

A Guide to Helping New Teachers

Succeed:

*Strategies for principals and
administrators to assist new teachers
overcome behavioral challenges
within the classroom*

By: Tara Eiben

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What is the Concern Surrounding New Teachers?

According to Research:

- Statistics indicate that 30%-50% of teachers withdraw from the profession within the first 5 years of employment (>50% in urban settings).
- The majority of teachers who left the profession stated behavior management issues as the reason.
- A recent study indicated that only about 30% of general education teachers felt that they often receive support from building administrators, and only 3% felt they received support from district administrators.
- Most general education teachers received limited training in special education topics and classroom management during college.
- Various reports have documented teachers' concerns of not being properly prepared to deal with challenging behaviors.
- Teachers cited pressure from administration to meet time constraints and high standards (student behaviors, test scores, etc.) as reasons why their teaching styles became controlling.
- Teachers who do not receive proper guidance from their principals have stated feelings of neglect, low morale, and desire to find employment elsewhere.
- Although most principals acknowledge their duty to nurture teacher development, they are often skeptical of their abilities to do it well.

Glossary of Terms

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)- a plan for addressing undesired student behavior that involves assessment to identify the function of the behavior, strategies for teaching and reinforcing appropriate behavior to replace the undesired behavior, and procedures for responding to the undesired behavior when it occurs *(Kerr & Nelson, 2010)*

Behavior Management- the process of shaping student behavior in order to facilitate a classroom environment in which learning can occur *(Smart & Igo, 2010)*

Classroom Management- the ability to ensure lessons are run smoothly and disruptions are minimal *(Tillery et. al., 2010)*

Emotional & Behavioral Disorders- “a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects educational performance:

An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors, an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers, inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances, a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression, or a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.”

- Characteristics include hyperactivity, aggression or self-injurious behavior, withdrawal, immaturity, & learning difficulties

(according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)- a process conducted to identify the potential functions that a student’s maladaptive behavior serves for him/her *(Kerr & Nelson, 2010)*

Mentor- Veteran teacher (typically of the same expertise and grade level) assigned to guide a new teacher during his/her first year *(Youngs, 2007)*

New Teacher Induction- required activities and trainings for newly hired teachers that are organized by the school district *(Youngs, 2007)*

Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS)- a system that supports and promotes positive behavior in children in all settings: utilizes primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention *(Kerr & Nelson, 2010)*

Pre-Service Training- training received before entering employment - ie: college coursework *(Smart & Igo, 2010)*

Case Study

Before:

Miss Hampton is a first year teacher at Education Elementary School. Gradually, she begins to experience behavior issues from multiple students in her class. Having little training or experience in behavior management, Miss Hampton finds herself stressed, overwhelmed, and helpless in the situation. Anxious that she may lose her job, she resorts to controlling teaching methods that ultimately backfire. She goes to her building principal to seek help.

After:

After hearing Miss Hampton's concerns, the principal decided to take action immediately. He set up times for Miss Hampton to meet with the special education teacher, gave her small goals to build her confidence, and actively monitored her classroom. Watching a veteran teacher instruct her class let her see what worked for her students and develop new strategies. Together with the principal and other staff members, they were able to determine the functions of the behaviors and devise a plan to replace them with desirable behaviors.

By not receiving ultimatums, but support, Miss Hampton was able to focus and work towards a solution. Miss Hampton now feels more confident in her ability to handle the challenging behaviors and will be better prepared to take on new challenges in the future.

Discussion Questions

Q: Principals and administrators: Think back to when you were a beginning teacher. What challenges and struggles did you encounter? What supports do you wish were available to you at the time?

Q: Reread the research findings on page 2 of this study guide. Which piece struck you as the most surprising? Why? Do you see evidence of any of these findings in your district or school? What can you do to prevent or help extinguish these problems?

Q: Think of specific challenges that are currently occurring in your building/school district. What are some steps you can take to help extinguish these problems?

FAQ's

Q1: Is it true that a lot of new teachers leave the profession because of behavior issues?

A1: Yes. According to recent research, the majority of new teachers who have resigned stated behavior issues as the reason. Inability to control these issues lead to stress, fatigue, anxiety, and physical aches.

Q2: What are the behaviors?

A2: Examples of these behaviors include defiance, noncompliance, destruction, disruption, physical aggression, self-injury, social withdrawal, socially inappropriate behavior, stereotypy, and verbal aggression.

Q3: How can we get the teachers to stay?

A3: Guidance and support! Teachers want to succeed. It is when they feel success is not in their reach that they leave. Show them that they are not alone in their struggles and that they too can develop a positive learning environment.

Q4: Would this help be useful for veteran teachers as well?

A4: Yes. Experienced teachers encounter behavioral challenges as well. Becoming educated about behavioral and emotional disorders, as well as learning ways to extinguish undesired behaviors can benefit anyone working in the school system.

Q5: Why aren't new teachers prepared for behavior issues?

A5: Colleges tend to focus on behavioral and classroom management in special education courses. With many special education students mainstreamed into the general education classroom, it can be surprising that general education teachers aren't better prepared during pre-service training.

Q6: Would this require extra training for the principal?

A6: If not already trained in emotional and behavioral disorders, as well as interventions for extinguishing them, extra training may be required. This can be incorporated in induction training, staff development sessions, or Act 48 trainings.

References

Bunting, C. (2007). Principals as classroom leaders. *Principal*, 39-41.

The author of this article is a former teacher and public school administrator. She now uses her knowledge as an education writer and consultant. Her purpose in writing this article was to acknowledge what teachers expect from their principals, as well as suggest ways for principal to achieve these goals. According to the article, teachers expect individual support and encouragement from their principals. Suggested ways for principals to accomplish this are: encourage teacher specialization, provide time for teachers to discuss the special needs of their students, encourage a community among the staff, allow for idea exchanges, and simply giving teachers time to express their ideas and concerns with each other. This article will be a great addition to my research project since it suggests ways for principals to help create a healthier environment for teachers.

Holland, P. E. (2008). The principal's role in teacher development. *SRATE Journal*, 17(1), 16-24.

The author, who received her Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh, is currently a professor of Educational Leadership and Cultural Studies at the University of Houston. She developed this study to understand from a principal's point of view what needs done and what is being done to help teachers. By interviewing and observing principals of all different grade levels in an urban setting, the author was able to distinguish the principal's role in teacher development literature frequently leaves out. Included in what novice teachers need to learn are: the school setting, multicultural awareness, teaching techniques, people skills, and empowerment. The principals agreed that experience was vital in learning these skills. When asked how they help novice teachers succeed in these goals, they agreed on some strategies but differed on others. Some of the strategies agreed upon are observations/feedback and recognition of teacher accomplishments. This information will be useful for principals seeking ways to help new teachers. It will also add strategies and principals' perspectives to my research project.

Pelletier, L. G., & Sharp, E. C. (2009). Administrative pressures and teachers' interpersonal behaviour in the classroom. *Theory and Research in Education*, 7(2), 174-183.

The authors, a director of the psychology department and psychology professor at the University of Ottawa, wrote this article in search of explanations as to why teachers result in controlling behaviors over supportive behaviors in the classroom. This article reviewed

teachers' perceptions on the pressures administration places on them. Additionally, the authors convey how these pressures effect their teaching strategies and classroom environment. It is discussed how different aspects, such as time constraints and performance evaluations, result in teachers being controlling in the classroom. This information will be highly effective in my research project by shedding light on what causes teachers to respond negatively, as well as where teachers are lacking support.

Smart, J. B., & Igo, L. B. (2010). A grounded theory of behavior management strategy selection, implementation, and perceived effectiveness reported by first-year teachers. *The Elementary School Journal*, 110(4), 567-584.

The authors of this article, from Presbyterian College and Clemson University, interviewed 19 first-year teachers to gain an understanding of their strategies and perceived effectiveness of controlling student behavior issues. Results found that these teachers felt they had confidence and consistency in controlling mild student misbehaviors, but felt their college courses did not help them achieve the same goals for more severe misbehaviors. Such misbehaviors and inability to address them lead to physical and emotional stresses. While some found having a veteran teacher as a mentor helpful, the lack of training during college had a major impact on the quality of the interventions. This article will be a great addition to my research project because it discusses the limitations of many college education programs, discusses first year teacher concerns, and gives specific examples of situations.

Tillery, A. D., Varjas, K., Meyers, J., & Collins, A. S. (2010). General education teachers' perceptions of behavior management and intervention strategies. *Journal of Positive Behavior*, 12(2), 86-102.

The authors of this article, from the Department of Counseling and Psychological Services at Georgia State University, developed this study to determine general education teachers' perceptions of behavior management and intervention strategies. In order to achieve this goal, kindergarten and first-grade teachers completed qualitative interviews that asked about strategies, such as rewards, RTI, and classroom management implementation. Results indicated that teachers demonstrated little knowledge on the features of RTI and PBIS. In addition, the teachers interviewed recognized that they are highly influential of student behaviors in the classroom, and that establishing rules and modeling examples were highly important. This article will add teachers' perspectives on programs and strategies that affect student behavior and classroom environment.

Westling, D. L. (2010). Teachers and challenging behavior: Knowledge, views, and practices. *Remedial and Special Education, 31*(1), 48-63.

The author, a professor of special education at Western Carolina University, researched 70 teachers to get insight on their opinions of challenging behaviors in the classroom. A questionnaire, that contained both Likert-type ratings and open-ended questions, addressed a variety of interests. Included in these interests were perceived adequacy of preservice, in-service preparation for working with students with challenging behavior, and support available for working with students with challenging behaviors. Results indicated that challenging behaviors added stress to the teacher and other students, with 44% of general education teachers stating that it makes them think about quitting. Only 30% of general education teachers indicated that they often receive support from building administrators, and the majority felt that their preparation by the school districts was not adequate to handle challenging behaviors appropriately. This study will be a great resource for my project, as it will give statistics on the points of view of both special education and general education teachers on the topic of challenging behaviors and their abilities to handle them.

Youngs, P. (2007). How elementary principals' beliefs and actions influence new teachers' experiences. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 43*(1), 101-137.

The author of this article is an associate professor of teacher education and educational policy at Michigan State University. He performed this study to discover how principals influenced induction experiences for new teachers, as well as how their personal backgrounds manipulated their take on new teacher induction. This study followed statistics that state 30% of first year teachers left the profession at the end of the year. The process included interviews of various parties (teachers, principals, mentors, etc.) and observations of meetings and induction activities. The results indicated that half the principals were positively involved while the other half did not make such an impact. Those who were not positively involved had backgrounds that correlated to their actions. Teachers who do not receive proper guidance from their principals have stated feelings of neglect, low morale, and desire to find employment elsewhere. This article will add important facts to my research project. The first few years of a teacher's career are extremely important to his/her enthusiasm and desire to continue on this path. The support and guidance from principals plays a major role in this concept.