Starting at the Beginning

An Intuitive Choice for Classroom Management

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ABSTRACT: Teachers' actions in the first 3 days of school set the stage for student success throughout the academic year. Classroom management continues to be one of the more pressing concerns for both preservice and in-service teachers. Recent research in classroom management has identified evidence-based practices, but the research-to-practice gap remains. This study reports on the implementation of a research-based classroom management professional development program focused on the beginning of the school year. To increase teacher buy-in and fidelity of implementation, 22 teachers were trained to deliver the program in their respective schools within a southeastern school district. Results of survey data from 347 teachers suggest that teachers made changes in their approach to starting the school year and that these changes were associated with increased teacher efficacy and fewer off-task and disruptive student behaviors. Implications for professional development and teacher education are discussed.

Classroom management is often discussed as if it were synonymous with discipline; unfortunately, this leads to an emphasis on controlling students instead of teaching them (Wong, Wong, Rogers, & Brooks, 2012). The true meaning of classroom management encompasses all those teacher actions used to maintain order and stimulate engagement while also responding to the behavioral and academic needs of individual students (Emmer & Stough, 2001). Clearly, managing a classroom is no small task. To succeed in the classroom, students are expected to be academically engaged, follow rules and procedures, and interact appropriately with peers (Farmer, Reinke, & Brooks, 2014). A teacher's classroom management plan must address each of these areas. Perhaps the most important factor contributing to a successful educational experience for teachers and students is the attention given to classroom management in the beginning of the school year, for this sets the stage for the remainder of the year (Harris & Garwood, 2015).

Beginning the Year

"Effective teachers plan their classroom management before the school year begins" (Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008, p. 366). In the

summer months when teachers are charting units of study, even the arrangement of desks and chairs must be carefully planned to ensure success (Harris, Shapiro, & Garwood, 2015). Once school is in session, the beginning of the year should begin with a more traditional arrangement as students learn the expectations of a new classroom (Capizzi, 2009). Rules and procedures should be clearly established by the end of the first week of classes; still, it is often necessary to reteach from this foundation throughout the school year (Appleton, 1995; Wong et al., 2012). An orderly classroom is one where students understand what is expected of them to the point that rules and routines are internalized (Froschauer, 2012). When students do not know how they are expected to behave or perform, rule infractions and a chaotic learning environment are almost assured.

In a unique study focused on the student perspective, Cothran, Kullina, and Garrahy (2003) gathered interview and focus group data from students in grades 6 through 12 to identify the most prominent factors that students perceived contributed to or hindered effective classroom management. The racially and economically diverse sample included 182 students in 12 different schools spread across urban, suburban, and rural areas of the United States. Seven key factors were identified by the students, including (a) earning students' respect instead of assuming it, (b) consistency in enforcement of rules, (c) fairness, (d) planning for fun in the context of learning, (e) establishing a relationship between teacher and student, (f) opening up in a personal way to the students and demonstrating care, and (g) establishing clear expectations in the beginning of the school year. It is this last point, the beginning of school, which is the focus of this article. Starting off with a focus on classroom management can yield dividends throughout the entire school year (Harris & Garwood, 2015).

Effective classroom managers are fair and consistent in their interactions with students. In Sanford's (1984) seminal study on effective versus ineffective teachers, a significant difference was found in how teachers began the school year. Effective managers set the stage for success by clearly delineating their expectations for behavior and classroom procedures. Throughout the school year, these practices were reviewed as needed. In a separate study of six elementary teachers from five different schools, videotape observations of the first 3 days of school and follow-up visits in the winter and spring revealed some startling differences between more and less effective teachers (Bohn, Roehrig, & Pressley, 2004). The most effective teachers were characterized in the following ways: they (a) knew student names from the first day, (b) attended to student engagement and established a classroom community, (c) demonstrated enthusiasm and expressed high expectations, (d) included students in the creation of rules and had students practice procedures, and (e) avoided the use of criticism or punishment in dealing with misbehavior. Bohn and colleagues found these more effective teachers to have students with higher rates of engagement and better progression in literacy activities

later in the school year. A report on effective secondary teachers found that better classroom managers averaged 10% more instructional time with the students (Palumbo & Sanacore, 2007). Considering the premium on time in today's classroom, especially at the secondary level, this is no small difference.

The consequence of failing to implement effective management strategies from the first day of school can mean struggles to establish an orderly learning environment all year long (Froschauer, 2012). Furthermore, ineffective classroom management may be a primary cause of teacher burnout (Kokkinos, 2007). It should not be surprising that struggles in management are second only to low salaries as the reason given for teachers leaving the field (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Kennedy & Thomas, 2012). Changing salaries will require a fundamental shift in policy and legislative action; improving teachers' classroom management tool sets is a much more realistic and achievable goal in the pursuit of improved student outcomes and teacher retention. High-quality classroom managers report higher rates of self-efficacy and lower incidents of burnout and have students who exhibit fewer disruptive behaviors (Reinke, Herman, & Stormont, 2013).

Best Practices and Common Concerns Regarding Classroom Management

The landscape of the 21st-century classroom is now more diverse than at any other time in history (Capizzi, 2009; Kennedy & Thomas, 2012). Teachers are challenged from their first day on the job to meet the medley of needs from a heterogeneous group of learners. It would seem logical to equip and prepare them with the very best in classroom management pedagogy.

Results of a comprehensive literature review identified 20 evidence-based practices in classroom management (Simonsen, Fairbanks, et al., 2008). The authors collapsed the 20 practices into the following five categories: (a) maximizing structure; (b) teaching, monitoring, and reinforcing expectations; (c) engaging students in observable ways; (d) using a continuum of strategies to increase positive behaviors; and (e) using a continuum of strategies to decrease negative behaviors. To support these practices and ensure successful implementation, teachers should also share their classroom management plan with parents in the beginning of the school year (Harris & Garwood, 2015; Stevens & Lingo, 2013). One program with a strong evidence base regarding student behavior and parental involvement is First Step to Success (FSS; Walker et al., 1997). The FSS program actively involves parents in a school-home based intervention to improve academic and social outcomes for elementary students with behavior problems. Parents are a key component of the program's success because of their unique knowledge of the child. Parents can be an ally in the home, and, given the importance of parental involvement to student success, teachers should work to build a partnership with them.

Teacher Concerns

For nearly four decades, the most consistent concern expressed by preservice, beginning, and veteran teachers has been classroom management (Cothran, Kulina, & Garrahy, 2003; Monroe, Blackwell, & Pepper, 2010; Oliver & Reschly, 2010; Veenman, 1984). A lack of classroom management preparation in teacher education programs is often reported by teachers as the reason for their discomfort with teaching in general (Jones, 2006; Landrum & Kauffman, 2006). When teachers have a negative affect (e.g., anger, nervousness) toward teaching, students often misbehave and become disruptive, which can lead to increased teacher stress and decreased teacher efficacy (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Kokkinos, 2007). In a study of 1,430 K–12 teachers, it was found that teachers who struggled in classroom management reported higher-than-average levels of stress; furthermore, stress had the strongest negative association with classroom management efficacy (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Students in classrooms of teachers with low efficacy often experience a decline in their academic motivation and engagement, with effects especially pronounced for students who are low achieving (Eccles et al., 1993; Jones, 2006). In other words, the students whom teachers often want to help most are the ones who are hurt the most by a teacher's stress and anxiety surrounding classroom management.

Student Outcomes

The key in effective behavior management is to call attention to desired student behavior and provide specific, appropriate praise for the students' actions (Simonsen, Fairbanks, et al., 2008). Teachers relying on reactive rather than proactive classroom management strategies unintentionally create a chaotic learning environment. Reactive and punitive policies, such as zero tolerance, often exacerbate rather than remediate behavioral struggles and contribute to an overall negative school climate (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Research has demonstrated that as teacher praise increases, students' disruptive behaviors decrease (Sutherland & Wehby, 2001). Teachers can also decrease disruptions by actively addressing student engagement. One means of doing so is through increasing students' opportunity to respond (OTR). High rates of OTR can improve academic outcomes by limiting off-task behaviors and increasing engagement (Haydon, MacSuga-Gage, Simonsen, & Hawkins, 2012). Increasing OTRs can be accomplished in many ways, such as choral responding or the use of response cards (Simonsen, Fairbanks, et al., 2008).

While all elements of classroom management are essential to teacher and student success, establishing a relationship with students is one of the most important (Holt, Hargrove, & Harris, 2011). Effective classroom management sets the stage for high-quality relationships by creating a sense of community among members of the classroom. The Consistency Management and Cooperative Discipline (CMCD; Freiberg, Huzinec, & Templeton, 2009) program was designed to help teachers create a caring and respectful classroom climate with strong relationships between class members. In

a study with 700 (50% involved in CMCD) students in grades 4 to 6, 97% of whom were considered economically disadvantaged, students in CMCD schools outperformed their peers in reading (64th percentile vs. 50th percentile) and mathematics (67th percentile vs. 50th percentile).

Effective classroom management opens the door for learning opportunities and fosters resilience in students at risk for school failure (Bondy, Ross, Gallingane, & Hambacher, 2007). Two separate reviews of the empirical literature in both education and psychology identified classroom management as the number one factor related to student learning (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). Management is linked directly to achievement because a well-managed classroom paves the way for more teaching time (Capizzi, 2009). In light of this finding, three points must be made. First, students do best academically in classrooms with a sense of order because fewer interruptions result in more time spent engaged in learning (Freiberg et al., 2009). Second, effective classroom managers have a positive affect toward teaching (Emmer & Stough, 2001). Finally, the teacher–student relationship—an essential component of classroom management—has long been tied to teachers' job satisfaction and self-efficacy as well as student achievement (Pianta, 2006).

A Systemwide Study of Classroom Management in Starting the School Year

The study reported below was grounded in the learner-centered aspect of How People Learn learning theory (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000), which suggests that learners (in this case, teachers) retain information when the content is meaningful to their daily lives and situated in real-world activities with an emphasis on prior knowledge. When professional development workshops build on teachers' experiences and background knowledge while also encouraging communication between stakeholders, teachers are more likely to implement the practices they have learned (Desimone, 2011). The purpose of this study was to guide teachers in more effectively beginning the school year. Methods to determine this included (a) ascertaining teachers' perceptions of a professional development program focused on classroom management in the first 3 days of school, (b) uncovering what tools the teachers took and implemented from the program, and (c) learning what changes teachers felt these made in their classroom.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Did teachers find the workshop to be valuable and of high quality?
2. What ideas did participants plan to try after participating in the workshop, and what did they actually implement in their classroom?

3. To what extent did teachers change their approach to beginning the school year after the workshop?
4. How did teachers compare starting the school year after participation in the workshop to past years?

Methods

The study involved a school system–wide implementation of a professional development program, with each of 11 schools selecting two teachers to be trained to present the workshop to their own faculty. Approximately 3 weeks before the beginning of the 2007–2008 school year, these 22 teachers attended a 3-day train-the-trainer session led by the program author to become certified workshop leaders, during which time they engaged with both the content of the program and the process of engaging adult learners with said content and leading them through multiple small-group activities. They then met together the following week to prepare workshop materials, practice presentations with the provided PowerPoint slides, and discuss ideas for tailoring parts of the program to specific concerns within their own schools. Instead of the typical 7-hour session on a single day, the school system chose to have teachers partake in 2 less intense, beginning-of-school in-service days of about 4.5 hours each for a total of 9 hours the week before school began. This allowed teachers to have some time in their classrooms each day and more time for targeted discussions in the workshop.

Each pair of workshop leaders led their school's teachers through six topics specific to the program. Teachers worked through 20-plus activities in small groups of three to five; teachers self-selected their first group and were thereafter randomly regrouped four more times over the 2 days for the purpose of developing greater faculty communication and collegiality. At the end of each topic session, each teacher wrote down specific ideas that he or she wished to implement related to that topic on a two-part non–carbon reproduction form. At the end of the second day, teachers kept the original list of ideas, workshop leaders collected the copy, and teachers also provided feedback on their perceptions of the workshop experience. Teachers were informed that they would meet again in a few weeks to share what they tried and how it worked. On a staff development day a few weeks after the beginning of school, the workshop leaders presented teachers with the copy of their ideas to implement and asked them to indicate which ones they had tried and to return the marked lists. They then asked teachers to complete a form to self-report on their experience in beginning the school year. Teachers next, again working in flexible small groups, revisited each of the six topics to share their successes and challenges related to each topic in their own classes and also to discuss possible ideas to address any remaining concerns.

Participants and Setting

This study took place in a rural school district in the southeastern United States. The school district contacted the second author, who at the time was a research assistant professor at a local university, requesting a staff development for all K–12 teachers, and university approval was obtained. Consent to participate was solicited on teacher demographic forms. Participants were informed that all personal data would be deidentified and that no individual teachers or schools would be reported in analysis. All data were collected by the workshop leaders at each school and then compiled into an Excel spreadsheet by an independent third party. Schools, workshop leaders, and teachers were deidentified so that the authors would have no access to individual participant data.

The district contained eight elementary schools, one middle school, and two high schools and served approximately 7,000 students. The county in which the school district resides had a population of approximately 40,000 people. Racial demographics of the county were relatively homogenous, with 97% of the population considered white, 1.5% African American, 1% Hispanic or Latino, and 0.5% from other races. The median family income was approximately $38,000 with 14.60% of the population living below the poverty line. A total of 347 teachers participated in this study. Table 1 contains demographic information for the teachers. Questions regarding race and ethnicity were not asked of the participants. Regarding participant gender, grade level, and years of experience, the current sample can be considered diverse. Participants taught a range of grades spanning kindergarten through grade 12.

Table 1. Participant Demographics (*n* = 347)

	n	%
Gender (*n* = 347)		
Male	160	46.11
Female	187	53.89
Grade level (*n* = 347)		
Elementary	236	68.01
Secondary	111	31.99
Years of experience (*n* = 336)		
0 (first-year teacher)	12	3.57
1–4	39	11.61
5–10	91	27.08
11–20	87	25.89
21–30	60	17.86
More than 30 years	47	13.99

Note. Mean number of years teaching was 16.42; secondary includes middle and high school.

Measures

All questionnaires were designed by the second author of this article based on her several years of teaching in public schools and conducting workshops with preservice and in-service teachers. Items on the questionnaires were generic and contained information commonly asked of teachers when reflecting on professional development. The purpose of this study was to gather a descriptive account of teachers' perceptions of the specific content of the workshop and the effect they felt it had on their practice. Therefore, no reliability or validity information is available for the survey-like questionnaires. The Teacher Workshop Reflections (TWR) questionnaire asked teachers to rate the workshop on 10 different quality aspects (e.g., *the information was valuable*, *the presenter made the information applicable*). The Teacher's Self-Report of Effects (TSRE) questionnaire asked veteran teachers to compare the level of increase or decrease in issues related to teacher efficacy and classroom management (e.g., *confidence in starting the year*, *efficiency of class procedures*) after completing the workshop to the previous school year. For both the TWR and the TSRE, teachers rated each question using a 5-point Likert-type scale. Finally, teachers were asked to report the number of ideas they planned to try in their classroom after completing the workshop. Three weeks later, teachers completed a follow-up assessment of the number of ideas they actually implemented. Teachers also rated themselves on a 5-point Likert-type scale to assess the degree of change in approaches to starting the school year on 12 different topics.

Getting Off to a Good Start: The First 3 Days of School

The Getting Off to a Good Start (GOTAGS; Harris, 2015) professional development program provides preservice and in-service teachers with a systematic approach to addressing the following key areas of classroom management: (a) arranging the classroom, (b) introducing oneself as a teacher, (c) establishing rules and procedures, (d) creating systems for grading and feedback, (e) building positive classroom community, and (f) communicating with parents. The program begins and ends with a focus on communication—first, how room arrangement communicates with students, and, finally, how teachers communicate with parents. The four segments in between address the typical anxieties that students feel in the first days of the school year about (a) the new teacher, (b) their ability to participate successfully in this new classroom, (c) their ability to achieve academically in this new class, and (d) their personal safety—both physical and emotional—in this new surrounding and with this group of people. The ultimate goal of the GOTAGS program is to equip teachers with the skills and resources to effectively address each of these areas in order to establish teacher credibility and engage students in a safe, warm, and academically focused learning environment.

Arranging the Classroom

GOTAGS begins by asking teachers to consider the message that their classroom sends to students. To set the stage for success, the program first addresses three *abilities* that teachers must self-assess in setting their initial room arrangement: abilities to see, to access, and to focus. For visibility assessment, teachers consider two questions: "Can I make literal pupil-to-pupil eye contact with each student?" and "Can students easily see academic displays (board, screen, chart, map, etc.)?" For accessibility, they consider three questions: "Can I easily move to stand beside each student?," "Can I easily reach my needed materials?," and "Can students, including those with special needs, easily reach needed materials?" For distractibility, they consider two questions: "As I look around my room, what things could entice student attention away from instruction?" and "How can I adjust any of these in some way to lessen the distraction?"

After the initial check for visibility, accessibility, and distractibility, GOTAGS guides teachers to consider a fourth "ability"—flexibility in modifying room arrangements to align with different types of lessons and teaching philosophies. The purpose here is to provide teachers with concrete strategies for rearranging their room throughout the year while providing some background knowledge for them to make informed instructional decisions. GOTAGS provides electronic templates for teachers to practice arranging their rooms prior to being in their actual rooms and rearranging them as needed to support a variety of instructional strategies.

Introducing Oneself as a Teacher

Once the teacher sets the physical stage for success, GOTAGS addresses how to relieve students' anxieties about oneself as the teacher. Teachers brainstorm ways to communicate to students something about themselves, their enthusiasm, their honesty and fairness, and their valuing of students as individuals and their class as a community. The GOTAGS manual provides a bank of sentence stems from which teachers can select to create a worksheet to learn more about students (e.g., *I am at my best when . . .*, *Something I wonder about is . . .*, *I think I learn best when . . .*), and the program strongly suggests that the teacher also complete the same set of sentence stems and make copies to share with each student.

Establishing Rules and Procedures (and Goals)

The next anxiety addressed (and the cornerstone of GOTAGS) equips teachers to address student anxiety about *doing school* by establishing clear rules for behavior in the classroom and developing and teaching various step-by-step procedures for getting things done (e.g., beginning class, heading papers, reconfiguring student desks). This section begins by differentiating

among the three categories of rules (the *have to's*—e.g., show respect to others), procedures (the *how to's*—e.g., how to head a paper), and goals (the *hope to's*—e.g., always do your best) to help teachers increase the likelihood of students perceiving them as "fair." When teachers are perceived as fair in their approach to management, students become more engaged (Freiberg et al., 2009). The program stresses that a primary cause of a student's challenging a teacher's authority is if the student perceives the teacher as "unfair." Frequently, the perception of being unfair comes from a teacher's failure to distinguish among rules, procedures, and goals, each of which is associated with a different student expectation of resulting consequence: negative, corrective, and positive.

Once teachers have a clearer understanding of the differences among the three, GOTAGS walks teachers through the developing and teaching of classroom rules (the *have to's*) by providing guidelines for writing effective classroom rules and strategies for teaching these classroom rules through class discussion and role play. Throughout the segment, there is a consistent emphasis on clarity and consistency in establishing and reinforcing rules of the classroom.

Regarding procedures (the *how to's*), after considering a list of possible classroom procedures, teachers add their own ideas, select the ones they believe to be the most important procedures for their own classrooms, and prioritize when to teach each one. Once selected, teachers examine the necessary steps for teaching a procedure, focusing explicitly on student-centered rationales and on demonstrating and rehearsing the procedure so that teachers move from telling students what to do to creating space for students to practice, receive feedback, and practice again. After exploring case studies that model the full process of teaching procedures, GOTAGS touches on the importance of audio and visual cues for when to do a procedure. The program provides an electronic template for developing a procedures lesson plan that outlines these steps for teachers' future use.

While setting classroom goals (the *hope to's*) can be an important element of creating a positive classroom culture, GOTAGS focuses on distinguishing them from rules and procedures rather than writing goals themselves. Goals are something that students should strive for (i.e., they are future oriented), while rules and procedures are expectations for student behavior in both the present and the future. School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS; Sugai & Horner, 2009) programs often include schoolwide goals in visual displays throughout school hallways, and it is helpful for teachers to include them in their classroom as well.

Creating Systems for Grading and Feedback

In addition to *doing school* effectively, students need to know how they can experience academic success. The next section gives teachers the tools to address student anxiety about grades. The ultimate goals of this section are (a) to

increase the level of transparency of a teacher's grading practices, (b) to show students a clear connection between their work habits (both in and out of class) and the resulting grades they earn, and (c) to guide teachers in developing a system that supports student academic success. The first step shows teachers how to build expectations of success by giving an initial academic assignment that gives students a positive experience—not too easy and not too hard and very, very doable. As the year progresses, some students need to increase their awareness of what behaviors lead to academic success. GOTAGS provides a strategy for teachers to develop a checklist tailored to their own classrooms that makes visible to their students those things that can lead to academic success (e.g., *I face my teacher when he or she is speaking*; *I keep my notes well organized*). Students self-assess by rating themselves on a scale of "Always" to "Never," and they are encouraged to target one item from the list for improvement over the next few weeks. While students self-assess, teachers need to design and maintain consistent systems for accountability, holding themselves and students accountable for quality academic work. The program provides a checklist (see Appendix) that teachers can use to self-assess themselves for how well they are creating a system that supports student success, and teachers are encouraged to complete a copy every 6 to 9 weeks (or every grading period).

Building Positive Classroom Community

Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, specifically the second level (emotional and physical safety), provides the foundation for building classroom community as teachers consider the options available to them for establishing a safe climate. Suggestions include how and when to teach safety drills and how to avoid both physical and emotional intimidation in the classroom. Once teachers establish a safe environment, they can begin to build a warm, academic community. Teachers brainstorm actions they can take to ensure that students (a) feel they belong, (b) feel they make meaningful contributions, (c) have basic physiological and emotional safety needs met, and (d) have multiple opportunities to work in positive ways with others. Along with those guidelines, GOTAGS offers specific strategies for teachers at different grade levels to help students learn about one another and possible strategies for ongoing, long-term learning about one another. Strategies may include taking roll with a question of the day (e.g., *What is your favorite color? Who is your favorite musician?*) or a scavenger hunt using information about the students.

Communicating with Parents

Teachers sometimes think of home–school communication as a last resort in managing the unmotivated, disorganized, or disrespectful student. While after-the-fact communication with parents can be a key lever in motivating students and reinforcing behaviors that are desirable at school, GOTAGS takes a proactive approach in engaging parents in the success of their children

at school before a negative need arises. A teacher's first communication with parents often sets their expectations for interacting with and supporting the teacher in the coming year. Consequently, the program promotes proactive communication with parents and guardians to inform them from week one. The final segment presents teachers with specific strategies for establishing and maintaining appropriate and consistent home–school communication. Strategies include surveys sent home for parents to complete (rather than students), letter templates to send home in the first days of school, and a checklist for laying the groundwork for parent volunteer involvement.

Culmination

The culminating activity of GOTAGS is designed to allow teachers to pull together everything discussed in the workshop thus far. Teachers review a step-by-step suggested outline for the first days of school that integrates the various topics covered, and they are provided with an electronic template to sketch out ideas for beginning the school year in their own classrooms. Completing and implementing the outline is designed to set teachers up for success and help their students and the school year get off to a good start.

Results

Our first research question asked if teachers found the workshop to be valuable to their practice. Of the 347 participants who took part in GOTAGS, 42.36% ($n = 147$) of them submitted a TWR questionnaire at the follow-up session. Results of the questionnaire are available in Figure 1.

On a scale of 1 to 5, the overall quality of the workshop as rated by teachers was 4.65. Our second research question asked teachers about the number of ideas planned and the number implemented after completing the workshop and starting the school year. Of the 347 participants who took part in GOTAGS, 74.35% ($n = 258$) submitted their initial list of ideas they planned to use with a report of which ones they actually implemented. Responses for each participant were combined to create an overall number of planned and implemented ideas for each of eight categories. Results of the survey are available in Figure 2. Visual inspection of the graph suggests that teachers had the most ideas for home–school communication, but the percentage of implementation of these ideas, while still greater than 50%, was lowest across the eight categories. Overall, teachers implemented 70.10% of the ideas they planned.

Our third research question assessed the extent to which teachers changed their approach to beginning the school year after participating in GOTAGS. The response rate for this questionnaire was 96.54% ($n = 335$). There were 12 first-year teachers included in the study; therefore, these teachers could not report on measures regarding comparisons between the current school year and the previous year. Results of the surveys are available in Table 2.
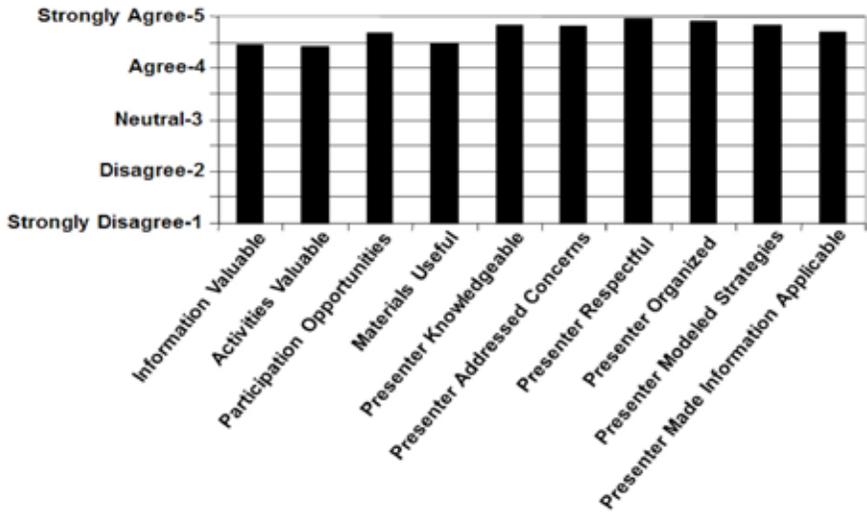
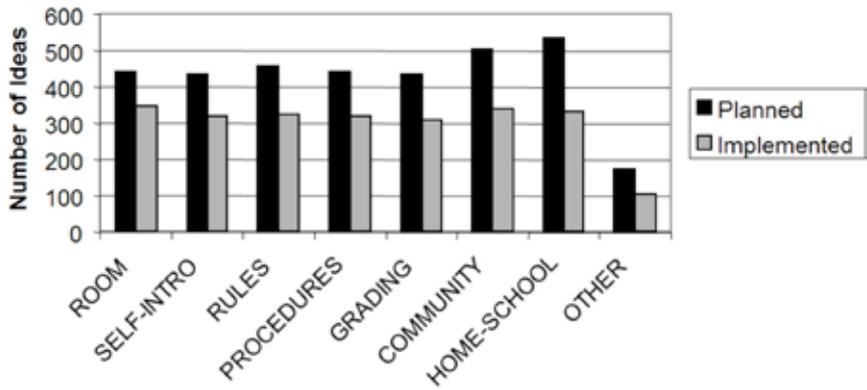**Figure 1.** Teacher ratings of the quality of the GOTAGS workshop.

Figure 2. Ideas planned and implemented by teachers.

Table 2. Teachers' Self-Report of Change in Starting the School Year

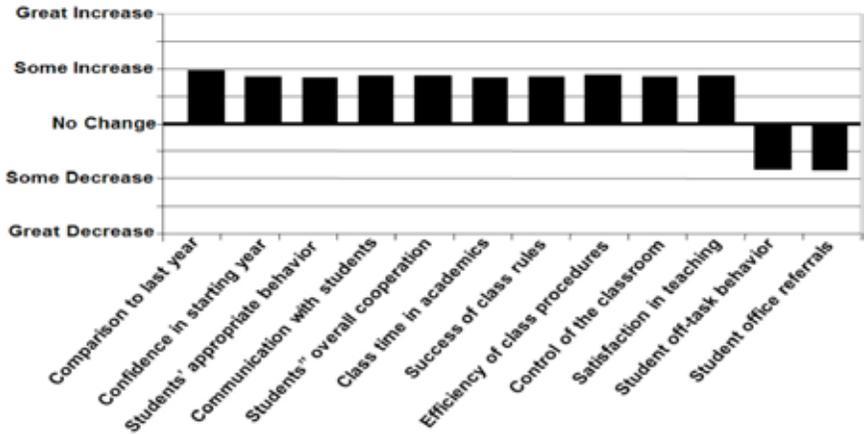| Degree of Change	n	%
Great (5)	17	5.07
Much (4)	101	30.15
Some (3)	188	56.12
Little (2)	26	7.76
None (1)	3	0.90

Figure 3.   Teachers' evaluations of starting the school year after the workshop.

Overall, the mean rate of change on a scale of 1 to 5 was 3.31, suggesting that teachers did make changes in their approach to starting the school year. The ratio of teachers reporting the greatest amount of change to those making no change was 5.67 to 1. Our final research question assessed the teachers' report of the difference between starting the school year after participating in GOTAGS and the beginning of the previous school year. Results from 335 veteran teachers on the TSRE questionnaire are available in Figure 3. Overall, teachers increased in their classroom management practices and feelings of satisfaction in teaching while also noting a decrease in students' off-task behavior and the number of office disciplinary referrals.

Discussion

Despite practicing teachers proclaiming classroom management as critical to effective teaching (Jones, 2006), only 55% of the 51 teacher-licensure state agencies (including Washington, D.C.) currently require evidence-based classroom management course work for preservice general education teachers (Freeman, Simonsen, Briere, & MacSuga-Gage, 2014). Those teacher preparation programs that do address classroom management struggle to find the most effective methods for preparing preservice teachers in this area (Gimbert, 2008). The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of a research-based professional development program focused on classroom management in the first 3 days of school. The beginning of the school year is the most important time for establishing academic and behavioral expectations and for setting oneself up for success (Capizzi, 2009; Harris & Garwood, 2015). Overall, the GOTAGS workshop proved to be successful. The increase in teachers' job satisfaction is particularly noteworthy, as it suggests that attention to management in the beginning of the school year can

improve teachers' outlook on their chosen profession. Implications from the findings of this research study regarding effective professional development and teacher training are discussed in the sections below.

Implications for Professional Development

The notion of professional development that has follow-up rather than one-stop shopping has important implications for research and practice. Indeed, follow-up coaching that comes after professional development sessions is needed to ensure the implementation of new strategies in teachers' daily classroom practices (Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). The current study embedded a follow-up approach by training teachers in each of the schools to be the deliverers of the professional development. The practicing teachers may have been more likely to follow through with the lessons learned from the GOTAGS program because they knew they would be held accountable by one of their peers. Furthermore, the training of teachers to deliver the intervention also provided schools with their own on-site, expert consultant. In other words, if teachers had any concerns or questions about the program, they simply had to walk down the hallway to talk with one of their colleagues. Previous studies seeking to increase teachers' use of evidence-based classroom management strategies have highlighted the importance of having an on-site consultant and/or in-person coach to increase implementation (MacSuga & Simonsen, 2011; Reinke et al., 2014). On-site consultation and follow-up are two strengths of this study and should be included in any professional development program that hopes to make lasting changes in teachers' approaches to management of the classroom.

Implications for Teacher Preparation

The lack of attention to classroom management as a part of teacher preparation and induction is unfortunate given the knowledge that management struggles often result in teachers leaving the field prematurely (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). The cost of teacher attrition in the United States is estimated to be upward of $7 billion per year (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2007). An increased emphasis on classroom management should take hold in teacher education programs and within the administrative body of schools (Capizzi, 2009; Emmer & Stough, 2001). Even in their field-based student teaching experiences, most preservice teachers enter classrooms midyear with an already established management system in place and are not provided opportunities to learn about establishing their own classroom management practices (Dyal & Sewell, 2002; Melnick & Meister, 2008). The perceived gap between their training and the reality of the classroom is an ever-growing concern for newly licensed teachers (Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, & Fry, 2004). When preservice teachers complete their student teaching assignments, the three biggest concerns they often express are classroom management, student

motivation, and parental involvement (He & Cooper, 2011). Principals expect that teachers will be able to manage their classrooms effectively (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negron, 2008), and advocates for reform in teacher education agree that new teachers must know how to engage students in a community of learning that is largely free of misbehavior (Good et al., 2006).

With more and more people entering the classroom via alternative certification programs, the true meaning of a novice teacher has evolved beyond that of a young college graduate (Ritter & Hancock, 2007). Two separate studies representing almost 500 teachers found that traditionally trained teachers were more effective classroom managers than their alternatively certified counterparts (Good et al., 2006; Ritter & Hancock, 2007). The majority of states' alternative certification programs (73%) do not include evidence-based classroom management strategies in their required course work (Freeman et al., 2014). When course work is offered in preservice education, it is unlikely the courses will be taught by someone experienced in classroom management pedagogy because most university faculty in licensure programs lack this expertise (Jones, 2006). Thus, it is often necessary for teachers to learn about classroom management through professional development if they hope to succeed in the classroom and provide their students with the education they deserve. Results from this study suggest that teachers will make changes in their approach to classroom management if they are provided with consultation and follow-up and that, according to the teachers themselves, these changes result in improved student behaviors and more job satisfaction.

Limitations

As with any study, the findings must be considered in light of research limitations. First, the study took place in one school district and therefore may not be generalizable to others areas of the country. Second, no statistical analysis was undertaken, and therefore causal claims regarding the effects of the professional development cannot be made. Finally, teachers self-reported their implementation of the GOTAGS strategies, and there were no classroom observations to confirm the actual rates of implementation. Social desirability is always a limitation in studies relying on self-report data.

Conclusion

Federal funds are now available to remediate the learning and behavioral needs of students at risk for school failure (Simonsen et al., 2010). One of the ongoing initiatives designed to address student behavior is SWPBS, with its multitiered system of support for all school-age students (Sugai & Horner, 2009). While SWPBS has been successful in decreasing disruptive behaviors and improving school climates across the nation, less research has been conducted at the classroom level, where teachers continue to struggle with management tasks (Farmer et al., 2014). Although evidence-based practices

in classroom management have been identified (Simonsen, Fairbanks, et al., 2008), the research-to-practice gap remains quite large. The GOTAGS program includes all of the essential elements of classroom management that have been identified as evidence-based practices, and the results of this study suggest that teachers will make changes in their approach to starting the school year with an attention to classroom management if they are provided with the proper support. Educational researchers must maintain an empirical focus on teachers' classroom management and the associations with school and student outcomes in an effort to keep good teachers in the field and ensure a successful academic experience for students. **TEP**

Appendix

A Teacher's Checklist to Encourage Student Academic Accountability

DESIGN: Creating the System	*A*	*U*	*S*	*R*	*N*
1. I post daily assignments on a designated visible location, and as part of the daily class closing routine I review what is written there and guide students in writing down any homework assignments.					
2. For each assignment, I clarify the specific work students should complete (all items, odds only, specific pages, etc.).					
3. For each assignment, I clarify how students should do the work (collaboratively, complete sentences, show all work, etc.).					
4. I clarify when and where students should turn in work (as finished, at the end of the period, by midnight; into a basket, electronically, etc.).					
5. I use a system for clearly communicating what, how, when, and where students should make up and turn in missed work from absence.					
MAINTENANCE: Following Through	A	U	S	R	N
6. I follow through on assignment deadlines, and I teach students ways to self-monitor their completion to meet these deadlines.					
7. I avoid "down time" in lessons, and I make plans that anticipate potential interruptions (e.g., technology glitch, student lacking materials.)					
8. I weight the value of assignments (e.g., assigning more points to assignments that last three weeks than those that last three days).					
9. I provide students with specific feedback on *what* is good and *why*, and *what* needs improvement and *how*, sooner rather than later.					
10. I teach my students to self-monitor by teaching them to self-track their progress/grades/accomplishments.					

Note. A = always, U = usually, S = sometimes, R = rarely, N = never.

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