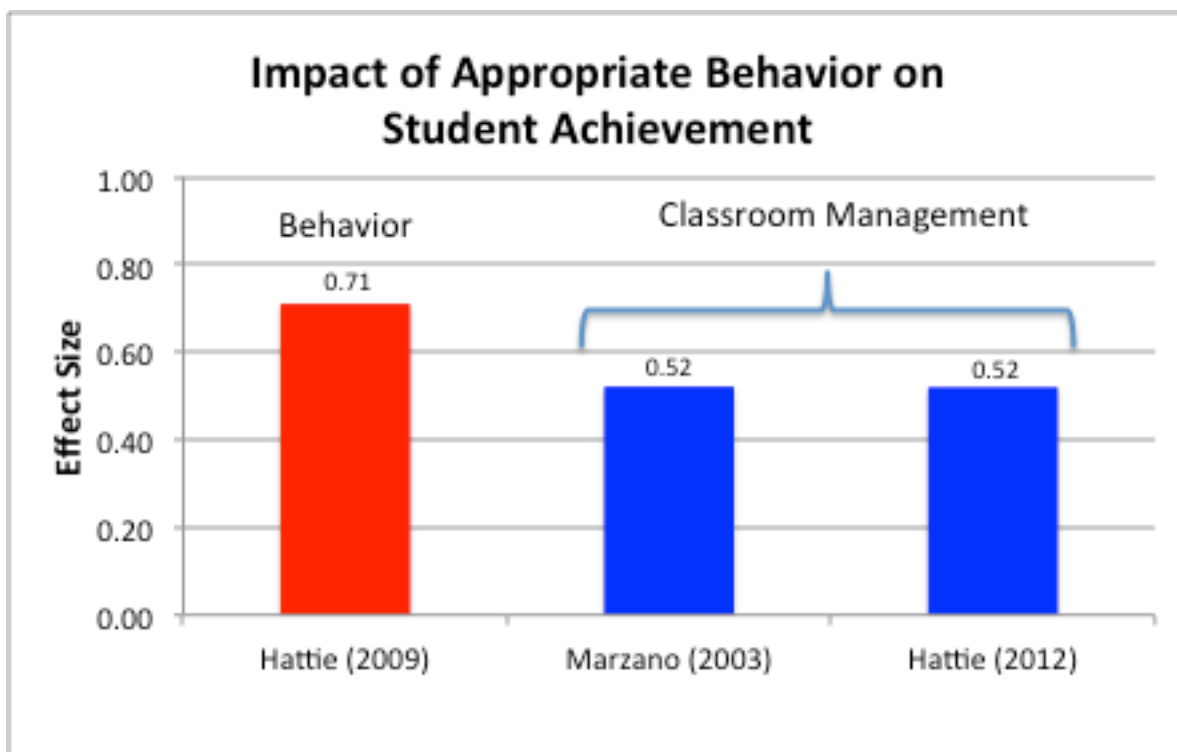# Classroom Management

Competent command of student conduct is essential to a teacher's success. Classroom management is how teachers influence student behavior to create an environment conducive to learning. The primary goal is to maximize appropriate conduct and minimize student misbehavior. Effective teachers accomplish this by managing contingencies, the events that occur immediately before and after a behavior. In this way, they remove impediments to teaching students the skills for effective communication, interpersonal interactions, and academic achievement needed for success in life. Ineffective classroom management results in chaos; student learning is disrupted and teacher morale is often damaged beyond repair (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). Where instructional control is poor, neither teacher nor students win.
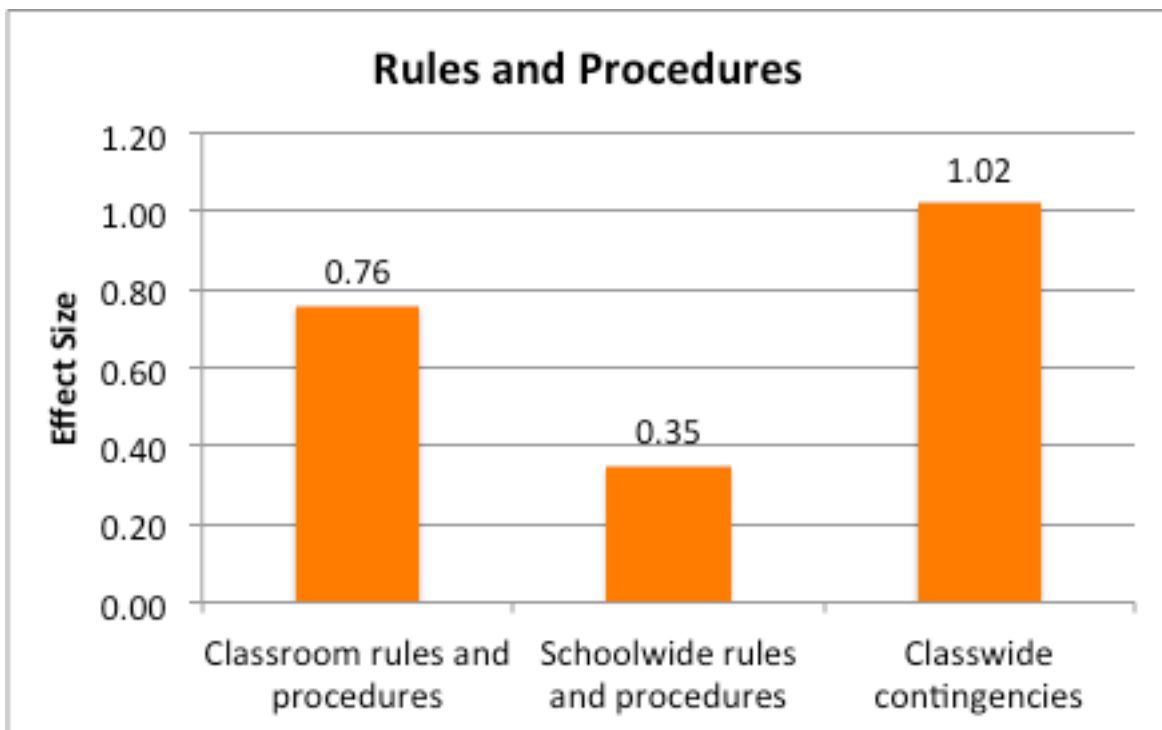

Impact of Appropriate Behavior on Student Achievement

Not surprisingly, research reveals that principals and teachers list classroom management among the top five indispensable teaching skills. Disruptive student behavior has ranked among teachers' top concerns for more than 15 years and is one of the prime reasons teachers leave teaching (Smart & Igo, 2010). Ingersoll (2001) found

that over 30% of teachers indicated classroom management issues as their primary reason for leaving the profession.

What is classroom management? The goal of effective classroom management is to (1) teach pro-social behaviors, (2) effectively address issues as they happen, and (3) prevent disruptive behavior. Classroom management consists of practices and procedures that teachers apply to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on-task, and academically productive (Oliver, Wehby, & Reschly, 2011). Success in the classroom depends on the teacher's ability to maintain an environment that encourages and supports learning. However, a well-managed classroom doesn't just happen on its own; it develops from well-designed training and experience in working with students. The four classroom management categories that rigorous research identifies as critical are (1) rules and procedures, (2) proactive management, (3) well-designed and - delivered instruction, and (4) disruptive behavior management.

Rules and procedures: An indispensable tool for preventing disruptive conduct is the systematic use of rules. Rules describe generally acceptable routines, standards, and procedures that inform students how to behave. Rules and procedures at both school and classroom levels are important in communicating to students and teachers the conduct expected. They prevent disruptive behavior by objectively defining how to behave, how to solve and avoid problems, and consequences of rule violation (Colvin, Kame'enui, & Sugai, 1993).

Posting the rules publicly, teaching appropriate behavior, and frequently reviewing expected conduct, when paired with constructive feedback, are found to significantly decrease common disruptive behavior such as veering off-task and talking in class. The various rules and procedures increase opportunities for teachers to reinforce appropriate behavior. These classroom management strategies are also associated with increased engagement, reduced frequency of student conflicts, and greater academic achievement (Johnson, Stoner, & Green, 1996; Lane, Wehby, & Menzies, 2003; Lo, Loe, & Cartledge, 2002; McNamara, Evans, & Hill, 1986; Sharpe, Brown, & Crider, 1995; Rosenberg, 1986).
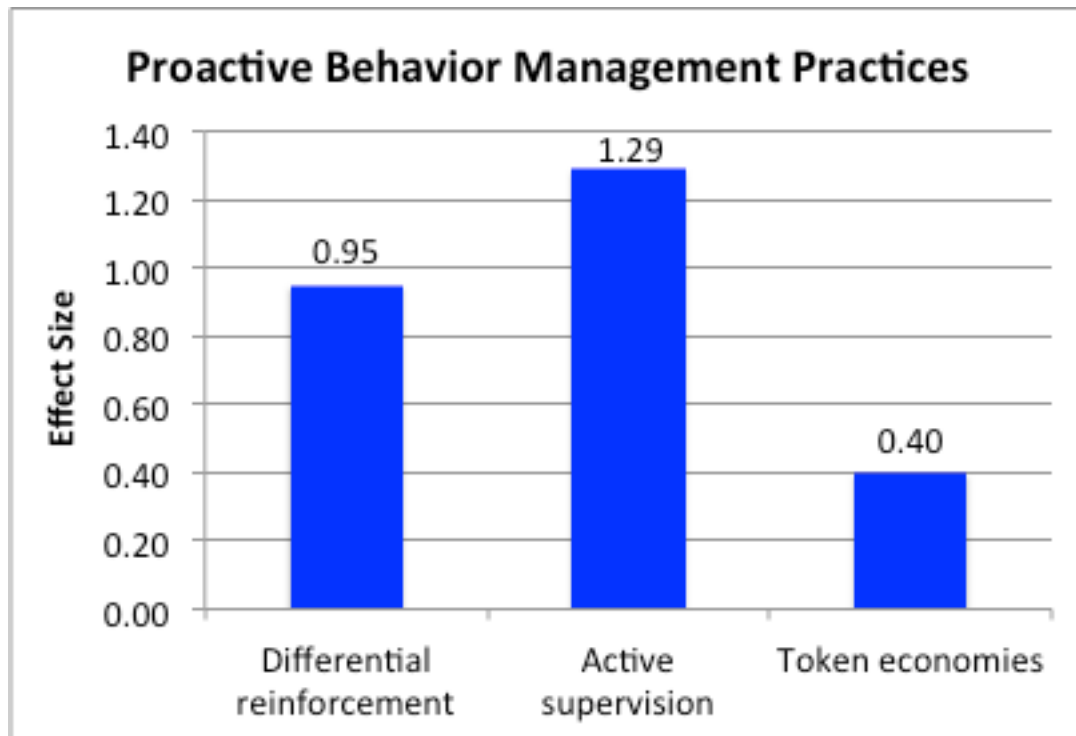
Rules and Procedures

	Effect Size
Classroom rules and procedures	0.76
Schoolwide rules and procedures	0.35
Classwide contingencies	1.02

Proactive management: Another set of preventive strategies focuses on recognizing and acknowledging desirable conduct. These strategies range from the simple "catching them being good," which emphasizes contingent praise, to more complex sets of classwide group contingencies such as token economies and behavioral contracts.

At the core of a proactive approach is the use of active supervision, which consists of teachers frequently moving around the classroom, remaining alert, engaging with students, and providing feedback including reinforcement for desirable conduct. Active supervision also has been proved effective outside the classroom, for example, in the hallway, on the playground, and on field trips, locations that are often trouble spots for disruptive behavior (Colvin, Sugai, Good, & Lee, 1997).

Teachers can avoid disruptive behavior by organizing the physical layout of the classroom. The dividers, desks, seating patterns, traffic flow, and classroom decorations can be designed either to maximize or minimize the probability of misbehavior. Effective organization of the physical environment can reduce visual and auditory distractions

as well as eliminate locations that are known sources of misconduct (Maxwell, 1996; Ahrentzen & Evans, 1984).

Proactive Behavior Management Practices

A bar chart titled "Proactive Behavior Management Practices" with the y-axis labeled "Effect Size" ranging from 0.00 to 1.40. Differential reinforcement = 0.95, Active supervision = 1.29, Token economies = 0.40.

Well-designed and -delivered instruction: Good classroom management and effective instruction are interdependent; you can't have one without the other. To minimize misbehavior, teachers must employ the most effective instructional practices. To maximize learning, teachers must be proficient in evidence-based behavior management strategies.

Research finds that students who persistently perform poorly on academic assignments have a negative attitude toward school and are more likely than academically successful students to act out and be labeled as problem students (Sprick, Borgmeier, & Nolet, 2002). Sometimes, students may act out to escape instruction that is at their failure level. Similarly, gifted students who are not challenged or given quality instruction also display disruptive behavior. In either case, poor instruction only exacerbates poor conduct. Teachers must assign work that is neither too easy nor too hard. Students need lessons that are well matched to their abilities and the difficulty of the

assignment. When mismatches occur, students become frustrated, bored, distracted, and eventually disruptive.

Effective instruction practices: A consistent and predictable schedule is important when creating an affirming learning environment. Teachers must pay special attention to transition periods in the daily schedule. The time between lessons, during moves between classrooms, before and after recess, and before and after lunch provide opportunities for students to act out because of the low structure in these situations. Planning ahead, establishing routines for transitions, and avoiding long periods of inactivity are important strategies for avoiding pandemonium and the loss of valuable instructional time.
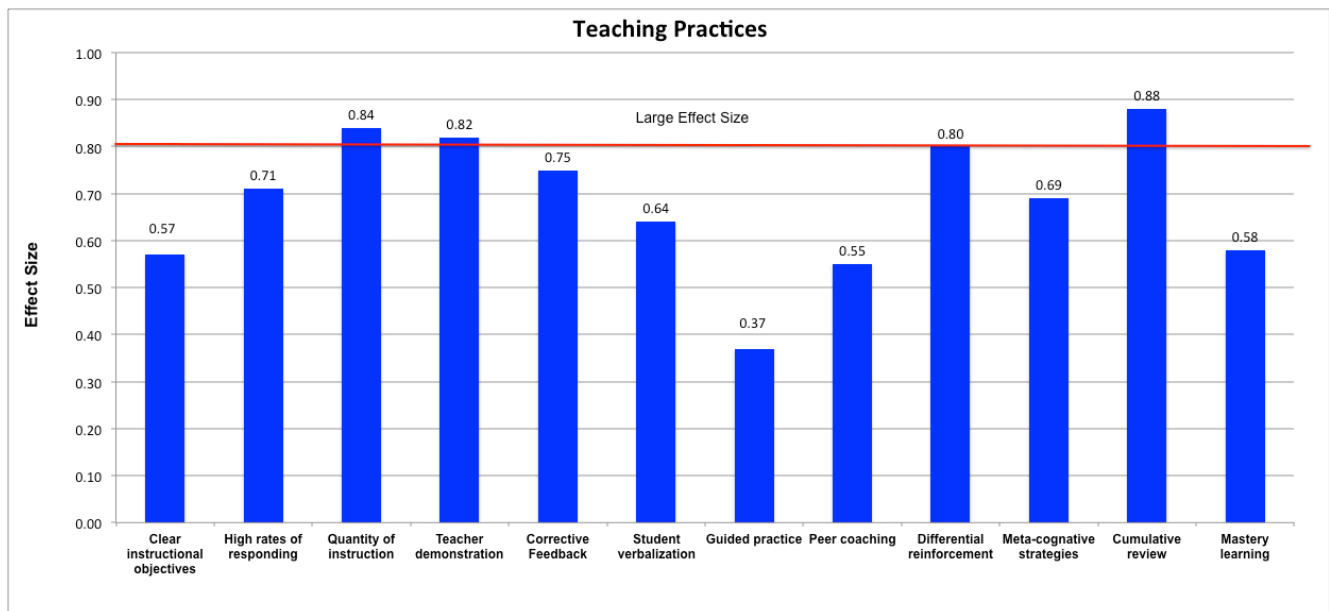
Teaching Practice Citations
1. Clear Instructional Objective – Hattie (2009), Hattie, Bigs, and Purdie (1996)
2. High Rates of Responding – Hattie (2009)
3. Quantity of Instruction – Hattie (2009)
4. Teacher Demonstration – Wilson and Sindelar (1991)
5. Spaced vs. Massed – Hattie (2009)
6. Student Verbalization – Hattie (2009)
7. Guided Practice – Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock (2001)
8. Peer Coaching – Hattie (2009)
9. Meta-cognitive Strategies – Hattie (2009), Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock (2001)
10. Cumulative Review – Hattie, Bigs, and Purdie (1996), Rosenshine and Meister (1994)
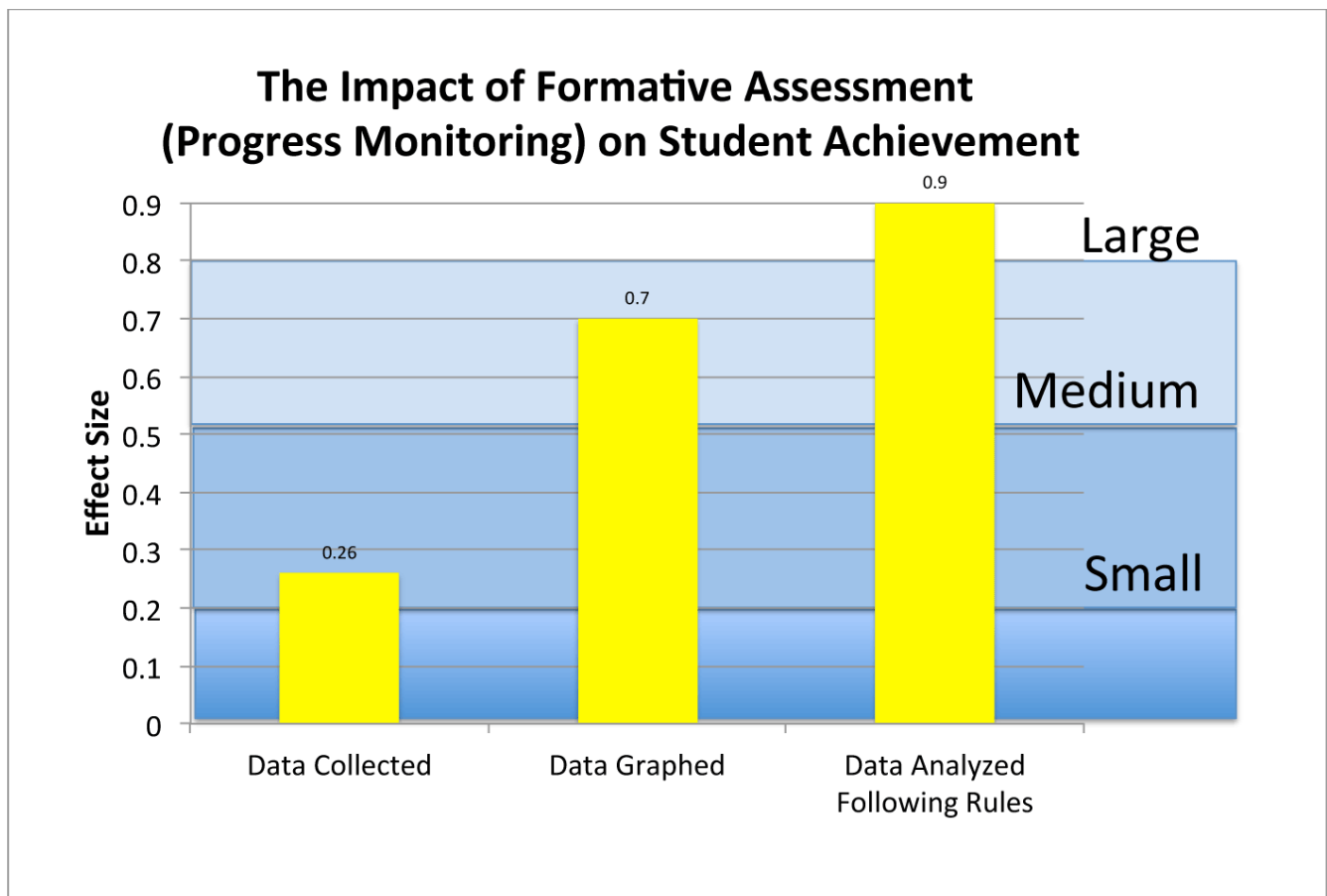11. Mastery Learning – Hattie (2009)

Research reveals that lesson planning is the indispensable foundation on which to build effective instruction. Explicit instruction or as it is sometimes referred to, direct instruction, is a systematic instructional approach based on design and delivery of practices derived from rigorous research. It provides supports or scaffolds that guide students through lessons and encourage mastery of each lesson; clear statements about the purpose and rationale for a new skill, clear explanations and demonstrations of the material to be learned, and focus on supported practice with feedback are fundamental to explicit instruction. It is an approach to classroom instruction that combines individual instructional practices characterized by clear presentation of content; carefully sequenced (components and subcomponents of skills are seamlessly and progressively presented) and supported instruction; high rates of responding; judicious review of content; systematic feedback; initial and ongoing assessment of student progress and placement; and student mastery of concepts and skills (Becker & Gersten, 1982; Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, & Tarver, 2004).

Teachers who develop instructional objectives, link lessons through the use of scope and sequencing, tie instruction to "big ideas" (concepts or skills central to the lesson that connect these to the "bigger ideas" or ways these concepts and skills will be used in later lessons and in "real world" settings), and to standards are the most successful. Teachers who provide each student with a sufficient quantity of instruction and require high rates of responding for each student to demonstrate acquisition of the lesson are better instructors.

To build long-term success, the most effective teachers require students to demonstrate mastery of the material before moving on the next assignment. In this way, students gain the foundational skills to be successful in future assignments. For learning to be sustained beyond the moment, teachers must return to previously taught material in future lessons. They must also find opportunities for students to use the skills or knowledge in real-life settings to increase student motivation and establish greater relevancy.

Another hallmark of effective teaching is the proficient use of feedback. Teachers who provide acknowledgment and corrective feedback in a non-judgmental way to guide students toward improving performance achieve better results. The ratio of positive to corrective feedback should be 4:1. Specific, clearly defined feedback is more effective than general statements, and immediate feedback is more powerful than delayed feedback.

Few instructional practices have as much impact on student performance as formative assessment. Teachers who regularly collect performance data and then chart and analyze the data see student learning notably enhanced. Even greater results can be achieved when teachers provide the outcome of their analysis to their students (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1986).

The Impact of Formative Assessment (Progress Monitoring) on Student Achievement

Effect Size

Data Collected	Data Graphed	Data Analyzed Following Rules
0.26	0.7	0.9

Large
Medium
Small

Other effective instructional practices include guided notes (handouts that guide a student through a lecture with cues and prepared space in which to write the key facts and concepts), and peer tutoring.

Disruptive behavior management: Disorderly behavior will occur despite teachers' best efforts to prevent it. Setting rules, using proactive management, and implementing well-designed instruction work most of the time, but inevitably situations arise in which a teacher needs to effectively respond to unacceptable student conduct. The key to weathering these events successfully is to have a plan, remain calm, react in an unemotional manner that minimizes any payoff to the students, and impose any punishment in a measured way that is commensurate with the infraction.

Students misbehave for a reason. Generally, they act out to avoid something they perceive to be aversive, such as an activity or lesson in which they are doing poorly or failing, or to gain something they perceive to be reinforcing, such as peer or teacher attention. The important point to remember is each student misbehaves for his or her own reasons. To reduce the frequency, intensity, and impact of misbehavior, the teacher must assess each situation to determine what is motivating the student to act out and then develop an intervention best designed to meet the student's needs. It is important not to skip this step when designing a behavior intervention. If a teacher intervenes without assessing the motivation, he or she might inadvertently reinforce the student and make the problem worse. For example, being sent to the office is a reward in the mind of a student whose motivation for misbehavior is to avoid class.

Teachers must adopt a continuum of strategies to respond to disruptive or inappropriate behavior. They must use the tool that best suits the situation. As a rule, they should begin with the least intrusive and uncomplicated intervention to remedy a problem, such as correcting the inappropriate behavior, and move on to more complex behavior interventions when required.

One of the most important strategies available to teachers is differential reinforcement, which essentially ignores the inappropriate behavior and instead reinforces the appropriate behavior to replace

the inappropriate conduct. It is designed to reduce misconduct in a positive manner and is a powerful alternative to the use of negative consequences. Other important strategies for behavior reduction include ignoring misbehavior (withdrawal or discontinuance of reinforcement in order to eliminate inappropriate conduct); corrective feedback (a verbal statement for the student to stop engaging in a behavior or an instruction to engage in an alternative behavior); an explicit reprimand (a verbal statement that describes the behavior and tells the student exactly how to behave in the future); and response cost (the withdrawal of access to a reinforcer immediately after the disruptive behavior) (Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008).

Behavior Reduction Practices

Effect Size

- Corrective feedback: 0.81
- Response cost: 0.53
- Differential reinforcement: 0.95
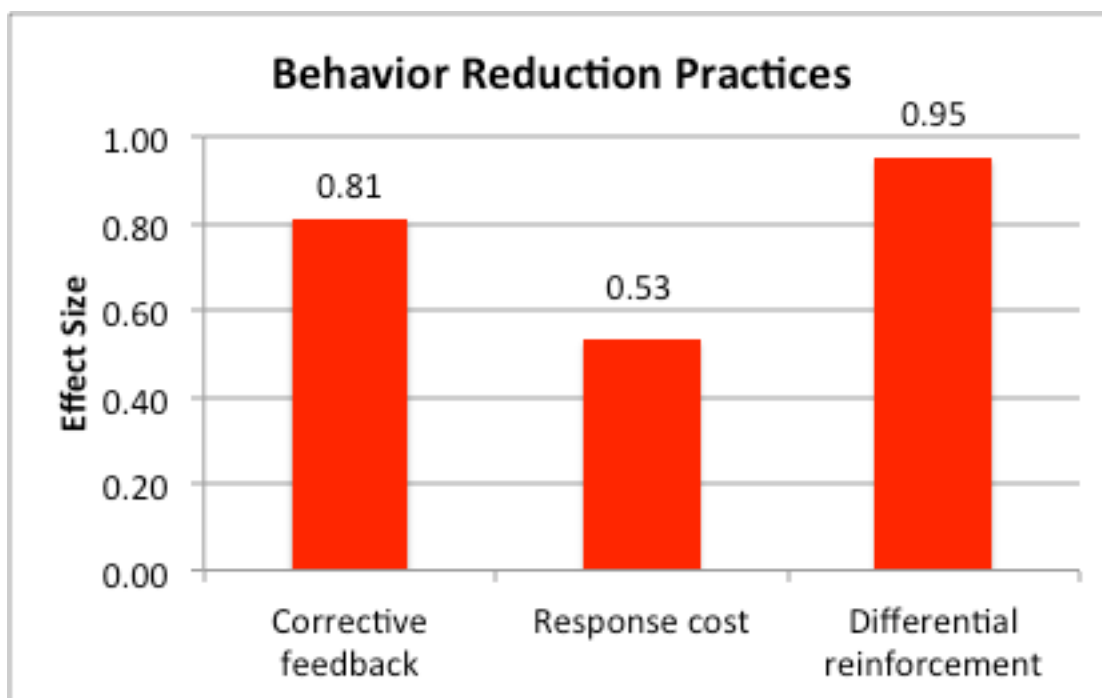
Conclusion

Educators currently have access to a solid knowledge base that outlines effective practices for building classroom management systems. In this overview, strategies have been grouped into four essential areas: rules and procedures, proactive management, well-designed and -delivered instruction, and disruptive behavior management. These strategies are devised for use at both school and classroom levels. A teacher can adapt and implement each practice to meet his or her requirements and each student's needs. The

strategies are intended to be compatible for use within each teacher's classroom structure and with the current curriculum. They are designed as a continuum of strategies beginning with the least intrusive practices and building to more complex interventions required to address serious misbehavior. Good classroom management starts with a universal system to support all students in the classroom and moves to more intensive interventions for students not benefiting from the universal level of intervention.

These strategies produce the best results when teacher training uses a professional development model that includes ongoing coaching and active support by the school administration. One-time in-service workshops have been proved to be ineffective in sustainable implementation of practices. When implemented with integrity, classroom management is an essential driver in establishing a classroom environment that produces the best results for students and teachers.

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