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Frequently-used discipline and management techniques in the Cedar Valley

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TECHNIQUES IN THE CEDAR VALLEY

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Introduction

The words "classroom management" can send shivers down the spine of any aspiring educator. While we toil away in class every day learning new content and how to teach it to our students, we pretend that all we must do as teachers is communicate information effectively. Do this, and our students will listen. Of course, anyone who has actually worked with children can quickly tell you that this is not true. An effective classroom requires much more than a sound understanding of content. Being a teacher demands that you are not only able to teach, but that you are able to engage, and engagement is something not so easily achieved.

Ask any education major what worries them the most about teaching, and more likely than not you will hear those same two words. Classroom management. The amount of research on the field of classroom management is staggering, with a number of renowned theorists providing strong, research-backed evidence on what separates effective managers from their counterparts, and yet this area is one that is often overlooked during one's college education. As a result, many of the sound views established by educational theorists and researchers are only observed by individuals who seek them out independently. While ideally all educators would seek out this information to both better themselves and provide a more effective education to their students, I became curious as to how this played out in our real, not-so-ideal world. I decided to compare the various views of top educational theorists to those of local area elementary school teachers. My hope was that these results show both how the philosophies of normal elementary school teachers compare to the available data on discipline and management, and how exposed the average educator is to these views.

Purpose

The primary goal of this research is to observe frequently-used classroom management techniques in the Cedar Falls Community School District. The observed techniques and the philosophies behind them will then be compared to the methods and philosophies of educational researchers and theorists. Classroom management is an area that is often underrepresented in the plethora of courses required of college undergraduates, as can be observed at the University of Northern Iowa. Of the 120 total credit hours required of an undergraduate student for graduation, exactly three are devoted to classroom management. Furthermore, those three credit hours, or one class, may not be taken until one's Level III Field Experience, which typically occurs the semester prior to student teaching. Thus with so little exposure to the field, most beginning teachers would be required to either explore this area of education on their own, or rely primarily on instinct. The information gained from this survey should indicate the ideologies held by current teachers, as well as how their ideologies were established.

This thesis will also briefly touch on the surveyed teachers' thoughts on and use of specific kinds of classroom management and disciplinary techniques in their own classroom. For example, the use of rewards as a form of motivation is a heavily debated issue amongst educational theorists, and thus one would believe that it would garner mixed opinions from classroom teachers as well. Many of these specific examples of management and discipline have no clear-cut evidence as to their overall effectiveness, and their usage is dependent on each individual teacher's perceived value of such techniques.

<div align="center">**Literature Review**</div>

Leading Management Theories

  Effective management is integral to the success of any classroom. Very little learning is likely to occur if the teacher is unable to retain the attention of their students. Yet the definition of classroom management itself may at times be vague, and even the leading theorists do not provide a definition of classroom management in their works. Rather, they provide an outline for how to be an effective classroom manager. Even our surveyed teachers provided a variety of responses when asked what the goal of classroom management was, and thus it seems important that classroom management be defined for at least the purposes of this thesis paper. After some consideration, it became clear that classroom management was easier to define through its goals rather than by itself. In turn, the goal of classroom management, for the purpose of this thesis, is to create an environment in which students are able to most effectively learn and develop as part of a community of learners, as well as to prevent any kind of disruption or impairment to this process from arising. This definition was created by piecing together the varying views on classroom management by many contributing theorists, all of whom tend to generally agree on these desirable outcomes. Yet each theorist disagrees, to at least some extent, on how this goal should be achieved. The following paragraphs contain information as to the varying programs or beliefs established by some of the most renowned educational theorists.

  In 1986, William Glasser published his book *Control Theory in the Classroom*. In his book, Glasser detailed the main points of control theory, and tied them into how he feels they should be applied to a classroom setting. Glasser made it clear that he feels something is wrong with our current education system. "Despite their hard work, teachers are confronted daily with increasing numbers of students who make little or no effort to learn." (Glasser, 1986, p. 1). He

later emphasized that students choose not to work hard because there is not enough immediate payoff in or out of school, providing them little incentive to go along with much of what school asks of them (Glasser, 1986, p. 11). Glasser believed that at all times, we are choosing our actions based on a set of basic needs, and if our actions are not meeting one of these needs we will opt out of performing this action. As Glasser stated, "Control theory explains that all of 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." (Glasser, 1986, p. 14). Glasser went on to state that all human behavior can be explained as an effort to satisfy one of these basic needs.

Glasser's emphasis on individual choice has been around for quite some time, and it is not uncommon to hear an educator say something to the effect of "You have a choice, you can either do what I told you or you can miss recess." Yet Glasser's definition of what is entailed by a choice expands much further than many individuals would anticipate. Glasser described a student with dyslexia, explaining that what we define as a learning disability is also a choice made by the student. "With this creativity, they are able to convince parents, teachers and themselves that they are the innocent victims of something that they cannot control." (Glasser, 1986, p. 34). This is important to consider when analyzing Glasser's assertion that we choose all of our actions. He really means *everything*.

Another program developed to help educators become more effective managers is Lee Canter's (2016) *Assertive Discipline*. One of the primary points of Canter's program is to have very high expectations for your students. The main points of his theory are as follows: Expect 100 percent compliance with your directions 100 percent of the time, allow no excuses for disruptive behavior, always sweat the small stuff, never back down, let students know you are

not going away, and avoid excessive praise (Canter, 2010, p. 15-19). These concepts form the backbone of *Assertive Discipline*. Certainly expecting the most from one's students is a positive, yet the way that Canter suggests educators go about achieving this clashes with the views of other educators. Take for example, "Never back down." In Canter's book, he outlined what was a clear power struggle between teacher and student. The student refused to do an assignment, the teacher presented the student with an ultimatum, the student continued to refuse, the teacher demanded the student go to the office (Canter, 2010, p. 18). According to Canter, this was the end of the story. Yet when a student already refuses to listen to their teacher, why would they suddenly decide to do what their educator tells them to do when they are supposed to go to the office? In fact, it could easily be argued that by engaging in power struggles such as this will cause significant damage to the classroom community, and will make future interactions with this student more challenging.

A third classroom management program is *Discipline with Dignity*, written by Richard Curwin, Allen Mendler, and Brian Mendler (2008). In this text, the authors explained that they believe in-school discipline problems are caused by a few key factors. These factors are the competitive environment of the classroom, student boredom, powerlessness, unclear limits, requiring students to earn educational opportunities, lack of acceptable outlets to express feelings, and attacks on dignity (Canter, Mendler, & Mendler, 2008, p. 17-20). Thus a teacher is best able to manage their classroom by accommodating for these various factors. The foundation of the *Discipline with Dignity* program is broken down into twelve steps. One emphasis that is quickly noted when reading this overview is how student-friendly it is. This is a very important factor to consider in classroom management. Too often, management becomes all about the teachers wants and needs in order to teach. In reality, as is pointed out by *Discipline with Dignity*

(Curwin, Mendler, & Mendler, 2008), the reason that many behavioral problems exist is due to the fact that the wants and needs of the students are not being addressed. For example, some of the key points of *Discipline with Dignity* included, "Listen to what students are thinking and feeling," or, "Offer choices." The program even goes so far as to say, "Legitimize behavior that you cannot stop," citing an example of every day students throwing paper airplanes during class. The authors stated that if nothing the teacher does is able to stop this, the teacher should consider spending five minutes per day having paper airplane contests (Curwin, Mendler, & Mendler, 2008, p. 23). In comparison to programs such as *Assertive Discipline*, we receive a vastly different view of how a classroom should look and operate. This is not to discount the validity of the information provided in the *Assertive Discipline* program. Rather, it is to say that there are more ways to gain control of a classroom than to simply seize it, and these other methods are certainly worth considering when you take into account the damaging effects that exerting your power over students can have on the classroom community.

The final theory studied was created by Alfie Kohn, who described the basis of his philosophy on classroom management and discipline in his book, *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community* (1996). If Canter (2010) with his *Assertive Discipline* program was one extreme of the classroom management spectrum, Kohn's *Beyond Discipline* program is the other. In fact, Kohn devoted a large portion of his book to attacking many of the core principles of various other management and discipline programs. Kohn argued that many of the aspects of other programs provide startling insights as to the theorists' and educators' views on children. Take the idea that children should be told exactly what the adult expects of them along with what will happen if they fail to follow directions. Kohn stated that this implies it would be a "disaster" if students were asked to reflect on how to conduct themselves instead of being told. Similarly,

he believed that this implies that simple requests with an explanation from the teacher will never suffice, and that the classroom expectations would not be honored without the use of punishment (Kohn, 1996, p. 2). Kohn is very much an activist for fostering student responsibility through relinquishing control. Kohn encouraged teachers to ask the "inconvenient questions" of whether or not their expectations are reasonable or necessary. He argued through much of his book than many of the rules established by schools remove power from the students, often unnecessarily. Kohn described the attitude as being "...the problem always rests with the child who doesn't do what he is asked, never with what he has been asked to do" (Kohn, 1996, p. 13). Clearly, Kohn took a very pro-children approach to management, calling instead on teachers to do everything in their power to foster the environment they wish to have through developing student responsibility and input. As Kohn showed, this applies to every aspect of the classroom. When students misbehave, we should first question in what ways we are responsible instead of labeling that student as "bad." One of the most memorable quotes by Kohn (1996) goes as follows: "When students are 'off task,' our first response should be to ask, 'What's the task?'" (Kohn, 1996, p. 19).

Additional books that were reviewed for the purpose of this thesis were *The First Days of School*, by Harry and Rosemary Wong (1998), and *Elementary Classroom Management* by Carol Weinstein and Andrew Mignano (2014). While these books did not offer their own unique philosophies on classroom management, they did a great job of combining the views of our different theorists into more balanced and universal strategies that tend to appeal to a larger number of educators due to their more moderate approach.

Debated Forms of Management

  Carrots - the use of rewards.

  The use of rewards as a motivational tool is hotly debated amongst educational theorists, and thus we see glaring inconsistencies in their use amongst educators. In *Assertive Discipline*, Lee Canter (2010) advocated for the use of rewards, suggesting that educators use a "points on the board" system for earning class rewards. Canter stated that when you observe students following directions, it is important to not only award points to the class but to draw attention to the award and the positive behavior (Canter, 2010, p. 29). The primary rules established in *Assertive Discipline* for providing rewards, and in particular using the "points on the board" system, are making sure that students earn points frequently throughout the day (so that the points remain motivating), never take points away, establish a visible location for the points to be displayed, and systematically explaining the system to students so they fully understand the goal (Canter, 2010, p. 30-31).

  Conversely, Kohn (1996) argued against the use of rewards in his program. In it, he described the similarities between rewards and punishments. "Rewards work very well to get one thing, and that thing is temporary compliance… Instead of 'Do this - or here's what I'm going to do to you,' we say, 'Do this - and you'll get that.' Instead of leading a student to ask herself 'What do they want me to do, and what happens to me if I don't do it?', her question becomes 'What do they want me to do, and what do I *get* for doing it?' The latter question, of course, is no closer to the kind of thinking we would like to promote" (Kohn, 1996, p. 32). Instead of advocating for compliance, Kohn encouraged educators to focus on the long term goal of fostering a sense of responsibility in our students. When the educator's objectives change focus, the methods that these are accomplished must also be altered. The use of rewards and their

impacts on student motivation are fascinating to watch, and was illustrated very clearly in *Discipline with Dignity*, where the authors described a 7th grade classroom that relied on providing stickers as a reward for good behavior. When the teacher ran out of stickers the students became extremely distressed, refusing to work until there were more stickers available (Curwin, Mendler, & Mendler, 2008, p. 105). Rewards are clearly a double-edged sword, and should be considered carefully before being used as a primary motivator in a classroom.

Carrots - the use of praise.

The use of praise or positive reinforcement is another debated topic in the classroom, which may come as a surprise to many individuals. Why would one not praise a student for demonstrating good work? Kohn argued that the belief that students need positive reinforcement implies that the only way a child would display a positive behavior is in seeking the approval of an adult (Kohn, 1996, p. 3). As was pointed out previously, Kohn encouraged educators to focus on the long term development of responsibility in our students rather than achieving immediate results. In this rare instance, both Kohn and Canter (2010) were in agreement on the use of praise, though for different reasons. In *Assertive Discipline*, Canter (2010) stated that while teachers try to be encouraging and praise can be effective, when it is used ineffectively it teaches students that the educator does not really have high expectations for them, and that they will praise any work that they submit. Canter did believe praise was appropriate when used effectively, however, as it can then communicate to the rest of the class what the teacher expects from them (Canter, 2010, p. 19).

Providing opportunities for choice.

Providing opportunities for choice in the classroom is a scary proposition for educators. The thought of handing over the keys and allowing students to direct the flow of learning sounds

like a disaster to many educators. Yet providing choice can make the learning experience incredibly meaningful and engaging for students. This begs the question, to what extent is allowing students to have choice appropriate? Almost all theorists encourage educators to allow for some degree of choice for their students. In *Elementary Classroom Management* (2014), the authors provided examples of how educators involve their students in establishing expectations and rules for their classroom. One of the teachers interviewed in this book created a "Bill of Rights" with the help of his students. The goal of this document was to protect the students' rights, and thus the students collaborate to determine what rules need to be in place in order to allow them to best function (Weinstein & Mignano, 2007, p. 114). Kohn (1996) argued for even more choice for students, as he told teachers to encourage their students to question the pre-established norms to create a more equitable balance between teacher and student. One way that Kohn suggested teachers allow their students to establish input is to hold regular class meetings. He encouraged educators to establish rules for these meetings with the help of their students, ideally making the meetings largely student-led. In these meetings, Kohn suggested that educators allow their students to discuss anything that they have an issue with in how the class is run, what has been going on that day, etc. In this way, the students take full ownership of the classroom and are given the responsibility of seeing that it continues to work effectively (Kohn, 1996, p. 91-94).

  Sticks - discipline and punishment.

   Despite our earlier struggles to define classroom management, defining discipline does not provide quite the same challenge. Discipline, again for the purpose of this thesis, is any form of punishment or consequence administered to a student as a result of a form of misbehavior. The goal of discipline, defined unflatteringly by Alfie Kohn in his book *Beyond Discipline:*

From Compliance to Community, is "...almost always to secure children's compliance with adults' demands" (Kohn, 1996, p. xii). It is important to note Kohn's use of the word "compliance." Consider one of Lee Canter's key concepts of *Assertive Discipline*, "Expect 100 percent compliance with your directions 100 percent of the time" (Canter, 2010, p. 15). While both authors are describing student compliance, they clearly demonstrate very different feelings towards expecting such obedience from one's students. These differences pervade amongst all of the theorists we have observed thus far. In his book, *Assertive Discipline*, Canter (2010) referred to punishment as "corrective actions." He listed a series of options for corrective actions, including time outs, recess or lunch detention, and calling the student's parents (Canter, 2010, p. 35).

Other programs define these punishments as "logical consequences", encouraging educators to find punishments that fit the crime, so to speak. In *Discipline with Dignity*, the authors provided an example of a logical consequence. "If a student messes up a bathroom, a logical consequence is for that student to clean it up" (Curwin, Mendler, & Mendler, 2008, p. 96). The thinking behind this method is that the purpose of a punishment is to improve future student behavior rather than to make the student feel bad or for the teacher to "get revenge." In *The First Days of School*, Harry and Rosemary Wong (1998) provided further examples of logical consequences and outline what rules should be followed by the teacher when administering such consequences. These rules include avoiding consequences related to the student's academic grade whenever possible, establishing consequences ahead of time, and encouraging the student to use appropriate behavior in the future while administering the consequence (Wong & Wong, 1998, p. 156).

Some programs condemn the use of punishment and consequences altogether. In Glasser's *Control Theory* model, he described his beliefs towards using punishments (and rewards) as motivational tools. "For thousands of years we have wrongly concluded that what we do *to* or *for* people can make them behave in a way we want even if it does not satisfy them… Coercion will no more motivate students than it does nations" (Glasser, 1986, p. 20). Kohn (1996) was even more adamant in his opposition to the use of discipline and punishment. He argued that punishment models the use of power to solve problems, rather than cooperation or reason. Kohn added that punishment negatively impacts the relationship between the punisher and the punished, and actually impedes ethical development in the punished student (Kohn, 1996, p.27-30). Kohn's argument against discipline and punishment largely stems from the reasoning behind *why* we punish. This list includes discipline's effectiveness at achieving temporary compliance, and the fear that if students are not punished they will believe that they "got away with" something and will thus be more likely to repeat this action in the future. Kohn repeatedly made the argument that many educators see two options when misbehavior occurs: punishment or inaction (Kohn, 1996, p. 31). This is an important concept for all educators to consider, because in reality a far greater number of options exist, though most require more work than simple punishment. Even so, if educators truly want the best for their students, alternatives to inactivity and punishment must surely be considered.

Methodology

I began by developing a survey which was sent to elementary school teachers in the Cedar Falls Community School District. This survey contained questions pertaining to teachers' use of various types of classroom management strategies, their reasoning behind the use of such strategies, and their personal management ideology or philosophy. It also contained questions

pertaining to the use of various types of discipline, both in their classroom and others, and sought to assess how teachers developed their personal beliefs towards discipline. The goal of the survey, which was distributed via email, was to capture the most realistic possible picture of how teachers in the designated area use various discipline and classroom management techniques, as well as their stated and implied beliefs about children and their teaching. Techniques that were inquired about included, but were not limited to, time outs, the use of rewards as incentive, the use of punishment as incentive, corporal punishment, public discipline, and written class rules/expectations. The survey sent kept all participants anonymous, so as to protect the privacy of each individual participant, and IRB-approved protocols were followed throughout the process. A full list of survey questions is provided in Appendix A.

While the surveys were being completed, I conducted research on a number of prominent educational theorists and their respective theories. I intentionally targeted educational theorists and researchers who sat on varying points on the classroom management spectrum so that I would be exposed to a variety of beliefs and systems. This, I felt, would best allow me to analyze the information received from the teacher surveys, and would help me in determining the prominence of various theorists or tactics in the Cedar Falls Community School District.

Once the surveys were collected, I compared the results I received to the varying viewpoints presented by leading theorists and researchers in the field of classroom management. I then analyzed the data I received, and was able to draw inferences from the information provided by the Cedar Valley educators that have completed the survey, as well as compare their responses to what research-backed data suggests on the effectiveness of discipline and classroom management. Once each response had been read, I looked for trends that tended to occur in specific fields, such as either classroom management or discipline. This allowed me to generalize

which theorists and techniques were most prominent in local area classrooms. This information was compiled into a rough draft for April 15, 2016. Continued revisions were then made, and a final thesis paper was submitted on Monday, May 1, 2016. A presentation of the collected data was given on Friday, April 16, which was open to the public and included a brief question and answer session. The information in this presentation reflected the same views as are presented in this paper.

Results and Discussion

Once the survey data had been collected and analyzed, they were tied back to our central theme: What classroom management techniques are most commonly used in the Cedar Falls Community School District, and consequently, what theorists or theories do educators most align with, if any? This was also tied into teacher preparedness upon graduating from their respective universities. Ultimately, the results from the survey were overwhelmingly similar to one another in a majority of areas. All of the participants placed a heavy emphasis on establishing clear expectations early on, and maintaining those expectations for the duration of the academic year. This belief is consistent with much of what research shows about effectively managing students. In fact, research indicates that teachers should explicitly teach students behaviors and expectations, similar to how one would teach content. It has been found that some of the most effective classroom managers spend the majority of their school day for the first few weeks of school focusing largely on classroom expectations (Weinstein & Mignano, 2007, p. 108). Another unanimous point was the importance of establishing strong relationships with one's students. Few of the surveyed educators failed to state the crucial role relationships play in the function of a classroom. Once again, this is consistent with what research has indicated on the subject. Establishing a tight-knit community of learners is integral to the success of a classroom,

and is incredibly effective at preventing and reducing the impact of any number of behavioral problems (Weinstein & Mignano, 2007, p. 82). As one can see, the surveyed teachers tend to focus largely on prevention rather than reaction. As Alfie Kohn (1996) comments in his book *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community*, effectively taught classrooms were "...characterized by a chronic absence of problems" (Kohn, 1996, p. xi). Thus, one of the key characteristics of effective educators is that they do not necessarily address misbehavior differently. Rather, through a variety of methods, they prevent misbehavior from occurring altogether. Consequently, when the surveyed teachers were asked about their personal philosophies on discipline, consider the response from one particular teacher: "I feel if the environment, structure, and expectations and consequences are in place and reviewed frequently then discipline is seldom necessary. If the students are involved in developing the expectations and consequences they have ownership and usually accept the consequences when they break their own rules."

That being said, there was slightly more disparity between the responses of teachers with regards to their beliefs on discipline. All of the teachers seemed to be in agreement that discipline and consequences should be established beforehand, and that when using discipline one should be firm and consistent. The teachers also argued that the punishment should fit the crime, so to speak. For example, one teacher stated, "If you are disrupting the group, you are asked to leave the group. If you are hurting friends at recess, you miss recess. If you do not do your work and choose to play instead, you will miss some of your play to do your work." This teacher also emphasized the importance of welcoming the student back to the group readily as soon as students demonstrate a willingness and ability to follow the established guidelines. As discussed under the literature review, theorists provide us with a variety of viewpoints on the

subject of discipline, including these "logical consequences" described by our educators. One aspect of logical consequences, as explained by Kohn, who is particularly outspoken against the use of punishment as a whole, is that they are considered reasonable (Kohn, 1996, p. 41). He goes on to describe why he feels that logical consequences are no more than simple punishment. "It is… more reasonable to paddle a child than to shoot him, but this does not offer much of an argument for paddling" (Kohn, 1996, p. 41). Clearly, this example is more extreme than separating a child from a group when they are causing a disruption, but it does provide an interesting concept for exploration. It forces educators to consider not only how their consequences (or punishments) address the misbehavior, but whether or not the consequences serve simply as a short-term deterrent or help students build long-term positive behaviors.

After inquiring about the management and discipline techniques used by our teachers, the survey then asked the participants to share any management or discipline strategies that they specifically would not use in their classrooms. The responses to this question were far more telling about each teacher's personal beliefs towards managing a classroom. Multiple teachers expressed their disapproval of the "Clip Up, Clip Down" charts used in many modern classrooms. The basis of the "Clip Up, Clip Down" chart is that each student is provided a clip or magnet which is attached to a board displayed somewhere in the room. This board indicates how well each student is behaving over a given period of time. When students do well, they are told to "Clip Up". Conversely, when a student is misbehaving they are instructed to "Clip Down". Many of the survey participants expressed their dislike for this method due to its publicity and tendency to embarrass poor performing students. Public forms of discipline can be among the most damaging to the relationship between the teacher and student, and should not be used to address discipline problems unless there is no other option (Weinstein & Mignano, 2007, p. 337).

Many of the surveyed teachers expressed that they made it a point of emphasis to keep any discipline between themselves and the student involved. When considering employing techniques such as the "Clip Up, Clip Down" chart, one must consider what is hoped to be accomplished. While this may be effective in deterring student misbehavior, it does so by pitting students against their peers and opening them to criticism from the group. This is destructive to the community of your classroom, and ultimately does not seek to help the student understand why their misbehavior was wrong or how they can improve. When addressing forms of discipline that they would not use in their classrooms, teachers once again largely focused on keeping all discipline between the teacher and the student. Another interesting trend was that the educators seemed to agree that in many ways, punishment was ineffective or even detrimental to improving student misbehavior. The surveyed teachers tended to focus on a more remedial, rather than punitive, approach to discipline. For example, one teacher stated, "I do not believe in taking students out of specials or recess as a "punishment." I think certain privileges can be reduced, but I have seen students being "disciplined" by taking away something they love and that doesn't help the student. I also do not like to make consequences that are not related to the issue with the behavior."

The question that elicited the widest variety of responses was, interestingly enough, what is the goal of classroom management and/or discipline? From this, a multitude of responses were collected, each vastly different from the others. Let us first begin by addressing the suggested goals of classroom management, which received less variance (although still a fair deal) than did the goal of discipline. Teachers emphasized establishing a warm community, maximizing the learning of each student, keeping students engaged, and establishing safety and predictability. The responses to this question largely indicate creating an optimal classroom. One in which all

students are engaged, excited to learn, and feel they belong. This aligns with the classroom management definition provided in *Elementary Classroom Management* (Weinstein & Mignano, 2007), and emphasizes on creating a fluid and effective classroom that facilitates learning and inclusion. Only one participant seemed to differ on their views in this area, stating that the goal of classroom management was "To have clearly defined parameters for behavior and consequences so everyone in the room is treated fairly and with respect and everyone is able to learn without disruption or distractions." This responds more clearly aligns with our established definition of discipline, but brings rise to an important point that while we all use the same terminology, we are not all speaking the same language. Every educator views classroom management differently, and these varying views must be considered as we explore the role that they play in our classrooms.

When asked to define the goal of discipline, the teachers were much less unified in their response. This question elicited responses ranging from, "Discipline is a way to help students learn," to, "I think any discipline is designed to slow or stop the undesirable behavior." One educator even admitted to this question, "I am not sure." With such a wide range of views on what discipline is hoping to achieve, it should come as no surprise that there are varying perspectives among educators as to what forms of discipline are appropriate or inappropriate, and when different forms of discipline should be employed. Even our theorists have different views on the desired outcomes of discipline, as was highlighted previously. Kohn - who by now you should realize is not particularly fond of discipline and punishment - describes discipline as, "Do this or here's what I'm going to do to you" (Kohn, 1996, p. 27).

The final key question asked in the survey related to how educators obtained their knowledge of classroom management strategies and techniques. This question, while seemingly

innocent, excavated a somewhat alarming trend amongst all of the participating teachers. Many of the teachers cited their experience in the classroom or in other settings involving children as their primary source of knowledge in developing their classroom management philosophies. Additionally, a good portion of the teachers explained a number of professional development opportunities that improved their understanding of the area, including interactions with colleagues and seeking out informational material on their own. While this is certainly commendable behavior and work ethic on the part of the teachers, it is upsetting to see how no teachers explicitly referenced their college education as a key source of information on classroom management ideologies and strategies. Management, as acknowledged by all of the participating educators, is incredibly important in the success of a classroom. In turn, a considerable amount of research and exploration has been conducted in this field. Despite this, it appears that it is not uncommon for undergraduate college students who aspire to become educators are not provided with a comprehensive or even very applicable background on effective techniques to be used in managing a classroom. Why this is the case is difficult to answer. One could easily argue that many universities require more content than is necessary, particularly when you consider that much of the same content was taught to these college students when they were in primary or secondary school. Additionally, it could easily be asserted that the value presented by more courses in the field of classroom management is far greater than that of many general education courses required during one's undergraduate career. All teachers should have a sound understanding of modern classroom management ideologies. If universities want to produce the most effective educators, they need to provide the most relevant curriculum possible. The information obtained by this thesis would certainly suggest that this quite simply is not currently happening.

As is true of all research, there were a few limitations to the information obtained in this study. The primary limiting factor was the small sample size of educators. It is difficult to make generalizations about teachers as a whole when only surveying individuals from one school district, and more difficult still when only a portion of those educators are surveyed. Thus, if future research were to be conducted, a larger sample size would certainly be necessary. Additionally, future research would be wise to more directly address the topic of classroom management preparedness in educators upon leaving college. Asking teachers directly about their experiences with management and discipline prior to beginning a career would certainly provide further insight, and shed more light on the severity of the issue.

Conclusion

The viewpoints expressed by both educators and theorists reflect the widely varying beliefs about how classrooms should operate. Ultimately, every teacher must find what techniques work most effectively for them in their classroom. Far more upsetting than the differences in classroom management philosophy, however, is the apparent lack of exposure of real world educators to these different viewpoints. As was stated by many of the surveyed teachers, few had been exposed to the different ideas expressed by leading theorists on issues extremely relevant to their field. Furthermore, many of our teachers cited that the majority of their classroom management philosophies were developed as they were teaching, as this is where they acquired the vast majority of their knowledge on the subject. Classroom management is one of the most important aspects of teaching, and yet it would appear that many colleges or universities fail to expose their soon-to-be teachers to leading viewpoints and varying perspectives on how this should be applied to real classrooms. As a result, teachers are left to either seek out this knowledge independently or simply develop their own beliefs based on a

very limited amount of experience. While certainly some educators engage in rigorous professional development and have exposed themselves to research in the classroom management field, it is clear that many do not.

The results of this thesis were able to provide significant insight into the degree that current educators have been exposed to research-based information on the fields of classroom management and discipline. The primary goal of this research was to determine the beliefs current educators held on the fields of classroom management and discipline. These areas play incredibly significant roles in the everyday function of a classroom, and the techniques that educators use have a direct and substantial impact on the development of their students. Because there was little to no justification for the beliefs established by our surveyed educators, we must question whether or not they were adequately prepared prior to their exiting their respective colleges or universities. Teaching is not a job in which individuals can take the "just another day at the office" approach. Educators are charged with the task of helping grow and develop future generations. Certainly then, we should be preparing them to most effectively lead and foster growth, rather than hoping that they develop these skills on their own. This is a definite area of weakness amongst colleges and universities in grooming future educators, and an area that - based on the results of this research - needs additional attention and preparation prior to our educators reaching the classroom.

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Appendix A – Teacher Survey

Honors Thesis Teacher Survey

1. **This survey is being conducted for an Honors Thesis research project at the University of Northern Iowa. The goal of this research is to determine the philosophies and beliefs of local area teachers when it comes to discipline and classroom management. The following survey should take 15 minutes or less to complete, and no further efforts will be asked of participants following the completion of the survey. The survey presents minimal risk, as no personal information will be recorded or shared. Compensation for completion of the survey will not be provided, but you will have the opportunity to see the survey results, final thesis paper, and thesis presentation. All personal or identifiable information that is provided will not be shared in any of the forms mentioned above. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the internet by any third parties. Participation in this research is voluntary, and participants may refuse to participate, or discontinue participation at any time. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Gabriel Gedlinske at gedlinsg@uni.edu, or Dr. Brian Townsend at brian.townsend@uni.edu. For questions regarding research participant rights, contact Anita Gordon, UNI IRB Administrator at anita.gordon@uni.edu. ***

Check all that apply.

☐ I agree to the terms above, and consent to allow the information I provide to be used as stated.

Teaching Experience

2. **At what grade level do you currently teach? ***
Note: If you teach multiple classes (middle or high school) at different grade levels, please check the middle school or high school box. Keep in mind that the grade levels that are considered belonging to middle school and high school vary between districts. Select whichever option applies to your district.
Mark only one oval.

○ Kindergarten

○ 1st Grade

○ 2nd Grade

○ 3rd Grade

○ 4th Grade

○ 5th Grade

○ 6th Grade

○ Middle School

○ High School

3. **Have you taught other grades in the past? If yes, mark which grades you have previously taught. If no, skip this question.**
Check all that apply.

[ ] Kindergarten

[ ] 1st Grade

[ ] 2nd Grade

[ ] 3rd Grade

[ ] 4th Grade

[ ] 5th Grade

[ ] 6th Grade

[ ] 7th Grade

[ ] 8th Grade

[ ] 9th Grade

[ ] 10th Grade

[ ] 11th Grade

[ ] 12th Grade

Teaching Philosophies

4. **Please provide a brief overview of your personal teaching philosophy on classroom management. ***

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5. **Please provide a brief overview of your personal teaching philosophy on discipline. ***

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Classroom Management

6. **What types of classroom management strategies do you employ in your classroom? Please describe the situations that these techniques are used in, and what each technique is meant to address.** *

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7. **What types of classroom management strategies do you observe being used by other teachers at your school?** *

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8. **Are there certain classroom management techniques that you tend to avoid using in your own classroom, or disagree with in general? If so, why do you disagree with these techniques?**

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9. **From your perspective, what is the goal of classroom management?** *

Discipline

10. **What discipline techniques do you employ in your own classroom? For each type of discipline, please provide an example of student behavior that you feel warrants that form of discipline.** *

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11. **What discipline techniques do you observe being used by other teachers at your school?** *

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12. **Are there certain forms of discipline that you tend to avoid using in your own classroom, or disagree with? If so, why do you disagree with these forms of discipline?**

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13. **From your perspective, what is the goal of discipline? Consider your own classroom in your answer. When you discipline students, what is your desired outcome?** *

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14. **What are your thoughts on corporal punishment being used as a form of discipline?** *

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Personal Experiences

15. **Have you ever been in a classroom, as a teacher or a student, that allowed or used corporal punishment as a form of discipline? If so, please explain how that affected the classroom environment and structure.** *

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16. **Think back to your personal teaching philosophy on both classroom management and discipline. How did you come to develop this philosophy? Was it drawn from your experiences as a teacher or former student? Is it based off of information you have gathered through your own or someone else's research?** *

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17. **If you have taught at different grade levels than the one at which you currently teach, please explain how your classroom management and discipline techniques have changed to adjust to different age groups.**

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Personal Information
The information collected in this section will not be attached to your specific responses in either the final paper or the presentation of findings. This information will be completely removed if other participants request to view the results of this survey.

18. **Gender** *

Mark only one oval.

◯ Male

◯ Female

◯ Prefer not to answer

19. **Age** *

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20. **Total Years of Teaching Experience** *

....

Survey Results

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey! Once all surveys have been collected, the information will be used in an unpublished thesis paper, as well as a brief presentation. If you would like to have access to the final paper, attend the presentation, or have access to the results of this survey, copy and paste the following link onto a new page: http://goo.gl/forms/CYjwWYqbu2. The paper and survey results will be distributed upon completion, and the presentation date will be sent out in late Spring. None of the information on this page or the linked Google Form will be included in the final thesis paper, the presentation, or the results distributed to participants.

21. **If there are any responses to questions that you do not wish to have shared when the results are distributed to participants, please list them below. They will be removed from the results that will be sent out to other participants.**

Note: This ONLY applies to the results which will be sent out to other participants. All relevant data may be used in the final thesis paper and presentation unless otherwise specified.

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