Classwide Interventions

Effective Instruction Makes a Difference

Maureen A. Conroy

Kevin S. Sutherland

Angela L. Snyder

Samantha Marsh

Whether teaching in a general education classroom or in a specialized program for students with special needs, teachers face a variety of classroom behaviors that can detract from the learning process. At times, they may spend so much time with a few students who exhibit disruptive and off-task behaviors that they are less available for academic instruction with all students.

The research literature provides numerous examples of effective teaching strategies that can help teachers address problem behavior in their classrooms. These strategies include manipulating *antecedents* (i.e., environmental factors that are likely to increase a behavior), such as increasing opportunities to respond to academic requests (OTRs), and manipulating *consequences* (i.e., environmental factors that maintain behaviors), such as providing contingent praise. Unfortunately, some teachers are not skilled at employing these effective teaching tools in their classrooms. Consider the case scenarios "A Classroom That Works" and "A Classroom With Challenges."

Creating a Positive Climate Through Classwide Interventions

Classrooms are dynamic environments in which teachers and students engage in ongoing reciprocal interactions throughout the school day. As indicated in both case scenarios, classes that include classwide effective intervention practices are likely to have positive teacher–student interactions and to promote student learning and engagement while minimizing problem behaviors. However, when classwide interventions are missing from a classroom, teacher–student interactions are likely to become reactively negative (and perhaps even coercive). Such interactions interfere with learning and create a chaotic and aversive classroom atmosphere.

Classwide interventions are a group of research-based effective teaching strategies used positively and preventively to promote and reinforce social and behavioral competence in students while minimizing problem behaviors (Farmer et al., 2006). Classwide interventions do not represent a single type of intervention; instead, they include a combination of effective behavior management practices that have a long history in our field, such as using contingent and frequent *praise,* providing *OTRs*, and applying *classroom rules.*

Classwide Interventions: Universal Classroom Tools for Effective Instruction

Teachers should consider the following classwide interventions when implementing positive behavior supports:

- Using close supervision and monitoring.
- Establishing and teaching classroom rules.
- Increasing OTRs.
- Increasing contingent praise.
- Providing feedback and error correction and monitoring progress.
- Implementing the good behavior game (GBG).

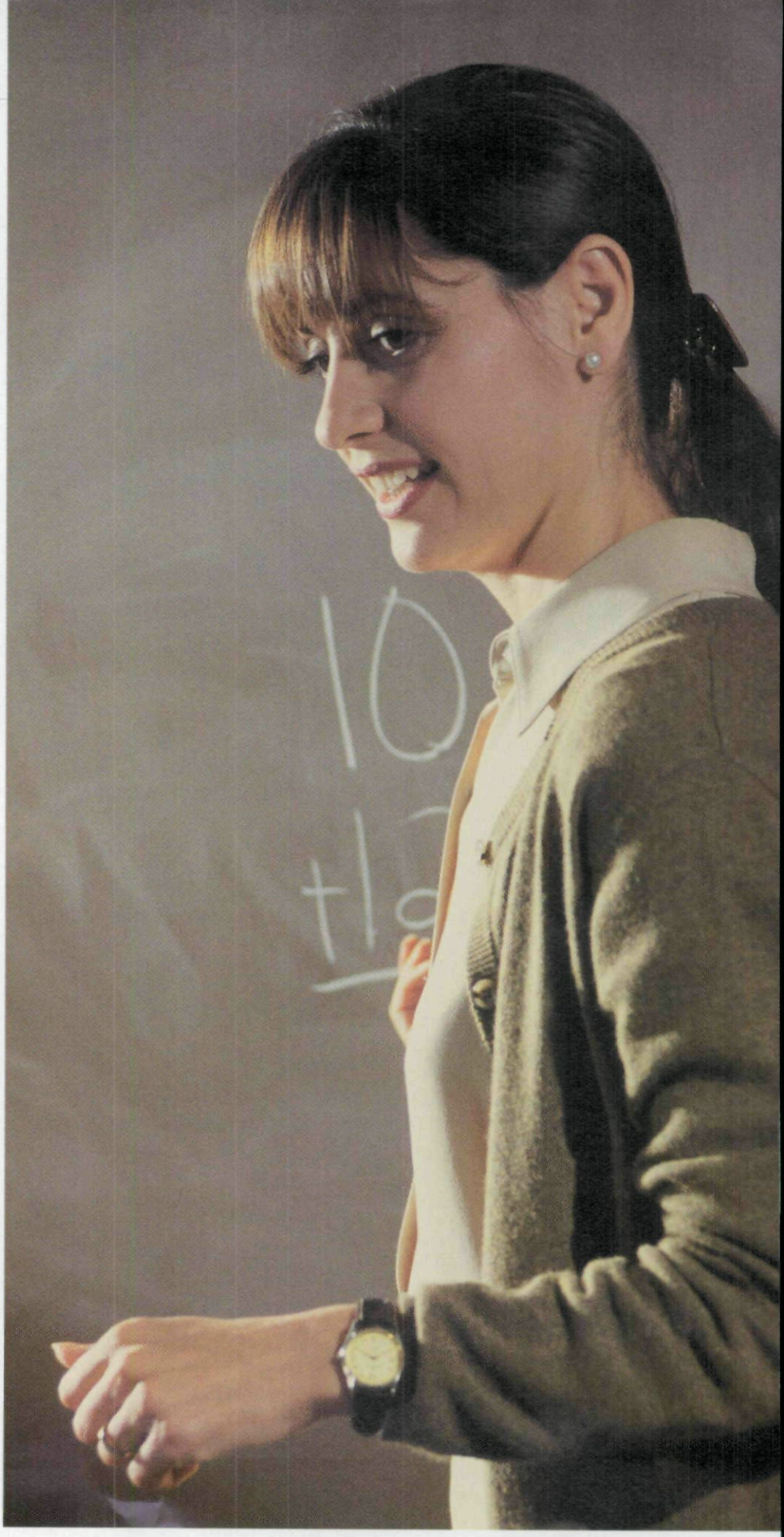
Close Supervision and Monitoring

Close supervision and monitoring generally means that the teacher has active, frequent, and regular engage-

TEACHING Exceptional Children, Vol. 40, No. 6, pp. 24-30.

ment with students. These engagements may include placing students close to the teacher, scanning and moving frequently, initiating and reciprocating purposeful interactions, and providing opportunities for direct instruction and feedback (Colvin, Sugai, & Patching, 1993). When teachers are in proximity to students and monitor students' learning and behavior, they can prevent problem behaviors before they occur and can redirect them before they escalate. For example, when a teacher is near a student who is becoming frustrated and is struggling with a task, the teacher can intervene quickly and provide academic and behavior supports before a problem behavior occurs.

Implementing close supervision and monitoring may require developing a plan in collaboration with other adults or paraprofessionals in the classroom. For example, a classroom teacher may implement a zone-monitoring and supervision plan during an instructional time when many students need assistance and engage in problem behaviors. With a zone-monitoring



Case Scenario: A Classroom That Works

Collaboration between special and general education teachers in the classroom can be beneficial to students with and without special needs, especially when the collaboration works seamlessly. Ms. Harman and Ms. Easley teach in an urban elementary school. At the beginning of the school year, they worked collaboratively with their students to develop classroom rules that both special and general education students could follow and to identify specific procedures, such as turning in homework and lining up to go to lunch, for regular classroom activities. In addition, they spent a significant amount of time praising their students not just for work done correctly but also for good attempts.

Ms. Harman and Ms. Easley, who continuously sought ways to improve their teaching and help their students learn, took part in an applied research project that facilitated positive changes in their instructional language and methods. They incorporated a group behavior management system called *the good behavior game (GBG;* Barrish, Saunders, & Wolfe, 1969) into their instructional time.

Ms. Hammond and Ms. Easley audiotaped an instructional lesson and graphed the numbers of opportunities to respond (OTRs) that they provided, as well as the number of times that they praised their students during the lesson. Through this self-evaluation of their instructional language, they developed a greater awareness of the frequency with which they provided their students with OTRs to instructional requests and of the frequency of their praise statements. Using these self-management procedures enabled Ms. Harman and Ms. Easley to increase the number of OTRs from only 10 per 15 minutes to almost 6 per minute, approximating the recommendations of the Council for Exceptional Children (1987). This change in the OTR rate encouraged student engagement and led to decreased undesirable behavior. In addition, the teachers increased their rate of praise from only 2 per 15 minutes to almost 1 per minute, resulting in further improvements in the behavior of the students. Making small changes in the ways that they instructed their students and rewarding their students more often for work attempted resulted in an improved positive classroom atmosphere and an increase in students' effort.

plan, adults in the classroom are at strategic locations throughout the classroom, and each of them monitors a small number of students. This system enables adults to closely supervise and monitor students and facilitates students' access to teacher assistance.

Considerable evidence supports the use of close supervision and monitoring as a classwide intervention. For example, research has documented that close supervision and monitoring result in decreases in disruptive behavior across various educational settings, including classroom instruction (DePry & Sugai, 2002); recess (Lewis, Powers, Kelk, & Newcomer, 2002); and transition time (Colvin, Sugai, Good, & Lee, 1997).

Classroom rules serve as behavioral expectations that create an organized and productive learning environment for students and teachers by promoting appropriate classroom behaviors.

Classroom Rules

The development and implementation of classroom rules is another universal classwide intervention that influences the learning environment for all students. Classroom rules serve as behavioral expectations that create an organized and productive learning environment for students and teachers by promoting appropriate classroom behaviors. Without classroom rules, such problem behaviors as aggression and disruption are more likely (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). Research has indicated that effective teachers do the following:

- Establish rules for expected behavior at the beginning of the year.
- Systematically teach the rules to the students.
- Monitor and reward students' compliance with the rules.
- Consistently apply consequences to rule violations (Anderson, Evertson, & Emmer, 1980; Evertson & Emmer, 1982).

Opportunities to Respond (OTRs)

Increasing instructional pacing through OTRs is a questioning, prompting, or cueing technique that begins a learning trial (e.g., "What number comes after 10?"). This technique helps increase the number of active child responses, which in turn can result in increases in correct responses and engagement of all students in the classroom (Greenwood, Delquadri, & Hall, 1984). Although OTRs vary in type and characteristics (e.g., choral responses, individual responses, and visual or auditory cuing), all types of OTRs generally include the following components:

- Increasing rates of teacher instructional talk that includes repeated verbal, visual, or verbal and visual types of prompts for responding.
- Presenting information in a manner that increases student correct

responding (e.g., "This is an *A*. What letter is this?").

- Implementing individualized instructional modifications appropriate for the students' level of functioning, along with frequent checks for understanding and accuracy.
- Using repeated instructional prompting that incorporates wait time to allow students to respond.
- Providing corrective feedback, error correction, and progress monitoring (Stichter & Lewis, 2006).

When researchers increase rates of OTR, they have found increases in on-task student behavior and in correct responses, as well as fewer disruptive behaviors by students (Brophy & Good, 1986; Carnine, 1976; Greenwood et al., 1984; Sutherland, Gunter, & Alder, 2003). Students who are engaged in learning are less likely to demonstrate problem behaviors (Sutherland et al.) and more likely to engage in active and correct responses (Sutherland & Snyder, 2007).

Contingent Praise

"Catch 'em being good" is a familiar strategy to most teachers. Although many teachers are aware of the powerful effects of praise, they often underuse it. Fortunately, training can help teachers learn to use praise as a reinforcer. Praise is a generalized reinforcer and has a rich research base that demonstrates its effectiveness in increasing social and behavioral competence in students (Alber, Heward, & Hippler, 1999; Sutherland, 2000). *Effective* praise is specific and contingent (Sutherland). *Specific* praise occurs when the teacher specifies the target behavior reinforced within the praise statement (e.g., "Good, you stayed in your seat during the entire reading session"). Praise is *contingent* when it is a consequence for a specific expected behavior, such as completing an assigned task, following a teacher's instruction, or engaging in appropriate social behavior.

Researchers have found that when teachers increase their use of specific and contingent praise, improvement occurs in the number of correct responses by students, task engagement, words read correctly per minute, problems completed, and student engagement (Kirby & Shields, 1972; Luiselli & Downing, 1980; Sutherland, Wehby, & Copeland, 2000). In general, teachers should offer praise statements more often than corrective statements. For example, Good and Grouws (1977) recommend that teachers strive to achieve and maintain a ratio of 4 or 5 positive statements to 1 corrective statement.

Case Scenario: A Classroom With Challenges

Ms. Walters taught 12 students, whose grade levels ranged from second grade to fifth grade, in an urban elementary school. The students had a variety of disabilities—for example, emotional disorders (ED), learning disabilities (LD), and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

As a group, these students presented many classroom challenges. Each day, Ms. Walters greeted her students by saying "Good morning, class," only to be confronted by disruptive student talk, papers flying at her, and students who were not in their assigned seats. Along with her paraprofessional, Ms. Johnson, Ms. Walters spent the first 45 minutes of every day just trying to get her students to sit down, hand in their homework, and attend to language arts, the first lesson of the day. She had very few doable procedures in place for daily tasks, and most of the students regularly ignored classroom rules. Ms. Walters had assigned students to small groups on the basis of their skill levels; however, she spent a tremendous amount of time correcting disruptive students, who would provoke others. Needless to say, she was frustrated and often raised her voice at her students in an effort to persuade them to pay attention to her. She knew that what she was doing was not working, but she and her students were caught in a negative, coercive interaction cycle.

Discouraged and ready to quit before she had even finished her first year, Ms. Walters agreed to have a behavioral consultant come into her classroom to help her with classroom management. The consultant worked with Ms. Walters to arrange her classroom so that all students could see her and the blackboard. The consultant and Ms. Walters developed procedures for entering the classroom in the morning (e.g., routines for putting away backpacks and homework), and Ms. Walters distributed students with disruptive behavior across the small groups in the classroom. As a reward for good behavior, she assigned a "daily leader" to each group for the next day.

The consultant also trained the paraprofessional to step in when Ms. Walters was having difficulty with a particular student and engage other students in small-group or individualized work so that Ms. Walters was not responsible for the whole class. After Ms. Walters received this support, her teaching strategies improved, and she felt and looked more competent and effective in her ability to manage her students' behavior and promote their learning. Students responded to her effective teaching practices; and as a result, they were more engaged. Although more growth was necessary, the classwide atmosphere improved, and everyone had hope for a better school year.

Feedback, Error Correction, and Progress Monitoring

Providing students with feedback relative to their behavior and performance level is another important classwide intervention. When used effectively, feedback should

- Help students learn the correct response in a timely way.
- Be specific to students' skill and knowledge levels.
- Occur following a student error (i.e., error correction).

Error correction procedures begin with the teacher's providing a corrective model (e.g., "Remember that to determine the area of a square or rectangle, multiply length times width"). This corrective model precedes the student's correct response, which the student should base on the teacher's model (e.g., "If the length of a rectangle is 5 feet and its width is 4 feet, I multiply length by width to obtain a result of 20 square feet."). Corrective feedback should accompany continuous monitoring of the student's academic and/or social behavior performance (e.g., curriculum-based measurement), as well as accurate and consistently presented instruction and interventions (i.e., fidelity of implementation).

Effective feedback can take many forms (e.g., answering questions, checking seatwork, and responding directly), and researchers have linked it positively to student engagement and achievement (Fisher et al., 1980). Similarly, when teachers use error correction, increases occur in academic performance (Barbetta, Heron, & Heward, 1993; Barbetta & Heward, 1993) and correct responses (Bangert-Downs, Kulik, Kulik, & Morgan, 1991).

Good Behavior Game (GBG)

The GBG is a group contingency designed to

- Improve the teacher's ability to define tasks, set rules, and discipline students.
- Reduce disruptive, aggressive, off-task, and shy behaviors in elementary-age children.
- Promote good behavior by rewarding teams that do not exceed maladaptive behavior standards.

The teacher begins the GBG by assigning each student in the class to a team and selecting team leaders. The teacher and students read and review the classroom rules, and the teacher informs students that each rule violation results immediately in a check mark on the blackboard next to the team's name. In addition, the teacher tells the students that he or she will state the rule that a student has violated, identify the student who has violated the rule, and praise the other teams for adhering to the rules. At the end of an instructional session, the teacher and students review the number of check marks per team, repeat the preset criteria for winning the game, and announce the winning team or teams. Team leaders then hand out rewards to winning team members (e.g., stamps, stickers, or "I did it" badges), and the nonwinning teams must stay in their seats and continue to engage in their lesson. Because teams try to beat the preset limit, more than one—or even all—teams can win.

Researchers initially associated the GBG with reduced rates of out-of-seat and talking-out behaviors of fourth-grade students (Barrish et al., 1969). Over the next 35 years, this finding led to a line of research that has documented the effectiveness of the GBG with students of varying ages and disabilities across many different settings. For example, Dolan and colleagues (1993) examined the effect of the GBG on first graders' disruptive classroom behaviors and found that teacher ratings of aggressive and shy behavior were significantly lower in the spring of the first grade than in the fall. In sum, the GBG is a good example of a classwide intervention that can have an effect on the behavior—and ultimately, on the learning—of many students.

Where Do You Begin? Steps for Creating a Positive Classroom Atmosphere

Creating a positive classroom environment through implementing classwide interventions does not solve all classroom problem behaviors overnight. As illustrated in the classroom of Ms. Harman and Ms. Easley in "Case Scenario: A Classroom That Works," implementing these effective teaching practices requires up-front planning and ongoing problem solving. In addition, teachers must implement these practices efficiently and correctly (i.e., with fidelity) and individualize the practices to make them appropriate for unique aspects of their classrooms. For example, classroom rules may vary from classroom to classroom, depending on the expectations and ability levels of the students. Similarly, the teacher may implement close supervision and monitoring differently depending on the classroom size and layout. Like other behavior support strategies, implementing classwide interventions requires ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the use and effectiveness of these strategies. Thus, teachers will want to monitor their implementation of targeted classwide strategies and student outcomes. Ms. Harman and Ms. Easley demonstrated that collecting data on their own teaching behaviors helped them improve their skills. Additionally, by collecting data on their students' behavior, they obtained enough evidence to know that the practices were working.

When teachers systematically implement classwide interventions, teacher–student interactions become more positive, students are more engaged, and teachers are able to focus on teaching appropriate behaviors.

Finally, as illustrated by the example of Ms. Walters in "Case Scenario: A Classroom With Challenges," teachers sometimes need a person outside their classroom to teach them classwide interventions and help them discover how to implement these strategies in their classrooms. Teachers may want to begin by assessing their current use of classwide interventions (see Table 1)

Table 1. Universal Classwide Interventions

Classwide Interventions	What Are You Currently Doing?	What Do You Want to Change to Improve Your Instruction?
Close supervision and monitoring	Are students in proximity to you? Can you visually monitor all the students in your classroom? Do you actively engage with your students? Do students in your classroom have quick and efficient access to teacher assistance? Is the adult–student ratio sufficient to provide close supervision and monitoring?	During which instructional time will you implement closer supervision and monitoring? What staff will you involve in close supervision and monitoring? How will you implement close supervision and monitoring? How will you monitor the effectiveness of close supervision and monitoring?
Classroom rules	Do you have classroom rules? Did you develop your classroom rules in collaboration with your students? Do your students know the classroom rules, and are they able to perform them? Do you communicate classroom rules to your students in an effective and efficient manner? Do adults in the classroom contingently and regularly provide reinforcement to students for adhering to the rules? Do you apply consequences consistently when students break classroom rules?	Do you and your students implement the classroom rules effectively? Do you need to rewrite or adapt your classroom rules? How will you communicate your classroom rules to your students? How will you monitor whether the rules are working? How will you provide positive reinforcement to students for complying with the rules? What will you do if students do not comply?
Opportunities to respond (OTRs)	Do you use various types of OTRs in your classroom (e.g., choral, individual)? Do you provide students with an adequate rate of OTRs? What type of instructional delivery model do you use (direct, whole group, small group, etc.)?	Can you increase the number of OTRs for your students? Can you "switch up" the delivery method you use to offer more OTRs? How can you use more direct instruction?
Contingent praise	Do you regularly praise students for answering correctly? Do you praise students for an attempt to answer, even if it is not correct? Are you specific about what you are praising a student for (rather than simply "good girl" or "good boy")? Do you praise students for desirable social behavior?	Can you increase your positive interactions with your students? Can you increase your use of specific praise statements? Can you increase your use of contingent praise? Can you find reasons to praise all students in your class more frequently than you reprimand them?

and systematically identifying and targeting specific classwide interventions for classroom application.

Final Thoughts

When teachers systematically implement classwide interventions, teacher–student interactions become more positive, students are more engaged, and teachers are able to focus on teaching appropriate behaviors—all these result in a positive classroom environment that promotes student learning and engagement.

References

Alber, S. R., Heward, W. L., & Hippler, B. J. (1999). Teaching middle school students with learning disabilities to recruit positive teacher attention. *Exceptional Children, 65*, 253–270.

Anderson, L., Evertson, C., & Emmer, E. (1980). Dimensions in classroom management derived from recent research. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 12*, 343–356.

Bangert-Downs, R. L., Kulik, C. C., Kulik, J. A., & Morgan, M. (1991). The instructional effects of feedback in test-like events. *Review of Educational Research, 61*, 213–238.

Barbetta, P. M., Heron, T. E., & Heward, W. L. (1993). Effects of active student response during error correction on the acquisition, maintenance, and generalization of sight words by students with developmental disabilities. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 26*, 111–119.

Barbetta, P. M., & Heward, W. L. (1993). Effects of active student response during error correction on the acquisition and maintenance of geography facts by elementary students with learning disabilities. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 3*, 217–233.

Barrish, H., Saunders, M., & Wolfe, M. (1969). Good behavior game: Effects of individual contingencies for group consequences on disruptive behavior in a classroom. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 2*, 119–124.

Brophy, J. H., & Good, T. (1986). Teacher behavior and student achievement. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research in teaching* (3rd ed.; pp. 328–375). New York: Macmillan.

Carnine, D. W. (1976). Effects of two teacher-presentation rates on off-task behavior, answering correctly, and participation. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 9*, 199–206.

Colvin, G., Sugai, G., Good, R. H., & Lee, Y. (1997). Using active supervision and precorrection to improve transition behaviors in an elementary school. *School Psychology Quarterly, 12*, 344–363.

Colvin, G. Sugai, G., & Patching, W. (1993). Precorrection: An instructional approach for managing predictable problem behaviors. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 28*, 143–150.

Council for Exceptional Children. (1987). *Academy for effective instruction: Working with mildly handicapped students.* Reston, VA: Author.

DePry, R. L., & Sugai, G. (2002). The effect of active supervision and pre-correction on minor behavioral incidents in a sixth grade general education classroom. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 11*, 255–267.

Dolan, L. J., Kellam, S. G., Brown, C. H., Werthamer-Larson, L., Rebok, G. W., Mayer, L. S., et al. (1993). The short-term impact of two classroom-based preventive interventions on aggressive and shy behaviors and poor achievement. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 14*, 317–345.

Evertson, C., & Emmer, E. (1982). Effective management at the beginning of the year in junior high classes. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 74*, 485-498.

Farmer, T. W., Goforth, J., Hives, J., Aaron, A., Hunter, F., & Sgmatto, A. (2006). Competence enhancement behavior management. *Preventing School Failure, 50*, 39–44.

Fisher, C. W., Berliner, D. C., Filby, N. N., Marliave, R., Cahen, L. S., & Dishaw, M. M. (1980). Teaching behaviors, academic learning time, and student achievement: An overview. In C. Denham & A. Lieberman (Eds.), *Time to learn* (pp. 7–32). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Institute of Education.

Good, T., & Grouws, D. (1977). Teaching effects: A process-product study in fourth grade mathematics classrooms. *Journal of Teacher Education, 28*, 49–54.

Greenwood, C. R., Delquadri, J. C., & Hall, R. V. (1984). Opportunity to respond and student academic performance. In W. L. Heward, T. E. Heron, D. S. Hill, & J. Trap-Porter (Eds.), *Focus on behavior analysis in education* (pp. 58–88). Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill.

Kirby, F. D., & Shields, F. (1972). Modification of arithmetic response rate and attending behavior in a seventh-grade student. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 5*, 79–84.

Lewis, T. J., Powers, L. J., Kelk, M. J., & Newcomer, L. L. (2002). Reducing problem behaviors on the playground: An investigation of the application of school-wide positive behavior and supports. *Psychology in the Schools, 39*, 181–190.

Luiselli, J. K., & Downing, J. N. (1980). Improving a student's arithmetic performance using feedback and reinforcement procedures. *Education and Treatment of Children, 3*, 45–49.

Stichter, J., & Lewis, T. J. (2006). Classroom assessment: Targeting variables to improve instruction through a multi-level eco-behavioral model. In M. Hersen (Ed.), *Clinician's handbook of child behavioral assessment* (pp. 569–586). Burlington, MA: Elsevier.

Sutherland, K. S. (2000). Promoting positive interactions between teachers and students with emotional/behavioral disorders. *Preventing School Failure, 44*, 110–115.

Sutherland, K. S., Gunter, P. L., & Alder, N. (2003). The effect of varying rates of OTR on the classroom behavior of students with EBD. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 11*, 239–248.

Sutherland, K. S., & Snyder, A. (2007). Effects of reciprocal peer tutoring and self-graphing on reading fluency and classroom behavior of middle school students with emotional or behavioral disorders. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 15*, 103–118.

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 emotional and behavioral disorders. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 8*, 2–8, 26.

Walker, H., Colvin, G., & Ramsey, E. (1995). *Antisocial behavior in school: Strategies and best practices.* New York: Brooks/Cole.

Maureen A. Conroy *(CEC VA Federation), Professor;* **Kevin S. Sutherland** *(CEC VA Federation), Associate Professor;* **Angela L. Snyder** *(CEC VA Federation), Collateral Assistant Professor; and* **Samantha Marsh** *(CEC VA Federation), Doctoral Student, Department of Special Education and Disability Policy, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond.*

Address correspondence to Maureen A. Conroy, Department of Special Education and Disability Policy, Virginia Commonwealth University, 1015 W. Main Street, P.O. Box 842020, Richmond, VA 23284 (e-mail: maconroy@vcu.edu).

TEACHING Exceptional Children, *Vol. 40, No. 6, pp. 24–30.*