Mascha et al., 2018), qualitative research involves deep exploration and analysis using a smaller number of participants (Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative research typically includes a sample size of 1-15 participants (Moustakas, 1994). While clear themes and patterns emerged from the participants' responses, the results are not intended to be generalized to all general education teachers across all school districts. Patterns in the data reveal important considerations for the development of behavior plans and teacher coaching practices in general education. Ultimately, however, behavior plans need to be individualized to a teacher's comfort level and skill set, since the teacher is the person responsible for implementing the behavior plan.

A second limitation of this study was that qualitative research is, by nature, subjective because conclusions rely primarily on the researcher's interpretation and analysis of the data. While it has been argued that objectivity is essential in all research (Anderson, 2010; Khatwani & Panhwar, 2019; Lien et al., 2014), subjectivity plays a vital role in understanding the data fully (Eakin et al., 2020). My experience as a district Board Certified Behavior Analyst brought valuable insight to the collection and analysis of data. Given the subjective nature of qualitative research, it was important to ensure that the data represented the participants' perspectives rather than my own. Conducting the study reflexively by continuously examining my feelings, reactions, and motivations throughout the research process (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and transparently reporting the data in synthesis matrices ensured the rigor of the study.

### ***Delimitations***

Delimitations of this study include decisions that I made to define the boundaries and scope of the study. The purpose of this study was to explore general education teachers' successes and challenges implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies in one

public school district. I chose to include the four low-intensity behavior management strategies that present most often in educational literature: precorrection, praise, breaks, and accommodations. To align the methodology with the purpose of the study, teachers who participated in the study were general education K-5 teachers who received training in low-intensity behavior management strategies from the district Board Certified Behavior Analyst.

One of the challenges that emerged was organizing and interpreting a very large, complex data set. I decided to use a hierarchal coding frame to link participants' responses directly to the research questions. I presented the data for each theme and subtheme in synthesis matrices. These methodological decisions allowed me to maintain focus on the research objectives by concentrating on participants' responses that were relevant to the research questions, and to support my findings with direct statements from participants.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There are few studies that have addressed the needs and challenges of general education teachers specifically. As the field of behavior analysis shifts from identifying interventions that are scientifically sound to ensuring that interventions are implemented with fidelity (Eiraldi et al., 2019; Fallon et al., 2019; Pas et al., 2019), it is critical to explore how behavior interventions are perceived by the individuals who are responsible for implementing them. There is a need for replication of this study in different school districts, in different geographic locations, to determine whether other general education teachers experience the same challenges and successes as the teachers in this study. Additional research can be designed to examine the perspectives and needs of paraprofessionals in school settings who are responsible for carrying out behavior interventions. Lastly, research can be conducted in clinical settings to explore the

challenges and successes that parents and caregivers experience implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies with their children in their homes.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore general education teachers' successes and challenges implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies (precorrection, praise, breaks, accommodations) while teaching in a public school setting. The theory guiding this study was Bernard Weiner's (1974) attribution theory, as the theory relates to teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and subsequent behaviors. The central research question was, "How do general education teachers describe their experiences implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies?" Fifteen teachers participated in the study, and all teacher participants previously received training in low-intensity behavior management strategies from the district Board Certified Behavior Analyst. Data collection involved three approaches: open-ended surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups.

Data were analyzed using van Manen's (1990, 2014) methodological guidelines for hermeneutic phenomenology, specifically *Phenomenology of Practice*. Teachers' descriptions of their challenges and successes implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies (precorrection, praise, breaks, accommodations) were organized into a hierarchical coding frame consisting of four primary themes and corresponding sub-themes: Teachers' Perceptions of Feasibility, Teachers' Perceptions of Effectiveness, Teachers' Philosophical Acceptance of Strategies, and Teachers' Use of Strategies. Themes and sub-themes were cross-analyzed to examine how teachers' perceptions of feasibility, effectiveness, and philosophical acceptance influence their use of behavior management strategies.

Although the majority of teachers felt that precorrection, praise, breaks, and accommodations were feasible, effective, and philosophically agreeable, teachers shared specific challenges associated with each behavior management strategy. The detailed information that teachers shared provides a framework for addressing teachers' challenges with each of the four behavior management strategies. In terms of behavior analytic practice in general education settings, the findings revealed the importance of simplifying behavior plans, individualizing the behavior plan to the needs of the teacher, coaching teachers on classwide use of strategies, coaching teachers on combining strategies to maximize effectiveness, and providing a problem-solving forum for teachers districtwide. There is a need for replication of this study in different districts, across different geographic locations.



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## Appendix A

### IRB Approval

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 5, 2024

Jessica D'Orazio  
Alexandra Barnett

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-1489 General Education Teachers' Perceptions of Low-Intensity Behavior Management Strategies: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Jessica D'Orazio, Alexandra Barnett,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application per the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data-safeguarding methods described in your IRB application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

**For a PDF of your exemption letter**, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study Details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents, **which you must use to conduct your study**, can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

This exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,  
**G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair*  
**Research Ethics Office**



## Appendix B

### Participant Consent Form

**Title of the Project:** General Education Teachers' Perceptions of Low-Intensity Behavior Management Strategies: A Phenomenological Study

**Principal Investigator:** Jessica D'Orazio, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, Liberty University

#### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must meet the following inclusion criteria:

1. You have referred a student to Intervention & Referral Services due to behavioral concerns (i.e., the student exhibits challenging behavior across academic settings requiring intervention beyond the universal level of classroom management).
2. You are a general education K-5 classroom teacher.
3. You have received individualized coaching and support on low-intensity behavior management strategies from the district general education Board Certified Behavior Analyst.

Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

#### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore general education teachers' successes and challenges implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies while teaching in a public school setting in central New Jersey.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Answer an open-ended electronic survey via Google Forms. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.
2. Participate in a one-on-one, semi-structured interview with me through Zoom. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded for the purpose of data analysis.
3. Participate in a focus group consisting of six to eight participants through Zoom. The focus group interview will last approximately 60 minutes. The focus group interview will be audio and video recorded for the purpose of data analysis.
4. You will be asked to review the finalized transcript of your interviews to ensure that the data accurately reflects your perspectives. This procedure is called member checking. Member checking will take approximately 30-60 minutes to complete.

#### How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include the improvement of school-based behavior analytic practices and teacher-focused professional development initiatives.

#### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

#### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher and members of her doctoral committee will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Unimportant details will be obscured to protect participants' identities.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Physical data will be secured in a locked filing cabinet, and electronic data will be encrypted and stored on a password-locked computer. Data will be destroyed after three years.
- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts, and then deleted. Only the researcher and members of her doctoral committee will have access to these recordings.

#### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

#### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Jessica D'Orazio. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Alexandra Barnett at [REDACTED].

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.*

### Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

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

The researcher has my permission to audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

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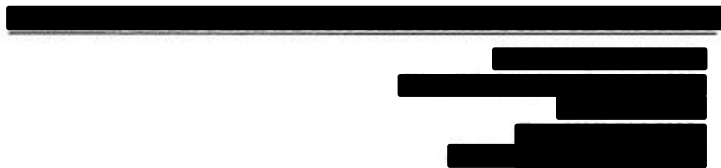
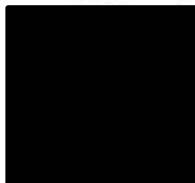
Printed Subject Name

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Signature & Date

## Appendix C

### Research Site Permission



[Redacted]  
Superintendent of Schools

March 21, 2024

Ms. Jessica D'Orazio  
9 Edwards Drive  
East Windsor, NJ 08520

Dear Ms. D'Orazio,

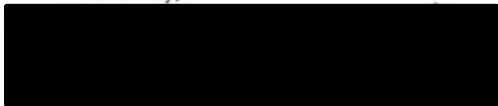
The approval process for your research study entitled, "General Education Teachers' Perceptions of Low-Intensity Behavior Management Strategies: A Phenomenological Study," has been completed and approved. The following items are understood by all parties:

- 1) A consent form will be completed by the participants.
- 2) Your research will take place on your own time and not interfere with your responsibilities.
- 3) Data collected from this research will only be utilized in a manner that does not identify the district.

Please contact [Redacted] to make the appropriate arrangements.

We wish you the best in completing your Doctor of Education, Specialization in Special Education at Liberty University.

Sincerely,



Superintendent of Schools

c: [Redacted]



## Appendix D

### Participant Recruitment Email

Dear (Potential Participant),

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. in Education. The purpose of my research is to explore general education teachers' successes and challenges implementing low-intensity behavior management strategies while teaching in a public school setting in central New Jersey. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

To participate, you must meet the following inclusion criteria:

4. You have referred a student to Intervention & Referral Services due to behavioral concerns (i.e., the student exhibits challenging behavior across academic settings requiring intervention beyond the universal level of classroom management).
5. You are a general education K-5 classroom teacher.
6. You have received individualized coaching and support on low-intensity behavior management strategies from the district general education Board Certified Behavior Analyst.

If willing, participants will be asked to:

5. Answer an open-ended electronic survey via Google Forms. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.
6. Participate in a one-on-one, semi-structured interview with me through Zoom. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded for the purpose of data analysis.
7. Participate in a focus group consisting of six to eight participants through Zoom. The focus group interview will last approximately 60 minutes. The focus group interview will be audio and video recorded for the purpose of data analysis.
8. After I transcribe the data, I will send the transcriptions to you to review and validate that the information accurately reflects your perspectives. This member-checking step will take approximately 30-60 minutes.

Names and other identifying information will be collected as part of this study, but the records of this study will be kept private, and participants' responses and identities will be kept confidential.

If you choose to participate, please reply to this email indicating your willingness to join the study. A consent document will then be emailed to you via DocuSign. The consent document contains additional information about my research. You will be asked to provide an electronic signature using DocuSign, and once you've applied your signature, the document will be automatically returned to me. You will need to sign the consent document prior to completing any of the research procedures.

Sincerely,

Jessica D'Orazio  
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University School of Education



## Appendix E

### Open-Ended Survey Questions

The following questions pertain to the four behavior management strategies listed in Table 1. For clarity, the table of behavior management strategies and their respective definitions will be provided in the survey.

1. Which strategies (pre-correction, praise, breaks, accommodations) are the most useful to you in terms of meeting the needs of a student with behavior challenges, and why? SQ2
2. Which strategies (pre-correction, praise, breaks, accommodations) present as problematic for you to implement, and why? SQ1
3. Explain how you feel about implementing pre-correction as a behavior management strategy. CRQ
4. Explain how you feel about implementing praise. CRQ
5. What are your thoughts about implementing breaks? CRQ
6. What are your thoughts about implementing accommodations? CRQ

**Table 1**

#### *Low-Intensity Behavior Management Strategies*

Behavior Management Strategy	Definition
Pre-correction	Providing proactive reminders about behavioral expectations before situations that are typically problematic for the student (Ennis et al., 2018). Ie. “We’re going to start the lesson now. Remember, I need you to try to stay quiet and not call out or talk to your friends.”
Praise	Directing a positive statement or action (smile, thumbs up, token) toward a student who meets behavioral expectations (Ennis et al., 2018).

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Breaks	Allowing a student to take a quick, timed rest period away from classroom demands (Owens et al., 2021).
Accommodations	Altering the classroom environment or learning tasks to help reduce frustration for a student who is experiencing learning or behavior challenges (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). Ie. Shortened assignments, providing the student with sentence frames for written language assignments

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## Appendix F

### Individual Interview Questions

The following questions pertain to the four behavior management strategies listed in Table 1, which will be displayed for participants during individual interviews.

1. How did you become interested in becoming a classroom teacher?
2. How many years have you been teaching?
3. Describe a classroom situation when using any of these strategies worked particularly well for you in terms of meeting the needs of a student with behavior challenges. SQ2
4. Describe a situation when implementing any of these strategies was problematic for you. SQ1
5. What are your thoughts about the feasibility of each of these strategies? SQ1, SQ2
6. Describe a situation when implementing any of these strategies was either feasible or not feasible. SQ1, SQ2
7. How do you feel about the agreeability of each of these strategies in terms of your personal teaching philosophy? SQ1, SQ2
8. Describe a situation when you either agreed with or did not agree with implementing one or more of these strategies in terms of your personal teaching philosophy. SQ1, SQ2
9. How do you feel about the effectiveness of each of these strategies in terms of meeting the needs of a student with behavior challenges? SQ1, SQ2
10. What are your thoughts about using these strategies class-wide to accommodate multiple learners in the classroom with behavior challenges? SQ1, SQ2

11. Keeping in mind the four strategies (pre-correction, praise, breaks, accommodations), what factors make you abandon a behavior management strategy that you've been using, or avoid a strategy altogether? SQ3
12. What factors make you continue to use a particular strategy? SQ3
13. Studies suggest that one of the challenges teachers face is that many teacher education programs do not provide coursework to develop behavior management skills (Nichols et al., 2020; Stevenson et al., 2020). What training did you receive in behavior management before becoming a classroom teacher? SQ1
14. Literature suggests that general education teachers face unique challenges in terms of accommodating students with behavior challenges (Jaffal, 2022). What challenges have you faced that you feel are unique to being a general education teacher? SQ1

## Appendix G

### Focus Group Questions

The following questions pertain to the four behavior management strategies listed in Table 1. As with the surveys and individual interviews, the table of behavior management strategies and their definitions will be displayed during the focus group interviews.

1. Keeping in mind the grade level that you teach, what are your thoughts about which of these four strategies are most and least feasible? SQ1, SQ2
2. Keeping in mind the grade level that you teach, what are your thoughts about which of these strategies are most and least agreeable in terms of your personal teaching philosophy? SQ1, SQ2
3. Given the grade level that you teach, how do you feel about the effectiveness of each of these strategies in terms of meeting the needs of a student with behavior challenges? SQ1, SQ2
4. Can you describe how often you use each of these strategies? SQ1, SQ2
5. How do you feel about using each of these strategies as class-wide behavior management strategies? SQ1, SQ2
6. Explain which strategies you feel are most effective for managing multiple learners with challenging behaviors in the classroom. SQ2
7. Explain which strategies you feel would not be effective for managing multiple learners with behavior challenges in the classroom. SQ1
8. What are the factors that make you continue to use a particular behavior management strategy? SQ3

9. What are the factors that make you abandon or avoid a particular behavior management strategy? SQ3

## Appendix H

**Table 4.**

***Feasibility of Precorrection: Synthesis Matrix***

Grouping	Speaker	Excerpt	Source
Classwide precorrection	Charlie	“I think precorrection as a strategy for the whole class is really easy.”	Interview
	Devon	“So the first two (precorrection and praise)? Easy! I mean, I do this all the time and I find it’s important for everyone.”	Interview
	Parker	I think pre correction is the most feasible for me, because I don't think of it just as something that helps my kids who are struggling with behaviors. I tend to say things whole class, and it applies to everybody. And then I'll model what I expect very often.	Focus Group
	Alex	“I agree with Parker. I use precorrection with all of my kids, especially in the younger grades like first grade. Everyone needs to be reminded of what’s coming up, what the expectation is, how do we sit, how do we raise our hand. So that’s helpful for everyone.”	Focus Group
	Rowan	With precorrection, one thing that I do that works not just with the specific child, but like as a class is, I'll say like if I'm ready for transition, I'll have a few students be my role models to start and then they all watch and say that's exactly how I want you to move to the next transition. With the specific child, I might have <i>them</i> be the role model.	Interview
Anticipating the student’s difficulties	Alex	“So giving them like reminders, you know, after you figure out a pattern with a kid and what’s going to set them off, I think that definitely proactive reminders are feasible.”	Interview
	Jesse	“The precorrection...it’s very feasible..it just takes a little extra planning where you would need to anticipate what they’re going to try to do and catch that.”	Interview
	Riley	“You know your kids...you know what’s gonna set them off. So to be able to just quickly touch base and just set up a reminder to make sure they’re hopefully set up for the best they can be is going to help your whole lesson.”	Interview
	Maddox	“So I feel like precorrection is definitely doable and effective because it kind of puts that idea in his mind, like okay, this is what I need to do..I’m not going to get up out of my seat...I’m not gonna go play at that table...It’s doable for the teacher because it’s just a quick, like, two second conversation.”	Interview
Difficulty remembering to implement precorrection	Taylor	“I don’t think that any of these are unreasonable. It’s just remembering to implement them. I guess..like having a reminder for the teacher. I would need to have on my	Interview

	desk or on a clipboard, ‘remember to give those reminders.’”	
Jamie	“And oftentimes, I would sit down and start the lesson and then realize like I was supposed to give the cue first. So as easy as it sounds, it was just hard to remember. So definitely something I would need to like write down, maybe give <i>myself</i> a cue to give the student a reminder.”	Interview
Cameron	“So I really like precorrection. I tend to sometimes forget about it. But I think it <i>is</i> easy and beneficial. So I feel like if you like remind yourself or maybe give yourself like a reminder so that you do it before starting the lesson, I think it could be a really effective strategy.”	Interview
Rowan	“I would say with the precorrection, like it’s just maybe remembering to do it...”	Interview

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## Appendix I

Table 5.

*Feasibility of Praise: Synthesis Matrix*

Grouping	Speaker	Excerpts	Source
Praise feels natural	Alex	“I think, like, the praise and also the pre-correction for me just come naturally. I mean, all of our kids want to be praised and that’s something that we do for everyone.”	Focus Group
	Jamie	“The praise, I would say by far, is the easiest part for me. I’ve been trying to give as much praise as I can in addition to the chart: ‘Wow, I’m so impressed. Keep up the good work.’ And those are just little things that it’s almost like you don’t have to remember to say them because you’re just so proud of them. It just comes out. So I think that’s why feels easier...because it’s more natural to do.”	Interview
	Jesse	“So I mean, two of them, of course, are super easy- the praise and the breaks. They come very naturally and they’re very fluid parts of the day.”	Interview
	Devon	“Praise, absolutely do that from day one. Absolutely. All the time, not an issue at all...time-wise...why should it be? You know, just recognizing what someone’s doing well.”	Interview
	Frankie	“Praise is very easy to do with him. He responds very well to praise. He wants to please, he wants to do well. So praise is very easy. He’ll ask me all the time, ‘Did I do a good job?’”	Interview
	Parker	“I feel like those (praise and pre-correction) are easiest for teachers to implement because they don’t take very long and like I said, in general, they’re just good for all of the kids.”	Interview
	Reese	“I think praise is most feasible because it doesn’t have to be in isolation with a particular child. And I think the same thing with all of these strategies, right? Like they can be used for the entire class. I just think praise is such a natural thing.”	Focus Group
Challenges associated with praise in the form of a behavior chart	Charlie	“Praise is, is really reasonable, too. I think when it moves into, like a behavior chart that has many time periods throughout the day, it loses its, you know, some of its feasibility. You know, smile, thumbs up, hug, I noticed you did this. All of those things are easy as can be. And if there’s just a, you know, two or three time periods within the day, that we’re doing the...the behavior chart, I think that’s really easy as well. It’s harder that way, although you know, it can be very, very successful. So, sometimes hard is worth it.”	Interview
	Jordan	“As far as praise? I mean, that’s also another one I feel like in the moment it’s easy to implement but I think it just depends on the type of it. Even the whole class (reward system)...I’m just thinking now... I told them earlier, ‘Oh, you guys earned a star’ and I’m like, I totally forgot to color the star (on the chart).” But then when you have multiple students on individual ones, which is you know, not often but still I think	Interview

	it's...other students are kind of like, 'Oh, like, what's that? Well I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing, why am I not getting an extra reward?'"	
Riley	"Praise, I mean, you have to praise all your students...just a little thumbs up or a little like, head nod or a little smile...just something, you know, so that they know that it's being acknowledged...that's easy. But if it is like a token system, you always get that one kid who's like, 'Well, why don't I get that token? Why don't I get to do this?' So you know, that's a different part of the problem."	Focus Group
Alex	"I'm thinking about my kids who you've really helped me with, right, like Elvis and Duke, I only had one big personality at a time. So for me, this was feasible. However, I can imagine if you had Elvis and Duke in the same classroom, that doing some of these for each of them would be very tricky. Especially, you know, prepping a kid beforehand, doing like a token chart, because that's a lot for teacher to manage when you have like 20 something kids. But you know, if it's just one student...I was able to do it, and it was beneficial with those two kids."	Interview

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## Appendix J

**Table 6.**

*Feasibility of Breaks: Synthesis Matrix*

Grouping	Speaker	Excerpts	Source
Taking a break is a skill that needs to be taught	Charlie	“It’s harder at the beginning of kindergarten because they often will need me to help talk them through how to take a break. But for most kids by now, taking a break is, you know, a skill that they know how to do and it’s easy and effective.”	Interview
	Alex	“I think breaks are always easy as long as you’ve coached them in how to take a break. You know, this is where you take a break, this is how you take a break.”	Focus Group
	Devon	“Absolutely trying to have a spot in the room of like a ‘take a break’ time and establishing that routine. Maybe not as simple as verbal precorrection and praise, but doable.”	Interview
	Cameron	“I’ve been doing it (implementing breaks) for years. And I think if you introduce it, as long as you really talk about the expectations, I do think it is easy to implement. I’ve used hand signals with kids. It can be something as simple as grabbing a couple fidgets, grabbing a timer, grabbing a couple SEL books, and you know, having a little comfy corner.	Interview
	Riley	“Breaks. I mean, this year, I have a student who literally, you know, goes to the bathroom 17 times a day. I pulled him aside and said, ‘Look, here’s the deal. I need to know where you are for safety reasons. If you need to just walk and get your energy out....that’s fine. I just need to know where are you.’ So, you know, talking about how to take quick break.”	Interview
	Frankie	“I believe breaks are most feasible. I’ll have it purposefully built in so he knows like what time he is allowed to go on a break... which would be normally right after the lesson right before we start independent work and then we’ll come back and go to the independent piece.”	Focus Group
Challenges managing students’ breaks	Parker	“The breaks I have struggled with because I feel like the management of like what the kid is doing, getting them back on track, making sure that they’re not there for too long....If they are there they’re being disruptive sometimes, and it just feels very overwhelming.”	Focus Group
	Alex	“I agree with Parker. The breaks can be really tricky because it’s like, are they taking advantage of the break or are they using it the correct way? With our young ones if it’s a break that allows them to leave the room,	Focus Group

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		are they, you know, chatting with everyone they see in the hallway?"	
	Jamie	"Just piggybacking off of what Alex and Parker said, I would agree the same. I think it's really hard to get them out of the break, right? So if I give them a sand timer, that's for five minutes, I'll let them know it's five minutes. I'll find times where they'll try to flip it over again, to extend their break. And it's really important that yes, they get their breaks but that they also come back and complete the work that needs to get done."	Focus Group
	Reese	"Breaks are always a tough one because sometimes kids who need a break also need an adult to walk with them to and from a place."	Survey
	Frankie	"He has a tendency to lie to me when he goes on break. So he'll tell me, he's going to the bathroom and he'll show up at the nurse. He'll tell me he's going to the nurse and he'll show up at his brother's classroom."	Interview
	Jesse	"So like I had one student who breaks were becoming...for me...like I don't know where he is in the building. It wasn't like okay, go take a quick walk around the B-wing, and then the child was in the A-wing and then talking to the security guards...so that that was not an option. That's when I feel like it's just getting derailed. That had to be modified. It was like take a break in the hall where I can still see you."	Focus Group
	Maddox	"I think breaks are tricky to implement, especially as the only teacher in the classroom of 25 students. It is difficult to facilitate a break without being able to leave the room, and also still working with/looking after 25 students."	Survey
Classwide breaks	Jordan	"Breaks? Our class does those every single day and I would say breaks are like definitely necessary and are really feasible to do every day, multiple times a day."	Interview
	Rowan	"I implement about like, two or three every single day to all my students. So when they come back from lunch, it's a mindfulness break. So all the students not just one targeted student is doing something relaxed, the lights are off and there's calm music. I give all my students a movement break in the afternoon in between two subjects. So all of my students can benefit for them not just one or two, so it's very manageable. And then you know if they ever need a break, I'll say go walk to the bathroom and come back. You could use breaks cards. So I think that is very manageable."	Interview

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## Appendix K

**Table 7.**

***Feasibility of Accommodations: Synthesis Matrix***

Grouping	Speaker	Excerpt	Source
Accommodations are feasible	Rowan	“With the accommodations, you know, it's like sentence starters or graphic organizers and that's very manageable because I do those for all of my students.”	Interview
	Jordan	“I think like every day we're doing many different types of accommodations even just like without even knowing... just naturally always implementing those things... giving all of our students certain prompts, different places to work and participate.”	Interview
	Parker	“I like accommodations a lot because while it takes more preparation from the teacher, everybody gets different accommodations. And oftentimes, it's subtle, so like the other kids don't notice if you give somebody else a different worksheet or something like that. I think that sometimes for like the challenging behaviors if the accommodation is like a different seating choice or a flexible seating option, and you give it, you know, as an option to other students, maybe not in that moment, but ‘Oh, during this time of the day, you guys, other people can get the chance to use it too...’ I think that's important to kind of make it something that doesn't call more attention to the student.”	Interview
	Devon	“Accommodations are of course after really getting to know a child and what they need. It's not challenging, but it requires the most preparation and planning for. But again, I think everyone in the class needs some kind of accommodation because everyone is a different kind of learner. I think all of these (precorrection, praise, breaks, accommodations) are necessary and doable. It just might...the last two (breaks and accommodations) take a little more planning and a little more getting to know the child.” (Interview)	Interview
	Jamie	“They've been easy. So I'll put on like a 20-minute timer for all the students during reading time. That's how long they have to read independently. And I'll say, ‘Okay, you can read for the first 10 minutes of the timer and then when it says 10-zero-zero, the second 10 minutes you can draw or you can you know work on whatever you're trying to build.’ So I feel like the accommodations have been pretty easy to implement.”	Interview
	Charlie Riley	“Accommodations are very doable. “Whether it's sitting in the front of the classroom, that's fine, whether it's a different chair, um, that's fine. Telling them like, ‘Hey, you know, we're doing five I just really want you to do two. Then maybe once you do two you can take a break and come back and try one more.’ You know, that's just an easy accommodation that you can do.”	Interview Interview
Accommodations can be problematic	Taylor	“I think altering the classroom environment is super easy. Because I think that's something you can do that doesn't need	Interview

		to be changed all the time. You know, like a seat that doesn't face all the other kids or a type of a chair that helps them focus or if you're giving them a squeezey thing or if you're giving them you know, I call them privacy binders to give them space. That type of thing. The shortened assignments and things like that....It's hard to sometimes remember because we have so many things on our plates.”	
	Frankie	“And the accommodations....It depends on the day, the material, what's going on, what I'm asking of him. When I'm doing a worksheet I'll say to him, just do this one problem for me, walk away, come back, do another problem for me. During the lessons if I'm teaching I allow him to walk around because he just cannot sit still and I'm okay with that. But because he's impulsive, it's really hard to see like, what will work what won't set him off.”	Interview
	Maddox	“It's hard being just one teacher with 24 other kids to like, keep going over and say, okay, you can have a five minute break now, but then we're gonna go back to our work. So I think that it's effective, but I think it's really hard in a just one teacher setting.”	Interview
	Riley	‘To piggyback on what Jesse was saying with accommodations, we aren't always trained on what the best accommodations are for that child. So what's one accommodation we might know worked for <i>a</i> child we taught, every child is different and we don't have another bag of tricks to pull things from always so that's why for me it was...it's the one that's the least feasible.’	Focus Group
	Rowan	“I also agree, especially since I am a new teacher. Like I try a timer, shortening the assignment, but like I said, it doesn't work for all students like you have to kind of be creative and think about each student and each need.”	Focus Group
Difficulty reconciling accommodations with grade level expectations, report card grading, and standardized testing requirements	Alex	“Yeah. For their learning tasks? That one is, you know, that one is getting <i>trickier and trickier</i> . So we are using the Bridges assessments, our reading and our phonics assessment. So if you have a kid that needs adjustments... accommodations but doesn't have a 504 or an IEP, that's a little tricky, because it's like we are expecting...these kids are expected to take this these Bridges assessments. And then we are expected to use that data to drive our instruction.”	Interview
	Jesse	“I think the accommodations are the hardest for me because I feel torn between them still needing to meet a certain academic requirement. So if the accommodation is like, ‘Okay, write three sentences, then I'll come back and check, and then write three more sentences.’ Well, 25 minutes have gone by and they've written you know, 10,15 sentences where they have to have a five paragraph essay. And then when I go to, you know, give parent feedback, or I'm filling in a report card like am I grading them based on what they did with an accommodation or is it relative to what they were supposed to do at a fifth grade level, given that they have no 504 or IEP? So that's where I get a little stumped.”	Focus Group
	Cameron	I was just going to add on what Jesse and Riley were talking about in terms of accommodations, like how Jesse, I also struggle with that grade level expectation. And then going on Riley is we only have so many tools in our bag of tricks	Focus Group

because we are gen ed teachers. That's why that's the hardest one."

Bailey "I think in gen ed classrooms accommodations are really really, tricky. Like you give them shortened assignments, and you give them all those sentence frames, but in a gen ed classroom when it comes to the post assessments, they are expected to do the exact same post assessment. They don't have an IEP, they don't have a plan. They're supposed to do it. And I feel like how is that fair like setting them up for like reduced work or shortened work or sentence frames? When then when it comes to post assessment time you're taking that all the way you're expecting them to do it in the same way. You know, it's not fair on the child at all. It's really, really hard in the gen ed classroom."

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Focus  
Group

## Appendix L

**Table 8.**

*Effectiveness of Precorrection: Synthesis Matrix*

Grouping	Speaker	Excerpt	Source
Maturity and impulsivity impact the effectiveness of precorrection	Charlie	“Precorrection, in kindergarten, me reminding them can maybe help get them on the right track sometimes, but not keep them there necessarily.”	Interview
	Jordan	“The pre-correction, it hasn't been...at least with my group of students this year, it hasn't really been that effective because I just think, especially with the age too in first grade, like the impulsivity and everything they just, even if I go over all these expectations and model in the beginning, I feel like it kind of goes out the door in the moment. But I do think that that's like, that's where I start, of course, before just trying to like, put out different fires, you know, like, I feel like that's really important. And I do think in general it's an effective strategy.”	Focus Group
	Frankie	“I think the precorrection works sometimes, but because he's impulsive, in the moment, he doesn't really care. He just wants to do what he wants to do. It's kind of hard to gauge what's going to occur, when it's going to happen, because it is so random and hard to kind of track.”	Focus Group
	Taylor	“The effectiveness depends on how much in control the child is. Now, he does love praise, and I could give them reminders, but two seconds later, it doesn't matter. So I think like, you know, kids who are partially in control, and you give them that reminder, like right beforehand, I think it'll help for a little while. But they would maybe need that reminder then mid lesson, you know, or so it depends on how impulsive the child is and whether or not this is something that they can really control.”	Interview
	Cameron	“Pre-correction, I think, it is situational. I think...I think it's effective for the...for the right student...for the student who does have the ability to control their body and their outbursts. I think it is effective because you're reminding them so I think most of the time, it's effective.”	Interview
Precorrection is effective	Jamie	“It's amazing how something so small like that is so important. Right? Because when I would do it, I would notice that, you know, the student was able to sit quiet and listen or sit quiet and follow the direction.”	Interview
	Devon	“I think the pre-correction and praise tends to work with everyone. It's a whole class kind of thing. So I think that's probably the most effective”	Interview

Riley	“Um, I feel you know, precorrection is definitely effective. Just one, it lets the student know that you're already thinking about their needs. It lets them already know that, hey, my teacher understands that this could be tough for me and that teacher understands.”	Interview
Jesse	“Pre-corrections helps the student remember expectations before we begin a task.”	Survey
Alex	“I do think providing the reminders, especially if there's...there's a change in their usual routine. I think that's <i>very helpful</i> . I think that that helps them because you're setting the expectations...you're giving them that reminder. If the majority of the class is having trouble, and I know like something exciting...or there's a big change in our schedule...you betcha I would definitely do like those proactive reminders.”	Interview
Parker	“I think that the most effective ones are the pre-correction and the praise. I think that and the modeling. I think those three things grouped together. like I feel like I'm the most in control of them, and feel like that is the most helpful for those students.”	Interview
Maddox	“I feel like pre-correction is definitely doable and effective because that initial reminder kind of like got everything rolling on, like, a good note.”	Interview

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## Appendix M

**Table 9.**

*Effectiveness of Praise: Synthesis Matrix*

Grouping	Speaker	Excerpts	Source
Praise is motivating to a child	Riley	“You know, praise...the effectiveness? You know who doesn't like praise? It's definitely easy and it's definitely effective, and it keeps them motivated.”	Interview
	Devon	“I really think praise helps them at this age level, helps them to be motivated. They need the positivity and they might not get it anywhere else.”	Interview
	Bailey	They do thrive on praise at this grade level. Fourth graders, they thrive on praise at this level. Praise is such a good way to motivate them, to kind of build up their self esteem, knowing what they're doing right.	Interview
	Jamie	Praise, or specifically the 2 goal charts ("hands to self" and "work completion") has been extremely useful for my student who has behavior challenges. Earning the smiley faces is exciting for him and since he gets to shade them in himself, it allows him to be a part of the process and take charge of his own behavior.	Interview
	Jordan	“And then praise? I mean, I think it's very effective for all of them, at this age, especially. Like they... they want to for the most part, like, please the teacher.”	Interview
	Cameron	“I think it's very effective. Kids just love to hear that they're doing well and they love to, you know, please the teacher because they know that's going to get their parents happy. So super effective.”	Interview
	Alex	“Which kid, you know, what kid isn't motivated by, like, positive reinforcement? So, yeah, I do these things for my whole class. Praise is effective when you're giving it maybe at the end of you know, a short time period. I think making a kid wait is very...can be really challenging for some of the kids who you know, who have these big challenges. Not holding it until the end...”	Interview
Praise builds students' self-esteem	Rowan	“Praise, you know, I praise all of my students. So they feel, like, equally valued.”	Focus Group
	Parker	“I think that praise, like, I can think back and I don't remember any of the things that I learned in certain grades, but I remember the things that my teacher said to me, and I remember how they made me feel. So I think that praising them, in the whole group...sometimes with those kids who have behavior challenges that can be really exciting to like, get the rest of the kids, you know, giving them a spotlight or, you know, kind of cheering them on. And I think it's important to call attention to the good things. We all want to feel good about what we're doing. And I think sometimes the kids who are struggling with those behaviors, they're hearing all the bad things. We need to make the good things as loud.	Interview
	Jesse	“Praise boosts their feelings of success.”	Survey



Importance of praise being behavior- specific	Charlie	“Praise is the most helpful because it allows you to give specific positive feedback to the individual student in real time. Often that can encourage a student to continue to meet the behavioral objective. This can also be done silently with a smile, thumbs up, or secret signal, so that the student is not singled out in front of the other students.”	Survey
	Jamie	“Yeah, I mean, it's been working <i>really, really</i> well. So, you know, I've been trying to give as much praise as I can in addition to the chart, just you know, anytime I see him staying on task, specifically saying like ‘Hey, I noticed you're doing a really good job staying on task. Thank you so much.’ Or, you know, ‘I noticed that you've completed this whole sheet by yourself. Wow, I'm so impressed. Keep up the good work.’	Interview
	Reese	“I think praise is the most effective because you can say ‘I'm noticing this’ or ‘I appreciate that.’ Like I think it has to be to the point of the targeted behavior or the task. And I think that honestly, whenever a child feels recognized and loved and valued, that all the rest of this stuff kind of falls into place. Praise doesn't have to be in isolation to a particular child. And I think the same thing with all of these, right? Like they can be used for the entire class, So I just think praise is such a natural thing, and as long as it's authentic, and not just you know, generically said but really, truly meant. I think kids respond really, really well to that.”	Focus Group

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## Appendix N

Table 10.

*Effectiveness of Breaks: Synthesis Matrix*

Grouping	Speaker	Excerpt	Source
Breaks are necessary and helpful classwide	Jordan	“I have found that many of our more challenging behaviors have come from students who lose attention and/or are overwhelmed by the demands of whole group lessons and long periods of sitting still. Breaks for unstructured play, especially outdoors, gives all the students something to look forward to and be motivated by. I believe breaks are developmentally appropriate and necessary for this age group.”	Survey
	Rowan	“I give breaks to all my students, not just the specific one. I think the breaks really help. I implement about like, two or three every single day to all my students. So when they come back from lunch, it's a mindfulness break. So all the students not just one targeted student is doing something relaxed, the lights are off and there's calm music. I give all my students a movement break in the afternoon in between two subjects. So all of my students can benefit for them not just one or two. And then you know if they ever need a break, or I think they, like, need to get out of the classroom for a second, I'll say go walk to the bathroom and come back.”	Interview
	Bailey	“The breaks, the precorrection, the praise, I use this with all of them. These are really, really helpful for the whole class.”	Interview
	Cameron	“I've been doing it (implementing breaks) for years. As long as you really talk about the expectations it can be very effective. I've used signals with kids. It can be something as simple as grabbing a couple fidgets, grabbing a timer, grabbing a couple SEL books, and you know, having a little comfy corner.”	Interview
Breaks reduce a student's frustraion	Jamie	“Yeah, I mean, with our student last year, you know, having that extra desk in the room was helpful when it was time to go and take a break. It was like an escape but still in the room to be able to go to and you know, escape from whatever it was that was, you know, challenging or frustrating.”	Interview
	Charlie	“I think breaks are necessary and helpful.”	Interview
	Alex	“ <i>I do think the breaks are very helpful. I think they're effective.</i> They remove a kid from a situation if the kid is frustrated.	Interview
	Devon	“Breaks are effective... as you get to know a child, so I can see whether someone is fidgety, whether someone is to their max.”	Interview

Students can use breaks to avoid classwork	Maddox	“I think the accommodations with breaks ...it, like, kind of nipped it in the bud. I feel like he <i>needed</i> that. if I just keep pushing and pushing like he's gonna have a meltdown. And then it's gonna be like all over.”	Interview
	Parker	“You know, like, it just becomes like, ‘Oh, I get a break now.’ And then sometimes students can often be behind in their academic learning by having breaks throughout the day and having to call them back and get them back to a lesson. It can be like them thinking like ‘Okay, I'm doing this in math, now I get a break,’ and it's just kind of going in and out of that state of learning.”	Interview
	Jordan	“But sometimes they just, they just want more and more of the breaks and not to do their work, so...”	Interview
	Frankie	“Breaks help, but he's very...he has a lot of avoidance behaviors.”	Focus Group
	Maddox	“But it can be hard to work in those breaks, especially when he's not doing his work.”	Interview
	Reese	“But...I think by the time they hit the third grade though, I think some of these kids know how to manipulate a situation a little bit, and I feel like they take advantage of it at time where they'll be like, oh, I need a break. Like they learn to say these words to escape.”	Interview
	Riley	“The one you know precursor is that you hope it's not during the lesson, that they take the break, but sometimes you understand.”	Interview

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## Appendix O

**Table 11.**

***Effectiveness of Accommodations: Synthesis Matrix***

Grouping	Speaker	Excerpt	Source
Accommodations reduce frustration by setting realistic goals	Alex	“I think for kids writing is often... I know that was frustrating for Duke, that was frustrating for Elvis I did shorten the expectations for them, right, by like, saying, ‘Okay, you just have to write at least three sentences and then you could go for a break.’ So accommodating is like pretty easy, and I think it's effective.”	Focus Group
	Jordan	“For accommodations... Yeah, I think that works specifically like for those students that are frustrated by that task. So like, yes, like for some of our students, giving them like in writing, like giving them some of those prompts or even, you know, having them like verbally sharing and writing it down for them with like, just a step in the right direction as opposed to them just feeling so overwhelmed by it they just won't even start it and then they'll just start doing whatever behaviors. So I think it is very, it's very effective.”	Focus Group
	Frankie	“I was gonna say also, what I found helpful is that if they know that they're working towards like an end goal. So they're like, Okay, if I, you know, if I do these three lines, then I can, you know, take a minute and then, you know, then come back and do something else. It's more attainable. It seems to make them less frustrated, and more willing to do the work.”	Focus Group
	Riley	Accommodations, you know, if it reduces their stress, if it reduces their, their length that they need to focus in, if it reduces, you know, whatever their trigger is, that might set off their behavior, it can be extremely effective.	Interview
	Maddox	I think accommodations are the most useful when meeting the needs of a student with behavior challenges. Often these students are not able to produce the same amount of work as other students and become frustrated and shut down if the assignment is too much. Shortening assignments, providing sentence frames, and even giving the student a special place to work in the classroom is helpful in reducing the frustration level and avoiding breakdowns.	Survey
	Parker	“I think that accommodations are also really, really important because if I'm asking the student to do something that they quite literally can't achieve....That's not going to make them feel good about it. So I need to accommodate the task or the learning environment or something like that, like I need to help them get to a	Interview

Difficulty reconciling accommodations with report card grading and students' need to fit in with their peers	Rowan	<p>place where they feel like I've done it, like I'm able to do this.”</p> <p>“I think the accommodations are effective because they have measurable work to do. like it's not like Okay, write four paragraphs right now. Like that might not be attainable for a specific student. So with accommodations, you know, reducing time, graphic organizers, sentence starters, using a timer... if you give them those things, they're more likely to <i>produce</i> something for you. Even if it's a little bit it's still something.”</p>	Interview
	Cameron	<p>“I'm going to meet the kids where they are. I'm going to do what I need to do to help. But then when their report card is all '1's: not meeting learning expectations'...like they're not meeting the curriculum, but I'm giving them what they need... so that is where I get in my head.”</p>	Interview
	Jesse	<p>“For me, I think I said in the survey too the accommodation part is really difficult in terms of matching it to what's expected. So for, you know, for...for Mark, we had set up like accommodations where I would give him a timer, and it was like, Okay, you need to try to write like to this line in your notebook. And that <i>worked</i> for him. But then he wasn't really meeting the expectations of fifth grade writing. And so that's where I always felt myself a little bit stumped. So like, yes, he's doing...um...<i>with</i> the timer he's doing what I'm asking of him. ..but it's not what he should be doing.”</p>	Interview
	Bailey	<p>“He has to have the accommodations because he needs that private space to work, he needs to be separated from distractions. When he's in the private office,he actually can do some work for me. But he does not like it. The private office works, yes, but he does not want to stand out. He does not want to look different. So...out of all of these strategies, accommodations are very, very tricky in gen. ed.”</p>	Interview

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## Appendix P

**Table 12.**

***Philosophical Acceptance: Synthesis Matrix***

Grouping	Speaker	Excerpt	Source
Behavior management strategies give students what they need	Alex	“For me, I do what...what works best for the kid, even if it's a lot more work for me, if it's gonna help that child and then in return, help the whole class because that child is not having outbursts or throwing things in the classroom, then I think it's positive for everyone. It makes sense.”	Interview
	Jesse	“Personally, I'm 100% on board. The goal is to give the kids what they need. And without a doubt, we always have one or two students who need these strategies. They're kids, right? They're 10 year olds, 11 year olds.”	Interview
	Jordan	“I would say they all align with my teaching philosophy, you know, giving students individually what they need and making it equitable.”	Interview
	Devon	“I think everyone in the class is a different kind of learner and so these are all necessary, depending on the needs of the learners.”	Interview
	Riley	“You know, we, we push the kids that need the challenge, we differentiate for whatever the needs are. So you know, all the strategies fit with my teaching philosophy.”	Interview
	Maddox	“I feel like these all align with my personal teaching philosophy. I love praising students when they deserve it. I think they just thrive off of that. Breaks when they need it, accommodations...accommodating different learning styles. I feel like this all aligns with what I do and what I know.”	Interview
Behavior management strategies benefit the whole class	Rowan	“I use all these strategies every single day, not necessarily on a specific student, but to my whole entire class. And I think that these strategies are, you know, beneficial to all of my students.”	Interview
	Jamie	“I feel like they can be used with really anyone at any time. I have a lot of students that love to hear that they're doing a great job or that you know, I'm noticing how hard they're working. So I really tend to use these with a lot of students. A lot of like, kids don't have IEPs but they do need accommodations. I have a student in my afternoon class who I will let her listen to read alouds on Epic on the computer just because that's what she needs.”	Interview
	Charlie	I would say they all fit in perfectly with my personal teaching philosophy. I mean, I want to reach the whole class and help them all, you know, reach the potential that they have. And so you know, these strategies I	Interview

would use for any kid in my class, not just a kid who is maybe having a meltdown.”

Parker “I think that honestly, these strategies are what make for effective classroom management in general and just effective teaching. I think that praise is something that all of my kids want. And I think that praise and precorrection...everyone benefits from reminders of what to do. I think that accommodations are also really, really important because if I'm asking the student to do something that they quite literally can't achieve....That's not going to make them feel good about it.” Interview

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## Appendix Q

Table 13.

*Teachers' Attributions for Continued Use of a Strategy: Synthesis Matrix*

Grouping	Speaker	Excerpt	Source
Continuing to implement a strategy that is effective	Alex	"For me, I do what...what works best for the kid, even if it's a lot more work for me, if it's gonna help that child and then in return, help the whole class because that child is not having outbursts or throwing things in the classroom, then I think it's positive for everyone. It makes sense."	Interview
	Taylor	"I mean, if something's really effective, even if it wasn't quite as feasible if it really was working, I think you would like do everything you could to kind of like make it more feasible, like figure out a way to like, you know, streamline it somehow... if it was effective, like, because gosh if it's effective it's gonna make your life easier in the long run, right?"	Interview
	Jordan	"If the student was showing more of those like positive behaviors and things that we want to see...I'm like still continuing with it because they made progress with it. They actually are excited and want to do it and have that feeling, that satisfaction. So I'm like, Okay, let's, you know, keep let's continue it. It's working and we can see that and they're just more excited to come to school and learn. So I think that's what makes me like okay, let's keep this up."	Interview
	Devon	"I would continue to use it until I found that it's not effective. If I see even the slightest increment of a bit of change and a bit more of attention and maybe something that is internalizing in them then I would keep doing it because a lot of times the repeat, the repetition of it does help to ingrain something."	Interview
	Frankie	"The effectiveness...if...if it works."	Focus Group
	Parker	"I found that it was effective for both of them. But it was becoming really unmanageable for me. So I changed it to make them more independent with their charts and their breaks. It's really hard when you know that something's working to let it go altogether."	Focus Group
	Riley	"If the child's making progress, and they're reaching their goals, I will continue to use it."	Interview
	Jamie	"If it tends to work...if it's something I can go to and it will work."	Interview
	Maddox	"I feel like as long as I can see that it's really helping with students. And like reducing those frustration levels."	Interview
	Reese	"It's all how the child is responding to it."	Interview
	Bailey	When I look at these strategies, I think the whole class benefits from providing these proactive reminders, praise, and breaks. Accommodations are really very specific to the individual.	Interview
	Rowan	"If it works. Whatever my students need is what I'm going to do. I use all of these strategies every single day, not necessarily with a specific student, but with my entire class."	Interview
	Cameron	"If it's effective, it's manageable, and I feel like it's, it's like genuinely helping this kid."	Interview
Charlie	"Whether it's effective and whether it's doable."	Interview	
Jesse	Probably I mean, I would say the feasibility, like how easy is it for me to implement. And the first three things on this (precorrection, praise, breaks) are very easy to implement, because they're part of their part of	Interview	



Combining strategies and using them situationally to maximize effectiveness	Riley	teaching in general. Like so to do that pre correction is just a little bit extra, but it's so doable. Just a quick conversation – ‘Hey, we’re going to do this. This is what I expect of you. It feels easy. It feels natural.’ “But it was really a combination of all them working together to have the most effective solution.”	Focus Group
	Jordan	“I feel like I use all of these strategies every single day. And like, not even like intentionally always, like just as they come up. So they're...they're not... they can all be effective and they can all be feasible....and one day one (strategy) is going to work for a certain student, and the next day, that same student, they're not going to respond well to that necessarily. It's not one size fits all with them.”	Interview
	Parker	”I think that the most effective ones are the precorrection and the praise. I think that and the modeling. I think those three things grouped together. I feel like I’m in the most control of them using those three together. And I feel like that’s the most helpful for most students.”	Interview
	Frankie	“I was gonna say for me I do a combination and so I'll do...my kiddo needs to move a lot so I'll do breaks...like he needs to be moving...And then praise and accommodations...he also relies on the accommodations and the praise. They’re effective and they work.”	Focus Group
	Bailey	“It’s like with each child it’s a combination of one or two of these strategies that works...that’s how I would put it.”	Interview
	Devon	“I think using a combination of the strategies is what makes them effective, and again, it depends per child. Some things work with some kids and some do not. It’s a whole class kind of thing. So I think that’s probably the most effective. But I think the combination of all of them.”	Interview
	Jesse	“So for me, I feel like I will pull these strategies in wherever and whenever. Even with kids who have absolutely no identifiable need. They might just be having a bad week or a week where they want to test the waters and see how far they can push, you know, the envelope.”	Interview

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## Appendix R

**Table 14.**

***Teachers' Attributions for Abandoning or Avoiding a Strategy: Synthesis Matrix***

Grouping	Speaker	Excerpt	Source
Modifying versus abandoning a behavior management strategy	Charlie	"I can't...I can't think of any reason that I would just get rid of any of these strategies in general. It's based on the student's response...I think one factor is how quickly his behaviors escalating. And I might skip directly to a break rather than trying praise or pre correction. So that is a big factor."	Interview
	Rowan	"So changing the way the strategy looks, changing strategy sounds, I think could be very beneficial."	Interview
	Riley	So there's times where a strategy might work for a little bit, but then you know, it, it loses effectiveness, the child gets bored with it, they're no longer motivated by it. It doesn't mean it's not a good strategy. It means it's not the right strategy for the time. So not abandoning, but maybe rethinking it."	Interview
	Parker	"I found that it was effective for both of them. But it was becoming really unmanageable for me. So I changed it to make them more independent with their charts and their breaks. It's really hard when you know that something's working to let it go altogether. So we didn't totally abandon the idea of the break. It just looked different. So like I would change what I'm doing based on if they're being successful, because if they're not successful, then the strategy is not working."	Focus Group
	Jordan	"What I would say if it was like not working or if it just felt like it was kind of, like quote, like, wasted like effort almost like we've been trying it consistently and not seeing change, for whatever reason. Then I would think, 'Okay, is the goal for them like unrealistic here? Could we change it?'"	Interview
Holding off on a strategy that has the potential to become unmanageable	Devon	Abandoning... maybe after you've tried it and, you know, several different days consecutively, it doesn't seem effective then either tweaking it or trying something totally different.	Interview
	Jamie	"So I think you know, breaks is one that sometimes I try to shy away from because when it comes to taking a break I'm, you know, trying to teach and I have to come in and check on them or, you know, I have to trust that, you know, they're going to come out when they say they will."	Interview
	Parker	"I feel like it always takes me a while to work my way up to actually giving breaks because I know how much trying to manage the breaks can take out of me. And if you introduce it like in the beginning of the year, I feel like it's something that is very hard to phase out."	Interview
Importance of the strategy fitting into the classroom routine	Cameron	"Some accommodations are very hard to manage as a gen ed teacher, you know, like, like shortened assignments, like sentence frames...ones that I normally wouldn't use, you know what I mean? Like those are hard to manage. Those are hard to keep going over and over like it's hard to keep up with that. So that's something that I would avoid because I just can't mentally or physically do it."	Interview
	Cameron	"Anything that goes out of the routine I think will fall to the wayside for me because there's other pressing things in front of my face. Some accommodations are very hard to manage as a gen ed teacher, you know, like, like shortened assignments, like sentence frames...ones that I	Interview

normally wouldn't use, you know what I mean? I can do letting them sit at the desk versus carpet...Breaks too, I would say, because I don't see them...I only see them being effective with a very small population of kids. I think I tend to...to not use them. I tend to not use...I don't use them because they don't seem to work very...as much as other ones. Praise? I'm with it. Precorrection? If I remember to do it, I'm with it."

Jordan "So like, when I find another strategy that seems like it's more realistic, like the easier for me to, like, maintain, and sustain and the student I don't know, gets to be more part of the classroom and, like, I just think that's a better solution." Interview

Jesse Praise and breaks, I feel like I do that for everybody, as needed. For me, that's a general teaching strategy. So those I keep using, you know. The precorrection I feel like it's almost like a contract with that child. It feels easy. It feels natural, that part of it. Because that pre correction for me, and I'm sure there's so many ways to do it. It's usually like a verbal quick like, hey, this is what we're doing. This is what I need from you.

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