

CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Classroom Check-Up

Have you ever been frustrated by the unwillingness or inability of the person with whom you are consulting to implement an intervention? Have you ever tried to persuade a teacher to change his or her classroom behaviors? Have you ever found yourself working harder to solve problems as a consultant than the people with whom you are consulting?

These are all common experiences for classroom consultants. Although many, if not most, of the teachers in a given school are fully motivated to implement new practices, some are not. In fact, when we examine teacher motivation to change more closely, it parallels what we know about human motivation to change any behavior. That is, interest in and willingness to adopt new behaviors fluctuate over time. Some days, or some times during a day, a teacher may be more or less receptive to consultation feedback and more or less likely to try new strategies.

For classroom consultants,¹ frustrations about helping others change can be amplified by the fact that much is known about effective classroom management practices. Consultants may find themselves thinking, “If only struggling teachers would listen to me, I have so many tools that could help them.” If only there were a bridge to help consultants connect struggling teachers with effective practices. The Classroom Check-Up (CCU) was developed, in part, to serve as that bridge, as a framework and set of tools that could maximize a consultant’s likelihood of helping teachers develop better classroom management practices.

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¹ We do not distinguish between the terms *consultation* and *coaching*. Although we use the terms *consultant* and *consultation* throughout, this book is also meant for individuals who refer to themselves as *coaches*.

ORIGINS OF THE CCU

When the first author, Dr. Wendy Reinke, was a graduate student at the University of Oregon, she had the good fortune of taking coursework from several brilliant school behavior consultants, including Dr. Randy Sprick. Randy taught her all of the critical skills needed to be an effective teacher consultant. In many of her school practicum courses, though, she saw the real-world struggles of attempts to help support teachers in their adoption of new and better classroom management practices. As Dr. George Sugai, another mentor, once insightfully told her, “We know how to change student behavior. The hard part is getting adults to change.” At the same time, Wendy was working in Dr. Tom Dishion’s Child and Family Clinic, where he was training students to deliver the Family Check-Up (FCU), a brief motivational intervention for promoting change in families. It was apparent to Wendy that a similar model could be developed for working with teachers to help resolve the challenge that George had described and that she had experienced in classrooms. As fate would have it, her husband, Dr. Keith Herman, a counseling psychologist and the second author of this book, had expertise in motivational interviewing, the clinical method that guides the FCU. Wendy developed the CCU as part of her dissertation and refined it over the years, inspired by these amazing mentors and assisted by her husband.

WHAT IS THE CCU?

The CCU is a consultation model for working with teachers to increase their use of effective teaching practices with a focus on classroom management. The CCU works to change practices at the classroom level, rather than targeting changes in individual students. A key assumption is that improvements on the classroom level will produce benefits for individual students. Moreover, students who would benefit from additional supports can be more readily identified if effective classwide practices are in place. Although the CCU can help identify students who need additional supports, the interventions developed as a part of the

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CCU are focused on changing the classroom context. Therefore, the CCU is not intended as a model for developing individualized student support plans. See Crone and Horner (2003) for a model designed to help build individual student behavior plans.

WHY DOES THE CCU TARGET EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT?

Classroom discipline problems are a major concern for teachers, school administrators, and parents (Rose & Gallop, 2002). Studies across elementary and secondary classrooms (Anderson, Evertson, & Brophy, 1979; Evertson, Anderson, Anderson, & Brophy, 1980) have indicated that this concern is legitimate. The increasing numbers of students with challenging behaviors entering school, and the inclusion of students receiving special education services

in general education classrooms present new complexities for teachers working to provide instruction and manage classroom behaviors among diverse learners. Disruptive behavior in the classroom takes time away from instruction, hinders student academic and social growth, and contributes to student and teacher stress, making effective behavior management vital to student learning and emotional health.

Supporting teachers in their efforts to provide effective behavior management in classrooms is important yet often neglected. Recently, we conducted a survey of over 200 teachers, asking them what they found to be their greatest challenge. By far, the greatest challenge reported was difficulties in managing behavior in the classroom (Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri, & Goel, 2011). When asked about areas in which they felt they needed additional training, teachers in this study reported that the number one area for which they needed training and support was in managing challenging classroom behaviors. In fact, many teachers did not feel that the supports that they had received in this area were adequate. For instance, one teacher who completed the survey commented, “My [classroom management] training has been on-the-job trial and error.”

The information gathered by our survey is not new. Research and surveys over the years have pointed to this same challenge for teachers. For instance, a nationwide survey of teachers conducted in 2006 across all grade levels also found that teachers feel a strong need for additional training and support in classroom behavior management (Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education, 2006). Although these teaching challenges are well documented, the problems persist, and as a result, managing classroom behavior continues to be an ongoing issue faced by many teachers.

We have also known for some time that ineffective classroom behavior management is associated with negative outcomes for students and teachers alike. For instance, research has shown that students in classrooms in which behavior is poorly managed receive less academic instruction (Weinstein, 2007) and are more likely to have negative long-term academic, behavioral, and social outcomes than students in well-managed classrooms. More specifically, students from classrooms with more disruptive behavior are (1) more likely to display challenging classroom behaviors in the future, (2) more likely to be identified for special education services, and (3) more prone to develop emotional problems, including depression and conduct disorder (Ialongo, Poduska, Werthamer, & Kellam, 2001; Kellam, Ling, Merisca, Brown, & Ialongo, 1998; National Research Council, 2002). However, many teachers simply are not adequately prepared to manage behavior problems in the classroom; some even enter the workforce without having taken a single course on behavior management (Barrett & Davis, 1995; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Houston & Williamson, 1992). Thus, it is not surprising that teachers identify classroom behavior management as one of their primary concerns (Maag, 2001; Reinke et al., 2011). In fact, nearly half of new teachers leaves the profession within 5 years, many citing student misbehavior as a primary reason (Ingersoll, 2002).

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Although there are many books on the topic of classroom behavior management, most do not focus on supporting teachers in their implementation of these practices. Typically, the books are written for teachers in an effort to provide them with strategies to work out

on their own. However, it can be difficult for teachers to transfer this information effectively into practice. This book offers a unique and innovative approach toward increasing the use of effective behavior management in the classroom by utilizing motivational interviewing, an empirically driven theory of behavior change, within a classroom-level consultation model. We believe that the integration of motivational interviewing (MI) with the CCU, a teacher consultation model operating at the classroom level (vs. individual student level), can create meaningful and lasting change for students and teachers.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK?

This book is designed to provide practice guidelines for working with teachers and other school personnel to improve classroom behavior management. The material in this book is helpful for school psychologists, special education and behavioral consultants, administrators, counselors, and other school professionals working to assist teachers in using effective classroom behavior management. The goal is to provide a useful model for consultation that leads to increased use of effective behavior management practices in classrooms.

Chapters 1 and 2 discuss the contexts and challenges faced by teachers as a result of the disruptive and difficult classroom behaviors exhibited by students. Additionally, the importance of utilizing effective classroom management strategies and the critical factors identified by research as associated with effective classroom management are described.

Chapters 3 and 4 provide an overview of MI and specific motivational strategies for working with teachers. MI is an innovative, well-established approach for enhancing readiness to change a variety of behaviors. We provide a summary of the MI model and then focus most of this section on applications with teachers. Some specific motivational enhancement strategies include giving personalized feedback to teachers on classroom behaviors; encouraging personal responsibility for decision making while offering direct advice, if solicited; developing a menu of options for interventions; and supporting teacher self-efficacy by identifying existing strengths and times when teachers have successfully changed classroom behaviors in the past. Additionally, the qualities and practices of effective consultation are discussed.

Chapters 5 and 6 introduce the CCU, a consultation model that utilizes these effective consultation practices and motivational strategies to increase the likelihood that effective behavior management strategies at the classroom level will be implemented and maintained. These chapters describe all aspects of the CCU process and provide clear direction for its application in teacher consultation.

Chapters 7 and 8 present specific classroom management interventions across varying grade levels that can be mapped directly onto the CCU consultation process and individually tailored to meet the needs of the specific classroom and teacher. This final portion of the book is devoted to presenting the mechanics of what are needed to provide effective consultation across different contexts and how the CCU framework can be used to increase other effective classroom practices.

We have structured the book so that the chapters align with the actual consultation process. The early chapters provide the necessary background information to prepare con-

sultants to deliver the CCU. Prior to using the CCU, consultants need to be familiar with research on effective classroom management (Chapter 2) and consultation skills (Chapters 3 and 4). Chapters 5 through 7 then describe the stepwise procedures for completing the CCU assessment, feedback, and planning process. After completing the CCU, consultants need to be prepared to help teachers select and implement interventions to improve their classroom practices. Thus, Chapter 8 describes a wide range of interventions upon which consultants can draw in helping to support teachers in changing any practices that were identified as needing improvement during the CCU process.

As such, this book is intended to produce five primary outcomes:

1. Describe the research base in effective classroom management practices and the need for classwide consultation to support teachers toward utilizing these strategies.
2. Provide an effective consultation model for supporting teacher use of effective classroom management practices.
3. Define specific procedures for implementing the CCU consultation model.
4. Increase consultation skills in the areas of MI, providing objective feedback, and tailoring interventions to the specific needs of the classroom by utilizing data.
5. Discuss how the CCU model can be used to facilitate a range of effective practices in the classroom.

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FOR WHOM IS THIS BOOK WRITTEN?

This book aims to prepare educational personnel (school psychologists, counselors, special educators, behavior specialists, teachers, and others) who consult with individuals within schools to improve behavior management at the classroom level using an effective, useful, and innovative model of classwide behavior consultation. The book also has value for administrators and management teams that have the task of designing effective behavior support systems and resources.

Readers may ask, “I am a teacher looking to improve my use of effective classroom management, but on my own. Can I still benefit from reading this book?”

The answer is a resounding “Yes!” You will find that the material in this book can be helpful in assessing which areas of classroom management you may want to improve, and gaining the ideas to help you do so. You can learn to self-monitor how well you are implementing new classroom strategies and to determine if they are working. Additionally, the information on effective consultation, including the use of MI, is helpful for anyone working with others, including those working with families.