

The Effectiveness of a Behavior Checklist on Classroom Management with Freshman  
Students in a Business and Information Technology Course at Elk Mound High School

by

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A Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the  
Master of Science Degree  
in

Career and Technical Education

Approved: (2) Semester Credits



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May, 2006

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**Title:** *The Effectiveness of a Behavior Checklist on Classroom Management  
with Freshman Students in a Business and Information Technology  
Course at Elk Mound High School*

**Graduate Degree/ Major:** MS Career and Technical Education

**Research Adviser:** Carol Mooney, Ed.D.

**Month/Year:** May, 2006

**Number of Pages:** 37

**Style Manual Used:** American Psychological Association, 5<sup>th</sup> edition

ABSTRACT

This study focused on student behavior and its modification through the implementation of a behavior checklist. Two separate classes covering required course material in a business and information technology class for freshmen students at Elk Mound High School were studied. A behavior checklist containing twelve common student behavior problems was created based on several models and collaboration with the building principal. In order to create the problem behavior categories, research was done about problem behaviors in different levels of education.

The research used in this study reviewed behavior checklists and their effectiveness in dealing with problem behaviors and suggested that by reducing problem behaviors, a less stressful learning environment exists, in which more learning can take

place. Students were monitored in the classroom for a nine-week period, and the results were analyzed using a between-subjects design. The results were documented using a Microsoft spreadsheet and graphed to show the most frequent and severe behavior problems.

After the analysis of collected data, conclusions were made about the relevance of a behavior checklist universal to a specific grade level. Anticipated behavior problems were compared and contrasted to behavior problems which actually occurred. On-task behaviors were discussed in relation to problem behaviors in frequency and intensity. Students displayed more on-task behavior than the initial research suggested would occur.

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Acknowledgments

This thesis could not have been written without Dr. Carol Mooney, Dr. Howard Lee, and Dr. Amy Gillette who all served as advisors and encouraged and challenged me throughout my academic program. The distance learning librarian, Jana Reeg-Steidinger, was also a big help in pulling my APA style format thesis all together.

I also would like to thank my co-workers at Elk Mound High School, Hugh Goodrich, Peggy Freitag, Carolyn Jackson, and Linda Dempski who provided assistance when needed and were able to put a smile on my face when I was a little stressed out. Most importantly, thank you to all of my family and friends for their unconditional support and love, without which I never would have had the power to finish this goal. I thank them all.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

Every career-technical educator must face classroom management challenges on a daily basis. This complex task involves lesson planning, constructing a safe environment, educating students, and responding to student behavior problems (Backes, & Ellis, 2003). This means that educators tend to juggle too many issues (Manning, 2003).

### Background

In order to make the juggling act possible, it is necessary to create classroom management techniques and discipline strategies that promote a positive learning environment. Instructors must have a well-managed classroom for learning to occur (Widmer, 2003). This well-managed classroom depends on the establishment and maintenance of effective rules and routines throughout the school year (Feldman, 2003a). While rules and routines must remain consistent, students do not all learn in the same manner. Different learning styles and different paces of learning make flexibility important (Little, Hudson, & Wilks, 2002).

Once a classroom is well maintained with a flexible instructor, focus can be turned to on-task instructional time (Alderman, 2001). Students who are focused on learning will accomplish more. A main factor impacting on-task time is good discipline.

Learning effective discipline techniques may take years. No one is born knowing how to control a room filled with adolescents, for five hours a day, and cover the objectives in a lesson plan. No technique works all of the time, and what works in one class may not have the same effect in a different class (Metzger, 2002). In a classroom of 24 students, it is possible to have 24 angels one day and 24 wild things the next (Lea, 2001).

Traditionally, when a classroom is well managed, the room has a sense of order and structure. This usually indicates that students are sitting quietly and staying on task (Garrett, 2003). This behavior creates the parameters for the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual environments of the classroom. The optimal learning environment is designed for students to feel safe, to take risks, to achieve new knowledge, and to fully understand that they are treasured members of the classroom (Norris, 2003).

Unfortunately, the optimal learning environment is not always possible. On the opposite end of classroom management, students are unable to learn in a chaotic, poorly managed room where misbehavior is allowed (Marzano, & Marzano, 2003). Misbehaviors can be defined as any behavior that is considered to be tactless for the situation or state in which it occurs (Charles, 1999).

According to Charles (1999), misbehaviors are classified into five different categories: aggression, immorality, defiance of authority, class disruptions, and goofing off. Similarly, the theme of aggression being identified as misbehavior can be the act of a student or group of students that hinder the learning of other students. The frequency of misbehavior is also directly related to the amount of time the instructor needs to exercise classroom management techniques (Little, Hudson, & Wilks, 2002).

Dealing with misbehaviors as an educator can be a nuisance and add stress to the workday. The National Educational Education Association (NEA) recently surveyed teachers about factors that deter them from doing their best job possible (O'Neil, 2004). Nine percent of the teachers responded that discipline problems or negative attitudes of students were a top factor influencing their performance.



Classroom management has never been an easy task, and some say it has become an even greater challenge today (O'Neil, 2004). As part of an NEA interview, teachers and support professionals indicated that students have the same needs as always -- to be accepted, competent, and respected.

At times it may seem that teaching the established curriculum may take a back seat to managing behavior problems (O'Neil, 2004). These problems can be compounded by other distractions in the school day: deviations from the normal school schedule, frequent student turn over, and events outside of school. These distractions tend to steal valuable class time needed to prepare students for learning assessments, such as state achievement tests.

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory performed a research study on classroom management and found that approximately half of all class time is used for instruction, while discipline problems take up most of the other half (O'Neil, 2004). Valuable classroom instructional time is being lost to problematic student behavior. Therefore, effective classroom management and discipline strategies allow the educator to gain back valuable instruction time.

Since 1969, Phi Delta Kappa has conducted a Gallop poll on public attitudes toward schools. Discipline usually ranks as the top problem every year on the poll (O'Neil, 2004). In the fall of 2003, the public ranked discipline as the second largest problem in local schools, trailing the concerns of school funding. Essentially, school districts are concerned with the costs of keeping students in the building. Once that problem has been solved, the new problem of how to control those students arises.

In order to have a successful management plan in place, a teacher must communicate that plan thoroughly, and remain consistent when administering the plan. The National Institute of Justice, an arm of the U.S. Department of Justice, recently released a study stating that 93 percent of public schools do a satisfactory job communicating student-discipline rules and policies; however, only 48 percent do a satisfactory job at being consistent (Bushweller, 2005).

Linda James, who works for the NEA's Teacher Quality Department, feels that the teachers do not get enough classroom management training before they head into the classroom (cited in O'Neil, 2004). These teachers tend to lack skills, comfort, and confidence when it comes to classroom management. According to one estimate, this may be why approximately one-third of educators leave teaching within their first five years.

The West Midlands School District conducted a study to see whether their teachers felt properly trained to handle behavior problems in their classrooms (Merrett & Wheldall, 1993). Results of the study showed 86 percent believed that they had taught themselves how to manage a class "on the job" through trial and error.

In addition to educating students, many of today's classroom instructors are teaching themselves classroom management strategies through trial and error. Fred Jones, classroom management trainer, stated that more teachers are going home exhausted (cited in O'Neil, 2004). They are tired of dealing with excessive talking, put-downs, out-of-the-ordinary disruptions, and power struggles.

Educators have a lot of influence to motivate and encourage students to achieve success, to become strong role models, and to make a difference in students' lives

(Spitalli, 2005). However, teachers also have the power to alienate students, so it is important to design a classroom management plan that best fits students' needs to achieve success and reduce teacher fatigue and frustration.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Students display behaviors that interrupt the learning process provided by the classroom instructor. Lack of classroom management techniques, lack of discipline strategies, and lack of instructor flexibility allow this behavior to intensify.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a behavior checklist on ninth-grade students during the first semester of the 2005-06 academic year at Elk Mound High School. The behavior checklist that was created for this study identified fifteen target areas. The fifteen categories were divided into subgroups based on three main classroom rules of the Business and Information Technology Education Department, applied daily at Elk Mound High School:

1. Work – cheating, not following the directions, not completing work.
2. Belong – being late, out of seat, or not being prepared; interfering with others, playing computer games, listening to music.
3. Respect – being defiant or rude, talking, misusing equipment or supplies, being removed from class, bullying (teasing or verbal).

#### *Assumptions of the Study*

1. All students included in the study were grade nine students at Elk Mound High School during the 2005-06 academic year.

2. These-ninth grade students participated in required course work for graduation at Elk Mound High School during the 2005-06 academic year.

3. The educator had consistent contact with students for the duration of the study.

4. All students from classes included in the study were considered participants in the study.

### *Definition of Terms*

For the purpose of this study the terms defined below will be used throughout this paper.

*Business and Information Technology Education:* The mission of Business and Information Technology education is to prepare students for business occupations and teach the students all about business (Wisconsin's, 1998).

*Career and Technical Education:* The three foundations Career and Technical Education is built upon are life, work and careers (Ellibee, 2005)

*Classroom Management:* Refers to creating parameters for the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual environments. This allows for optimized learning to occur (Norris, 2003).

*Consequences:* What occurs if rules are broken.

*Misbehaviors:* Actions that are considered to be tactless for the situation or state in which they occur (Charles, 1999).

*Procedures:* Communicate expectations for behaviors thoroughly and remain consistent (Bushweller, 2005).

*Rewards:* What occurs if rules are followed.

*Rules:* Communication of expectations or standards, e.g., work, belong, and respect

### *Significance of the Study*

In order to understand how this study is relevant to Business and Information Technology and to secondary education in general, the following points have been considered.

1. Classroom management is an important facet of daily instruction. Learning how best to control a disruptive student allows reluctant learners more individualized instruction and assistance.
2. The goal of every educator is to have every student in his/her classroom achieve academic success. Great efforts are made by educators to minimize discipline problems with an effective classroom management plan.
3. The educator will experience less stress/fatigue from problem students with a well-managed classroom.
4. Students will feel freer to learn in a classroom that is focused on student success rather than student misbehavior.
5. The use of a behavior checklist enables the educator to keep track of the problem student who would otherwise “slip through the cracks.”

### *Limitations of the Study*

Classroom behaviors are impacted by a variety of internal and external variables. Diverse backgrounds and learning styles introduced the following limitations to the study:

1. Student assignment. The student registration process was organized in a way that allowed students to determine their class schedule for the year. Instructors had no control over the number of students or type of student in each class.

2. Meal schedule. The proximity of each class to meal times may have impacted students' energy and attention levels. This, in turn, may have affected the results of the study.

3. Student observation. All students were in class for 90 minutes under the instruction of one educator. Tracking classroom behavior of all students was difficult. The frequency of the negative behavior may have overwhelmed the instructor's observation/evaluation.

4. Academic requirement. Students may have been placed in a business course to fulfill a requirement for graduation. Interests, ability levels, and prior knowledge varied significantly from student to student.

5. Student demographics. Students came from a variety of backgrounds with differing values, attitudes, and experiences with education. They often may not have responded the same to a given assignment.

6. Findings. Research data from this study pertained to only ninth-grade students enrolled at Elk Mound High School. Generalization beyond this population should not be made.

### *Methodology*

A self-designed behavior checklist was introduced at the beginning of the 2005-06 academic school year. The checklist was implemented for the duration of the first semester involving both sections of first-year students taking required coursework.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

### Introduction

This chapter will discuss the causes of student misbehavior and classroom management techniques to improve/reduce behavior issues.

### Student Misbehavior

Once the causes of the misbehaviors are clearly defined and understood, the educator can take positive steps to correct/eliminate problem behaviors. There is no universal problem behavior and there is no universal solution to correct all problem behaviors, and so open-mindedness and flexibility are required.

Some of the basic struggles that educators have dealt with since the beginning of education have included handling student misbehavior, “classroom management” (*Reasons for*, n.d.). One way to examine misbehavior is through the eyes of the educator. Educators believe students tend to misbehave in order to achieve four self-serving goals: getting attention, taking revenge, seeking power, and avoiding failure. When students misbehave, one of the following four goals are usually the reason for the misbehavior.

In the 1930’s, Dr. Rudolf Dreikurs, identified four behavioral goals. The most common of misbehaviors, attention seeking behaviors involve disrespect, disturbing the class, teasing, swearing, being out of his/her seat, being uncooperative, and making fun of others. Possibly the most difficult misbehaviors from an educator’s viewpoint, power-seeking behaviors, involve disobeying, not cooperating, disrespecting, talking back and disturbing the class. Possibly the most emotionally charged misbehaviors, revenge-seeking behaviors, involve shoving or pushing, teasing, or causing embarrassment, and not including others. With revenge, educators are dealing with emotions and physical

components. The most introspective misbehavior is the students' fear that any efforts made in the classroom will result in failure. Students who display these misbehaviors are often disciplined for: not paying attention, not being prepared, being untrustworthy, and wasting time. In reality, these students believe that they will fail at any task they attempt. Therefore, attempting nothing means failing nothing ("*Reasons for,*" n.d.).

Another factor to consider is not what students do, as individuals, but rather how they behave in relation to their family structure. A 24-year veteran teacher who is National Board certified, SiriNam Khalsa, conducts workshops on classroom management and believes it is the changes that are occurring in family structures which contribute to misbehaviors. Some of the students come from one-parent families, some are in foster care, some have never met their fathers, or their fathers are incarcerated (cited in O'Neil, 2004).

It is possible that the behaviors that the students display in the classroom are not changing; rather certain behaviors are increasing at a faster rate than others. Marianne Pavie, a recess aid at Holland Elementary School in Pennsylvania, doesn't believe that student behavior is becoming more difficult to manage; there is just an increase in the number of students displaying the unacceptable behavior (cited in O'Neil, 2004). She strongly believes that many parents work excessively, resulting in the students returning to a home that is empty and unsupervised at the end of the school day. As a result, the students learn how to deal with life's struggles on their own and tend to form negative habits due to a lack of maturity or lack of guidance (O'Neil, 2004).

Others blame student misbehavior on the media and popular culture. The overcrowded and impersonal environment of our nation's schools may develop curricula



that are irrelevant and/or a climate in which peer pressure may increase (O'Neil, 2004). Denise Drellich, who works at Crystal Lake Elementary as a mainstream consultant, says aggressive students can alter the tone of the classroom. Drellich states, "We have kids who get away with foul language and disrespectful tones and talking back at home and in society, so we see it in the classroom. Society accepts a wider range of behavior than it ever did before" (Davies, 2000, p. 1.B).

Some other causes of behavior problems are due to medication and drugs (Seidman, n.d.). Students are already stimulated to a great extent by events that are taking place outside of the classroom. When students receive large amounts of excitement or emotionally charged activity outside of the school day, it becomes difficult for them to focus their attention on academics. When students attempt to self medicate through substance abuse to control their feelings and emotions, the results of these efforts may show up in the classroom. At this point in time learning becomes secondary, and the primary concern is the student's well being. At the reverse end of the field, students who depend upon medication to function in the classroom can show dramatic changes in attention span and behavior when their medications are not properly taken. An otherwise cooperative and respectful student may be difficult and defiant without the existence of his/her prescribed medication.

A cause of misbehavior can be illness (Seidman, n.d.). Students who suffer from chronic illness are often absent during key learning moments. Upon their return to the classroom, many students, frustrated by a lack of knowledge/understanding of course materials, may choose to misbehave rather than seek out help from the educator.

The over involvement of students both in and outside of the school building can quickly lead to student fatigue (Seidman, n.d.). It is then common for students to sleep while in class when the instructor is trying to teach. Students who are run-down may also choose to misbehave rather than work in the classroom because the misbehavior requires less energy.

Dr. Allen Mendler, a researcher of human behavior, believes the most frequent cause of student misbehaviors are: powerlessness, boredom, unclear limits, low self-concepts, and few emotional outlets (cited in Zawadzki, n.d.). Students feel as if they are pawns to be manipulated at the whim of their instructors. Without a real connection on an emotional or personal level to their educators, students may turn to misbehavior as a way to express their feelings.

Whatever the cause of the misbehavior, it must be skillfully handled so students can be engaged in the learning process and move peacefully from class to class (O'Neil, 2004). The following paragraphs explain how several school districts are handling this complex issue.

The Lafayette Parish School Board agrees that discipline is a problem for classroom management, and it is not easy to be in agreement on a solution (Simoneaux, 2001). Some school board members want to return to corporal punishment, while others want the disruptive students removed from the classroom environment. School board member John Earl Guidry (Simoneaux, 2001, p. X.1.B) states, "If you misbehave in the classroom, you need to get out." The board, however, has come to one agreement; they are not interested in throwing any more money into a solution. Beverly Wilson, another board member, (Simoneaux, 2001, p. X.1.B) states, "I don't want to spend any more

money on these children.” She also continues, “We’re talking about 1,200 kids in our system disrupting 28,000. I’m up to here with this.” Currently the schools do enforce different discipline programs for the students at the different schools and it does make a difference to the students who are on the fence.

Rhonda Turner, a teacher at the Lafayette Parish (Simoneaux, 2001, p. X.1.B) states, “These problems are going to stop when they stop in the classroom. Until they’re trained – I’ve seen a 30 – year teacher who cannot discipline”. She adds, “I can be an effective teacher, and I know what it took for me to get there: training and knowledge. That allowed me to be a teacher instead of a police officer.”

Just because a student has a discipline concern does not mean he/she cannot learn (Simoneaux, 2001). Superintendent James Easton has promised the Lafayette Parish staff that he and the staff will work out a solution for the board. “This matter requires a systematic method,” Easton states (Simoneaux, 2001, p. X.1.B). “This is a very complex issue. There’s always been a discipline problem in school. We will always have a few challenges with a few children. The issue is, we can’t let that population grow. We have to influence children to be more responsible and respectful.” Easton also states, “I believe the teacher must be in charge of the classroom. It is not in the best interest of children to allow them to be disruptive.”

Teachers in the district have brought it to the board that they feel that they need to be trained on a solution instead of punishing the students. Charlene Doucet, an educator in the Lafayette School District, suggested the Boy’s Town discipline model. The program focuses on the teacher’s behavior, and is the most research-based and most effective program that she has encountered (cited in Simoneaux, 2001). The Boys Town,

now known as Girls and Boys Town, was founded in 1917 to help at-risk students. The group educates teachers and youth personnel across the nation on its discipline philosophy. Their model focuses on discipline and respect, encouraging the usage of precise, uniform language to teach students how to respond during social situations (*Parents, teachers*, 2004). Charlene stated, (Simoneaux, 2001, p. X.1.B) “It’s about effective classroom management. It’s about being the master of your domain”.

The faculty team at Fern Ride Middle School in Elmira, Oregon has implemented a behavior-management system, called, “High –Fives”: be respectful, be responsible, hands and feet to self, follow directions, and be there and be ready (Sack, 2000). If the students follow the five goals, they earn tickets that are handed out by each staff member. The tickets can be redeemed for treats such as popcorn and snow cones or extra time during lunch breaks.

In another region of the country, the State Board of Education in Colorado disputes biological basis of student misbehavior. The board recently passed a ruling recognizing that many behavior problems are just that, rather than biological disorders (Cobble, 2000). The board strongly believes that students should be disciplined rather than drugged into appropriate behavior. Cobble, (Cobble, 2000, p. AA) states that the board is encouraging their teachers to use “proven academic and/or classroom management solutions to resolve behavior, attention, and learning difficulties.” The most popular strategy discussed is communication between parents, educators, and medical professionals. Some students may benefit more from consequences than from medication when it comes to discipline and learning.

## Discipline Strategies

Communication is the key when it comes to rules. Rules need to be communicated early, clearly, and frequently. It is a good idea to enforce the rules as needed, reward good behavior, and be consistent when applying the consequences for misbehavior (Feldman, 2003b).

In some school districts across the country, consultants are being hired to fill the gap of the lack of classroom management skills (Mathews, 2000). The best time to take a consultant course on classroom management skills is after you have been exposed to at least one year of teaching. Michael Grinder, a Battle Ground, Washington based consultant (Mathews, 2000, p. A.19) states, “They have to have had experience of doing things wrong before they can learn how to do them right.” Some experienced teachers believe it is not rules or punishments that influence their behavior, it is the personal bond.

There is no question that every educator has encountered at least one student who tends to push her patience or take his sanity to the limits (Barnes, 2004). Here are some techniques for classroom management that have worked for Peter Barnes, who teaches in Virginia.

Step one: Act quickly – this method limits interruption time and allows others to remain focused on learning.

Step two: Find time for personal conversations – take the disruptive student aside and ask questions. This approach offers a three-way win. The student receives the teacher’s attention, teacher can keep their patience, and the class can remain focused on learning.

Step three: Be consistent – point out the classroom rule in which they have broken and handout a consequence.

Step four: Have a heart – keep in mind that some students have little parent support and need additional help at school, a touch on the back, and to hear kind words.

There are no secrets to effective classroom management, but Charles E. Backes and Iris C. Ellis suggests the following (Backes & Ellis, 2003, p. 23);

- Have clear expectations for your students. State rules and expectations during the first or second day of class. Theorists in the past have suggested only having three to five rules. The theory has good intentions, but it leaves many unspecified actions unaddressed and it could cause havoc in the classroom.
- Deal with today's problems today. Teachers should correct the behavior during the class period in which the behavior occurred. Using warnings, redirection of the student's behavior or other larger consequences can reduce lost teaching time.
- Treat all students with respect. A key component to gaining leadership of a classroom is to convey to the students that they are important and that they themselves can master the content. Students enjoy hearing their name, so learn each of their names during the first two or three days of class.
- Teachers should model acceptable behaviors such as humor, courtesy, patience, and manners.

Mitchem (2005) suggests the following to help preserve a sense of humor and sanity on a day-to-day basic when it comes to classroom management. BE PROACTIVE is an acronym which stands for:

**Build relationships** – As you build positive relationships with your students, optimal learning can occur. If a student feels comfortable and likes the teacher, then he/she will want to please the instructor by doing what is requested. The most important asset that an instructor can do is to spend time with their students and show an interest in their personal goals and existence. This can take as little as one minute: smiling, greeting students as they come to class, and using eye contact.

**Expectations – teach them** – Classroom rules should be communicated to the students in a manner that they know what behavior is acceptable, which will result in positive interactions among all students in the classroom. It is suggested that an instructor only enforce four to five classroom rules and to explain them positively as preferred behaviors.

**Praise appropriate behaviors** – One of the most effective techniques is by creating a positive classroom atmosphere that focuses on affirming and recognizing the positive behaviors instead of correcting and redirecting the negative behaviors.

**Routines** – Responding to inappropriate behavior is essential to consistency in the classroom. This can be accomplished by setting a routine for students who behave inappropriately.

**Opportunities to respond with feedback** – Effective instruction is one of the most effective behavior management tools at teachers' disposal. One way is to grant students with countless opportunities to respond with feedback. If students are involved actively in their instruction, then they are less likely to display disruptive behaviors.

**ABCs of self-management** – Mitchem, along with a co-author of Wells created the ABCs of self management - **A**ntecedent (trigger), **B**ehavior, and **C**onsequence. It is

suggested that you discuss what is important to you and to your class so your expectations are clear. You may want to point out your pet peeves so there won't be any misunderstandings later.

**Collaborate and cooperate with parents, teachers, . . .** – Mitchem (2005) suggested that if you ever get to a point at which you have no idea what to do, ask your co-workers for productive ideas. It is okay to request help. Some students are too difficult to work with by yourself.

**Teach replacement behaviors** – If a teacher is able to recognize the reason for a student's behavior, then they be able to create an alternative replacement behavior to prevent further disruptions.

**Individualize instruction** – A simple method of addressing difficult behavior is to modify some part of the instruction, such as: providing choices of tasks, matching the level of difficulty of the task to their competence level, and shortening the assignments by folding the assignment in half so the students do not feel overwhelmed.

**Visualize yourself somewhere else** – If none of the strategies work for you and students are still interrupting your ability to teach, then with a sense of humor, a visualization strategy might work.

**Enjoy the experience** - Mitchem (2005) believed that when a student misbehaves, it is an opportunity to teach - - and isn't that what we all want to do?

Steven Wolk, author of, *Being Good*, believes the goal of classroom management is to help students develop and shape their character, plus promote self-discipline (cited in Garrett, 2003). Character is the foundation of human and social values. Wolk believes that teachers should teach values: common good, community, compassion, empathy,



caring, and thoughtfulness. By educating students on what is “right” in the classroom, an educator can take steps to identify and to correct what’s “wrong” (behavior problems.)

Lee Canter developed a program to lessen discipline problems. His philosophy is that teachers should care about their students’ learning and should communicate that they care for each student. He strongly believes that teachers should be clear with their students on learning expectations, and teaching of appropriate behaviors (cited in KaVanagh, 2000). By establishing, teaching, enforcing, and reinforcing classroom expectations for student behavior, student disruptions and other forms of off-task behavior may be reduced (Feldman, 2003a). Canter also stressed specific reward systems as a short-term strategy for those students who are particularly difficult (cited in KaVanagh, 2000).

Classroom procedures help guide students’ behavior as well. These procedures need to be communicated often; discuss what style of talk is appropriate, what movements within the classroom are acceptable, and any other matters that can cause disruptions (Feldman, 2003b).

Consistently enforcing classroom rules enables an educator to create a caring classroom. This involves communication of expectations for self-reliance and self-control (Wentzel, 2003). Educators should ask for students’ opinions and feelings, and provide positive expressions of caring and acceptance.

Thoughtful educators usually have two overall goals (Brainard, 2001). The first one is to provide a productive classroom for student learning and for academic achievement. The second goal is to provide student satisfaction with their schooling. Both goals are major aspects of a well-suited classroom. Productivity and satisfaction go

together. It would be tough to be successful without achieving both goals. Effective classroom discipline provides students with an outstanding setting for learning to occur.

In order to have a productive classroom, much time and energy is spent creating curriculum. This curriculum needs to be interesting, intellectual, critical, purposeful, creative, and highly relevant, in order for students to desire academic success (Wolk, 2003). Getting students involved and interested in what they are learning in school creates a good classroom relationship and learning environment.

As discussed in a recent meta analysis, of more than 100 studies, the qualities of teacher-student relationships are the foundation for all other areas of classroom management to be built upon (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). Their findings were that teachers who built high-quality relationships with the student body had 31% fewer discipline problems, rule violations, and other related problems over a school year's time. This is compared to teachers who did not have the relationships with the student body. Effective teacher-student relationships are characterized by specific teacher behaviors: showing the appropriate levels of dominance, showing appropriate levels of cooperation, and by awareness of high-needs students. Personality and/or friendships were not significant factors in handling discipline.

Easley (2004), suggested complimenting the students if they seem to be tuned out of the learning process. The compliments should be very detailed. She even suggested writing them out so the students were able to read them and reread. Written compliments tend to be the most powerful motivator. They can be used to help students become successful. Not every student is easily motivated. When faced with a challenge, try this, place an index card on the desk and give yourself a point every time you make eye

contact and smile at a student who is trying to push your buttons. Try to make a game out of it. No one knows what the index card is designed for, only you do. Try to see how many positive points you can score during a class period.

Gail Ritchie, who teaches elementary school, recommended that teachers should try different classroom management strategies until they are able to find one that best fits their style (Mathews, 2000). Teachers need time and training to be aware of the variety of different strategies that work and to see which best fits their style of teaching.

Educators frequently use “techniques” for classroom management that tend to undermine students’ respect (Spitalli, 2005). This leads the students to resentment, a breeding ground for disobedience. Here is a list of ten discipline no-no’s.

1. Don’t punish a group of students when you are unsure of the perpetrator; it tends to turn students against each other. The innocent students will resent the ill-behaved, as well as resenting the instructor, and figure out that there is no advantage for good behavior.

2. Using school work as punishment went out with the dark ages. It often teaches the students not to like a subject and/or the instructor.

3. Bullying students by teasing, insulting, or ridiculing does not motivate students to behave or pay attention. Hurt feelings can result and the feeling of the effects can be devastating and long-lasting.

4. Lowering grades as punishment will give the perception to students and parents that you are vindictive. The grade a student earns should illustrate academic accomplishment, not behavior.

5. Teaching by means of cruel intentions does not work. Making students memorize rules for the sake of rules and making them reiterate them on an assessment will never get them to learn in the correct manner.

6. Students are not allowed to use vulgar, rude, or offensive language and neither should instructors. Using such language does not enhance the classroom management or coaching skills. It reflects a lack of self-control and lack of respect for your students.

7. If a teacher decides to raise his/her voice to get their students attention over and over, students will end up tuning the instructor out all together. Students tend to misbehave in order to get attention; it is best for the instructor to have a private meeting to avoid a public show. Teachers should concentrate on the student's behavior, not the students themselves.

8. Using heavy sarcasm is a form of bullying. It can be abusive and harmful and cause some students to strike back. Classmates tend to resent teachers who treat their friends in this manner.

9. Sending students to see the principal for discipline without attempting to resolve the matter yourself will result in others seeing you as weak and fearful. Teachers must be able to work with day-to-day problems on their own in order to earn student respect.

10. Asking a student to replicate an unacceptable choice of words only encourages the student not only to say it once, but twice. The use of offensive profanity is unacceptable. It is suggested that the instructor have a private meeting with the student in order to get their point across, and this will remove the student from their audience as well.

*Summary*

Teaching is one of the most strenuous professions in existence and one of the most rewarding, considering the outcome teachers can have on students' lives and eventually on the value of society itself (Spitalli, 2005).

Problems that most frequently occur in a Business and Information Technology Education classroom are: talking, misuse of equipment or supplies, cheating, incomplete work, and being off task. The frequency and severity of problem behaviors can be reduced by enforcing established classroom rules while maintaining a physical and emotional presence.

### Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter will focus on applying the knowledge examined in the literature review in the creation of research methodology.

#### *Developing an Instrument*

Classroom management techniques were applied in a classroom setting in an effort to create an optimal learning environment. The minimization of discipline problems was attempted.

A between-subjects research design was used to compare two classes of ninth grade students enrolled in required coursework at Elk Mound High School. The participants were compared on adherence to classroom rules, frequency of disruptive behavior, behavior relation to meal times, and size of the class. All students participating in this study were monitored through the Business and Information Technology Education department.

#### *Subject Selection and Description*

Participants in the study were pre-selected through the course enrollment procedures performed during the 2004-2005 academic year, pending parent consent. This process was done prior to the introduction of the study and with no student, parent or guardian knowledge of this study's existence.

#### *Instrumentation*

The instrument being used in this study was a self-designed behavior checklist. The behavior checklist was created after researching a series of behavior checklist at the elementary and middle school. After collaboration with the building principal, he suggested a solution to lessen classroom misbehavior, which was to create a behavior

checklist. After researching behavior checklists, three main sources were helpful. Initially developed for elementary and middle school students, the checklists were then modified for students at the high school level.

The behavior checklist that was created for this study identified fifteen target areas. The fifteen categories were divided into subgroups based on three main classroom rules of the Business and Information Technology Education Department, applied daily at Elk Mound High School.

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

On a daily basis, data was collected and recorded on students' adherence or deviation from the behavior checklist. A master recording sheet containing the frequency of student misbehavior was used to chart daily activities of the students. Separate identical charts were used for each class.

#### *Data Analysis*

Once all the data had been collected from the study and tallies had been made of each category for each misbehavior, analysis occurred. Daily documentation was performed using Microsoft Excel, which was then converted into chart form. Comparisons were then made between each class in relation to type and frequency of misbehaviors that occurred. After analyzing results for validating, it was determined that a behavior checklist did, in fact, focus the instructor's attention on specific classroom behaviors. While these results are specific to this study, the use of a behavior checklist is applicable to education at large.

#### *Limitations*

There were several limiting factors to the study:

1. Distribution of consent forms took place the first day of school. Participation in the study was contingent on the consent forms being returned in a timely manner.
2. Participant awareness of the study may have caused behavior which deviated from students' "normal" behavior pattern.
3. The study assessed two of the three ninth-grade Information Processing courses. Students enrolled in the second semester Information Processing course were not represented in the study.
4. It was unknown whether the assessment instrument would produce results that were high in validity.
5. It was unknown whether the assessment instrument would produce results that were high in reliability.

### *Summary*

This study was designed to document that the introduction of a behavior checklist to ninth grade students at Elk Mound High School in the required Business and Information Technology Education coursework would reduce the frequency of student misbehavior. The study also documented that by implementing the behavior checklist, it would result in more efficient and effective classroom management.



## Chapter IV: Results

The anticipated outcome of the study was a group of two or three students frequently disrupting class and inciting others to commit disruptive behaviors. After documenting the frequency and intensity of these behaviors, modifications were to be implemented. The application of consequences to facilitate the improved behavior was not required. The actual outcome of the study was a low occurrence of disruptive behavior.

### *Item Analysis*

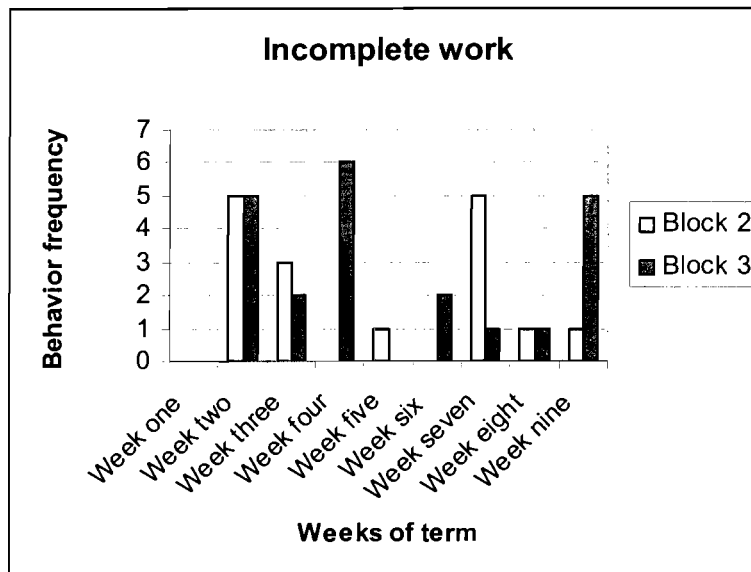
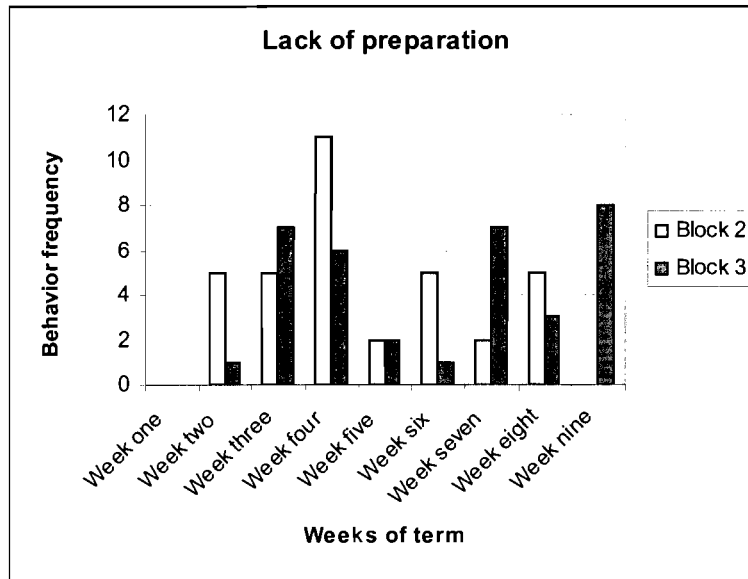
There are fifteen different categories of disruptive behavior on the behavior checklist. Of those fifteen behaviors, only seven occurred in the nine week documentation period. (See charts below). The disruptive behaviors were documented on a weekly basis; most behaviors did not occur every week. There were two disruptive behaviors that occurred every week.

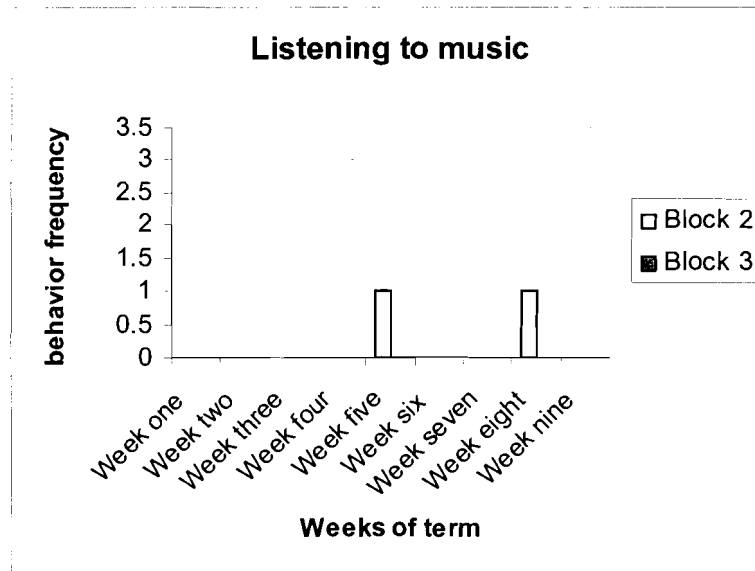
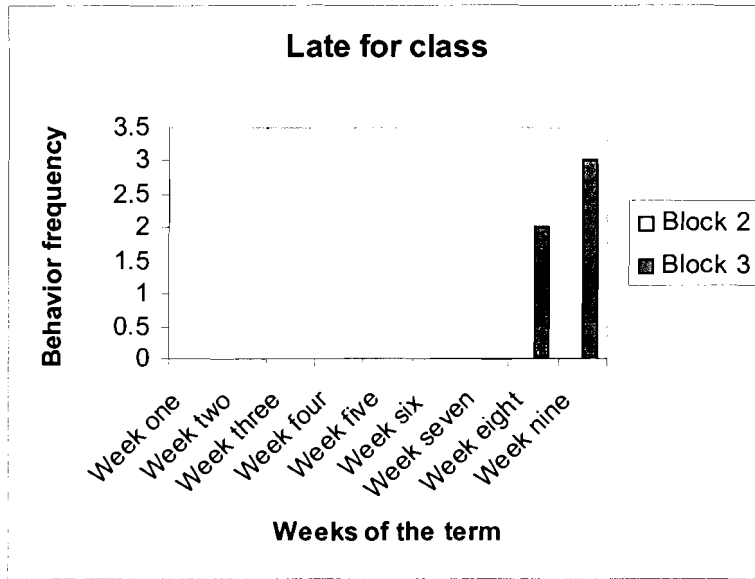
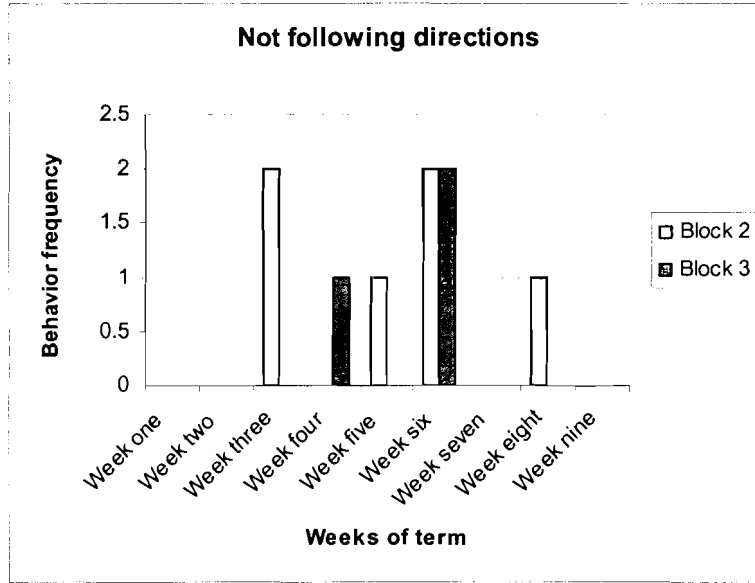
The outcome of block two included five of the fifteen disruptive behaviors. Of the twenty-six students in the class, the most frequent disruptive behavior was a lack of preparation (thirty-six instances), followed by incomplete work (sixteen instances) and not following directions (six instances). Less frequent occurrences of listening to music (two instances), playing computer games (one instance), and defiance (one instance) also occurred.

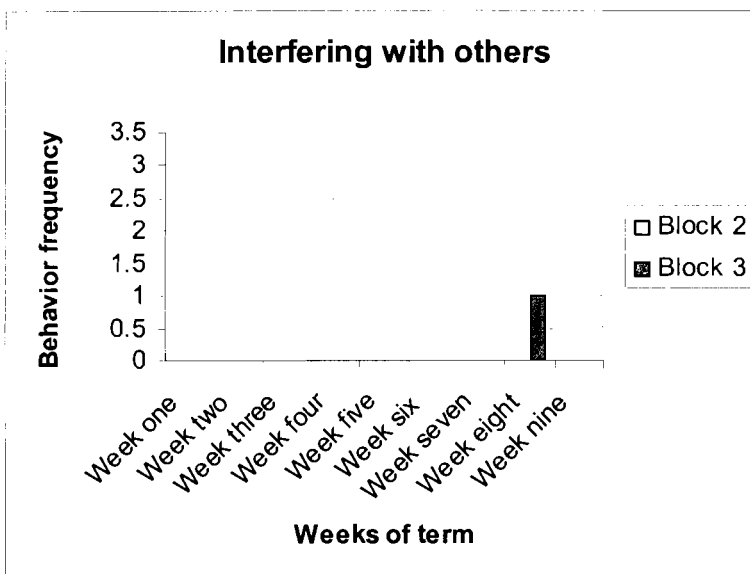
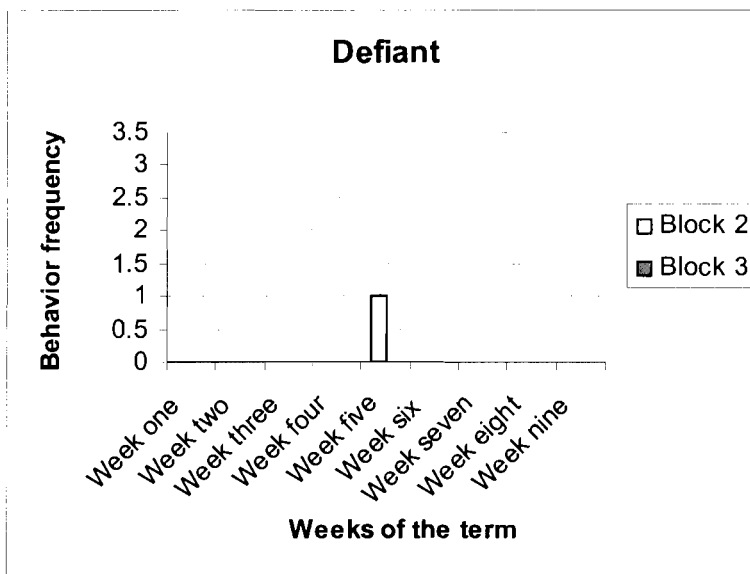
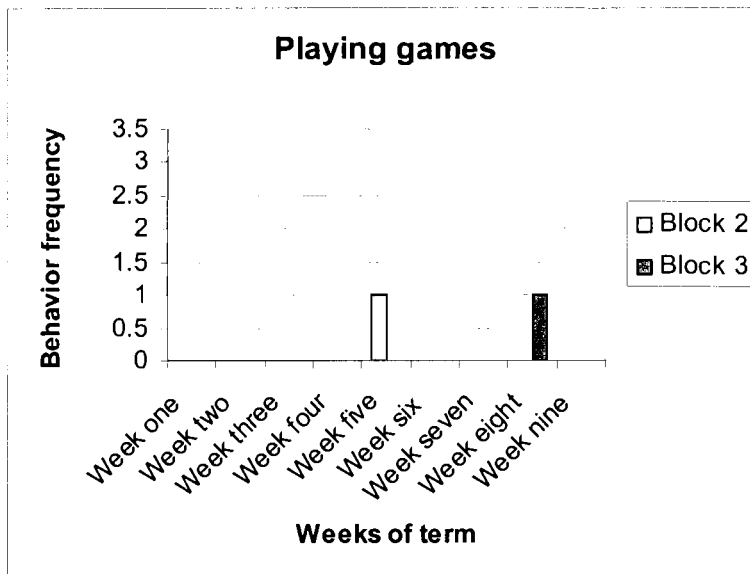
The outcome of block three included five of the fifteen disruptive behaviors. Of the twenty-two students in the class, the most frequent disruptive behavior was a lack of preparation (thirty-five instances), followed by incomplete work (twenty-two instances) and being late to class (five instances). Less frequent occurrences of following the

directions (three instances), playing computer games (one instance), and interfering with others (one instance) also occurred.

### Behavior Charts







## Chapter V: Discussion

Classroom management is a challenge that must be dealt with on a daily basis through lesson planning, constructing a safe environment, educating students, and responding to student behavior problems.

### *Limitations*

This study could be performed in any educational setting. The limitations to this study included the following:

1. Student sample. The student registration process was organized in a way that allowed students to determine their class schedule for the year. Instructors had no control over the number of students or type of student in each class.

2. Meal schedule. The proximity of each class to meal times may have impacted students' energy and attention levels. This, in turn, may have affected the results of the study.

3. Student observation. All students were in class for 90 minutes under the instruction of one educator. Tracking classroom behavior of all students was difficult. The frequency of the negative behavior may have overwhelmed the instructor's observation/evaluation.

4. Academic requirement. Students may have been placed in a business course to fulfill a requirement for graduation. Interests, ability levels, and prior knowledge varied significantly from student to student.

5. Student demographics. Students came from a variety of backgrounds with differing values, attitudes, and experiences with education. They often may not have responded the same to a given assignment.

6. Findings. Research data from this study pertained to only ninth-grade students enrolled at Elk Mound High School. Generalization beyond this population should not be made.

### *Conclusions*

Throughout this study the students were positively influenced by the instructor and were motivated to succeed in the classroom. After analysis of documented behaviors, only seven disruptive behaviors were observed out of the twelve listed. The most frequent behavior disruption, the lack of being prepared, was a less severe disruption requiring no additional disciplinary action. Students were well behaved, respectable, and completed their assignments successfully. Due to the lack of behavior problems, the students were able to learn in a well managed atmosphere that created social, emotional, physical, and intellectual stimulation. Students were able to focus on learning from the instructor's materials, rather than on the instructor managing classroom behaviors.

Research for this paper suggested that discipline was the second leading cause of lost instructional time. In this study, the instructor was able to focus more time/energy on subject material and less on managing misbehaviors. This also allowed for a less stressful learning environment which benefited students and instructors alike. At the beginning of the study, it was anticipated that more frequent and varied misbehaviors would exist. The amount of time actually spent dealing with misbehaviors was less than anticipated. All students enrolled in the sections studied were able to successfully complete the course. As a result, the instructor was able to spend more time preparing lesson plans, assisting students, and presenting a wider variety of course materials.

### *Recommendations*

For the purpose of this study, the behavior checklist that was created to monitor behaviors achieved its goal. Because a great diversity exists in learning environments across all ages, geographic locations, and educational philosophies, not all techniques used in this study will universally be successful. Trial and error may be a necessary component in the successful implementation of a behavior checklist, specific to the students being taught and the learning goals established by the instructor. Any advance knowledge of the behavior patterns of the students coming into the course being taught would aid in the development of an effective behavior checklist.

This study should be replicated to determine whether similarities exist between the classes being administered the behavior checklist. It is also important to replicate this study to look for consistencies in teaching, administration material, and handling of discipline problems with the behavior checklist.

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