Purpose

Research clearly indicates that teachers are the single most important factor affecting student achievement (Haycock, 1998; Marzano, 2003). Research also supports the fact that classroom management skills are perhaps the most important set of teacher skills influencing student learning.

Faced with large class sizes, an increasing number of students who arrive at school experiencing considerable emotional stress, and classes in which students' academic and behavior skills vary widely, teachers are experiencing a heightened need for improving effectiveness in motivating and managing students. The movement toward increased inclusion of students with various disabilities and the growing number of students whose first language is not English have increased the complexity of teaching and effectively managing classrooms. Regardless of changes that may be made in the education system, schooling in the United States will not improve significantly unless teachers develop skills in the widely varied teaching methods generally described as classroom management.

Fortunately, technology in classroom management has kept pace with the increasing demands placed on teachers. Research in classroom management has grown explosively in the past forty years. Most teachers trained in the 1960s learned only such simple prescriptions as “don’t smile until Christmas” and “don’t grin until Thanksgiving.” In recent years, however, thousands of articles and hundreds of thoughtful research projects have focused on student behavior and learning. The concept of school discipline, which had concentrated on dealing with inevitable student misbehavior, was replaced by the concept of classroom management, which emphasized methods of creating positive learning environments that facilitate responsible student behavior and achievement.

Our purpose is to provide the reader with specific strategies for creating positive, supportive, respectful environments that encourage all students to view themselves and learning in a positive light. Our heartfelt desire is that this book will increase each reader's ability to empower students to believe in themselves, understand the learning environment, and view the school as
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a place where their dignity is enhanced and where they can direct and take credit for their own learning. We agree with Mary McCaslin and Thomas Good (1992), who wrote:

We believe that the intended modern school curriculum, which is designed to produce self-motivated, active learners, is seriously undermined by classroom management policies that encourage, if not demand, simple obedience. We advocate that a curriculum that seeks to promote problem solving and meaningful learning must be aligned with an authoritative management system that increasingly allows students to operate as self-regulated and risk-taking learners. (p. 4)

Although authors can provide research-proven methods and the theory that supports these methods, we realize that the teacher is the decision maker. We strongly believe (and the best current educational research supports) that in order to create schools that will help an increasing number of students succeed in life, educators must implement many of the methods presented throughout this book. We acknowledge and respect that teachers must consider each new approach in light of their personal styles and teaching situations; we also know that the methods in this book have proven effective for thousands of teachers. Engaging in thoughtful, reflective decision making before implementing a new approach is the sign of a competent professional; failing to incorporate methods proven effective with a wide range of students is irresponsible behavior.

Research Basis for the Materials Presented in This Book

Extensive research and experience went into the development of this book. The junior author taught elementary school for thirty-two years and then for five years taught classroom management and supervised student teachers at the college level. Over the past forty years, the senior author has been a middle school teacher, assistant principal, district-level special education coordinator, consultant in more than twenty-five states, and teacher educator teaching classroom management. He has chaired the American Educational Research Association’s Special Interest Group on Classroom Management, written the chapter “Classroom Management” for the Handbook of Research on Teacher Education and the chapter “How Do Teachers Learn to Be Effective Classroom Managers?” in the Handbook of Classroom Management: Research, Practice, and Contemporary Issues—a 1,445-page compilation of classroom management research edited by Carolyn Evertson and Carol Weinstein (2006). The senior author has also written the books Creating Effective Programs for Students with Emotional and Behavior Disorders (2004) and Practical Classroom Management (2015) as well as numerous chapters and articles on classroom management. Each year, the senior author continues to teach classroom management to between sixty-five and seventy-five graduate school students who are completing a year-long school internship while earning their master’s degree in a fourteen-month full-time program. The questions, concerns, and implementation of best practices by these bright young educators, and the questions and feedback during their first years of teaching, have significantly enriched the content in this book. In preparing for this book, the authors reviewed the 300 most recent articles as well as dissertations completed over the past five years on classroom management. In writing this eleventh edition, the authors also drew on the dozens of other studies conducted during the past forty years, ranging from the foundational work of Jere Brophy, the meta-analysis by Robert Marzano (2003), the aforementioned Handbook of Classroom Management (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006), the summary of research-supported practices for Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom (Epstein, Atkins, Cullinan, Kutash, & Weaver, 2008), a summary of “Evidence-Based Practices in Classroom Management” (Simonsen, Gairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008), and dozens of other key research studies and summaries of these studies. The most important research,
however, will be that which the reader conducts as he or she implements the methods described in this book. Effective classroom management is influenced by the context in which one teaches—including the unique needs and styles of the teacher and his or her students. Educators must conduct their own action research by implementing research-based methods and determining how these methods work most effectively within the context of their own classrooms and schools.

Throughout this edition of the book, we refer to brain-based research and its implications for effective classroom management and instruction. While great strides have been made in developing theoretical connections between current knowledge of the human brain and methods that support positive student behavior and learning, “The idea that applying this knowledge base to educational psychology to yield positive outcomes in the teaching and learning process sounds promising, however, there is a lack of empirical research conducted in K–12 classrooms to support the positive results of applying brain research to teaching practices” (Erbes, Folkerts, Gergis, Pederson, & Stivers, 2010, p. 120). It is therefore imperative that teachers and school district personnel conduct sound action research as they implement methods that have brain-based research as a primary support for their implementation.

New to This Edition

Updated material on the relationship between effective classroom management and PBIS

- New material on the how classroom management methods can support the creation of classrooms that are sensitive to students who have experienced trauma
- Updated discussion of brain-based research that supports classroom management methods
- Material on effectively using behavior specific feedback (praise)
- New material on the importance of creating positive, supportive peer relationships within the classroom and additional methods for creating these positive relationships
- Updated material on bullying and preventing bullying
- Methods for teaching students how to effectively respond to stress and frustration they experience in the classroom
- Methods for dealing with students’ use of electronic devices in the classroom
- New methods on using student choice to enhance motivation and academic success
- Methods for implementing peer tutoring
- New methods for preventing and responding to student behavior that disrupts the learning environment
- New ideas and methods on using reinforcement in the classroom
- Updated material on the use of zero tolerance and suspensions
- New methods for classroom teachers conducting a functional behavior assessment
- Updated materials on using the “check-in-check-out” procedure and other forms of contracts
- Ten interactive reviews that enable the reader to test their knowledge of the content by applying it to classroom scenarios

Audience

This book is for preservice and in-service teachers, counselors, administrators, school psychologists, and special educators. Its comprehensive and research-based presentation offers practical ideas for creating positive classroom and school climates, organizing and managing classrooms, improving instruction, dealing with classroom discipline problems, developing individualized
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plans for students experiencing persistent or serious behavioral problems, and developing
schoolwide student management programs. These ideas enable educators in their various roles to
understand the broad issues and specific skills involved in effective classroom and schoolwide
student management and to work collegially in responding to unproductive student behavior.

The concepts and strategies presented in this book will assist educators who work with a wide
range of students. They stem from research and have been field-tested by thousands of teachers
who work with students who are African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian, Caucasian,
poor, rich, learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, and talented and gifted. Educators who work
with students at risk for school failure will find these methods essential to their students’ success.

Approach

Materials used to educate teachers and administrators have too often focused on isolated aspects of
effective instruction and management. To develop a realistic, workable approach to classroom man-
gagement, educators have had to seek out and integrate information from literally dozens of sources—
many of which have claimed to provide “the answer.” This eleventh edition of Comprehensive
Classroom Management offers a thorough research-based synthesis of current knowledge in effective
classroom management. Extensive review of the research and our own experiences in classrooms
highlight five major factors or skill areas involved in effective classroom management:

1. Developing a solid understanding of students’ personal/psychological and learning needs
2. Establishing positive teacher–student and peer relationships that help meet students’
basic psychological needs, building a community of support within the classroom,
and extending this to involve students’ caregivers
3. Using organizational and group management methods that maximize on-task student
behavior that supports learning
4. Implementing instructional methods that facilitate optimal learning by responding to
the academic needs of individual students and the classroom group
5. Using a wide range of counseling and behavioral methods that involve students in
examining and correcting behavior that negatively affects their own learning or that of
other students

This emphasis on providing a variety of specific methods to consider does not, however,
imply that teachers should implement these methods by rote. We believe that teachers should
(and will) implement recommendations selectively, attending to their own teaching styles, learn-
ing goals, students’ needs, and other context variables. As Brophy and Evertson (1976) stated:

Effective teaching requires the ability to implement a very large number of diagnostic, instructional,
managerial, and therapeutic skills, tailoring behavior in specific contexts and situations to the
specific needs of the moment. Effective teachers not only must be able to do a large number of
things; they also must be able to recognize which of the many things they know how to do applies
at a given moment and be able to follow through by performing the behavior effectively. (p. 139)

We have stayed away from providing a cookbook of what to do if Johnny cheats or steals
because we agree with Allen Mendler (1992), who wrote:

It will never be possible to compile a list of all possible techniques to be used when problem
behaviors occur. Formulas fail to fit all situations. It is therefore more important that educators be
guided by a sound set of principles and guidelines from which they can use existing strategies or
develop new ones. (p. 26)
Unlike several classroom management texts, this text does more than merely summarize the work of leading classroom management theorists and suggest that educators examine their own behavior in light of someone’s theory. We believe teachers need to examine and integrate specific, research-based methods into their approach to creating supportive learning environments that maximize the learning gains for all students. Because we strongly believe all educators should have access to this basis for their decision making, throughout the text we have listed references to support our statements and recommendations. While most readers will choose not to examine these while reading the text, they provide important support for the methods recommended throughout the text.

As mentioned earlier, our approach places a major emphasis on creating positive learning environments and empowering students to understand and be actively involved in classroom management and instruction. We strongly believe that a significant number of serious management problems are responses to the manner in which students are treated as human beings and the types of instructional tasks they are asked to perform.

The methods presented in this book have been used by us and by numerous teachers whom we have taught and with whom we have worked during the past forty years. The methods have been field-tested by teachers in thousands of classrooms evenly divided among primary, intermediate, middle, and high school settings. These settings include classrooms in inner-city, rural, and suburban schools.

The first edition of this book was published more than thirty years ago. We are delighted and rewarded by the fact that most of the current “best accepted practice” in classroom management is consistent with the model we presented then and have continued to present. The Positive Behavior Support model presented by George Sugai and his colleagues (Sugai, Horner, & Gresham, 2002) includes most of the components found in our text since its first edition in 1981. Similarly, Jerome Freiberg’s (1996) “Consistency Management” and Cooperative Discipline model, which has proved so successful, emphasizes creating a caring community of support; having students develop classroom norms; giving students responsibility for running the classroom and school; implementing interactive, meaningful learning experiences; and reinforcing students. Evelyn Schneider’s (1996) “Educational Responsibility” involves building a community, giving students choices, and increasing student academic success. William Glasser’s (1990) The Quality School: Managing Students without Coercion and Curwin and Mendler’s (1988) Discipline with Dignity focus on creating schools and responding to misbehavior in ways that enhance students’ sense of personal value and efficacy.


We celebrate the fact that there is increasing agreement among writers, researchers, teachers, administrators, and parents regarding the factors that are associated with creating classroom and school communities that enable virtually all children to experience a community of support that enhances their academic and personal lives. We believe this book will enrich you on your journey to integrate these methods into your classroom and school.

It is our heartfelt wish and prayer that the materials in this book will assist you and your colleagues in creating positive, nurturing environments for students from all ability levels; socioeconomic classes; ethnic groups; and with varied personal, social, developmental, and intellectual
backgrounds. In addition, we hope this book will increase the enjoyment and rewards you experience in the incredibly important job of educating children and adolescents.

How to Use This Text

Compared to many texts on classroom management, this text is quite long and detailed. Our goal is to provide readers with a truly comprehensive, research-based, and practical source for implementing effective classroom management methods in their classroom. Since we wrote one of the first classroom management books in 1981, many authors have followed suit with much shorter and less comprehensive books that may be easier to read for students who have limited time to study this topic. We have continued, however, to present a more detailed, practical approach, trusting the professors who use this book will select activities that highlight key concepts they believe can be mastered within the time limitations they and their students experience.

Sadly, teaching is perhaps the only profession many people believe one can practice without extensive training. We have all heard and read many statements to the effect that if someone knows the content, he or she should be able to teach it in public schools. We would not want to be operated on, have dental work completed by, be defended in court by, or drive across a bridge designed by someone without extensive and detailed knowledge of the skills those in their profession deem essential for effectively practicing the profession. However, we often provide teachers with extremely limited knowledge and skills in critical areas of the profession and then wonder why students are too often failing in our public schools.

In order to provide students with an opportunity to select when and how to apply the material in this text, we have inserted numerous “Pause & Consider” activities throughout the book. We certainly do not expect every reader to complete all of these. Our hope is that professors and readers who use this text will select those they believe will meet their immediate instructional goals and will return to others as they continue their professional journey.

In short, we trust professors and students to use this book in a manner that will provide teachers and future teachers with key knowledge and skills, while also returning to this text as a resource as they continue to implement best practices in classroom management.

Acknowledgments

We wish to acknowledge the many teachers whose application of the methods presented in Comprehensive Classroom Management have validated their effectiveness. We thank Susan Foster, Peter Grauff, Heather Lilley, Dean Long, Lisa Stevens, Marjorie Miller Tonole, and Terri Vann for allowing us to use student behavior change projects they completed in our graduate classes. We also thank our daughter, Sarah Rudzek, for her editing and many suggestions in Chapter 5.

We want to thank Lynn Reer, who shared her ideas for working with second language learners. She has committed decades of passionate work to creating better school environments for these students. Finally, we would like to thank our daughter, Sarah, who shared ideas she generated to help her diverse first grade and fourth/fifth blend classes during her first six years of teaching.

We would also like to thank the reviewers of this edition for their helpful comments: Susan Edington, Murray State University; Joan S. Lawson, Hudson Valley Community College; Doug MacIsaac, Stetson University; and Bettie Willingham, Barton College.
The findings show that teachers who approach classroom management as a process of establishing and maintaining effective learning environments tend to be more successful than teachers who place more emphasis on their roles as authority figures or disciplinarians.

—Thomas L. Good and Jere Brophy (2008)

Classroom management can and should do more than elicit predictable obedience; indeed, it can and should be one vehicle for the enhancement of student self-understanding, self-evaluation, and the internalization of self-control.

—Mary McCaslin and Thomas L. Good (1992)

No other topic in education receives greater attention or causes more concerns for teachers and parents and students than classroom discipline. . . . The lack of effective classroom discipline or behavior management skills is the major stumbling block to a successful career in teaching.


Management must be presented in an intellectual framework for understanding classroom events and consequences rather than simply as a collection of tricks and specific reactions to behavior.

—Walter Doyle (1986)

The ways we organize classroom life should seek to make children feel significant and cared about—by the teacher and by each other. Unless students feel emotionally and physically safe, they won’t share real thoughts and feelings. Discussions will be tinny and dishonest. We need to design activities where students learn to trust and care for each other. Classroom life should, to the greatest extent possible, pre-figure the kind of democratic and just society we envision, and thus contribute to building that society. Together students and teachers can create a “community of conscience,” as educators Asa Hilliard and George Pine call it.


Classroom management is an enterprise of creating conditions for student involvement in curricular events. . . . The emphasis is on cooperation, engagement, and motivation, and on students learning to be part of a dynamic system, rather than on compliance, control and coercion.

—David Osher, George Bear, Jeffrey Sprague, and Walter Doyle (2010)
At every level of prevention, effective instructional and classroom management practices provide the foundation for youth engagement and learning, which in return is associated with decreases in problem behaviors.


Teaching is a profession. Effective teachers are reflective practitioners who constantly seek to analyze the impact their behavior has on the success of those they serve. While we may wish that the conditions under which we work were ideal or the students with whom we work experienced less trauma in their lives, our focus must remain on how our decisions and behaviors can positively impact our students. It is also our responsibility as professional educators to move beyond simply implementing prefabricated methods to truly understanding, analyzing, reflecting on, and constantly improving our decisions in order to assist all students to find joy in learning and to maximize their potential. In the area of classroom management, this includes having a deep understanding of the field and the reasons we choose the methods we use.

**Learning Goals**

After reading this chapter, you will know:

1. Why teachers are concerned about student behavior and the need for effective classroom management
2. The factors involved in effective classroom management
3. The historical trends in classroom management
4. The significant impact school variables have on student behavior and learning
5. The factors that influence teachers’ decisions regarding classroom management

**Why Are These Goals Important?**

Research indicates that teachers’ skills in creating safe, supportive classrooms are a major factor influencing students’ motivation, achievement, and behavior. In March 1984, a ten-member Panel on the Preparation of Beginning Teachers, chaired by Ernest L. Boyer, the president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, issued a report listing three major areas of expertise needed by beginning teachers:

1. Knowledge of how to manage a classroom
2. Knowledge of subject matter
3. Understanding of their students’ sociological backgrounds

Ten years later, Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1993) conducted a sophisticated data analysis of factors influencing student learning and identified classroom management as being the most important factor. Another decade later, issues of effective classroom management were highlighted by research studies as a key to effective student learning (Marzano, 2003; Shinn, Stoner, & Walker, 2002). In a *Los Angeles Times* article, Randi Weingarten, the president of the American Federation of Teachers, stated that the management of student behavior was one of the most complex aspects of teaching and the most difficult skill for many teachers to master. In this same
article, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan criticized U.S. teacher education programs for their failure to prepare teachers, partly because graduates of these programs lacked classroom management skills (Mehta, 2009).

Research suggests that skills in classroom management are a significant factor in enhancing student achievement in a variety of content areas (Deickmann, 2009; Frazer-Abder, 2010) and in schools serving very diverse students (National School Climate Council, 2007; Poplin et al., 2011; Ratcliff et al., 2010). The concept of discipline, with its emphasis on dealing with inevitable misbehavior among students, has for many years now been replaced by a more comprehensive body of knowledge that also emphasizes the importance of increasing students’ positive behavior and achievement by creating classroom communities in which students’ personal and academic needs are met (Brophy, 2004).

CONCERNS ABOUT STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND THE NEED FOR IMPROVED TEACHER KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

PAUSE & CONSIDER 1.1

Before reading this section, stop for a minute and write a response to the questions “What is it about teaching that most interests and excites me, and what am I most concerned about?” Share your response with colleagues or fellow students in a course you are taking.

Student behavior problems have for years been a major concern of parents, teachers, and administrators. After many years of rating discipline as the second biggest concern about America’s schools, the 2014 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes Toward Public Schools reported that the American public listed discipline third behind “lack of financial support” and “concerns about educational standards” (Bushaw & Calderon, 2014).

The public’s concerns about student behavior appear well grounded. Based on an extensive review of the literature, several leaders in the field of serving students with emotional and behavioral disorders recently indicated that at any one time at least 12 percent of students in K–12 classrooms have a relatively serious behavioral and emotional disorder, and 20 percent experience mild to serious problems in this area (Forness, Kim, & Walker, 2012). Researchers have reported that 58 percent of classroom time allocated for instruction is lost due to student behavior that disrupts their learning and that of others (Martella, Nelson, Marchand-Martella, & O’Reilly, 2012).
These are significant numbers that help explain why many teachers report students with ongoing and serious behavior problems are their greatest concern (Burkman, 2012), and classroom management is the area where they most need additional training (He & Cooper, 2011; Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri, & Goel, 2011). In one study, 34 percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that student behavior problems interfered with their teaching (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). An anonymous survey of 3,000 teachers in 48 states conducted by the American Psychological Association Task Force on Violence Directed Against Teachers found that 80 percent of teachers reported some form of victimization during the previous year, and 94 percent of these were caused by students. Of these experiences, 44 percent of teachers experienced physical attacks, 50 percent reported property loss or damage, and 72 percent reported some form of verbal harassment (Espelage et al., 2013).

Perhaps not surprising given these numbers, a study reported that more than one-third of teachers indicate they know a colleague who quit teaching because of discipline issues (Goodman, 2007). In a 2006 poll of teachers and administrators conducted for MetLife, one in five teachers indicated they were not prepared to maintain order in their classrooms, and teachers who were leaving the field were significantly more likely to state they felt unprepared in classroom management. Beginning teachers continue to indicate they received little effective training in classroom management (Brevik, 2009; Kuster, Bain, Newton, & Milbrandt, 2010). This is understandable given that, based on a survey of ten large universities with nationally recognized teacher preparation programs in elementary education, only three had a specific course on classroom management (Shook, 2012). Until initial teacher preparation in classroom management is improved and ongoing in-service work in this area becomes more common and better grounded in best practices, issues of student behavior will continue to be a major factor in teacher burnout (Durr, 2008), and principals will continue to identify classroom management as a major area of weakness for new teachers (Merkel, 2009; Smolinsky, 2009).

Concerns about student behavior and classroom management do more than create stress for teachers and very likely limit the number of teachers who enter teaching or remain in teaching for an extended period of time. In addition, these concerns often cause teachers to limit their use of instructional methods that actively engage students in the learning process (Lotan, 2006). If teachers are to implement engaging, meaningful instructional activities that enhance student motivation and higher-level thinking skills, teachers must become comfortable with their classroom management skills.

While much progress has been made in providing teachers with skills and systems for preventing and responding effectively to student behavior that disrupts the learning environment, many teachers continue to believe factors beyond their control are keys to student behavior.

Participants in our study attributed student behavior to unalterable variables such as internal student characteristics and family dynamics. These attributions of student behavior appeared to affect teachers’ decision-making processes and thereby their daily practices. (Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012, p. 227)

Even though social factors have made the teacher’s job more challenging, studies indicate that teachers and schools make a dramatic difference in the lives of many children. Schools and teachers
CHAPTER 1  Classroom Management in Perspective

working with similar student populations differ dramatically in their ability to help students develop desirable behaviors and increase students’ achievements. A U.S. Department of Education publication (2000) stated: “Studies indicate that approximately four of every five disruptive students can be traced to some dysfunction in the way schools are organized, staff members are trained, or schools are run” (p. 10). Research also indicates teachers who are involved in in-service classroom management work can dramatically improve their classroom management skills. In one study of fourteen teachers who received support in improving classroom management, thirteen of these teachers reduced student misbehavior in their classrooms by an average of 71 percent (Nard, 2007).

This text was written with the express intent of providing the kind of research-based, practical support that will help both preservice and in-service teachers significantly improve their classroom management skills and thus reduce disruptive student behavior and improve student learning. These types of improvements are best supported by learning communities in which teachers are actively involved in analyzing their practices, discussing developments with other educators, and collecting data on the outcomes associated with incorporating the methods they develop to improve their classroom management skills (Casey, 2009). The Pause & Consider sections interspersed throughout this book are intended to increase your active engagement with the content and to encourage you to support this by interacting with your colleagues.

UNDERSTANDING CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

After reading the next section, you should have a better understanding of past and future trends in the field of classroom management and the multiple methods you will need to consider as you plan to develop a safe, supportive learning community.

PAUSE & CONSIDER 1.2

Take a few minutes to write your own definition of effective classroom management. What classroom management skills do you believe effective teachers demonstrate? What attitudes and behaviors characterize educators who are effective at helping students develop and commit to using responsible, caring behavior in classroom and school settings? You might think about teachers you had who were very effective at creating this type of environment. What was it about them and what they did that helped to create this supportive environment where almost all students made good choices? If possible, share these ideas with a group of fellow students or colleagues. After completing this text or course, revisit what you wrote and discussed in this activity and write a new definition that incorporates your new ideas and understandings.

The Authors’ Basic Assumptions about Classroom Management

Based on our extensive review of the research and our experience in the field, six basic assumptions organize our beliefs and practices related to classroom management.

1. Effective classroom management is first and foremost about creating classroom environments in which all students feel safe and valued. Only in this type of environment are students able to maximize their learning of important social and academic skills. When teachers and students create these types of classroom settings, students make a high percentage of good choices and their learning is enhanced.
PART ONE Foundations of Comprehensive Classroom Management

2. Effective classroom management is closely connected to effective instruction. Students will tend to act responsibly and their learning will be enhanced when they are successfully and actively engaged in constructing meaningful, culturally relevant knowledge and skills.

3. Effective classroom management methods should enhance students’ sense of ownership, responsibility, and personal efficacy. This includes teachers incorporating into their decision making regarding instruction and behavior management an understanding and respect for their students’ cultural backgrounds and their families’ and communities’ beliefs, norms, values, and traditions.

4. Effective classroom management involves methods for helping students develop new behavioral skills that can assist them in working collaboratively and successfully with others.

5. Effective classroom management requires teachers to thoughtfully consider their goals for students as well as their own values and beliefs about working with students.

6. Effective classroom management involves thoughtful planning and focused professional growth. It is both a very personal and a very professional activity that requires that teachers integrate their own professional knowledge and skills with careful attention to their own personal beliefs and values and students’ wants and needs—including students’ developmental and learning needs and cultural values.

THE COMPONENTS OF COMPREHENSIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Jere Brophy (1988) provided a thoughtful, general definition of classroom management when he wrote:

Good classroom management implies not only that the teacher has elicited the cooperation of the students in minimizing misconduct and can intervene effectively when misconduct occurs, but also that worthwhile academic activities are occurring more or less continuously and that the classroom management system as a whole (which includes, but is not limited to, the teacher’s disciplinary interventions) is designed to maximize student engagement in those activities, not merely to minimize misconduct. (p. 3)

More recently, Osher et al. (2010) have indicated, “There are at least four social and emotional conditions for learning—emotional and physical safety, connectedness, authentic challenges, and a responsible peer climate” (p. 55). Adkins-Coleman (2010) adds that “culturally responsible classroom management requires that teachers set high expectations for students, ensure that students meet their expectations, and maintain a caring, structured, cooperative classroom environment that addresses students’ lived experiences and cultural backgrounds” (p. 41). We believe effective classroom management must ensure that all these conditions are met, and in order to do so, suggest that comprehensive classroom management includes five areas of knowledge and skill:

1. Classroom management will be most effective when it is based on a solid understanding of current research and theory in classroom management and students’ personal and psychological needs (Chapters 1 and 2).

   Just as physicians must understand a great deal about the human body in order to effectively implement the many specific skills necessary to help their patients, teachers will be more effective when they understand the theoretical and research support for the classroom management methods they implement.
CHAPTER 1  Classroom Management in Perspective

2. Classroom management requires that teachers create positive personal relationships and a community of support in the classroom by establishing positive teacher–student and peer relationships and having positive involvement with students’ caregivers (Chapters 3, 4, and 5).

   The value of establishing positive, supportive classroom environments is based on a concept presented by numerous psychologists, neuroscientists, and educators: Individuals learn effectively in environments where they experience a sense of being known, valued, and cared for and where they, therefore, feel safe and supported.

3. Classroom management involves helping students develop and commit to behavior standards that support a physically and psychologically safe classroom learning environment. It also involves teachers’ using organizational and group management methods that facilitate a safe, calm, smooth-flowing classroom structure (Chapter 6).

   This is perhaps the most well researched aspect of effective classroom management, and the development of behavior standards is the most commonly implemented approach to classroom management.

4. Classroom management includes teachers’ using instructional methods that facilitate optimal learning by responding to the academic needs of individual students and the classroom group (Chapter 7).

   Active student engagement in meaningful work at which the student is successful plays a major role in increasing students’ motivation to learn, on-task behavior, and learning.

5. Classroom management requires that teachers have the ability to respond effectively when students behave in ways that detract from their own learning and that of others (Chapters 8, 9, and 10).

   Given that disruptions will occur even in the most supportive, well-organized, and academically engaging classrooms, it is imperative that teachers possess methods for responding in ways that respectfully refocus the student while maintaining a smooth flow to classroom instruction. Comprehensive classroom management involves a commitment to and skills in responding to an individual student’s ongoing classroom behavior problems by analyzing the classroom environment, making changes to support the student, and helping the student develop skills for making responsible behavior choices within the classroom.

   While combining all components of effective classroom management will enhance the learning and behavior of all students, it seems particularly important when working with students who have historically struggled academically and behaviorally (Kennedy, 2011). It also appears that these components of effective management interact so that to some extent they are dependent on each other.

   Another way to conceptualize a comprehensive approach to classroom management is to consider various levels or a sequence for classroom management interventions. Hill Walker and his colleagues (Walker et al., 1996) developed a three-staged model for serving students with emotional and behavior problems. This model, initially developed by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) (1995) as a recommended approach for addressing the problems of youth offenders has also been used as a model for preventing mental disorders in school-age children (Greenberg, Domitrovich, & Bumbarger, 2001) and is a key component in the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports approach. Figure 1.1 presents this type of sequential approach as it relates to classroom management.
Just as teachers must be able to effectively differentiate instruction, they must be able to use multiple methods to help all students behave in ways that support their own learning and that of their classmates. By having this type of classroom management system available for all students, when these supports are provided to students who have been or may be considered for eligibility under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the teacher may implement these methods because they are no different than what is used with any child needing behavioral instruction within the general education classroom. Many relatively simple yet effective approaches are available for helping students examine and change their behaviors. Because teachers are increasingly faced with the task of teaching students who require special assistance in consistently behaving in ways that support the learning of all students in the classroom, it has become necessary that teachers acquire skills in implementing all aspects associated with comprehensive classroom management.
When faced with problems concerning students’ classroom behaviors, teachers too often intervene using disciplinary responses without carefully considering interpersonal relationships or the organizational and instructional changes that could be made in the classroom to increase positive student behavior and learning. A U.S. Department of Education publication (2000) stated: “Studies indicate that approximately four of every five disruptive students can be traced to some dysfunction in the way schools are organized, staff members are trained, or schools are run” (p. 10). Ennis and McCauley (2002) examined the methods eighteen teachers in urban classrooms used to successfully assist struggling students. These authors reported that the methods included “creating a curriculum and class environment that permitted many opportunities for engagement, provided positive interactions, encouraged the development of shared curriculum, and fostered student ownership” (p. 149). The teachers in this study also involved students in developing classroom behavior standards and had positive, supportive relationships with their students. In a study of effective classroom management in urban schools, Ullucci (2009) reported similar findings.

The History of Classroom Management Research and Practice

Teacher–Student Relationships and Counseling Approaches

Because the emphasis in psychology during the late 1960s and early 1970s was on personal growth and awareness, often termed humanistic psychology, most methods focused on understanding students’ problems and helping them better understand themselves and work cooperatively with adults to develop more productive behaviors.

Emphasis on humanistic psychology was most obvious in the models of self-concept theorists. This research was first widely reported in the late 1960s and early 1970s in books such as LaBenne and Green’s Educational Implications of Self-Concept Theory (1969) and William Purkey’s Self-Concept and School Achievement (1970). This work was extended to a more practical program for teachers by Tom Gordon (1974), whose Teacher Effectiveness Training provided them with techniques for responding to students’ behavioral errors with open communication and problem solving.

One of the earliest and most widely used problem-solving models was William Glasser’s reality therapy (1965). Glasser’s model derived from the belief that young people need caring professionals willing to help them take responsibility for their behavior and develop plans aimed at altering unproductive conduct. Rudolf Dreikurs and his associates (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1971) developed a model based on the belief that acting-out children made poor choices because of inappropriate notions of how to meet their basic need to be accepted. Dreikurs proposed a variety of methods for responding to children’s misconduct, depending on the goal of the behavior. His model provided teachers and parents with strategies for identifying the causes of students’ misbehavior, responding to misbehavior with logical consequences, and running family and classroom meetings. In the early to mid-1990s, the focus on students’ needs and problem solving continued with books such as Glasser’s Quality School (1990), Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockem’s Reclaiming Youth at Risk (1990), Curwin and Mendler’s Discipline with Dignity (1988), Mendler’s What Do I Do When . . . ? How to Achieve Discipline with Dignity in the Classroom (1992), and Fay and Funk’s Teaching with Love and Logic (1995).

The third major research area within the teacher–student relationship and counseling approach was the more data-based analysis of how the frequency and quality of teacher–student interactions affected student achievement. Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson’s Pygmalion in the Classroom (1968) reported that teachers’ expectations for students’ performance became self-fulfilling prophecies. In other words, students seem to perform as teachers expect them to. The important question
became what, specifically, teachers do to communicate high or low expectations to students. This question was initially studied by Brophy and Good (1971, 1974) at the University of Texas and led to recommendations and professional development on positive expectation effects (Cooper & Good, 1983), and providing students with behavior-specific praise (Brophy, 1981).

Teacherm's Organizational and Management Skills

The initial study on the importance of teachers’ organizational and management skills was reported in Jacob Kounin’s 1970 book, Discipline and Group Management in Classrooms. Kounin’s study involved videotaping many hours (285 videotaped lessons) in classrooms that ran smoothly with a minimum of disruptive behavior and classrooms in which students were frequently inattentive and disruptive. The videotapes were then systematically analyzed to determine what teachers in these two very different types of classrooms did differently when students misbehaved. The results showed no systematic differences. Effective classroom managers were not notably different from poor classroom managers in their ways of responding to disruptive student behavior. Further analysis, however, demonstrated how effective classroom managers used various teaching methods that prevented disruptive student behavior.

The Texas Teacher Effectiveness Study was a second landmark study dealing with organizing and managing behavior. In this study, reported in Learning from Teaching by Jere Brophy and Carolyn Evertson (1976), the researchers observed fifty-nine teachers over two years. Teachers were selected to provide two groups: teachers who were very effective at increasing student achievement and those whose students consistently made relatively poor academic progress. Classroom observations focused on teachers’ behaviors previously suggested as being related to effective teaching. The results of the study supported Kounin’s, that specific teacher behaviors were strongly related to student academic achievement and positive school behavior.

Kounin’s and Brophy and Evertson’s findings were expanded by Emmer, Evertson, and Anderson (1980) in the Classroom Organization and Effective Teaching Project carried out at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at the University of Texas at Austin. In the first of a series of studies, these researchers observed twenty-eight third-grade classrooms during the first several weeks of school. The research findings showed that the smooth functioning found throughout the school year in effective teachers’ classrooms was heavily influenced by effective planning and organization during the first few weeks of school. Effective classroom managers provided students with clear instruction in desirable classroom behavior, carefully monitored students’ performance, and spent time reteaching behaviors that students had not mastered. Effective teachers also made consequences for misbehavior clear and applied these consequences consistently.

“I’ve tried various forms of discipline, and I find that radio control works best.”

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This study was followed by research in junior high school classrooms (Evertson, 1985; Evertson & Emmer, 1982a), which verified the importance of early planning and effectively teaching rules and procedures to all students. Carolyn Evertson has continued this pioneer work, and her Classroom Organization and Management Program (COMP) provides instructional modules for helping teachers organize and effectively run classrooms. Studies by Jerome Freiberg (1999), Ron Nelson and others (Nelson, Martella, & Galand, 1998), and the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports work (Lewis & Newcomer, 2005; Lewis, Newcomer, Trussell, & Richter, 2006) have reinforced the importance of teaching desired behavior and establishing agreed-on behavior standards.

Instructional Skills

A third area of investigation on teacher behavior that prevents disruptive student behavior and enhances learning examines how teachers engage students in the learning process. Some of the earliest work on this subject was conducted by Madeline Hunter. For more than two decades, her Instructional Theory into Practice (ITIP) program attempted to translate findings in educational psychology into practical strategies that improved instruction. Though her work emphasizes some of the skills highlighted by researchers studying classroom organization and teacher–student relationships, her major contribution was in helping teachers understand the need to develop clear instructional goals, state these to students, provide effective direct instruction, and monitor students’ progress.

This research was expanded by studies that examined the relationship between various teacher instructional patterns and students’ achievement. Often called process-product research because it examines correlations between instructional processes and student outcomes or products, these studies were thoughtfully reviewed by Rosenshine (1983).

Another area of study examined the relative merits of competitive, cooperative, and individualized instruction. Carried out by David Johnson and Roger Johnson (2009), this work demonstrates that cooperative learning activities are associated with many desirable learning outcomes. Students who work cooperatively on learning tasks tend to relate more positively to their peers, to view learning as more positive, and to learn more information. Additional work in cooperative team learning was carried out by Robert Slavin (1995, 1996), who developed the teams-games-tournaments approach, and by Spencer Kagan (2009), who developed a practical book entitled Cooperative Learning: Resources for Teachers.

Researchers have also examined factors influencing how individual students learn most effectively and how teachers can adjust instruction to respond to students’ individual learning styles. Work by Rita Dunn and others (Dunn & DeBello, 1999; Dunn, Thies, & Honigsfeld, 2001) has shown that when teachers allow students to study in environments modified to respond to students’ varying learning preferences, students, including those with special learning needs, learn more and behave in ways that facilitate their learning and that of others. Howard Gardner’s work on multiple intelligences (1999b, 2006) has suggested there are at least eight types of intelligence. Gardner suggests that teachers should attempt to adapt instruction and assessment to respond in some ways to each child’s individual strengths. He also suggests that teachers will be more effective in enhancing student achievement when they help students relate instructional activities to something valued in the students’ world.

More recently, several new methods have been presented to increase teachers’ ability to assist students in obtaining academic skills. Response to Intervention (RTI) is an approach where student mastery of specific learning objectives is carefully assessed and usually highly structured instructional interventions are implemented to enhance student mastery.
A second approach, called Place-Based Education, enhances students' engagement in the learning process by integrating multiple content areas as students study issues and solve problems in their communities (Smith, 2002).

**Behavioristic Methods/Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports**

As social uneasiness rose about disruptive behavior of youth, the focus of classroom discipline moved in the direction of teacher control. This increased attention to discipline was associated with the development and popularization of behavioristic methodology. Beginning in the mid-1970s, most courses that aimed at helping teachers cope with disruptive student behavior focused almost exclusively on behavior modification techniques. Teachers were taught to ignore inappropriate behavior while reinforcing appropriate behavior, to write contracts with recalcitrant students, and to use time-out procedures. This emphasis on control was most systematically presented to teachers in Canter and Canter's (1976) *Assertive Discipline*. Teachers learned to state clear general behavioral expectations, quietly and consistently punish disruptive students, and provide group reinforcement for on-task behavior. Behavioral control has also been emphasized in the work of Fredric Jones (1987). Jones focuses on teachers' effective use of body language, the use of incentive systems, and individual assistance for academic problems.

In recent years, the most noted approach emphasizing data collection and focused behavioral interventions with students is termed *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports*. This approach incorporates much of the work from earlier studies in effective classroom management.

Given the popularity of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS)—more than 15,000 schools are implementing the approach—it is important to describe the relationship between the materials presented in this text and the SWPBIS approach. SWPBIS is a thoughtful, systematic compilation of a variety of methods, including the seminal work on teaching students rules and procedures (Evertson, 1985; Evertson & Emmer, 1982a; Evertson & Harris, 1995), the focus on data collection (Duke, 1980), and the emphasis on ensuring that discipline interventions are focused on helping students develop new skills (Jones, 1980; Jones & Jones, 1981, 1986). Specifically, the PBIS approach emphasizes (1) using data to make decisions about serving individual students and implementing schoolwide interventions; (2) working with school staff to define, teach, and reinforce socially acceptable school behaviors; (3) implementing a reinforcement system to encourage students to demonstrate responsible behavior; (4) providing small-group and individual instruction for appropriate behavior to students who need additional assistance; (5) developing an individualized plan to assist students who continue to make poor behavior choices based on a detailed analysis of the factors influencing student behavior (functional behavior assessment); and (6) creating family, school, and community partnerships to support the academic and behavioral needs of individual students (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negron, 2008; Sugai et al., 2010). These interventions are placed within three tiers. Tier 1 focuses on teaching schoolwide behavioral expectations to all students, reinforcing appropriate use of these skills, and reteaching appropriate behavior when students fail to behave responsibly. Tier 2 is geared to assist students demonstrating a pattern of problem behavior or academic failure and to prevent these issues from becoming serious. Tier 3 typically involves the use of functional behavior assessment to devise specialized assistance for students who continue to struggle despite receiving Tier 2 support.

While the SWPBIS system includes some methods for helping teachers more effectively respond to classroom behavior that disrupts the learning environment, SWPBIS is not specifically
focused on classroom management and the creation of supportive classroom learning environments. Therefore, there is limited focus on teacher–student or peer relationships, ensuring that instruction is engaging and culturally sensitive, or the importance of assessing and implementing changes in the classroom as a response to student behavior problems. Effective, culturally sensitive classroom management must thoughtfully address all of these issues (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Monroe, 2009; Jones, 1996, 2006; Ullucci, 2009).

While we strongly support staff implementing SWPBIS, it should also be mentioned that studies suggest more research is needed to support this approach. A meta-analysis of PBIS results reported that “SWPBIS is moderately effective in reducing problem behavior in students” (Solomon, Klein, Hintze, Cresse, & Peller, 2012, p. 116). Another assessment of the research on this approach reported that “although there is evidence pointing to its efficacy, the research behind SWPBIS is still weak” (Chitiyo, May, & Chitiyo, 2012, p. 20). Some writers suggest that further research is needed to ensure that SWPBIS is implemented in a manner that is culturally sensitive (Vincent & Tobin, 2011), while others have noted that “The majority of research on SW-PBIS has been at the school-wide level, and more research is needed to understand classroom-level characteristics associated with positive outcomes” (Reinke, Herman, & Stormont, 2013, p. 40). Other researchers suggest, The assessment of this approach would be strengthened by including a greater emphasis on observational data as opposed to office referrals and other more general indicators of behavior (Solomon et al., 2012). In addition, some researchers have raised the question of whether it is more effective and a better use of resources to reduce disruptive behavior and improve school climate by focusing on the most disruptive classrooms and individuals rather than on universal schoolwide interventions (Osher et al., 2010).

As mentioned earlier, SWPBIS Tier 1 interventions place relatively little emphasis on assessing classroom factors that are impacting student behavior. Tier 2 interventions also seldom focus on observation and modifications of the classroom environment, but rather emphasize single interventions focused solely on the student (Carter, Carter, Johnson, & Pool, 2012). As presented in this book, a comprehensive focus on classroom management incorporates all key classroom components impacting students’ behavior and learning. In order to assist all students in reaching their potential, it would be ideal if all teachers were effectively educated and supported to provide the skills presented in this text and were also supported by an effectively implemented SWPBIS system.

**Pause & Consider 1.4**

You have just read sections describing the key concepts and skills associated with effective classroom management as well as a brief history of classroom management methods. Look back at what you wrote in Pause and Consider 1.1. How does what you just read compare with what you wrote regarding a definition and key components associated with effective classroom management? You may want to write briefly about this or share your discoveries with a peer or small group.

**Social Factors Influence Students’ Behavior**

It is beyond the scope of this text to document the extent of problems such as divorce, domestic violence, poverty, racism, the impact of television and video games, and so on that affect the anxiety and concerns students bring to school and that negatively affect students’
learning. As anyone who works in K–12 public schools knows, many classrooms today include children living in poverty, children who have recently experienced their parents being divorced, children experiencing physical and/or psychological abuse at home, and so forth.

An organization called the Search Institute has developed a list of forty assets that assist students in reaching their potential. This organization also lists five developmental deficits: (1) drinking parties, (2) being alone at home, (3) being a victim of violence, (4) overexposure to television, and (5) physical abuse. Sadly, research indicates that “only 15 percent of young people surveyed experienced none of these deficits. One-third of youth (32%) experienced three or more” (Benson, Scales, Leffert, & Roehlkepartain, 1999, p. xiii).

**Pause & Consider 1.5**

Stop for a moment and consider the home and community factors you believe have the greatest negative impact on students coming to school with the personal support and psychological energy needed to perform their best at school. Next, write a statement or share your thoughts with peers. What are the implications regarding how school staff work with students to help them make responsible decisions in a school setting?

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**Creating a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom**

By the age of sixteen, 68 percent of children in the United States have experienced a traumatic event (Pappano, 2014). The National Survey on Children's Exposure to Violence reported that 25 percent of children had witnessed violence and 10 percent had seen a family member assault another family member (Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, Hamby, & Kracke, 2009). Students who have experienced trauma are at greater risk for school failure and need environments that provide them with personal support and a stable, predictable environment (Levine & Kline, 2010).

A variety of classroom factors has been recommended to support students who have experienced trauma. Blaustein and Kinniburgh (2010) identify four characteristics of a positive learning environment for children who have experienced significant adverse events that provide a foundation for learning and personal growth.

1. Adults demonstrate awareness of their own emotions and behavior and respond to students in a calm, educational manner.
2. Adults focus not on student behavior alone but rather on the function the behavior may be serving the student.
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3. Adults are consistent and predictable in the way they respond in providing a safe setting for students.
4. Adults teach and consistently use predictable routines and thus provide students with a sense of structure and order rituals.

Another group of writers has suggested the key characteristics of a trauma-sensitive classroom include:

- Developing a consistent approach to responding to disruptive behavior
- Creating predictable classroom routines and relationships
- Reducing bullying and harassment
- Teaching children skills in self-regulation and coping with stressful events
- Building on students’ strengths
- Communicating high behavioral and academic expectations
- Providing opportunities for students to be meaningfully engaged in the learning process (Wisconsin Group, 2014)

Similarly, Bath (2008) suggests that trauma-informed responses to children and youth involve creating a safe setting where children feel connected to the adults and are provided with support in learning how to manage their emotions.

Creating positive and collaborative teacher–student relationships is felt by many to be the context where the regulation of emotions, trust, and self-awareness that are often lacking in children who have experienced trauma can emerge (Perry, 2006). Positive teacher–student relationships are a centerpiece of classrooms and schools focused on reducing the negative impact trauma has on students’ schools success (Brinamen & Page, 2012; Dods, 2013; Wright, 2013). A student’s challenging behavior often reflects a mismatch between his or her current skill set and what the environment is asking of the student. Classrooms sensitive to trauma pay close attention to the match between the demand characteristics within the classroom and the student’s capacity to respond to those demands. Ongoing assessment of the compatibility between environmental demand and student skills is necessary when working with students who have experienced adverse events. Many students who have experienced trauma have weaknesses in executive function skills and difficulty accessing these skills in novel or unpredictable situations. Teachers need to pay close attention to a student’s exposure to novel as opposed to familiar expectations and events. This means teachers working with students who have experienced emotional trauma need to ensure that classroom routines are clear and mastered by students and that new events, including new types of instructional activities, are introduced by providing clear statements and demonstrations of the new behavior expectations.

Trauma-sensitive classrooms also enable students to feel safe making academic and behavior errors (Cole, Eisner, Gregory, & Ristuccia, 2013). Classrooms need to be places where students understand that effective learners take risks, make mistakes, and ask questions and that both peer and adult responses to mistakes will be respected. Trauma-sensitive classrooms also provide clear and educational responses to students’ errors (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2010; Cole et al., 2005; Cole et al., 2013). In a trauma-sensitive classroom, “a behavior-management system should be based on an understanding of why a particular child might respond inappropriately in the classroom and on the relational and academic needs of that child” (Cole et al., 2005, p. 55).
The approach to classroom management presented in this text is consistent with the leading work on creating classrooms that support students who have experienced trauma. Indeed, this is one reason the methods presented throughout this text enable teachers to effectively support a wide range of students who may have previously demonstrated behavior that was disruptive to the learning environment.

**Pause & Consider 1.6**

Write a brief statement about the key components of the trauma-sensitive classroom. How do the characteristics of this type of classroom compare to or contrast with what you have just learned about the key components of comprehensive classroom management? Generate a list of reasons a trauma-sensitive classroom might be an essential factor in facilitating both positive behavior and academic achievement for today's students.

**School Factors Significantly Influence Students’ Learning and Behavior**

Consider what classroom factors made your K–12 school experience positive and what factors made the classroom feel unsafe or caused you to feel a sense of frustration and failure. If you discuss these factors with fellow students or colleagues, it is likely you will realize most of these factors were influenced by the decisions and actions (or inactions) of teachers.

Even though social factors have made the teacher’s job more challenging, studies indicate that teachers and schools make a dramatic difference in the lives of many children (Darling-Hammond, 1997, 2010, 2013; Jackson & Lunenburg, 2010).

Teachers have control over many factors that significantly influence the achievement and behavior of students. Schools and teachers working with similar student populations differ dramatically in their ability to help students be academically successful and develop desirable behaviors. Mortimore and Sammons (1987) summarized their extensive research on factors that influence students’ academic and social gains by noting that school factors were six to ten times more influential than factors such as age, sex, social class, or race in determining students’ academic progress.

Kellam and his colleagues (1998) reported that highly aggressive six-year-old boys assigned to first-grade classrooms with teachers skilled in classroom management were three times less likely to be highly aggressive when they reached eighth grade than similarly aggressive boys placed in first-grade classrooms characterized by poor classroom management. These findings are consistent with experimental studies conducted in middle school classrooms by David Hawkins and others at the University of Washington (1988). Clearly, teachers make a difference, and teachers’ classroom management skills are an important aspect of teachers’ being able to bring about positive gains in student achievement and behavior.

There is increasing agreement among researchers (Algozzine, Audette, Ellis, Marr, & White, 2000; Freiberg, 1999; Jones, 2006; Lewis et al., 2006; Nelson & Roberts, 2000; Simonsen, Gairbanks, et al., 2008) regarding the type of school and classroom environments needed to support positive behavior among a wide range of students. These writers indicate the importance of working with students to clearly define and accept behavior expectations; developing clearly understood and educationally sound responses to rule violations, including the reteaching of expected behaviors; and developing individualized behavior support plans for
students who present ongoing behaviors that violate the rights of others. In addition, several of these writers (Freiberg, 1999; Jones, 2002) highlight the importance of creating an engaging curriculum and modifying curriculum and instruction for students who experience academic difficulties. These authors also emphasize the importance of ensuring that students experience a community of support within the school setting.

Unfortunately, much of the material written about methods that prevent students from experiencing behavior problems virtually ignores the aspect of students’ experiencing a sense of significance or belonging and involvement in academic tasks that are meaningful to the students and in which the students can experience success (Jones, 2002). Too often we have visited schools in which staff were working to teach prosocial skills and develop plans for recalcitrant students, but the ethos of the school lacked warmth and joy, and academic tasks were relatively uninteresting and failed to actively engage students. Often a significant minority of students in these schools felt alienated, found their academic work to be tedious and unrelated to their lives and interests, and did not believe teachers cared about them. Unless the factors of creating personal connections between peers and between students and staff and implementing meaningful, engaging academic tasks are addressed, the popularized behavioral approaches to changing student behavior will be inadequate as interventions to create safe, productive learning environments.

In April 1999, two very alienated male students entered Columbine High School in Colorado and killed twelve students and one adult. Several months after this incident, one student summarized what he had learned about preventing violence when he stated, “I don’t tease my friends as much as I used to. I try to be a lot nicer to everyone.” A senior who was in a video class with one of the killers said that this year, “a lot of seniors have been more open to people, even to underclassmen” (Goldstein, 1999, pp. 56, 57). The principal noted, “I think where money needs to be spent is educating our students about tolerance, about respecting one another, about communication” (Goldstein, 1999, p. 57). The key to preventing school violence is ultimately not in guards and cameras but in students feeling cared for, competent, and valued.

The Issues of Order, Caring, and Power

For classrooms and schools to meet the academic and personal needs of students, schools must be safe environments characterized by a considerable degree of order. Weinstein (1998) suggests that many teachers (especially beginning teachers) mistakenly view a teacher’s actions to create a caring and orderly classroom as mutually exclusive. Beginning teachers often want students to like them and view setting clear limits and responding politely yet firmly to student behavior that disrupts others’ right to feel safe and learn as endangering the fragile relationship they are attempting to develop with their students. The important question related to order is not whether
order needs to exist but how order is established and maintained. In his book *Constructive School Discipline*, Walter Smith (1936) wrote:

It must be admitted, however, that the failure of the old disciplinary regime, not inaptly styled “beneficent tyranny,” has left the situation somewhat chaotic. Many have discarded the authorita-
tive type of control without developing any adequate system to take its place. . . . Discipline under the new regime cannot be made easier, but it may be made a more vital element in moral education than it ever could under any system of autocratic domination. (pp. 8, 9)

Although Smith’s statement was written more than seventy-five years ago, there is an increas-
ing body of research and literature suggesting that the issue of how order is established may be the most important factor influencing student behavior in schools. Pedro Noguera (1995) stated that schools that feel safe are characterized by teachers knowing, valuing, and caring about students.

The urban schools that I know that feel safe to those who spend their time there don’t have metal detectors or armed security guards, and their principals don’t carry baseball bats. What these schools do have is a strong sense of community and collective responsibility. Such schools are seen by students as sacred territory, too special to be spoiled by crime and violence, and too important to risk one’s being excluded. (p. 207)

Discussing the importance of caring in working with students experiencing serious behavior problems, H. James McLaughlin (1992) wrote:

[A] teacher’s legitimate authority has four characteristics: it derives from personal and positional relationships with students; it is both assumed and conferred; it is constrained or enabled by school and societal contexts; and it is predicated on the transformation of control by caring. (p. 4)

Bowers and Flinders (1990) have suggested that “control and caring are not opposing terms; but the form of control is transformed by the presence of caring” (p. 15). Sergiovanni (1994) stated that one’s commitment to exemplary practice serves as the basis for authority. This concept is supported by comments John Holt made in the early 1970s when he noted that all teachers needed to have authority but that there were two types of authority. *Natural authority* is based on a teacher’s natural skill in assisting students in the learning process, solving problems, and modeling thoughtful, caring behavior. *Arbitrary or role-bound authority* is the authority granted to educators by their roles as teachers, principals, counselors, and so on. This authority is based on educators’ legal right to maintain order. Holt suggested that students are impressed by and respond well to natural authority, whereas they often respond to arbitrary authority with confrontation and withdrawal. He suggested that the two types of authority are difficult to blend and that the more educators use natural authority, the less they would need to call on arbitrary authority. Similarly, the more educators use arbitrary authority, the less students will be able to see educators’ natural authority.
In their book *Conflict in the Classroom*, Nicholas Long, Ruth Newman, and William Morse (1996) provide a thoughtful statement about the choices teachers make when considering how to maintain a safe classroom environment:

For some educators, discipline means the power of the teacher to control the behavior of their students . . . For other educators, discipline means an opportunity to teach students a set of values about how people can live together in a democratic society. This would include the values of honesty, fair play, the rights of others to learn, respect for property, respect of multicultural differences, and so on. Discipline is perceived as the process of helping students internalize these values and to develop self-control over their drives and feelings. (p. 238)

We have all worked in classrooms and even schools in which students behave responsibly when the teacher is present but become disruptive when a substitute teacher, bus driver, or playground supervisor becomes involved. Our experiences suggest that a common characteristic of classrooms and schools in which this occurs is the focus on adult control through rewards and punishments. When adult power is used to influence student behavior, the behavior is likely to change dramatically when the power differential between adults and children changes. Interestingly, when discussing current methods in effective discipline, Lee Canter (1996), once perhaps the most noted advocate for a control/power method of discipline, wrote:

There are teachers who believe that to have order, you just get tougher and tougher with kids—that you impose more rules and harsher consequences to get students' respect.

But it doesn't work . . .

To be successful, a discipline plan should be built on a foundation of mutual trust and respect. That's the fundamental change in the Assertive Discipline plan for the '90s . . . Too many kids have been let down by the adults in their lives. You have to demonstrate that you're fair, that you stick by your word, that you care. (p. 6)

Sleeter (1991) wrote, “For me, and for many other advocates and theorists of multicultural education, empowerment and multicultural education are interwoven, and together suggest powerful and far-reaching school reform” (p. 2). In discussing the relationship between multicultural education, empowerment, and social change, Sleeter (1991) stated:

The multicultural education approach, or cultural democracy, attempts to redesign classrooms and schools to model an unoppressive, equal society which is also culturally diverse. Explicitly this approach does not strongly teach social criticism and social change, but implicitly it does so in that a multicultural classroom or school implementing this approach is clearly different from the existing society. Students are empowered as individuals by achieving and receiving validation for who they are, and are empowered for social change by having lived a pluralistic model. (p. 11)

In his book *Building Community in Schools*, Thomas Sergiovanni (1994) stated, “if we want to rewrite the script to enable good schools to flourish, we need to rebuild community. Community building must become the heart of any school improvement effort” (p. xi). Sergiovanni further stated:

Compliance strategies actually make things worse. Responsibility strategies are helpful but just not powerful enough. Strategies aimed at helping classrooms become democratic communities, on the other hand, can help young people reconnect with each other and with their schoolwork. Democratic communities can help students and adults come together to construct a standard for living their school lives together. And democratic communities can help students meet their needs to belong, to be active, to have control, and to experience sense and meaning in their lives. (p. 122)
One of the most important professional decisions you will make is how you choose to create and maintain a learning environment that is comfortable and supportive for all learners. Johnson and colleagues (Johnson, Whittington, & Oswald, 1994) studied the discipline responses of more than 3,400 Australian teachers. He found that teachers' views of discipline fell into three categories: (1) traditional, characterized by the teacher as an authority figure who presents and follows strict rules and responds with clear and escalating responses to student misbehavior; (2) liberal progressive, in which teachers apply democratic principles that involve students in decision making and solving problems; and (3) socially critical, in which unproductive student behavior is viewed as a response to conditions in the classroom that fail to meet students' needs and where creating positive, supportive environments characterized by engaging and intellectually appropriate instructional activities is the key to preventing undesirable student behavior. Johnson reported that 98 percent of the teachers fell into the first two categories. More than 70 percent of secondary teachers rated themselves as traditional, while nearly two-thirds of elementary teachers rated themselves as liberal progressives.

While all teachers develop their own style of classroom management, as you read this text, you will discover that our reading of current research and our own experience in K–12 classrooms support a blend of the liberal progressive and socially critical approaches. We agree with the findings of Brophy (1996) that more successful teachers view classroom management as the proactive development of a safe, supportive, engaging classroom environment, whereas less successful teachers view classroom management as maintaining teacher authority and implementing discipline methods.

Some educators and writers suggest that teachers should select an approach that is consistent with their own personality and matches their own preferences. Consider for a moment situations in which you seek professional help—possibly seeing a physician or dentist. Do you want the professional to choose an approach to treating you based on what makes that person most comfortable or on the most current research related to the condition that caused you to seek assistance? We have worked with many educators whose approach to classroom management involved controlling students and attempting to have the least possible contact with parents and guardians. During their high school experiences, one of our children was sprayed in the face with water for turning his body to be comfortable in a chair, and the other was yanked out of her seat for quietly asking a question of a friend seated next to her in a study hall. These methods were defended by the educators involved as being methods they felt were most effective. Certainly there is no "one correct way" to effectively maintain a safe and calm learning environment. However, there are strong guiding principles—methods that have proven effective, methods with sound research support—and there are methods such as those used by these teachers that are not professionally defensible.

**Pause & Consider 1.7**

Picture yourself responsible for maintaining an orderly environment for the twenty-five to forty students you currently teach or a group of students you plan on teaching. What type of authority do you believe will be most effective for you in order to create a positive, productive learning environment? Write a brief statement about the general classroom management methods/approaches to classroom management you believe are associated with this type of authority. After completing your work with this text, you are encouraged to return to this statement, once again determining the type of authority you believe is most effective and listing, outlining, or creating a schema indicating specific classroom management methods that will support your effectively implementing this type of authority in the classroom.
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**FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE TEACHERS’ CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT DECISIONS**

The Teacher’s Personal History

Teachers’ approaches to classroom management are clearly impacted by their own life experiences. Johns and Espinoza (1996) noted that “what teachers consider to be ‘discipline problems’ are determined by their own culture, filtered through personal values and teaching style” (p. 9). Similarly, how we organize our classroom and how we respond to disruptions of the learning environment are also influenced by our personal histories.

Studies report significant relationships between teacher personality factors and their orientation to classroom management. In a study of 156 preservice teachers, Kaplan (1992) found that “teachers’ disciplinary experiences in their families of origin are predictive of the strategies they select for classroom management” (p. 263).

As you work to create positive, supportive learning communities in which all students feel safe and respected, you must be aware of your own personal history and beliefs and ensure these do not limit your ability to incorporate methods that facilitate learning for all students. For example, you may have been raised in a setting where any form of challenge to adult authority was responded to with firm discipline with no discussion even considered. Some teachers may prefer an impersonal, even distant relationship with their students, but their students may need a more personalized relationship with their teacher. As you select methods for creating a positive, supportive learning community and responding to behavior that detracts from this productive learning environment, it is absolutely essential that you understand your students’ beliefs and values about learning and personal relationships and that you incorporate them into your decision making. It is equally imperative that you understand what research suggests is most effective in preventing and responding to disruptive student behavior. This knowledge must always take precedence over what feels right to us.

Beliefs Regarding the Goals of Schooling

Another key school factor influencing teachers’ decisions regarding classroom management methods is the goals teachers have for their students. We serve students best if we consistently ask ourselves, “What are my long-term goals for my students? How do I want their lives to have been impacted by the time they spent with me?” Whenever you consider what approach to use when establishing a classroom climate, motivating students, or responding to disruptive behaviors, it is influenced by your educational goals.

There is little argument that a primary goal of public education is to provide students with skills to be happy and productive members of their societies. When considering how to best assist students in reaching this goal, we may need to ask such questions as: “What type of academic skills do I believe students will need in order to live productive adult lives?” “What skills other than academic knowledge do I believe are necessary to reach this goal?” “What type of environment do I believe facilitates the attainment of my classroom instructional goals?”

In his book *The Optimistic Child*, Martin Seligman (1995) wrote:

We want more for our children than healthy bodies. We want our children to have lives filled with friendship and love and high deeds. We want them to be eager to learn and be willing to confront challenges. We want our children to be grateful for what they receive from us, but to be proud of their own accomplishments. We want them to grow up with confidence in the future, a love of adventure, a sense of justice, and courage enough to act on that sense of justice. We want them to be resilient in the face of the setbacks and failures that growing up always brings. And when the time comes, we want them to be good parents. (p. 6)
Alfie Kohn (1991) suggested that schools will best serve students and our society most productively if they focus on producing not only good learners but good people. Kohn noted that “a dozen years of schooling often do nothing to promote generosity or a commitment to the welfare of others. To the contrary, students are graduated who think that being smart means looking out for number one” (p. 498).

Kohn further suggested that schools are ideal places to nurture children’s innate sense of caring and generosity of spirit. He suggested that both students’ future success and the quality of learning will be enhanced in classroom and school environments that emphasize collaboration and caring.

In his article “Discipline and Morality: Beyond Rules and Consequences,” John Covaleskie (1992) suggested that “children must develop a sense of what it means to be a good person—what it means to choose to do the right thing, especially when circumstances are such that one is faced with the possibility of doing the wrong thing to one’s own advantage, and getting away with it” (p. 174). He goes on to state that “the standard by which we should be judging ‘discipline programs’ in schools is that of moral responsibility: do our children learn to think, talk, and act morally? The goal is not compliance with rules, but making the choices to live a good life, an ethical life” (p. 176).

Nel Noddings (1992) responded to this issue when she wrote:

To suppose, for example, that attention to affective needs necessarily implies less time for arithmetic is simply a mistake. Such tasks can be accomplished simultaneously, but the one is undertaken in light of the other. We do not ask how we must treat children in order to get them to learn arithmetic but, rather, what effect each instructional move we consider has on the development of good persons. Our guiding principles for teaching arithmetic, or any other subject, are derived from our primary concern for the persons whom we teach, the methods of teaching are chosen in consonance with these derived principles. An ethic of caring guides us to ask, What effect will this have on the person I teach? What effect will it have on the caring community we are trying to build? (p. 499)

In their examination of national and regional studies on educational requirements needed for the job market, researchers from the Sandia National Laboratories (1993) wrote that “according to business leaders polled, the most important workplace ‘skills’ for future employees were not academic skills. Rather, behavioral ‘skills’ . . . were all listed in the ‘highly critical’ categories” (p. 295). It would seem that using classroom management methods that focus on teaching students to interact and collaborate more effectively may not only enhance positive classroom behaviors that support academic skill development but also may help students develop important life skills.

A recruiting network recently reported that employers were finding it difficult to find the employees they wanted because many applicants lacked key skills. These skills included self-reliance, communication abilities, flexibility, self-awareness, organizational skills, self-promotion, decision making, the ability to build and work as part of a team, problem solving, action planning, leadership, negotiation, and adaptability and social confidence, including the ability to network effectively. In a similar vein, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), a nonprofit organization that connects college career placement offices to employers, reported that in 2013 employers rated the two most important skills for candidates seeking new jobs as the ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization and the ability to work in a team structure. The next two highest-rated skills involved problem solving and organization (nacweb.org [search for “skills employers want 2013 recruits”]).
Along similar lines, in his book *Emotional Intelligence* Daniel Goleman (1995) suggested that how happy, fulfilled, and productive people are as adults is due only in small part to their intellectual ability as traditionally measured. He stated:

My concern is with a key set of these “other characteristics,” *emotional intelligence*: abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one’s moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope. (p. 35)

In support of his beliefs, Goleman noted that in a follow-up study of 450 boys, results indicated that success at age forty-seven was related more to how the boys handled frustration, controlled their emotions, and got along with others than it was to intellectual ability (Felsman & Vaillant, 1987).

**Pause & Consider 1.8**

We suggest you stop at this point and write a brief response to the following questions: What kind of learning and what personal skills and attitudes do I want my students to develop while they are with me, and what type of classroom environment do I believe enhances this kind of learning? We believe your responses to these questions will significantly influence how you choose to organize and manage your classroom. Keep these questions in mind as you read this text and decide which classroom management skills you will incorporate in your professional repertoire.

**Students’ Cultural Backgrounds**

During the past several decades, there has been a significant increase in student diversity in our schools. In 2012, the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics reported that its most recent data indicated 20 percent of children ages five to seventeen in the United States spoke a language other than English in their home. When making decisions about classroom structure and discipline, teachers must consider students’ cultural backgrounds and the associated values and beliefs that influence their students’ behavior.

Ballenger (1992) provides an engaging description of a North American teacher’s discovery that the perspective from which she viewed behavior management and her use of language needed to be altered to effectively engage young Haitian students. Ballenger found that, when dealing with behavior problems, Haitian parents and teachers did not talk about children’s feelings or individual consequences. Instead, they focused on the fact that the behavior was “bad” and that it was disappointing to significant adults in the child’s life that the child would act in this manner. Ballenger (1992) noted that:

The North American teachers characteristically are concerned with making a connection with the individual child, with articulating his or her feelings and problems. . . . The Haitian people I spoke with and observed, emphasize the group in their control talk, articulating the values and responsibilities of group membership. (p. 204)

Ballenger commented that her observations suggested that North American teachers, particularly those in the primary grades, were reluctant to firmly correct students, while Haitian teachers seemed to see this as part of strengthening teacher–student relationships. While acknowledging the fact that “North Americans perceive Haitians as too severe, both verbally and in their use of
Ballenger emphasized that creating too great a discrepancy between parental and teacher responses to disruptive student behavior may cause serious problems because it can have a negative impact on the relationships between the teacher and the child. Macias (1987) also described concerns regarding continuity in her study of Tohono O’odham preschoolers (members of an Native American group in Arizona). She noted:

For many children of ethnic minority origin, the transition from home to school in early childhood appears to be a critical period of discontinuity. The way in which cultural disparities—between what has been learned at home and what school teaches—are dealt with determines to some degree the efficacy of their schooling. (p. 364)

Several years ago, one of us was working in an elementary school located in a community in which approximately one-third of the students were Native American. Several teachers expressed annoyance when they discovered nice, shiny, “I’m #1” buttons in the wastebaskets. During a faculty discussion concerning the lack of respect for school property displayed by these students, a Native American staff member informed the teachers that in her culture, students were encouraged not to outshine their friends. She noted that students from her tribe would be chastised by members of the tribe for bringing home an item indicating they had outperformed their friends and focused attention on themselves. The staff assistant had provided the teachers with an important lesson in how methods used to encourage and motivate students are more effective when they are responsive to students’ cultural values.

This problem of cultural incongruence clearly impacts some African American students. African American students, particularly males, are the most disproportionately disciplined student group. Data collected in 2012 by the U.S. Department of Education show that Black students comprise 18 percent of students in the United States but 35 percent of the students suspended at least once and 39 percent of the students expelled. The manner in which some Black children prefer to learn and are accustomed to act in social settings may play a significant role in this unfair treatment (Bireda, 2010). African American students are more likely to support their peers, to have a collaborative approach to learning, and have a “we” approach to defending their peers. African American students are more likely to be confrontational, intense, and more active and animated in discussions, not taking turns or asking for permission to speak. In addition, African American students may view time differently and place a higher value on social issues than timeliness (Bireda, 2010; Gay, 2000). A number of these characteristics—for example, being more field dependent; viewing time differently; and valuing supportive, collaborative relationships—are also common among Latino and Native American students. These values often differ from those of White teachers, who value punctuality and more often “rely on more dispassionate, impersonal, and emotionally restrained communication styles” and “sequential versus simultaneous patterns of interaction. . . . Repeated reprimands for expressing culturally derived communication styles may irritate African American youngsters, diminish their sense of self-worth, lead to escalating discipline problems, and impede academic progress” (Day-Vines & Day-Hairson, 2005, p. 238). The book Cultures in Conflict: Eliminating Racial Profiling (Bireda, 2010) presents an excellent description of cultural factors that influence the learning and behavior of African American and Latino students as well as approaches educators can take to make schools more inviting, culturally sensitive places for students from these cultural groups.

In their article “Toward a Conception of Culturally Responsive Classroom Management,” Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, and Curran (2004) state that culturally responsive classroom management “is a frame of mind, more than a set of strategies or practices, that guides the
management decisions that teachers make” (p. 27). They suggest that developing culturally responsive classroom management requires the following:

(a) recognition of one's own ethnocentrism and biases; (b) knowledge of students’ cultural backgrounds; (c) understanding of the broader social, economic, and political context of our educational system; (d) ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate classroom management strategies; and (e) commitment to building caring classroom communities. (p. 27)

In their review of “culturally responsive” teaching, Shevalier and McKenzie (2012) noted that “classroom management arose from a family-like community defined by a shared vocabulary, with all responsible to one another to do the right thing” (p. 1099). The materials presented in this text have been carefully selected to offer multiple classroom management strategies—including the creation of caring classroom communities—that are considered best practice in working with a diverse student population (August & Hakuta, 1997; Freeman & Freeman, 2002; Garcia, 2001; Kuykendall, 2004).

**Summary**

Teachers continue to experience persistent and often serious problems stemming from students acting in ways that disrupt the learning environment. Fortunately, research in classroom management has expanded dramatically during the past forty years. Teachers no longer need to depend on simplistic advice or one-dimensional answers to the complex tasks of motivating and managing students. Teachers can increasingly draw on an expanding body of methods that will enable them to create more positive, supportive classroom environments; better organize and instruct their students; and more effectively respond to the behavior of students who act irresponsibly, even in supportive, well-managed classrooms characterized by clear, meaningful instruction. The efficacy of new methods can be enhanced if teachers have a clear philosophy of classroom management and understand their own responsibilities and those of their students and school support personnel. Finally, school systems
can better assist students with serious behavior problems if all educators within the system understand the methods to be followed in responding to unproductive student behavior.

Students who create classroom management and instructional challenges are, in fact, our best staff development specialists. They let us know that even though we may be very good, we can always expand our skills. Fortunately, almost without exception, the new methods we implement to assist students who are struggling with their learning and behavior will be beneficial for all students. Effective classroom management is not a zero-sum game in that efforts to assist students in need detract from other students. When you use the methods suggested in this book, you not only enhance your ability to reach students with special academic and/or behavior needs but also simultaneously enrich the learning experience of all students.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1.1

Developing a Philosophy about Student Behavior Management

Write an answer to each of the following questions regarding your beliefs about students’ behavior.

- What is the most common cause of student misbehavior?
- When students misbehave, what type of teacher response or consequence is the most effective? Why?
- As a parent or someone caring for children outside of a school setting, how do I usually respond to a behavior problem?
- How does what I believe about preventing and responding to disruptive classroom behavior relate to those that were used with me when I was growing up?
- In what aspects of comprehensive classroom management do I possess the most skills?
- In what aspects of comprehensive classroom management am I least skilled, or what aspects do I use less in my approach to classroom management?

1. After reading these statements, write a brief summary describing your general belief or philosophy about managing the behavior of children and youth.

2. As you work with the material in this text, you are encouraged to return to this summary and add comments and modifications, so that it becomes a working document for your professional examination of your classroom management methods.

RECOMMENDED READING


CHAPTER 1  Classroom Management in Perspective


CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS’ BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS

Teaching is difficult under the best educational conditions, and this failure to take into account the needs of students or teachers makes what is already a hard job almost impossible. Any method of teaching that ignores the needs of teachers or students is bound to fail.

—William Glasser (1990)

Teachers can augment the academic self-image by identifying and developing some of the unique cultural and social strengths Black and Hispanic youth bring to the classroom. An understanding of how the social self-image can be used to bolster the academic self-image is critical.

—Crystal Kuykendall (2004)

The job of the educator is to teach students to see the vitality in themselves.

—Joseph Campbell (American mythologist, writer, and lecturer)

Students behave appropriately and learn more effectively in environments that meet their basic personal and psychological needs. All students learn best in school settings in which they are comfortable and feel safe and accepted. Students’ academic failure and misbehavior can be understood—and subsequently prevented or corrected—by examining classroom and school environments to determine which student needs are not being met.

LEARNING GOALS

After reading this chapter, you will know:

1. Several key concepts regarding students’ psychological needs that influence their behavior and success at school
2. Why some students may be at higher risk for having an unsuccessful school experience
3. Why the issues of power and caring are so important in a school setting

Why Are These Goals Important?

There is a tendency in any job as complex as teaching to look for simple solutions and to seek methods that adults feel most comfortable implementing. In the education profession, it is essential that we always focus on the questions “What methods most effectively help students to learn essential academic and behavior skills?” and “What student needs must be met in order to ensure that these methods are most effective?” This chapter will assist you in answering this second question and in maintaining it as an essential question you ask throughout your teaching career.
Teachers are frequently frustrated by their inability to determine the source of disruptive student behavior that detracts from students’ learning. When asked to describe why children misbehave, teachers often include in their responses such factors as poor attitude, poor home environment, lower-than-average IQ, lack of parental support for school, and medical or emotional problems. These views suggest that teachers can merely coax or bribe these students into behaving appropriately or remove or punish these children when behavior errors occur. Teachers may thus absolve themselves of responsibility for students’ behavior problems. In this scheme, teachers are confronted with unpredictable forces over which they have little control.

Even though it is true that student behavior is influenced by factors outside the control of the school, studies on school and teacher effectiveness have demonstrated that teachers and schools have a major impact on how students behave and learn and on how they feel about themselves. Therefore, another approach to analyzing unproductive or irresponsible student behavior is to believe that almost all students can function productively in a classroom and to consider what classroom variables can positively affect student learning and behavior. Much of this text provides specific methods used by teachers to create such environments. However, professional educators must understand why these techniques are effective rather than merely using them as gimmicks that positively influence student behavior. Consider for a moment if you took a child with a stomachache to see a physician. How would you react if, without examining the child, the physician indicated that an appendectomy would be performed? When you asked why the physician intended to perform the operation, the doctor indicated that the previous summer he had taken a class on appendectomies, had been told the operation was helpful to all children, and had demonstrated skill in performing it. It is likely you would seek another opinion and would perhaps even report the incident to the appropriate authority. Allen Mendler (1992) placed this in perspective when he wrote:

\[\text{Most discipline programs incorrectly place their emphasis upon strategies and techniques. The latest gimmick is offered to get Johnny to behave. The problem is that there are a lot of Johnnys out there and not all respond according to how the text or technique says they should. Having worked with thousands of children and adults, I have concluded that it is fruitless to expect that any technique will work with all people who present the same symptom. . . . The competent teacher needs to get at the reasons or functions of a given maladaptive behavior to formulate a strategy likely to work. . . . When they [children] misbehave, they tell us that they need help learning a better way. They are telling us that there are basic needs not being met which are motivating the behavior. (pp. 25, 27)}\]

Teachers are involved daily in creating the atmosphere in which children spend approximately one-fourth of their waking lives. Although this necessity obviously places considerable responsibility on the teacher, it simultaneously imparts a positive, creative dimension into teachers’ professional lives. Teachers are not faced with the prospect of merely reacting to student
behaviors over which they have no control. On the contrary, by creating environments that respond sensitively to students' needs, teachers can ensure that most student behavior will be positive and goal directed.

This chapter describes the basic psychological needs that must be met for students to behave in positive, productive manners. No attempt is made to present an in-depth description of any one theorist's work or to describe child and adolescent development. Rather, the chapter highlights needs that, when met within the school setting, enhance positive teacher and student behavior and thereby facilitate learning.

**Theoretical Perspectives**

One approach to understanding students’ unproductive school behavior suggests that much of this behavior is a response to students not having their basic needs met within the environment in which the unproductive behavior occurs. This explanation suggests that teachers may significantly impact student behavior by creating classroom and school environments that meet students' basic needs.

Another way to view unproductive student behavior is as a skill deficit. This model suggests that students who act aggressively on the playground or in the hallway lack skills to make appropriate contact with peers, to handle the inevitable frustrations and conflicts that arise, and to solve problems. Similarly, students who act out during instructional time may lack skills in understanding or organizing the work, using self-talk to handle frustration, or knowing how to obtain assistance. This social-cognitive skill deficit model suggests that students need more than reinforcement for appropriate behavior and negative consequences for inappropriate behavior. Students need to be taught social and work skills in the same manner that they are taught reading and math skills. Indeed, it is interesting that when students have serious difficulties reading, they are referred to a specialist who works intensively with them for an extended period of time. Educators do not expect students to learn to read by being placed in time-out or otherwise isolated from classmates. Likewise, teachers seldom expect students with reading difficulties to be at grade level after only a few sessions with the reading specialist. However, when students experience difficulties with their behavior, educators often isolate them, provide little or no instruction in how to behave appropriately, and expect one or two visits to a counselor or principal to resolve the problem and ensure that the student has the skills necessary to function as effectively as his or her classmates. If we believe student behavior problems often represent skill deficits, this is not realistic. Instead, educators must respond to unproductive student behavior by creating multiple opportunities for students to develop needed skills.

**Personal Needs Theories**

**Abraham Maslow**

Abraham Maslow (1968) suggested that for students to have energy for learning, their basic personal needs must be met. Maslow has suggested that there is a hierarchy of basic human needs and that lower-level needs generally take precedence over higher-order needs. His hierarchy of needs, which has been divided in a variety of ways, includes these components:

- Knowledge and understanding
- Self-actualization
Self-respect
Belongingness and affection
Safety and security
Physiological needs

A good discussion of these needs can be found at xenodochy.org/ex/lists/maslow.html.

Maslow's theoretical position is that people have an innate need to be competent and accepted. Unproductive behavior is therefore not viewed as an indication of a bad child but rather as a reaction to the frustration associated with being in a situation in which one's basic needs are not being met. Maslow further suggested that these basic needs cannot be met without assistance from other people. Finally, he postulated that only when the basic needs are met can the individual become motivated by self-actualization or the need to take risks, learn, and attain one's fullest potential.

Rudolf Dreikurs

Rudolf Dreikurs centered his ideas for working with children on the belief that their basic need is to be socially accepted: “We should realize that a misbehaving child is only a discouraged child trying to find his place; he is acting on the faulty logic that his misbehavior will give him the social acceptance which he desires” (Dreikurs & Cassel, 1972, p. 32).

Dreikurs described four goals associated with students’ disruptive behavior: attention getting, power, revenge, and displays of inadequacy. He suggested that “when a child is deprived of the opportunity to gain status through his useful contributions, he usually seeks proof of his status in class through getting attention” (1972, p. 34). If adults are ineffective at responding to this attention getting, Dreikurs indicated that students will seek power. If this response is thwarted by teachers’ own power methods, students become deeply discouraged and seek revenge. Finally, Dreikurs suggested that “a child who has tried passive destructive forms of attention getting in order to achieve the feeling of ‘belonging’ may eventually become so deeply discouraged that he gives up all hope of significance and expects only failure and defeat” (Dreikurs & Cassel, 1972, p. 39). In Discipline without Tears (Dreikurs & Cassel, 1972) and Maintaining Sanity in the Classroom (Dreikurs et al., 1971), Dreikurs suggested methods for assisting teachers in identifying which of the four mistaken goals the child is seeking and ways teachers can respond to children to help them return to positive involvement in the regular classroom.

Topper and colleagues (Topper, Williams, Leo, Hamilton, & Fox, 1994) offered a slightly modified list of needs met by students’ challenging behaviors.

- **Attention**—the behavior serves the need to draw attention away from others and to oneself
- **Avoidance/Escape**—the behavior serves the need to end an event or activity that the student does not like, or to avoid an event
- **Control**—the behavior serves the need to control events
- **Revenge**—the behavior serves the need to punish others for something that was done to the student

“It takes four cups of coffee just to get on their wavelength.”

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PART ONE  Foundations of Comprehensive Classroom Management

• Self-Regulation/Coping—the behavior serves the need to regulate feelings (e.g., boredom, embarrassment, anger, fear, anxiety) or energy levels
• Play—the behavior serves the need to have fun (p. 47)

The idea that all behavior is purposeful is an important concept in working with students. Students are not “bad” or “disruptive”; they are simply attempting to meet their needs using behaviors that are not in their best interests or the best interests of others. Oftentimes these are behaviors that have provided them with much-needed attention, a sense of control, escape from work they find difficult, a method of self-regulation, or a method for having fun. It is our role as educators to help them develop behaviors that not only meet these needs but also serve them effectively throughout their lives.

William Glasser
For half a century, William Glasser (1965) crusaded for increasing the sense of efficacy and power students experience. In his book Control Theory in the Classroom, Glasser (1986) stated, “Our behavior is always our best attempt at the time to satisfy at least five powerful forces which, because they are built into our genetic structure, are best called basic needs” (p. 14). Glasser described the five basic needs as “(1) to survive and reproduce, (2) to belong and love, (3) to gain power [emphasis added], (4) to be free, and (5) to have fun” (p. 22). Glasser indicated that students will function productively only in school environments that allow them to experience a sense of control or power over their learning.

In The Quality School: Managing Students without Coercion, Glasser (1990) extended his ideas on enhancing students’ sense of involvement and empowerment. When describing why educators see relatively high rates of off-task behavior in schools, Glasser noted:

For workers, including students, to do quality work, they must be managed in a way that convinces them that the work they are asked to do satisfies their needs. The more it does, the harder they will work.

Instead, teachers are required to stuff students with fragments of measurable knowledge as if the students had no needs—almost as if they were things. . . .

Because this low-quality, standardized, fragmented approach is so unsatisfying to students (and teachers), more and more students are actively resisting and this resistance is seen as a discipline problem. (p. 22)

Stanley Coopersmith
Another useful concept of students’ needs is offered by Coopersmith (1967). In his research on the factors associated with self-esteem, Coopersmith found that in order to possess high self-esteem, individuals need to experience a sense of significance, competence, and power. Significance can best be defined as the sense of being valued that an individual attains from involvement in a positive two-way relationship in which both parties sincerely care about each other. Competence is developed by being able to perform a socially valued task as well as or better than others at one’s age level. For example, winning a free-throw shooting competition involving her peers would provide a fifth-grader with a sense of competence. Finally, power refers to an ability to understand and control one’s environment.

Coopersmith’s research indicates that students need to experience a sense of trust and personal involvement as well as a sense of accomplishment or competence if their needs are to be met. Coopersmith also noted that in order for individuals to feel good about themselves and their environment, they must experience a sense of power or control. Students who clearly
understand classroom rules and procedures and who understand what is to be learned and why it might be useful to them will experience a sense of power. Likewise, students experience a sense of power when they are allowed to choose a topic of special interest to study, provide input into how the classroom is arranged, understand their own learning style and its relationship to their learning and teacher decision making, or study material related to their cultural heritage.

What Students Need
A number of other writers have researched and written about the major needs that dominate and influence student behavior. Figure 2.1 presents the views of four researchers/theorists regarding this topic. As noted in this figure, all four theorists share the belief that for students to have their basic needs met, and thereby function effectively in the school environment, they need to experience positive relationships with others (belonging, significance, collaboration, love). Likewise, three of the writers specifically highlight students’ needs for academic accomplishment (mastery, competence, content). All four writers indicated that students need some sense of choice or ability to influence their environment (independence, power, choice). Finally, two of the writers suggest a need to share with or give to others. A third author mentioned this but did not include it in his list (Glasser, 1990).

Based on their review of the research and interviews with students, Topper et al. (1994) report that students provide a similar list regarding their needs and wants. Students mentioned, “wanting to be engaged in interesting and fun learning activities, being able to make choices, develop skills needed to be successful and independent, having friends, having an advocate and being able to make a difference in the lives of others” (p. 7).

Notice how similar these needs and wants are to those created by the theorists. Students want and need to have positive personal relationships characterized by mutual caring and support, an opportunity to demonstrate mastery and competence, a chance to learn and use their own decision-making skills and to influence their environment, and an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others.

It is important to realize that, just as children enter school with dramatically different reading readiness, they also vary in their ability to meaningfully engage in the social life of the classroom and to be receptive to adults’ attempts to provide them with significance, competence, and power. Some children have had life experiences that have led them to view relationships as less supportive and to interpret a higher range of peer and adult behaviors as negative and unsupportive. Therefore, before they can trust others, behave in a reciprocal manner, and begin to maximize their potential, some students require more time in a positive, supportive classroom environment in which their competence is validated and they are given choices and opportunities to express themselves openly.

FIGURE 2.1
STUDENTS’ BASIC NEEDS

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>belonging</td>
<td>significance</td>
<td>collaboration</td>
<td>love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mastery</td>
<td>competence</td>
<td>content</td>
<td>fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independence</td>
<td>power</td>
<td>choice</td>
<td>power/freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generosity</td>
<td></td>
<td>virtue</td>
<td>survival</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to Erikson (1963), there are eight stages of human psychosocial development. Each stage is characterized by a conflict in which the individual either attains a key psychosocial understanding or develops an emotional liability. Although he indicates that three stages are most likely to be experienced by school-age children, he poignantly highlights the concept that each stage builds on its predecessors. Therefore, if a child does not reach satisfactory resolution of an earlier stage such as trust, this will negatively affect the child’s ability to successfully work through later developmental stages. Figure 2.2 presents the first five stages in Erikson’s developmental theory—those that apply most directly to children and adolescents in K–12 schools.

A key concept for teachers is that not only must we assist students in developing a positive resolution of the developmental stage most characteristic of their age but we must also support students who are struggling.
CHAPTER 2  Understanding Students’ Basic Psychological Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Key Developmental Tasks</th>
<th>Implications for Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infancy</td>
<td>Develop a sense of trust and hope or a sense of mistrust and despair</td>
<td>Help children know you are a caring adult who knows and understands them and can be trusted to provide a safe, supportive environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Opportunities to test oneself in order to develop a sense of self-expression and self-control</td>
<td>Create opportunities for choice and self-expression and enough structure to ensure the child’s behaviors are positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Child expands autonomy to include their own planning and increased interaction with others</td>
<td>Ensure that there is adequate support but numerous opportunities for creative expression, productive peer engagement, and problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Child learns to do meaningful work well and develop a sense of competency</td>
<td>Individualize work and use goal setting and data displays so students know they are improving at their work and developing important and valued knowledge and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Increased sense of self-consciousness and lower self-esteem as young adolescents struggle to develop a sense of who they are as individuals. New formal operational thought is being developed and previously accepted beliefs and values are being challenged as adolescents view their world more subjectively and critically.</td>
<td>Create a classroom climate in which students experience support from their peers and which students view as a “safe zone” where harassment and discrimination are not allowed to exist. Students need fair, clearly articulated structures and adults who are personally strong and flexible enough to become involved in openly discussing questions adolescents have about subject matter, teaching techniques, and school rules and procedures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 2.2
STAGES 1–5 IN ERIKSON’S DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY

because of unsatisfactory resolution of earlier stages. The clingy third grader and the sixth grader who appears unable to work independently are examples of students who may need support in working through earlier developmental issues. In a very real sense, we are providing effective reparenting for many children. While this may occur through the coordinated efforts of a team of educators developing a special plan to assist a child, it may also happen as a natural outcome of using the effective classroom management methods presented in this text.

Social Factors Theory

David Elkind

In The Hurried Child, Elkind (1981) added an interesting dimension to the topic of children’s psychological needs. He stated that relationships among all individuals, but especially between children and adults, involve basic patterns of dealing with each other. He described these patterns as implicit contracts and noted that they are constantly changing. He further commented that children’s needs are met when contracts change in response to changing personal and cognitive skills demonstrated by children, but that contracts must not change primarily in response to adults’ needs.

Elkind described three basic contracts between adults and children: (1) responsibility–freedom, (2) achievement–support, and (3) loyalty–commitment. The responsibility–freedom contract refers to adults “sensitively monitor[ing] the child’s level of intellectual, social, and emotional development
in order to provide the appropriate freedoms and opportunities for the exercise of responsibility” (1981, p. 124). The achievement–support contract refers to adults expecting age-appropriate achievements and providing the necessary personal and material support to help children reach expected goals. The loyalty–commitment contract emphasizes adults’ expectations that children will respond with loyalty and acceptance of adults because of the time, effort, and energy adults give. Although Elkind focused on the parent–child relationship, these contractual areas apply to all adult–child relationships.

Elkind’s key concept related to contracts is that they are frequently violated by adults and that this violation causes stress for youngsters. Violation of the responsibility–freedom contract occurs when adults fail to reward responsibility with freedom. For example, when students act responsibly in making a reasonable request of a teacher or administrator and this request is not taken seriously or handled respectfully, this contract has been violated. Likewise, students who have demonstrated skill in directing portions of their own learning but are not treated as independent thinkers and learners experience frustration and stress through violation of the responsibility–freedom contract. The achievement–support contract is violated when adults do not provide adequate support for students’ achievement. The low-achieving student who receives few opportunities to respond in class, little assistance in answering questions, and less reinforcement for appropriate answers is not receiving support commensurate with desired and potential achievement. Difficulties in the loyalty–commitment contract occur when children, especially adolescents, fail to provide adults with indications of loyalty commensurate with the efforts or commitment that adults see themselves as having made. When adults respond with removal of commitment, giving up on or criticizing the student, rather than by understanding and discussing the problem, contract violation occurs. This condition is more likely to happen with low-achieving students who may not immediately repay teachers for what appear to be considerable amounts of time and effort. It may also occur when cultural discontinuity exists between teachers and students with teachers perceiving themselves as providing support but students not feeling respected or supported.

Joan Lipsitz

While serving as director of the Center for Early Adolescence at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Joan Lipsitz wrote extensively on the needs of early adolescence. She noted that adults often fail to understand this age group, which leads to classroom management and instructional decisions that cause a considerable amount of the unproductive behavior that so frequently frustrates teachers who work with this age group. Lipsitz emphasized the importance of developing school environments that meet young adolescents’ developmental needs. These were summarized by her colleague, Gayle Dorman (1981), and include many of the methods we consider as effective classroom management and instruction, including active and meaningful participation in their learning; clear, supportive structure; experiencing a sense of competence; and positive relationships with
their peers and teachers. Joan Lipsitz's thoughtful book *Successful Schools for Young Adolescents* (1984) examined four schools that have successfully met these needs.

Lipsitz's work has been supported by recent work regarding the importance of matching teacher–student relationship, instructional, and discipline issues to students' developmental needs. Pianta (2006) wrote that “using control-oriented discipline and competitive academic values with early adolescents who value autonomy, exploration, and a sense of identity, tends to produce lower levels of motivation and achievement and higher levels of problem behavior in large part because of the mismatch between context and developmental forces” (p. 689). A number of researchers have echoed this concern (Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 1998; Wentzel, 2003). For example, there appears to be a mismatch between the more role-bound, impersonal relationships teachers began to develop with their students in middle school and early adolescents’ needs for supportive relationships (Roeser & Galloway, 2002). This may be a particularly serious problem for students who enter middle school with fewer skills and less motivation (Harter, 1996). In addition, teachers may more effectively respond to students' sensitivity about their identity and competence by emphasizing instructional methods involving mastery, effort, and improvement rather than methods emphasizing comparison between students (Roeser et al., 1998).

In order to better understand why students behave in ways that fail to support learning, we strongly encourage every public school educator or prospective teacher to spend an entire day every year being a student in their school. This should involve the educator either riding the bus to school or entering the school at the same time as the student and completing all activities as if he or she were a student (including lunch, physical education, recess, etc.). Adults who have this experience are surprised at the uncomfortable seating, the lack of breaks, and the low levels of academic involvement and positive personal contact experienced by the student they are shadowing. Activity 2.1 (on page 46) provides additional ideas for this learning activity.

**Social Cognitive Development Theory**

In their book *Treating Explosive Kids: The Collaborative Problem-Solving Approach*, Ross Greene and Stuart Ablon (2006) suggest that students who struggle to follow adult expectations “have lagging skills in the global domains of flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, and problem solving” (p. 7). Rather than view students' acting out or withdrawal behavior as caused by needs
not being met, this approach suggests skill deficits in children's cognitive skills are the cause of noncompliance and explosiveness. The authors place the cognitive skills that are the basis for effectively or ineffectively responding to setting events as follows:

1. Executive Skills
   - Working memory
   - Organization and planning
   - Shifting cognitive set

2. Language-Processing Skills
   - Labeling one's emotions
   - Communicating feelings and needs
   - Sorting through and selecting response options
   - Receiving feedback about the appropriateness of one's actions

3. Emotion Regulation Skills
   - Regulate arousal in the service of goal-directed activity
   - Regulate acute emotional response

4. Cognitive Flexibility Skills
   - Need predictable routines

5. Social Skills
   - Recognizing the impact of one's behavior on others
   - Attending to social cues and nuances

When confronted by a student whose behavior is not supporting his learning or that of others, this model emphasizes the importance of educators determining the cognitive skills that are lacking and working with children to develop these skills through involving them in problem solving that incorporates the steps of: (1) showing empathy for the student's legitimate needs/concerns, (2) helping the student define the problem, and (3) collaborating with the student to develop new understandings and skills. Notice how this approach emphasizes the support for increasing students' sense of significance, competence, and power.

**Brain Research**

Research on the operation of the brain and what this may mean for creating effective learning environments and presenting effective instruction has progressed dramatically in the past decade. As the recommended reading at the end of the chapter indicates, numerous books present instructional strategies that logically connect to what we know about the human brain. Researchers and writers who present educational strategies that support what we know about the brain are providing teachers with many creative, practical, and beneficial methods for helping students succeed in school. Many, if not most, of these methods are not new and are also supported by a wide range of applied educational research. We agree with the following assessment by Howard Gardner (1999a):

> To be sure, knowledge of the brain's structure and functioning might well hold interesting implications for learning and pedagogy. But the only way to know for sure whether something is possible is to try it. And should one succeed despite the predictions of neuroscience, that success becomes the determining fact. (p. 79)
In an article in *Education Week*, Sarah Sparks (2012) presents the views of a number of leading neuroscientists regarding the connection between the field of neuroscience and practical implications for education. She quotes Dr. Kenneth Kosik, a neuroscience professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara and co-director of the Neuroscience Research Institute, as saying, “We still have a paucity of real, concrete findings in neuroscience that we can say will change what goes on in the classroom” (p. 17). She goes on to quote leaders in the field of brain-education research as noting that “the neuroscience evidence in their field has been sketchy so far” and “We need to figure out how to do more practical research” (p. 17). She suggests that more laboratory schools are needed where ideas generated by scientists can be applied and researched.

Like a number of other writers in this field, Sparks suggests that a major benefit of current neuroscience as it applies to education settings involves teaching students how the brain works and how they can improve their own learning through effort and practice. She also notes that brain research has taught us to understand the role of stress in limiting effective brain functioning and the importance of teaching students how to take breaks and relax themselves in order to facilitate their learning.

These ideas have been presented by Dr. Judy Willis (2010a, 2010b). Prior to becoming a teacher, Dr. Willis practiced child neurology for fifteen years, and she discussed how she uses her knowledge of neurology to enhance student engagement, excitement for learning, and achievement. Dr. Willis talks about the positive impact on brain functioning of reducing stress and failure associated with learning, ensuring that students are successful and appreciate their successes; the importance of creating supportive, safe learning environments; the benefits of helping students understand that they have the power to positively influence their brain’s development; and the benefits of instructional activities that are interactive and personally relevant.

Materials at the end of the chapter reference several books by credible authors with backgrounds in neuroscience. While we caution educators about making a simple extrapolation from neuroscience to the classroom, it is important to study this area of research and conduct action research in your own classroom to see whether ideas with face validity between neuroscience and pedagogy can be implemented to enhance your students’ learning.

We can say for certain that most of the research-supported methods presented in this text are also consistent with methods being presented as supported by what we know about the human brain.

**Pause & Consider 2.3**

Based on what you currently know about brain-based research and learning, write a statement indicating how you might apply this knowledge to a classroom setting. After completing this text, you may want to revisit this Pause & Consider and add new information to your answer. You may also want to meet with colleagues or fellow students to discuss this topic.

**Students at Risk for School Failure**

Concern for students at risk is a major theme in U.S. education. The term *at risk* has generally referred to students who are likely to drop out of school. The Business Advisory Commission of the Education Commission of the States (ECS) has extended this concept to include youngsters who are unlikely to make successful transitions to becoming productive adults.
Students may be at risk for a variety of reasons. In addition to the fact that a student may not have had important personal or developmental needs met prior to entering the classroom or within the school setting, he or she may also be at risk for poor academic performance because (1) the school system provides relatively few educators from the social/cultural group with which this student identifies and presents a curriculum that fails to value the student's cultural background; (2) the classroom environment and instructional approach is inconsistent with how the student learns best; (3) the student has limited English proficiency and is thus less able to understand the material being presented; (4) the student has special needs associated with an identified disability; (5) outside of school, the student has limited support for school success; (6) the student has demands outside of school that limit time and energy for school-related learning tasks; or (7) the student lacks a sense of hope that school-based learning will positively impact his or her future.

Based on the most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), dropout and suspension rates vary dramatically by ethnicity. Dropout statistics show 12.7 percent of Hispanic, 12.4 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native, 7.5 percent of Black, 4.4 percent of White, and 4.2 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander students drop out of school. Statistics reported in 2012 indicate the percentage of male students who have been suspended at least once also shows dramatic variability by ethnicity with 49 percent of Blacks, 29 percent of Hispanics, 29 percent of those who identify themselves as being of two or more races, 18 percent of Whites, and 13 percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders having been suspended. Interestingly, 32 percent of all males had been suspended at least once compared to 17 percent of all females. While there are many factors for these discrepancies, it is interesting that Futrell, Gomez, and Bedden (2003) found that 80 percent of the classroom teachers they surveyed felt unprepared to effectively teach students from diverse backgrounds.

Writers such as James Banks, Johnella Butler, Harold Dent, James Garcia, Geneva Gay, Crystal Kuykendall, and Pedro Noguera have written extensively on the problems students of color confront in their attempt to achieve success in U.S. classrooms. Studies indicate that many African American, Hispanic American, and Native American students are more field dependent and group oriented than the average White student and that schools are structured as highly individualistic, competitive environments (Freeman & Freeman, 2002). According to Geneva Gay (1993), “the sameness of educational resources for diverse individuals and groups does not constitute comparability of quality or opportunity. Teachers, materials, and teaching environments that work well for European American students do not necessarily work equally well for ethnic minorities” (p. 182). Gay highlighted three reasons students of color may fare less well than their White counterparts in traditional classrooms:

1. Most [teachers] do not know how to understand and use the school behaviors of these students, which differ from their normative expectations, as aides to teaching. Therefore, they tend to misinterpret them as deviant and treat them punitively.
2. Most curriculum designs and instructional materials are Eurocentric. . . . They are likely to be more readily meaningful and to have a greater appeal to the life experiences and aspirations of European American students than to those of ethnic minorities. Thus, when attempting to learn academic tasks, European American students do not have the additional burden of working across irrelevant instructional materials and methods.
3. A high degree of cultural congruency exists between middle-class European American student culture and school culture. These students do not experience much cultural discontinuity, social-code incompatibility, or need for cultural style shifting to adjust to the behavioral codes expected of them in school. (pp. 182–183)

Compared to their peers from high-income living situations, students from low-income living situations are also disproportionately unsuccessful in school. High school students in low-income living situations are six times as likely to drop out of school as are their peers from high-income families (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Clearly, one's ethnicity, disabilities, and family income significantly impact academic access and success in U.S. public schools. One important goal of this text is to provide the knowledge and skills to more effectively serve the learning needs of a wide range of students. Consequently, the methods presented in this text have been selected because they have proven to be effective with virtually every group of students that has historically been poorly served in U.S. public schools.

Students who struggle in school are our best staff-development experts. Through their academic frustration and behavior problems, they frequently inform us that while we may be doing a fine job of teaching for some students, we need to modify our strategies for them. Interestingly, although the instructional and classroom management modifications we make in response to the demands of these students are often necessary prerequisites to their experiencing success, they also benefit virtually all other students. Many of the strategies presented in this text would be desirable but not absolutely necessary if we were teaching a senior honors class or a graduate seminar. However, when teaching a heterogeneous group of students, some of whom find the work extremely challenging or frustrating, these strategies can make the difference for both teacher and student between an exciting, enjoyable year and a year filled with anger and frustration.

Unique Needs of Immigrant Children

Although all students experience the developmental and social/personal needs described in this chapter, immigrant children experience unique needs associated with moving into a new culture.

In 431 B.C. Euripides wrote, "There is no greater sorrow on earth than the loss of one's native land." Students who have recently moved to this country are struggling with this loss as well as numerous other specific adjustments. One very basic stressor for immigrant children is that "once an immigrant student walks into a U.S. classroom, the rules and knowledge they received from their home culture do not readily apply." (Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999, p. 205)

In her book The Inner World of the Immigrant Child, Cristina Iggo (1995) considers how immigrant children often believe they cannot accept their culture of origin but they also feel unaccepted and alienated from U.S. culture. She discusses the importance of validating and supporting their culture of origin. In writing about her own experiences as an immigrant student, Iggo (1995) noted that because she was bilingual, the issues she faced were not so much about language as about her feelings of confusion and inadequacy about how she should act, her loss of a cultural identity, and the difficulty of adapting to new cultural expectations when no one was trying to understand and adapt to who she was.
She talks about the loneliness and sadness experienced by many immigrant children and their desperate need to be connected to someone who they believe cares and understands. Igoa makes an important point when she notes:

In my work with immigrant children, I have become aware that each student's response and behavior in my classroom and out in the yard are a result of the complex interaction of his or her cultural background, individual nature, and length of time that student has been in the host country. (p. 17)

A number of factors influence the experience of immigrant families (Edwards, Ellis, Ko, Saifer, & Stuczynski, 2005). These include the following:

- Background and reasons for immigrating
- Immigrant or refugee status
- Adjustment issues
- Family and cultural supports
- Cultural differences
- Language issues
- Economic status
- Marketability of skills in U.S. economy
- Acceptance by U.S. mainstream society
- Generational issues

In order to understand the needs of our immigrant students, we must go beyond understanding theories of human development and understand the journeys that have led our students to our classrooms. It is helpful for us to know what kind of instructional activities are most and least comfortable for them, what types of teacher responses are most comfortable, and the expectations or ways of behaving that make them uncomfortable.

As discussed throughout this text, this will involve meeting with families and seeking out individuals in the community and the education profession who have a deep understanding of the needs of our immigrant children.

It is important to realize that the issues facing immigrant children are not unique to children who have recently arrived from another country. Native American students who have lived in rural areas, often on reservations, and move to urban areas will experience stressors very similar to those of students from other countries. Similarly, students from families who live in poverty will often find the peer pressures and social demands of middle-class school communities to be unfamiliar and intimidating. Our role as educators is to understand all students with the goal of providing every student a safe, caring, supportive learning community.

Your views may differ from those expressed in this section. What is important is to have a solid foundation in research and theory to support your views. It is also imperative that you develop specific teaching methods that enable you to effectively implement your beliefs and goals in a manner that enhances students’ dignity, academic success, and social skill development.

A Case Study: Meeting Students’ Needs in a Middle School

Several years ago, one of us worked with a middle school located in an area where nearly 90 percent of the students were on free or reduced lunch and were either Hispanic or Native American. When confronted with problems of student absenteeism and failure, the staff initially
CHAPTER 2  Understanding Students’ Basic Psychological Needs

looked at national research on middle schools and developed a schedule and instructional strategies that they believed were best suited to the needs of middle school students. They created a block schedule in which students spent nearly half the day in a language arts, reading, and social studies block and the other half in a science, math, and health block. In addition, to respond to problems of student tardiness and students’ learning styles related to time of day, the blocks were rotated at the end of the semester. In addition, a study period was scheduled following the morning block, and students who were having difficulty with their work remained with their block teacher and an assistant while other students attended an elective. Therefore, for half the school year students had the potential for a tutorial in nearly half their academic subjects. During this time, students were guaranteed to have assistance from someone who spoke their first language.

To increase the students’ sense of significance and power, the staff created a yearly fall retreat in which approximately forty students and ten adults spent several days camping and developing a vision for the following school year. This vision was used as a theme for decorating the school, for helping students set goals, and for school events. One year when one of us was working at the school, the theme was “Make all the right moves.” Chess figures were used to decorate the cafeteria, and students used this motto as a lead-in to short- and long-term goal setting.

In addition, the staff created a number of clubs representing activities selected by the students. The Native American club became well known regionally for its performances, and several other cultural clubs made performances and arranged special events. Students formed a recycling club that became actively involved in the community.

The faculty became concerned, however, when they noted that despite the fact that student achievement and attendance were improving dramatically, there was still a very high rate of late arrivals to school. Rather than assign detentions or use some other form of coercive discipline, the faculty met with students and parents to discuss the issue. Cultural differences regarding time were discussed. The group, therefore, decided to place the responsibility on the students to decide how important it was to be on time. The school decided to move the club program from fourth to first period. Students who arrived late were invited to study in the cafeteria but were not allowed to participate in the club for that day. Student tardies virtually disappeared. The students simply decided that the club activities were important enough to offset their lack of concern with timeliness.

SUMMARY

Many teachers view their lack of ability to understand and effectively respond to unproductive student behavior as a major cause of job-related stress and personal frustration. Anyone who has taught has heard a colleague say in exasperation, “I just don’t understand why Johnny acts that way.” This chapter presented the important concept that student behavior can be understood by considering basic psychological needs students bring to the school setting. In many if not most cases when students act unproductively at school, they are responding to the fact that basic needs are not being met in the school setting. Unproductive school behavior is more frequent among students whose basic needs are not being met at home and in the community. Nevertheless, the problems outside of school are often not the major cause of the students’ school difficulties, nor does their presence absolve us of our responsibility to create learning environments that meet students’ basic needs.
Beginning teachers often struggle with the issues of creating order, providing care and support, and sharing power and responsibility. Understanding how these concepts interact and how they are most effectively developed in the classroom is a critical factor in developing an effective philosophy and practice of classroom management. Educators must also be particularly sensitive to the issue of how classroom environments support or disadvantage students who have historically been less successful in public school settings in the United States. This includes African American, Hispanic, and Native American students, as well as students whose first language is not English and those who have been raised in poverty. It is essential that school settings systematically and thoughtfully support the cultural values and interests as well as the personal and learning style needs students bring to the classroom. In order to accomplish this, educators will need ongoing assistance in developing increased knowledge and skills in this area.

**IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES**

**ACTIVITY 2.1**

Examining Various Perspectives of a Behavior Problem

Select an incident in which a student disrupted the learning environment to such an extent that you had to send him or her to the office. Before continuing this activity, write down the punishment or consequence you would expect the student to receive for this act. On a separate sheet of paper, write a one-half- to one-page statement indicating how each of the following individuals would describe the incident leading to the referral: (1) yourself, (2) the student involved, (3) a student-centered counselor, and (4) the administrator who heard both your and the student’s points of view. At the bottom of each paper, write a brief statement indicating what you think each individual would suggest as the solution or resolution to this situation. Having completed this exercise, write a statement concerning how you believe the situation should be responded to or resolved.

**ACTIVITY 2.2**

Behavior Problems and Students’ Personal Needs

Consider a situation where the data from your school indicates you are having ongoing behavior problems in a certain area of the school, for example, cafeteria, an area of the playground, specific hallway areas, a certain classroom, and so forth. Make sure to consider whether a pattern exists concerning the students who are most commonly involved in the behavior problems. Based on your reading of this chapter, what might you consider regarding how this situation relates to students’ personal needs? What might these findings suggest regarding the manner in which educators responsible for students in this setting responded to create an environment that more effectively met the needs experienced by these students. After completing this course, return to this activity and add other ideas for how educators might help to alleviate this problem.

**RECOMMENDED READING**

- *Garbarino, J. (1999). Lost boys: Why our sons turn violent and how we can...*
CHAPTER 2 Understanding Students’ Basic Psychological Needs
