Behavior Specific Praise and Its Impact on Classroom Disruptions

Jennifer Knoll

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Education

July 2018

Graduate Programs in Education

Goucher College

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Abstract

This research explores how the use of positive behavior intervention strategies influences

behaviors of students. Specifically, it addresses how behavior specific praise in the classroom

affects the frequency of disruptions by nineteen eighth grade students in a low socio-economic

middle school. Over a four-week period, this study used a pre-experimental design that was a

variant of the one group pretest-posttest design, in that students served as their own controls

under baseline and treatment conditions. The intervention increased the frequency of the

teacher's use of behavior specific praise by introducing the concept and using a digital motivator.

A repeated measures t-test revealed that the mean number of disruptive behaviors per student

was significantly lower during the intervention period (Mean = 4.21, SD = 6.02) than during the

baseline period (Mean = 5.95, SD = 7.16) [t (18) = 4.65, $p \leq .001$]. The null hypothesis indicated

that there will be no significant difference in the mean frequency of disruptive behaviors per

student in the classroom environment during a baseline period and a behavior specific praise

intervention. As the data was significant, the null hypothesis was rejected.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Classroom management is the topic of conversation at many faculty meetings as educators cite negative behaviors as a top concern in their occupation (Pisacreta, Tincani, Connell, & Axelrod, 2011). Positively managing behaviors has garnered popularity since the 1990's. The United States Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs funded the Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports in 1998 ("PBIS in the Classroom," 2018). Behavior specific praise is a simple strategy within PBIS used with the intent to prevent classroom disruptions. Behavior specific praise is the use of praise statements that acknowledge explicitly the behaviors that the teacher wants to be repeated. In this way, a teacher focuses on the positive and promotes those behaviors (Haydon & Musti-Rao, 2011).

Educating the youth in society evolves as the youth change from generation to generation. Children with behavior problems act out to satisfy their basic human needs. Solving the discipline problems means doing things with kids that satisfy these basic needs. When basic needs are not being fulfilled, other means of gratification will be sought out (Mendler, 2012). At the core of the education system is the philosophy of making the learning environment a place where students feel safe, feel they belong and want to come to daily, working to fulfill those basic needs. The Maryland State Department of Education identifies promoting a safe, healthy environment for students as part of its mission and the school system in which this researcher is an educator identifies establishing clear expectations for positive school climates to maximize student learning as part of its mission. The way in which a teacher responds to his/her students can impact the climate of the school and classroom, thus their students' behaviors. Responding

to a student in a negative, harsh manner will garner a similar response from them. Alternatively, attending to behavior positively will create an environment where students do not feel belittled or combative but instead are provided the opportunity to learn more productive behaviors and receive positive reinforcement (Conroy, Sutherland, Snyder, Al-Hendawi, & Vo, 2009).

As an educator in an at-risk zone, where students have less access to resources, the researcher would like to see the effects of behavior specific praise on the number of classroom disruptions. Engaging positively in a classroom environment is not a simple task. Teachers acknowledge managing student misbehavior as one of the most challenging parts of their job (Fullerton, Conroy, & Correa, 2009). Educators also recognize classroom management as an area that they need additional training and support as they develop professionally (Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, & Merrell, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to address the following question about the use of behavior specific praise. Does the systematic use of behavior specific praise decrease the frequency of disruptions in the classroom setting?

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis is that there will be no significant difference in the mean frequency of disruptive behaviors per student in the classroom environment during a baseline period and a behavior specific praise intervention.

<center>**Operational Definitions**</center>

Behavior Specific Praise

A teacher-initiated statement that immediately informs the student of specific behavior, either social or academic, that teacher desires to see continued and replicated by praised student or classmates (Conroy et al., 2009).

Disruptions

Disruptive behavior is defined as any action or statement by a student that disrupts the flow of classroom instruction. This includes calling out, having side conversations, getting out of a seat, engaging in off-task activities, using cell phones and technology at inappropriate times, and throwing materials.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports is a systemic approach for assisting schools in adopting behavioral interventions that will enhance academic and social behavior outcome for all students. PBIS is a prevention-oriented approach ("PBIS in the Classroom," 2018).

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature seeks to explore the impact of behavioral interventions through positive means on student disruptions. Section one provides an overview of the effects of disruptive behaviors. Section two examines the Department of Education program, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports. Section three includes insight on the use of behavior specific praise in the classroom. Section four provides suggestions on implementing behavior specific praise. Section five explores the options for effectively training school staff on using behavior specific praise and in section six, a summary is provided.

Overview of Effects of Disruptive Behaviors

The 21st-century teacher holds many roles in a classroom beyond an educator of our youth. A manager of classroom behavior is a role of a teacher that when done well, can lead to a positive classroom culture where more time is available for effective instructional practices. Teachers surveyed, however, felt that this is an area where little training and support is provided to them before entering the field and even while in the field (Reinke et al., 2008).

The National Center for Education Statistics in 2000 reported that 40% of teachers claimed that "challenging behaviors interfered with their teaching (Pisacreta et al., 2011, p. 243)." Management of student behavior, or rather the difficulty of it, in the classroom, has been cited by many leaving the field as the main reason for parting with the profession. There is a high attrition rate of educators with nearly half who have entered the field leaving within the first five years. A key focus of recruiting, preparing and maintaining teachers should give them the skills and strategies necessary to manage a classroom of student behaviors (Jenkins, Floress, & Reinke, 2015).

Educating and obtaining effective teachers is key to the success of our education system. Classroom management that is effective can decrease negative, disruptive behaviors but also increase the quality of instruction.   Poor classroom management has been associated with adverse long-term outcomes for students, both academically and socially (Reinke et al., 2008). Establishing models of management that are feasible and effective needs to be a critical area of focus for our education system to provide our students with a culture of learning that benefits them throughout their education.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions (PBIS) is a preventive based program geared toward creating a positive culture in the classroom environment. In this program, the concept is to reduce negative behaviors through proactive, positive means rather than reacting and punishing the negative unwanted behaviors (Conroy et al., 2009). This type of system changes the overall ecology of the classroom rather than targeting interventions for particular students. The structure of the room changes from one that focuses on remedying the problem to one that seeks to put interventions in place that stops the problem before it starts (Reinke et al., 2008).

Proactive measures will include pre-correction and explicit timing. Pre-correction includes prompting students of expectations before they can make a negative choice. In explicit timing, students are made aware of monitoring of time when transitioning between activities. A countdown clock may be used to help them manage time and to decrease the amount of instructional time lost (Haydon & Kroeger, 2016).

Active supervision is a crucial aspect of proactive PBIS. A teacher demonstrating active supervision will actively move about the classroom, use words of behavior specific praise, have

intentional interaction with students, and will be actively scanning for behaviors (Haydon & Kroeger, 2016). This review will primarily focus on the aspect of PBIS in how teachers respond to children's behaviors with behavior specific praise.

Behavior Specific Praise

Behavior specific praise is used to acknowledge student behavior that the teacher wishes to reinforce. Behavior specific praise is defined as verbal praise or approval from the teacher that identifies the positive behavior of a student. The praise is different from general praise which is a general statement that does not verbally specify the desired behavior that was being recognized (Haydon & Musti-Rao, 2011). "Tom, I like the way you came into class and wrote your homework down right away," would be an example of behavior specific praise, where "Good job Tom" would be general praise.

Children who find praise reinforcing will be more likely to engage in the behaviors that are receiving the contingent praise. Sutherland, Wehby, and Copeland (2000) researched how the rate of praise affected behaviors in a self- contained classroom of students with emotional behavior disorders. Studying nine individuals of elementary age, they found that by increasing the rate of teacher praise, the student's on-task behaviors was increased. In a later study, Sutherland, Copeland, and Wehby (2001) focused on how raising the rate of behavior specific praise affected correct academic responses. The experimental group, whose teachers were taught to increase their use of behavior specific praise, saw an increase of accurate responses over the control group that received no treatment.

Behavior specific praise can be used as an effective means of managing classroom behaviors as part of the PBIS program. The positive means of management has been connected to decreased disruptive behavior and increased academic engagement of all students in the

setting, not just the student acting out (Reinke et al., 2008). On the contrary, if children are responded to in harsh and combative tones, they will likely react with similar combative behaviors. Children learn to seek reinforcement in response to the teacher's method of interaction. If the positive is reinforced, more positive behaviors will be seen, and alternately if students are only corrected or attended to with a negative response, their negative behaviors will be reinforced and repeated (Conroy et al., 2009)

The negative, disruptive behavior is defined as any action or statement by a student that disrupts the flow of classroom instruction. This may include calling out, side conversations, getting out of a seat, off-task activities, and throwing materials (Pisacreta et al., 2011)

Students with emotional behavioral disorders (EBD) exhibit disproportionally high levels of disruptions. As a result, they receive more punitive reprimands and corrections of behavior and less positive interactions than their peers that do not demonstrate problematic behaviors. Observations of classrooms of students with EBD identified that less than 5% of the interactions of these students with the teacher were positive in a study of 20 classes (Markelz & Taylor, 2016). Research suggests that students who are regularly disruptive require the most positive reinforcement to change the pattern of behavior; however, they commonly receive the least (Perle, 2016).

In a middle school case study, two first year teachers were taught the concept of behavior specific praise, given examples of appropriate behavior specific praise, and given a MotivAider, a pager-like reminding system, that cued them to provide a behavior specific praise once every four minutes. The first teacher saw a decrease in classroom disruptions from a mean of 2.1 per minute to .49 per minute and the second teacher saw a reduction in disruptive behaviors from 1.6 per minute to .24 per minute after they were given the training to utilize behavior specific praise.

In this study, neither teacher was using behavior specific praise when baseline data was collected and reported that classroom management was an area for which they sought help. Both of these teachers increased their rate of behavior specific praise from zero per minute to .3 per minute for teacher one and to .7 per minute for teacher two. Their level of reprimands decreased from 1.28 per minute to .86 per minute for teacher one and .86 per minute to .21 per minute for teacher two (Haydon & Musti-Rao, 2011). This pattern of correlation is regularly reported.

Implementing Behavior Specific Praise

Implementing this strategy of PBIS should be done with direct intention. Most importantly is the way in which it is delivered. As defined, it should be specific to the behavior that is being acknowledged and individualized. Praise should be given immediately following the recognized behavior. A lapse in time will decrease the correlation between the two and thus reduce the effectiveness of the behavior specific praise. Praise can be correlational to the acquisition of the skill. This means a new skill may warrant ample praise, whereas the teacher may diminish the frequency for an acquired skill. Praise should be given by an attentive teacher rather than requested by an awaiting child. This unsolicited praise is more meaningful to a student. Praise should focus on improvement and effort rather than one's ability. Praising a student for thinking critically rather than saying "You are so smart," is appropriate. Children will know if praise is not genuine and that will diminish its effectiveness. Praise should be given in a sincere tone, at an appropriate level for the students receiving it (Conroy et al., 2009).

The acceptable rate of praise to negative correction varies between studies. In two separate studies, differing acceptable rates of praise are found. In 2008, studies suggested a ratio of 4:1, whereas another study from the same year suggests a higher rate of 8:1. Studies do not

agree on the rate; however, these studies agree that increasing the baseline of praise to correction correlated with a decrease in disruptions (Pisacreta et al., 2011).

Rates of specific praise decreased as children aged in school. Studies at the kindergarten level had rates of specific praise at 8 per hour, and that decreased to an average of 1.75 per hour as they entered grade school. Studies in various grade levels of teaching have identified an inverse relationship between the amount of praise and the disruptions in the classroom. (Jenkins et al., 2015).

Training to Use Behavior Specific Praise

Ample literature supports the use of behavior specific praise in the classroom; however, researchers have indicated that praise is not being utilized frequently enough. Much of literature focuses on how to make this feasible change happen in the classroom. Training and preparation of teachers is necessary as many teachers report they are not prepared to manage the behaviors of a classroom before entering the workforce. Teachers currently in the field report a need for additional training in classroom management.   Researchers have focused many studies on effective means to increase teacher use of praise (Jenkins et al., 2015).

Research indicates that teachers are responsive to training and consultation type models over direct instruction, as it can be difficult to apply to real-world situations (Jenkins et al., 2015). The Classroom Check-Up is a model that focuses on support at the classroom level. This method has been found successful but differs from the typical whole faculty in-service style presentation. In the Classroom Check-Up, a consultant interviews the teacher and observes the classroom to make an assessment. They then provide feedback of strengths and weakness from the assessment findings of the current classroom setting. Both the teacher and consultant work together to develop a selection of options to create the positive classroom outcomes desired. The

teacher then chooses what intervention they will implement, and the consultant provides ongoing support for the implementation of these interventions. Ultimately, the teacher will monitor the daily execution of the chosen intervention with an intervention procedure checklist. This method intends to provide the teacher with the support he/she needed to implement interventions while learning new habits and identify methods of self -accountability (Reinke et al., 2008).

The hectic pace of the teaching profession and tending to so many demands at once has been cited as a reason for not following through with appropriate rates of praise in the classroom. In the middle school study by Haydon and Musti-Rao (2011), they used a simple habit-forming device that vibrates every 4 minutes, to remind the wearer to look for behavior to praise. This simple means was effective in increasing praise, which correlated to a decrease in disruptions.

Summary

The success of our education system relies on effective management of the classroom so that quality instruction and engagement can take place. Classroom management is directly tied to levels of student involvement and academic achievement, making it an essential component of teaching. BSP requires just the knowledge of and a change of mindset in how the teacher is going to interact with the students. Making the educators aware of how this simple change in their daily language can affect the students' success is a key goal of many of the studies in the review.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This study examines behavior specific praise and its effectiveness on classroom disruptions. The goal was to determine if increased frequency of behavior specific praise impacts the frequency of disruptions in the general education classroom setting.

Design

This study used a pre-experimental design that was a variant of the one group pretest-posttest design, in that students served as their own controls under baseline and treatment conditions. The independent variable was whether the teacher was systematically using behavior specific praise. The dependent variable was the number of disruptions in the classroom per student. Disruptive behaviors were recorded using a time sampling method with three-minute intervals.

Participants

Convenience sampling was used. The study participants were students in an 8th-grade class in the researcher's home school. The public middle school is in the mid-Atlantic region. The school has approximately 1,100 students and of that 3% are Asian, 44% are African American, 10% are Hispanic, 36% are Caucasian, and 7% identify with two or more races. Sixty percent of this school's population receives Free and Reduced Meal Services. Fifteen percent receive special education services.

There were nineteen student participants in this study. The demographics of this group were as follows: eight Caucasian, nine African-American, and two Hispanic. Two students received special education services and one had accommodations identified in a 504 Plan. Eleven students were male and eight were female in this class.

Instrument

A time sampling strategy was used to collect observational data in this study. Data was collected on a form designed by this researcher. There is no reliability or validity data for the form. For each three-minute interval during each 30-minute observation session, the researcher recorded whether or not each student had a disruptive behavior. Disruptive behavior was defined as any action or statement by a student that disrupts the flow of classroom instruction. Observed disruptive behaviors included calling out, side conversations, getting out of a seat, engaging in off-task activities, using cell phones and technology at inappropriate times, and throwing materials.

Procedures

The teacher who implemented the intervention was a tenured science teacher in her fourth year at the middle school and held a Standard Professional Certificate. She willingly volunteered to be part of the experiment knowing that only that the researcher was going to be observing student behaviors. An instructional aid is present during this class, which is the last class period of the day, to assist with classroom instruction.

The researcher observed the classroom for two thirty-minute sessions over the baseline period. During the data collection, the students were involved in a lesson each day that included moments of teacher led instruction, group work and independent work. The classroom teacher only knew at this time that the researcher was collecting data on classroom behaviors. She recorded for each student whether he or she committed a disruptive behavior during each three-minute interval.

The researcher next provided a 20- minute education session on behavior specific praise to the teacher of the class. The education session included examples and non-examples of

behavior specific praise. A video from TeachingChannel.org, Specific Praise: How it Improves

Learning (2018), was used to emphasize how behavior specific praise differs from general

praise. Next, the researcher set a frequency goal for giving behavior specific praise. The teacher

was to provide behavior specific praise at least once every four minutes. The teacher was given

a MotivAider App for their phone. It vibrated every four minutes as a physical cue to give

behavior specific praise.

       The researcher then observed the classroom for two thirty-minute sessions during which

the teacher gave behavior specific praise every four minutes. She recorded the frequency of

disruptive behaviors per student. Instructional activities were similar to those during baseline.

       The number of disruptive behaviors per student was prorated to adjust for absences. The

mean number of disruptive behaviors per student under the two conditions was compared using a

non-independent samples t-test.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study examined how increasing the use of behavior specific praise affected the number of disruptions in an eighth-grade science class. A general educator was introduced to behavior specific praise and was instructed to increase her use of it to one praise statement once every four minutes. The number of disruptions was recorded before and after the behavior specific praise intervention.

A repeated measures t-test revealed that the mean number of disruptive behaviors per student was significantly lower during the intervention period (Mean = 4.21, SD = 6.02) than during the baseline period (Mean = 5.95, SD = 7.16) [t (18) = 4.65, $p \leq .001$]. Please see Table 1. Consequently, the null hypothesis that there would be no significant difference in the mean frequency of disruptive behaviors per student in the classroom environment during a baseline period and a behavior specific praise intervention was rejected.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and t-Test Results for Disruptive Behavior Frequency Per Student During Baseline and Intervention Periods

Condition	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-statistic
Baseline	5.95	7.16	4.65*
Behavior Specific Praise Intervention	4.21	6.02	

N = 19   * $p \leq .001$

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine how the use of behavior specific praise affected the frequency of disruptions in the classroom. The study found that the number of disruptive behaviors per student was significantly lower during the intervention period than was recorded during baseline data collection. The null hypothesis that there would be no significant difference in the mean frequency of disruptive behaviors per student in the classroom environment during a baseline period and a behavior specific praise intervention was rejected.

Implications of Results

The results of this study indicated that increasing the use of behavior specific praise will decrease the number of disruptions in the classroom. The researcher observed students responding to praise given to themselves and given to other students during the intervention. During the intervention teaching session, the teacher noted that as the year was coming to an end, she was struggling more with managing disruptions, saying, "Behaviors have escalated as the weather turns nicer; they know the end of the year is near." She was excited for a new tool to use in the classroom to manage the frequency of disruptions.

The researcher observed a change in students' response to redirection when behavior specific praise was used versus correction. During the baseline data collection, the teacher most frequently used means of corrections to stop classroom disruptions. Students were observed sighing, rolling their eyes and even ignoring the teacher's behavioral corrections. The students' reactions as a class significantly changed when the style of classroom management changed. Students were seen sitting up straighter when they were praised and when their classmate was praised. Students would correct their own behavior after a classmate was praised to match his or

her actions. Consequently, student engagement increased during the intervention period and the teacher reported she was able to complete her lesson more regularly with fewer disruptions and quicker transitions.

The positive method of behavior specific praise changed the climate of the room. The teacher did not appear as frustrated and the students did not appear as defiant. This created a classroom that felt more relaxed, but also one where the flow from one activity to the next moved more quickly and smoothly.

The intervention also had positive effects on the teacher. She reported that she felt more in control of the behaviors and learning in the classroom than she had since winter break. She noted that she was feeling frustrated with behaviors as the year came to an end and had been counting down the days. The intervention, however, forced her to look for the positives in each period with her students. She said that focusing on the positives rather than the negatives helped her to realize all that was still going well and helped to change her mindset.

Managing student behavior in our changing society is driving a lot of research. Nationally, teachers indicate that they feel a need for additional training and support in classroom management. Effective means of managing the classroom can be found in educational literature; however, these strategies are not always put into practice. It is felt by many researchers that these strategies and interventions found in the literature are not seen as feasible by teachers in need of implementation (Reinke et al., 2008).

Although many interventions are not perceived positively by teachers, the teacher in this study felt that behavior specific praise is a worthwhile intervention. The teacher cited the feasibility of behavior specific praise as a reason to continue its use. She did not need to prepare anything before the students arrived. She did not need to buy anything in preparation or as a

reward. The intervention did not require her to find additional time in her lesson to achieve

success. The intervention is rather effortless for the teacher and does not need extra time or

money to be invested. When considering interventions to incorporate to support our teachers, the

use of behavior specific praise is very feasible according to this study.

The result of this study indicates that behavior specific praise should be more widely

taught to teachers. Developing training that highlights the type of praise that is behavior specific

and the frequency in which it should be utilized is necessary. Training our teachers on delivering

praise that is specific, immediate, consistent, frequent, and preventative is key to this method

(Perle, 2016). The MotivAider app was one simple means of creating accountability for a

teacher new to using behavior specific praise. It would also be helpful for a veteran teacher to

keep themselves on track during a hectic day in the life of a teacher.

Theoretical Implications of the Research

There are many studies which indicate positively attending to the behaviors educators

want to be duplicated helps to maintain positive classroom behavior. This study gives evidence

to support that there is an increased likelihood that students will exhibit similar positive

behaviors in the future that they were praised for and heard praised. In this study, the researcher

observed students adjusting their behavior to match the neighbor who was being praised. The

behaviors that brought more attention were repeated. This supports a 2009 study that students

will respond to their teachers in the manner in which they are addressed. Addressing students in

a positive manner will garner positive feedback, while constantly correcting the negative will

reinforce and garner negative reactions. Praise that is specific, sincere, and immediate can help

foster children's intrinsic motivation to learn (Conroy et al., 2009).

Threats to Validity

There are several threats to validity that should be considered in this study. The sample size was small with only nineteen students in the class. The small class size would allow for the changed behaviors of a few students to impact significantly the data collected.

The researcher used convenience sampling of students from her home school. This limited the heterogeneity of the sample. There was also no random assignment to groups, and instead, subjects served as their own controls. By subjects serving as their own controls, this allowed the time of the year (approaching the end) and maturational and historical issues to have a greater impact possibly.

The researcher had existing relationships with the teacher as well as some of the students in the sample. The researcher's presence in the room could have influenced the students' behaviors as well as the teacher's. Additionally, the researcher's presence in the room may have caused a reactive effect.

A further threat is that the researcher designed the study and collected the data. This leads to the risk of experimenter bias as the researcher's expectancy may have led to an unconscious bias during data collection.

Another threat to the validity of the study was the time frame of the study. The researcher gathered baseline data over two weeks in two 30-minute time periods and the intervention data over two weeks in two 30-minute time periods. The short time frame makes it impossible to know if similar results would have been seen after the novelty wore off.

Lastly, the timing, being the fourth quarter and end of the year, is a threat to validity. During this period, eighth-grade students are involved in a lot of monumental decisions. They are creating their high school schedules, applying for magnet and private schools, and meeting

with administrators over retention threat. These are events that could potentially affect a student's behavior in school. Repeating the study at a different point in the year could alter the results.

<p style="text-align:center">Connections to Previous Studies</p>

A study by Haydon and Musti-Rao (2011) involved two first year teachers who had expressed frustrations in their classroom management. These teachers had previously tried other methods suggested by the school's behavioral consultant to promote engagement in the lessons. The teachers reported little change in the number of disruptions. The age group of the sample was similar to that of the researcher's, both observing middle school aged students.

During baseline data collection of this study, Haydon and Musti-Rao (2011) noted many of the same informal observations that the researcher did in her study, including, frequent disruptions with low rates of teacher praise and high rates of teacher reprimands. The intervention of increasing the rate of behavior specific praise was introduced to the two teachers by first explaining the rationale behind behavior specific praise, providing them with a script of behavior specific praise statements, and a guided practice session of delivering behavior specific praise. The study also used a tool to signify the rate at which praise should be provided, once every four minutes. This method is nearly identical to the researchers in this study.

The results were similar although reported as a rate. Teacher one saw a decrease in disruptive behaviors by 1.61/min and teacher two saw a decrease of 1.36/min. Haydon and Musti-Rao (2011) also recorded the rate of behavior specific praise from the teacher. Their rate of behavior specific praise increased to .3/min and .7/min respectively from a baseline of zero. Interestingly, they determined that the rate of reprimand was also affected. The mean rate of reprimand decreased for teacher one by .25/min and .65/min for teacher two.

Not only were the similar results of decreased disruptions seen, but the teachers'

reactions were similar to the intervention. Haydon and Musti-Rao (2011) report that both

teachers felt the intervention was helpful and easy to implement and that they would be likely to

implement it again in the future.

Implications for Further Research

Future research should consider the time of the year, sample size and duration of the

study. The end of the year can be a turbulent time for schools. The testing window has closed,

and multiple high stakes tests have come to an end. Test anxiety and testing schedules disrupt

the normal learning pattern in the school environment. Future research should take into

consideration anticipation of the end of the year and how the changing climate of the school may

affect student behavior.

This study was performed over the course of four weeks. In future research,

consideration should be taken when determining the duration of the intervention observation

period. This would determine if behavior specific praise will help to manage behavior in the

classroom over an extended period. Future research could determine whether the novelty of

receiving behavior specific praise will wear off or if it will continue to motivate students.

The age of the sample should also be taken into consideration. The students in this

research were eighth graders. Future research can observe students in the primary and

intermediate elementary years as well as high schoolers to determine if behavior specific praise

is an effective means of managing behavior across all age groups.

Summary

The intervention in this study simply involved identifying a student's positive behavior

and giving praise specifically at least once every four minutes. The result of this study indicates

that the use of behavior specific praise can significantly lower the frequency of disruptions in the classroom environment. The use of behavior specific praise was perceived as a feasible method by the teacher to help manage the classroom behaviors in a positive manner. In our education system, finding a way to manage behaviors while maintaining positive relationships with our students is integral.

References

Conroy, M. A., Sutherland, K. S., Snyder, A., Al-Hendawi, M., & Vo, A. (2009). Creating a positive classroom atmosphere: Teachers' use of effective praise and feedback. *Beyond Behavior, 18*(2), 18-26.

Fullerton, E. K., Conroy, M. A., & Correa, V. I. (2009). Early childhood teachers' use of specific praise statements with young children at risk for behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders, 34*(3), 118-135. Retrieved from https://goucher.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=45598286&login.asp&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Haydon, T., & Kroeger, S. D. (2016). Active supervision, precorrection, and explicit timing: A high school case study on classroom behavior. *Preventing School Failure, 60*(1), 70-78. doi:10.1080/1045988X.2014.977213

Haydon, T., & Musti-Rao, S. (2011). Effective use of behavior-specific praise: A middle school case study. *Beyond Behavior, 20*(2), 31-39. Retrieved from https://goucher.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=72084567&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Jenkins, L. N., Floress, M. T., & Reinke, W. (2015). Rates and types of teacher praise: A review and future directions. *Psychology in the Schools, 52*(5), 463-476. doi:10.1002/pits.21835

Markelz, A. M., & Taylor, J. C. (2016). Effects of teacher praise on attending behaviors and academic achievement of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. *Journal of Special Education Apprenticeship, 5*(1) Retrieved

from https://goucher.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1127753&login.asp&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Mendler, A. N. (2012). *What Do I Do When ...?: How to achieve discipline with dignity in the classroom*. Moorabbin, Vic.: Hawker Brownlow Education.

PBIS in the classroom. (2018) Retrieved from https://www.pbis.org/school/pbis-in-the-classroom

Perle, J. G. (2016). Teacher-provided positive attending to improve student behavior. *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 48*(5), 250-257. Retrieved from https://goucher.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1101342&login.asp&site=ehost-live&scope=sitehttp://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0040059916643707

Pisacreta, J., Tincani, M., Connell, J. E., & Axelrod, S. (2011). Increasing teachers' use of a 1:1 praise-to-behavior correction ratio to decrease student disruption in general education classrooms. *Behavioral Interventions, 26*(4), 243-260. doi:10.1002/bin.341

Reinke, W. M., Lewis-Palmer, T., & Merrell, K. (2008). The classroom check-up: A classwide teacher consultation model for increasing praise and decreasing disruptive behavior. *School Psychology Review, 37*(3), 315-332. Retrieved from https://goucher.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ817295&login.asp&site=ehost-live&scope=sitehttp://www.nasponline.org/publications/spr/index.aspx?vol=37&issue=3

Specific praise: how it improves learning. Retrieved May 13, 2018, from https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/positive-feedback-to-students

Sutherland, K. S., Copeland, S., & Wehby, J. H. (2001). Catch them while you can: Monitoring

and increasing the use of effective praise. *Beyond Behavior*, 11, 46-49.

Sutherland, K. S., Wehby, J. H., & Copeland, S. R. (2000). Effect of varying rates of behavior-

specific praise on the on-task behavior of students with EBD. *Journal of Emotional and*

Behavioral Disorders, 8(1), 8,26. Retrieved

from https://goucher.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=t

rue&db=eric&AN=EJ603419&login.asp&site=ehost-live&scope=site