

The Effect of a Check In/Check Out Program on Disruptive Student Behavior

By Rebecca Feldman

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Education

May 2013

Graduate Programs in Education

Goucher College

## **Table of Contents**

List of Tables	iii
Abstract	iv
I. Introduction	1
Overview	1
Statement of Problem	1
Hypothesis	2
Operational Definitions	2
II. Review of the Literature	3
Importance and Relevance of Strong Classroom Management	3
What Effective Classroom Management Looks Like and Its Impact	4
Extent of Problem Behavior and Challenges Facing Teachers	5
Possible Interventions	6
Summary	9
III. Methods	10
Design	10
Participants	10
Instrument	10
Procedures	11
IV. Results	12
V. Discussion	13

Implication of Results	13
Threats to Validity	13
Connection to Literature	14
Implications for Future Research	15
References	17

## **List of Tables**

1. Pre- and Post-test Means and Standard Deviations Of Students' Number of Days Meeting Their Behavioral Goals	12
--	----

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of a Check in/Check out program on disruptive behavior in third grade students. Participating students were matched with a teacher and met with them briefly at the beginning and end of the school day. Student behavior was tracked using the existing behavior plan in the school. Behavior was tracked the week prior to the intervention as a pre-test and the week following the intervention as a post-test. The hypothesis that the Check in/Check out program would have no impact on disruptive behavior was rejected because there was a significant difference found between disruptive behavior before and after the intervention.

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

“Teachers in classrooms since time immemorial have dealt with students whose behavior runs counter to their attempts to maintain an orderly environment for learning” (Emmer & Stough, 2008, p. 1). Classroom management has always been a concern for teachers, and will continue to be an area of concern as new teachers enter the profession. Throughout this researcher’s own teaching experience, many different classroom management concerns and strategies have been observed. As a teacher at the school where this research was conducted, the researcher has become aware of teachers who struggle with classroom management and teachers who succeed.

Schools are constantly looking for new strategies to reach students whose needs are not met with general classroom management strategies. Through reviewing the literature about classroom management, this researcher identified several strategies that can be used to address specific behavior concerns. A Check In/Check Out program has been discussed many times over the years as a possible intervention at the school, but has never been put into practice. This research provided the perfect opportunity to test this type of program and determine if it has any impact on students who need additional interventions to address their behavioral needs.

### **Statement of Problem**

The purpose of the research was to explore the effects of a Check In/Check out program on student behavior in third grade.

## **Hypothesis**

A Check in/Check out program will have no effect on disruptive student behavior in a third grade classroom.

## **Operational Definitions**

***Disruptive behavior*** is any student behavior that interrupts classroom learning. The school has a previously established a flow chart listing many disruptive behaviors and whether they should be managed by the teacher in the classroom or by the administration in the office.

A ***behavior chart*** is a document created by the school's Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) team that is used school-wide to track students' adherence to the code of conduct. The chart is divided into green, yellow, and red, to identify behavior that meets the standard, is slightly below the standard, or is significantly below the standard. Each day's behavior is then tracked on a monthly chart and the data is collected by the PBIS team.

***Behavior expectations*** have been defined by the school. Students who follow the code of conduct and receive green on their monthly behavior chart at least eighty-five percent of the month are considered to have met the school's behavior expectations.

***Check In/Check Out program*** is program that matches students with educators in the building and is aimed at encouraging the student to build a positive and supportive relationship with an adult at school. The student meets with the faculty member at the beginning and end of the school day for encouragement and support.

The school's ***Code of Conduct*** states, "Today I will be respectful, I will be responsible, I am ready to learn." Students recite this pledge daily and it is posted all over the school along with expectations for behavior in different locations such as the classroom, hallway, and cafeteria.

## **Chapter II**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Overview**

This literature review examines the literature regarding classroom management, student behavior, and possible interventions to improve student behavior in the classroom. The first section discusses the importance and relevance of strong classroom management. The second section discusses the extent of problem behavior and the challenges facing teachers in terms of managing student behavior. The third section discusses several interventions aimed at improving student behavior in the classroom.

#### **Importance and Relevance of Strong Classroom Management**

Evertson and Poole (2008) describe classroom management as, “everything the teacher does ... from creating the setting, decorating the room, and arranging the chairs; to speaking to children and handling their responses; to putting routines in place, then executing, modifying, and reinstituting them; to developing and communicating rules so that they are understood by students” (p. 1). In their research, Reglin, Akpo-Sanni, & Losike-Dedimo (2012) noted that a lack of classroom management can contribute to poor student progress. A teacher’s ability to manage the classroom and students has a direct impact on time on-task and instructional time. Reglin et al. (2012) also points out that students with lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to have access to fewer resources in and out of school and their classrooms tend to be disrupted by student behavior more than others. The more frequent disruptions to their learning environment lead to less time on-task and less academic instruction.

In their research, Pas, Bradshaw, and Mitchell (2011) found a moderate correlation between student achievement and whether the student had received an office discipline referral.



They also noted a connection between office discipline referrals in intermediate years and disruptive behavior later years. One correlation noted was that office discipline referrals can predict middle school dropout rates for students. Conversely, they found that students who did not receive office discipline referrals had lower rates of disruptive behavior outside of school. Research shows the negative outcomes of disruptive student behavior and many educators strive to have stronger classroom management and meet the needs of their students who demonstrate disruptive behavior. Pas et al. (2011) found, through their data, that an office discipline referral may serve as an indicator for an academic problem.

### **What Effective Classroom Management Looks Like and Its Impact**

Evertson et al. (2008) explain that successful classroom management might not look like what someone would expect. They describe a classroom where things are running smoothly, students are meeting expectations, and a teacher who needs to do very little correcting of behavior. They further explain that while it may not look like that teacher has put much effort into classroom management, the reason things run so smoothly is because of all of the proactive classroom management choices that teacher made prior to the first day of school and continues to make each day.

According to Smith & Lambert (2008), a teacher with good classroom skills focuses on teaching appropriate behavior to his or her students rather than focusing on punishing inappropriate behavior. This focus on teaching positive behavior wills “prevent acting out before it occurs” (p. 16). Capizzi (2009) also discusses teaching positive behavior as well as having clear and consistent rules and expectations for students. This researcher describes six factors for ideal classroom management: structure, layout, décor, rules, routines, and maintaining and monitoring behavior. The author goes into depth about the structure involved in each of these

factors, and when combined by a teacher in his or her classroom, they create a safe and positive learning environment for students.

According to Capizzi (2009), maintaining strong and consistent classroom management can lead to increased learning for students and can discourage problem behavior while increasing the desired positive behaviors. Smith and Lambert (2008) explain that when teachers focus on teaching the behavior they expect, and build relationships with students, classroom disruptions will decrease.

### **Extent of Problem Behavior and Challenges Facing Teachers**

According to Emmer et al., (2008), “Teachers in classrooms, since time immemorial, have dealt with students whose behavior runs counter to their attempts to maintain an orderly environment for learning” (pg. 1). Much of the research on classroom management and related interventions notes that all teachers face management challenges. Reglin et al. (2012) noted the correlation between low self-esteem, low academic achievement, and disruptive behavior. They explain that as children get older and get further behind academically, their self-esteem declines and their disruptive behavior increases. The authors also note that other research substantiates that disruptive student behavior contributes to academic problems.

Reglin et al. (2012) also cites the work of Graffeo & Silvestri’s (2006) regarding Locus of Control and the differences between students with low socioeconomic status and those who are not. Low socioeconomic students have been shown to have an external Locus of Control and, therefore, do not see themselves as fully in charge of their own behavior. The authors found that students with an external Locus of Control tend to engage in disruptive behavior more frequently than those with an internal Locus of Control. Therefore, schools whose students come

from low socioeconomic backgrounds face greater classroom management needs than other schools. These schools typically have fewer resources.

Emmer et al. (2008) found that classroom management is a challenge for all teachers, both new and experienced. They explain that behavior is often unpredictable and teachers do not always have the opportunity to reflect on their management choices before they act. These authors cited research that estimates that teachers make an instructional or behavioral decision every two minutes throughout the day. This level of decision-making requires a great deal of cognitive focus and energy. The decision-making is one of the challenges of good teaching and classroom management.

These authors further observed that most teachers receive very little instruction in classroom management as part of their undergraduate and graduate education. With insufficient instruction, teachers are forced to learn on-the-job. The authors also noted that increased emphasis on teacher accountability and increased teacher workload have also impacted teachers' abilities to make the best decisions possible.

### **Possible Interventions**

Debnam, Pas, & Bradshaw (2012) as well as Miramontes, Marchant, Heath, & Fisher (2011) discuss the Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) model. This is a school-wide program that designs behavior interventions in a three-tier system. The first tier is a school-wide behavior plan to reach all students. The second tier includes more targeted interventions to reach at-risk students who need more support than just the interventions in the first tier. The third tier incorporates more intensive interventions targeted at specific students who demonstrate greater needs. Debnam et al. (2012) explore the components of the program in great detail but explain that every school designs a program to meet its needs and no two schools

implement the exact same interventions in each tier. Debnam et al. (2012) looked at the evaluation tools used as part of the PBIS program and found commonalities among schools and programs and identified strengths and areas of need. For example, ninety-eight percent of schools linked their interventions to school-wide behavioral expectations, but only thirty-eight percent of the surveyed schools reported that interventions were fully described to teachers.

In a slightly different way of looking at the PBIS program, Miramontes et al. (2011) evaluated the social validity of the program. Teachers, administrators, and other service providers were surveyed about their perceptions regarding PBIS implementation and outcomes. These authors found that the participants' opinions were generally positive about the impact the program has on their school and the students. The majority of participants surveyed identified PBIS as being worth their time and effort.

Mong, Johnson, & Mong (2011) as well as Filter, McKenna, Benedict, Homer, Todd, & Watson (2007) describe the Check in/Check out intervention. The authors in both studies implemented the Check in/Check out intervention in schools that already used the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports model described previously. Filter et al. (2007) and Mong et al. (2011) describe the program similarly. The program targets specific students rather than whole classrooms. The selected students meet with an adult at the beginning and end of the school day to goal set and review the goals for the day. The authors also describe the use of a point card for student behavior in increments, such as each class or each hour, throughout the day. This intervention is described as building positive relationships between the selected students and teachers in school.

Filter et al. (2007) found that teachers who participated in the program found it easy to implement and observe progress in the students who participated. In the Check in/Check out

program that Filter et al. (2007) studied, “thirteen of the nineteen students who participated showed a decrease in major Office Discipline Referrals when in the program” (p. 78). While the authors describe several limitations, such as the small sample size, the results of the program were overall positive. Mong et al. (2011) only reviewed the participation of four students in the Check in/Check out program. While this sample size was much smaller than the previously discussed study, these authors also saw a decrease in Office Discipline referrals during the students’ participation in the program.

In their research, van Lier, Muthen, van der Sar, and Crijnens (2004) discuss the Good Behavior Game as a classroom behavior intervention. In the Good Behavior Game, students are divided into teams and have an incentive for following classroom rules and expectations and displaying ‘good behavior’. Teams who meet the expectations during a preselected time frame receive a reward. Teachers use verbal positive reinforcement as well as tangible prizes as reinforcement for students who meet the goal. van Lier et al. (2004) explain that the game encourages students to self-monitor their behavior as well as help monitor their classmates’ behavior. Through their research, van Lier et al. (2004) found that children who participated in the Good Behavior Game showed a decrease in measured levels of Attention-deficit/hyperactivity problems. While there were limitations in their research and results, they found many positive results from this intervention.

Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, & Merrell (2008) describe the Classroom Check-Up as a system to assess and improve student behavior in the classroom. When implementing this intervention, an assessment of the classroom is completed, followed by feedback to the teacher from the assessors. Teachers then collaborate with the consultant and develop a menu of researched interventions that could positively impact the classroom and student behavior. The teacher

chooses the interventions and, supported by the consultant, implements and self-monitors the interventions. After the implementation of this intervention, the authors noted some positive trends, primarily the increase in praise and the decrease in disruptions during instructional time. However, after some time had passed, the authors found that the rates of praise began to decline with teacher self-monitoring.

### **Summary**

Successful classroom management is an important piece of student achievement in school. Classroom management includes every decision a teacher makes, from the arrangement of desks to consequences for inappropriate behavior. Disruptive behavior is inevitable and has been challenging teachers for as long as people have been teaching. Good classroom management and solid systems can help alleviate some of the disruptive behavior. For some students, more intensive interventions are needed. This literature review discussed several possible interventions. However, there are many more interventions, both formal and informal, that exist in education today.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODS**

#### **Design**

This study used a pre-and post-test designed by the school where the research was conducted. The dependent variable was student behavior based on the school's code of conduct and behavior chart. The independent variable is the Check In/Check Out program.

#### **Participants**

Participants for this study were a convenience sample enrolled in third grade at the school where the researcher works. Students were recommended for participation by their teachers, after a larger group was identified. All third graders who did not meet school-wide behavioral expectations for the previous two months were identified as possible participants. This group included 18 students. The list of students was provided to classroom teachers and the teachers identified four students who, based on classroom observation, they felt might benefit from a Check In/Check Out program. Of the four students identified, two were African American and two were Caucasian. Two of the participants were female and two were male. One of the four students has an IEP and receives special education services.

#### **Instrument**

The instrument for this study was previously developed by the school's Positive Behavioral Intervention Systems (PBIS) team and had been in place for at least five years school-wide. The school has a code of conduct and a daily behavior chart for all students that matches the behaviors outlined in the code of conduct. Each student's behavior was tracked daily with a color system of Red for far below expectations, Yellow for slightly below expectations, and Green for meeting expectations. Classroom teachers track behavior daily and

submit their data to the PBIS team monthly. The team keeps data for all students to track whether they met expectations (green) for at least eighty-five percent of the month. This researcher used this monthly data to initially identify a group of students who did not meet behavior expectations consistently. Once the four participants were identified, the daily behavior charts were used as a pre-test. After participation in the Check In/Check Out program, the daily behavior charts were used again as a post-test.

### **Procedure**

The study was designed for a six week period of time. The first week, participant behavior was tracked using the pre-test. Then, for four weeks, participants met with their mentor teachers as frequently as possible, primarily in the mornings and afternoons. After the four weeks of meeting daily with mentors, participants' behavior was tracked again using the post-test.



## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

Data was collected by noting the number of days in one week that students ended the day with satisfactory behavior before the intervention, then the post-test tracked how many days in a one week period the same students ended the day with satisfactory behavior. Each student involved in the intervention had more days with satisfactory behavior after the intervention than before the intervention indicating the null hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 1**

**Pre- and Post-test Means and Standard Deviations Of Students' Number of Days Meeting Their Behavioral Goals**

<b>Days Meeting Goals Pre M (SD)</b>	<b>Days Meeting Goals Post M (SD)</b>
2.75 (.500)	4.50 (.577)

The mean for students with satisfactory behavior pre-intervention was 2.75 during that week. Post-intervention, the mean was 4.50. A dependent  $t$  test was run to examine the difference between the number of days students met their behavioral goal prior to and after the intervention. Results showed a significant difference,  $t(3) = -7.00, p < .01$ . These results will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION**

The hypothesis of this research was that there would be no change in disruptive student behavior after participating in the intervention. The null hypothesis was rejected because there was a significant difference found between disruptive behavior before and after the intervention. The mean of students meeting the behavior goal after the intervention increased by 1.75, from 2.75 before the intervention to 4.50 after.

#### **Implications of Results**

The results of this research support prior research about Check in/Check out programs by Mong et al., (2011) as well as Filter et al., (2007). As with other research, the behavior of students in this program became less disruptive. All schools face the issue of disruptive behavior and this research could help schools implement a similar Check in/Check out program with students with frequent disruptive behavior. Very early on in the intervention, the participating students were excited to meet with their paired staff member each day and were disappointed when a participating staff member was out of school for the day. As the data showed, disruptive behavior for the four participating students decreased after the intervention, and observation by this researcher noted that student enthusiasm seemed to increase as well.

#### **Threats to Validity**

One considerable threat to the validity of these results is the sample size of the group involved in the intervention. Only four students participated in the Check in/Check out program. It is difficult to know how these results would translate to a larger population just based on four students. An additional threat to validity is the period of time over which research was conducted. Students were pre- and post-tested for one week each and participated in the program

for four weeks. If any of those time periods were extended, especially over a more significant period of time such as an entire school year, results may have differed.

Consistency may have impacted the validity of these results. There are several areas where consistency may have impacted results. Several teachers were responsible for determining each student's level on the daily behavior calendar, and, although there is a flow chart to identify disruptive classroom behaviors and appropriate consequences, categorizations differ between teachers.

An additional aspect of consistency was the willingness of the participating teachers. The four teachers who met daily with students were consistent participants, other than two absences, but the participating students' classroom teachers were not as consistent. Although all teachers were asked to participate and to allow their students to participate, one changed her mind and would not let one of her students see the participating teacher on a consistent basis. Instead of twice a day every day, that student met with a participating teacher once a day every day and twice a day some days. However, the student still showed a decrease in disruptive behavior during the post-test.

Many external factors could have affected the validity of the pre- and post-test results. Because the pre- and post-tests were run for one week each, various outside factors could have had an impact on student behavior during that particular time. Family situations, illness, diet, and many other factors impact students every day and it is not possible to control for those things in a classroom setting.

### **Connections to Literature**

Mong et al. (2011) as well as Filter et al. (2007) described a Check in/Check out program in their research. Both studies followed schools as they implemented the program. However,

both interventions differed in several ways. While the basic structure of each program was similar, with students being paired with an adult to meet with at the beginning and end of the day, the two programs described by Filter et al. (2007) and Mong et al. (2011) are a bit more complex and focus on goal setting and each student has an individual point sheet or behavior chart to track their behavior. In this research, selected students did not have individual charts but stayed under the school-wide behavior system.

In both of the cited studies, the authors saw positive results similar to those in this research. In both the authors' research and this researcher's programs, positive changes were noted in student behavior.

This intervention is described as building positive relationships between the selected students and teachers in school. Filter et al. (2007) found a decrease in major Office Discipline referrals. Some of the threats to validity that this research faced were also addressed by Mong et al. (2011) in their research. They found that the small sample size could have affected results in their research as it could have in this research.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Further research should be done to study how a Check in/Check out program like this one impacts student achievement. If a study were designed to track student achievement over time while participating in a program like this one, it might provide schools with additional research to support implementing a Check in/Check out program.

In a future study, one might also examine the perceptions of students before, during, and after participating in a similar program. Research could examine student perceptions regarding their self-esteem, their academic performance, their overall feelings about school, or other related topics.

While some research has been completed on Check in/Check out programs, there are differing versions of this type of program in existence. In future research, varying aspects of these related programs could also be studied.

If this research were implemented again in the same setting, it might make results more accurate to track the consistency of participation for both teachers and students. It would also be essential to choose teachers to participate who are aware of the small time commitment and the inconvenience it could cause in their classrooms occasionally.

## References

- Capizzi, A. M. (2009). Start the year off right: designing and evaluating a supportive classroom management plan. *Focus On Exceptional Children*, 42(3), 1-12.
- Debnam, K. J., Pas, E. T., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2012). Secondary and tertiary support systems in schools implementing school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports: a preliminary descriptive analysis. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 14(3), 142-152.
- Emmer, E. T., & Stough, L. M. (2008). Responsive classroom management. In T. Good (Ed.), *21<sup>st</sup> Century Education: A Reference Handbook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Evertson, C. M., & Poole, I. R. (2008). Proactive classroom management. In T. Good (Ed.), *21<sup>st</sup> Century Education: A Reference Handbook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Filter, K. J., McKenna, M. K., Benedict, E. A., Homer, R. H., Todd, A. W., & Watson, J. (2007). Check in/check out: a post-hoc evaluation of an efficient, secondary-level targeted intervention for reducing problem behaviors in schools. *Education & Treatment of Children West Virginia University Press*, 69-84.
- Miramontes, N. Y., Marchant, M., Heath, M. A., & Fischer, L. (2011). Social validity of a positive behavior interventions and support model. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 34(4), 445-468.
- Mong, M. D., Johnson, K. N., & Mong, K. W. (2011). Effects of check-in/checkout on behavioral indices and mathematics generalization. *Behavioral Disorders*, 36(4), 225-240.

- Pas, E. T., Bradshaw, C.P., & Mitchell, M.M. (2011). Examining the validity of office discipline referrals as an indicator of student behavior problems. *Psychology in the Schools, 48*(6), 541-555.
- Reglin, G., Akpo-Sanni, J., & Losike-Dedimo, N. (2012). The effect of a professional development classroom management model on at-risk elementary students' misbehaviors. *Education, 133*(1), 3-18.
- 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.
- Smith, R., & Lambert, M. (2008). Assuming the best. *Educational Leadership, 66*(1), 16-20.
- van Lier, Muthen, B. O., van der Sar, & Crijns, A. A. M. (2004). Preventing disruptive behavior in elementary schoolchildren: impact of a universal classroom-based intervention. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 72*(3), 467-478.