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The Impact of Professional Development on the Delivery of Written Praise and Office Disciplinary Referrals

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ABSTRACT

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Written Praise and Office Disciplinary Referrals

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The purpose of this research was to examine the impact of professional development on teachers' delivery of written praise notes and the number of office disciplinary referrals (ODRs). The professional development consisted of training teachers on the effective use of behavior specific written praise, as well as on how to analyze and respond to praise-note and office disciplinary referral data. It was hypothesized that this process could help support and increase teachers' delivery of behavior-specific written praise notes and would subsequently decrease in the rate of office discipline referrals (ODRs).

As baseline data, this study used the participating school's existing data (November through February for academic years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011). Data included number of praise notes and office disciplinary referrals. Across the most recent school year (November thru February 2011-2012), on a monthly basis, data were collected on number and content of notes and the number of ODRs. Current data were compared with baseline data from two previous school years.

Although the data did not indicate significant changes between baseline data and post intervention data, overall data suggest a gradual increase in respect to the number of written praise notes. However, contrary to anticipated outcome, a slight upward trend was indicated in the number of office discipline referrals. These results are considered inconclusive in regard to whether professional development significantly impacts the number and specificity of praise notes and decreases the number of students with ODRs. However, the majority of teachers supported delivering written praise notes as an effective intervention to increase desired classroom academic achievement and appropriate social behavior.

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I would also like to thank my chair Michelle Marchant for her continual support. This research project would not be possible without her positive support and feedback. I would also like to thank my other committee members, Michael Richardson and Ellie Young for their help and encouragement throughout this process. I also owe my thanks to Melissa Heath for her willingness to help with formatting and editing my work.

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INTRODUCTION OF STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

This thesis, *The Impact of Professional Development on the Delivery of Written Praise and Office Disciplinary Referrals*, is written in a hybrid format, which brings together traditional thesis requirements and journal publication formats.

The preliminary pages of the thesis adhere to university requirements for thesis formatting submission to the university. The thesis report is presented in a journal-ready format and conforms to length and style requirements for future publication in education journals. A more extensive literature review is included in Appendix A.

Background

Across the U.S. schools are becoming increasingly diverse (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2009). Classrooms include students from a variety of backgrounds with respect to behaviors, abilities, and disabilities (Jenkins & Yoshimura, 2010). Teachers are challenged to meet students' needs, especially those who struggle academically or behaviorally.

In regard to student behavior problems, teachers typically design a classroom management plan that focuses on specific classroom rules. Violating these rules often leads to punishment with specific infractions leading to specific consequences, all students receiving the same consequence for the same behavioral infraction (Alber & Heward, 2000). Unfortunately, this approach focuses the teachers' attention on students' negative behaviors and subsequent punishment (Robinson, Ervin, & Jones, 2002). This takes time away from academic instruction and places the teachers' attention on the students who frequently misbehave (Maag, 2001). By attending primarily to students' undesirable behaviors teachers miss the opportunity to teach students appropriate behaviors and social skills (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

To this end, Osher, Bear, Sprague, and Doyle (2010) recommend teaching students appropriate behaviors, clearly defining expectations, and rewarding students who display such behaviors. This is often looked at as a preventative discipline approach in education. Many of the behaviors typically witnessed at schools involve talk outs, disruptions, and social isolation. Although these problems may seem minimal they often contribute to the development of more serious problem behaviors (Kauffman, 1999). Taking a preventative approach can minimize these problem behaviors. This includes early implementation of proactive classroom management strategies (Kauffman, 1999).

Positive Behavioral Support (PBS)

Some schools have started taking this preventative approach by implementing a Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) model. PBS is designed to use behavioral evidence-based interventions and preventive strategies on a school-wide, classroom, or individual level in order to aid students' academic and behavioral success (Nelson, Young, Young, & Cox, 2009). Ultimately, the purpose of PBS involves setting and teaching school-wide expectations, encouraging expected behaviors while discouraging problem behavior (Lewis & Sugai, 1999) and providing opportunities for modeling while reinforcing appropriate behaviors (Reinke, Splett, & Robeson, 2009). Various strategies, one of which is praise, have been implemented within PBS to fulfill its purpose (Nelson, Young, Young, & Cox, 2009).

Praise is a form of social approval in the school setting and is a powerful, effective, low cost reinforcer that teachers can use within the PBS model to encourage and reinforce both expected behavior and appropriate behavior (Alber & Heward, 2000; Brophy, 1981). It is easy to use and is a readily available, naturalistic strategy that all teachers have at their disposal (Kalis, Vannest, & Parker, 2007; Sutherland, Wehby, & Copeland, 2000). In a functional analysis by Brophy (1981), praise is defined as "an expression of worth or a statement of approval" (p. 5). This wording gives more emphasis on a teacher's response to students' specific behaviors rather than just feedback of a correct response (e.g., "good job").

Praise is most effective as a reinforcer when it is behavior-specific. An effective reinforcer is designed to increase the likelihood of the behavior happening in the future (Kalis et al., 2007). Behavior-specific praise focuses on a clearly described behavior exhibited by the student (Kalis et al., 2007; Southerland et al., 2000). It is a relatively simple strategy that has been found to be successful in maintaining the desired behaviors in students. Specifically, it can

have an impact on students' academic, social, and emotional success (Sutherland & Wehby, 2001).

Praise is typically seen as a vocal expression: however, a few studies have looked at the use of written praise (e.g. praise notes) as a means of reinforcing student behavior (Nelson et al., 2009). The use of behavior-specific praise, including in written form aligns with the recommendation found in the PBS literature that incentive programs should focus on the social acknowledgment and the interaction between the student and the school and not just a token or tangible reward (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Strategies for encouraging expected behaviors can be developed and often maintain the desired behaviors in schools (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). The success of this strategy is often measured as part of the PBS model (Lewis & Sugai, 1999).

The PBS model also emphasizes the need for schools to make data-based decisions regarding prevention and intervention strategies. Data-based decisions are made after relevant data are identified, collected, summarized, and analyzed by way of regularly scheduled meetings and administration support (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Data are used to identify the areas of concern, select the practices to address the concern, evaluate the impact of these practices in achieving desired outcomes, and guide long-term action planning and sustainability (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Schools often collect data on the use of attendance/tardy, standardized tests, and office discipline referrals (Sugai & Horner, 2002). It is important to note that data associated with appropriate behaviors is often not considered. Although some schools collect these data, many schools do not analyze the data and use it to make decisions (Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000).

Professional Development

Training teachers is a time and cost-effective strategy for improving behaviors. Professional development can help raise teachers' confidence when working with students and in bringing forth improvement in education (Jenkins & Yoshimura, 2010; Speck, 1996). Professional development can ground teachers in both pedagogy and content knowledge, engage them in an active learning process (Doppelt et al., 2009), and provide them with opportunities to practice new ideas in their own classroom (Klein & Riordan, 2009). According to current professional development literature effective professional development includes ongoing feedback and training to teachers (Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, & Merrell, 2008) methods for teachers to self-monitor their own behavior (Partin, Robertson, Maggin, Oliver, & Wehby, 2010), and opportunities to collaborate with peers and coaches (Klein & Riordan, 2009).

Statement of Problem

Researchers suggest a need to implement prevention efforts for behavioral challenges in school (Payne, 2009), with the PBS model being one effective prevention approach schools have adopted (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Prevention programs, including PBS, are more successful when schools implement them with fidelity. One important way to ensure fidelity is for data to be collected and analyzed in order to make the best decisions for all students. As part of the PBS model, schools have collected data to help design, monitor, and assess interventions (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Although data are being collected, there remain some concerns about who collects the data and how it is being used to design, monitor, and assess interventions (Sugai et al., 2000).

Within prevention programs, the use of feedback, including praise, has been underscored as an essential element (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2002; Sugai & Horner, 2002). Praise is

sometimes delivered verbally; however, a few studies have found success in the use of written praise (Nelson et al., 2009; Wheatley et al., 2009). Within these studies, positive outcomes were not recognized until the analyzed data were provided to the teachers. This suggests that there is value in training teachers to analyze data on their own in an effort to change their behavior as well as to influence the behavior of their students.

Although studies have shown the impact data can have in increasing positive behaviors of students, many schools do not effectively analyze the data and use it to make decisions (Sugai et al., 2000).   If schools and teachers are not taking the time to analyze their own data, especially data related to positive behaviors, how then could data be used to improve the behaviors of students?

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research was to examine the impact professional development for teachers can have on the delivery of written praise and office disciplinary referrals (ODRs). This research is designed to focus on training teachers to monitor and analyze their own behavior data. It was hypothesized that this process could help support teachers' delivery of behavior-specific written praise notes subsequently, changing the rate of office discipline referrals (ODRs). The professional development consisted of training teachers on the effective use of behavior specific written praise and how to analyze and respond to praise-note and office disciplinary referral data. Although studies have measured the impact of professional developments on praise, these studies used atypical measurement tools (e.g., Observing Pupils and Teachers in Classrooms, Classroom Check-Up) and have exclusively measured the impact of verbal praise. This study used existing data collected at the school specifically praise notes and office disciplinary referrals to increase teacher use of behavior-specific written praise.

Research Questions

Three research questions were investigated during this study:

1. What is the effect of professional development (i.e. training, team meetings, and data analyses) on an elementary school teacher's delivery of written praise, specifically the rate and quality of the written praise (i.e., behavioral specificity) when comparing baseline data from academic years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 to post-intervention data from 2011-2012 for the months of November thru February?

2. What effect does a teacher's delivery of the written praise and the teams' data analyses then have on the rate of elementary school students' office discipline referrals (ODR) when comparing baseline data from academic years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 to post-intervention data from 2011-2012 for the months of November thru February?

3. What are the perceptions of the teachers in respect to this professional development training? Specifically, the training on improving the quality of Principal's 200 Club written praise notes on effectively analyzing praise notes and ODR data?

Method

Setting

This study was conducted in an elementary school located in a suburban neighborhood within the western United States where positive behavior support (PBS) is instituted at both the school and district levels. The participating school was selected from Utah's Academic Behavior Coaching Initiative (ABC-UBI), a PBS and response to intervention (RtI) statewide initiative. Amongst other efforts, ABC-UBI schools implement the Principal's 200 Club, a strategy designed to "catch students being good." This strategy involves establishing a system in which teachers write Principal's 200 Club notes to students when they observe them following the

school rules. More information about ABC-UBI and Principal's 200 Club can be found on the following website: [www.UPDC.org]. Additional details will be shared below. This elementary school was selected to participate because they have been a part of the ABC-UBI initiative for the past 4 years and had already collected the necessary data needed for this study.

This school serves grades Kindergarten thru sixth grade and 19 teachers participated in the study. Approximately 460 students attended this elementary school. The student-body consisted of approximately 91% Caucasian, 5% Hispanic/Latino, 2% Pacific Islander, and less than 1% for each of the following ethnicities: Asian, American Indian, and African American. Participants included 51% male students and 49% female students. English Language Learner contributed to approximately 3% of the school population and students with disabilities made up approximately 13% of the population. Students eligible for the free or reduced lunch program totaled 28% of the school population. According to the Utah Performance Assessment System for Students (UPASS) report from 2010-2011, 88% of the participating school's students were proficient in Language Arts, 86% were proficient in Math, and 84% were proficient in Science. The school's average daily attendance was 91%.

Participants

Teacher participants were selected from a local elementary school grades kindergarten through sixth grade. Each teacher in the elementary school was invited to participate in the study at the beginning of the school year and all teachers agreed to participate. There were a total of 19 participants, one male and 18 females. Participants ranged in experience from two to thirty years of serving in the teaching profession with the average experience among the teachers being 12 years. Each teacher participated individually in the study by giving Principal's 200 Club praise

notes and Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODRs) to their students. Each month, participating

teachers worked together in grade level teams to analyze their data.

A building team leader was identified to assist with the data analysis process. This

person was selected because she already met monthly with grade level teams to discuss data.

During the data collection phase of this study she continued to collect the on-going data from

each group each month and meet with each grade level to discuss any concerns the teachers had

in writing and analyzing written praise notes.

Materials

The materials for this study included resources for both training and implementation

purposes. Examples of Principal's 200 Club notes (samples of praise notes) and ODR databases

were used to train teachers to write behavior-specific praise notes and to analyze data with their

team. Specifically, Principal's 200 Club notes and ODR databases across three consecutive

years were accessed. Other materials included blank Principal's 200 Club notes, checklists,

computers, pencils, and paper.

Study Design

This study is a descriptive study examining the changes in teacher use of written praise

and ODRs across the months of November through February for three consecutive years. An

intervention during the third year allowed for an examination of relationships between the

intervention and any changes in the teachers' use of praise notes and ODRs.

Dependent variables. The dependent variables for this study included Office

Disciplinary Referrals (ODRs) and Principal's 200 notes across three consecutive years. Past and

current data sources were accessed. Specifically, the researcher measured the following data per

month: (a) the number of ODRs given across the entire student body, (b) the percentage of

students receiving ODRs, (c) the number of Principal's 200 Club notes given across the entire

student body, (d) the percentage of students receiving the Principal's 200 Club notes, and (e) the

number of Principal's 200 Club notes that are behavior specific (quality) across the entire student

body. The sources for these dependent variables were systems already implemented in the

school known as the Principal's 200 Club and Encore. Both systems are explained in detail

below. The Principal's 200 Club collects data about both office disciplinary referrals and

positive notes written by teachers.

Office disciplinary referrals. As part of the Principal's 200 club, ODRs are collected.

ODRs are written when a student engages in a behavior that violates a school rule and is severe

enough to require administrative intervention. These referrals are recorded in a software

program used by the school called Encore. Encore is designed to keep track of educational data

(e.g. attendance, demographics, discipline, schedules, grades). The ODRS are divided into

categories based on the severity of the behavior. The categories consist of minor infractions,

major infractions, in-school suspension, and out of school suspension. However, lacking

empirical or theoretical justification for hypothesizing different effects of praise notes on ODRs

by category, the present study will focus on total ODRs rather than analyzing ODR categories

separately.

Principal's 200 Club notes. The Principal's 200 Club is part of the PBS initiative that is

being implemented in the school on a school-wide level. The purpose of the Principal's 200

Club is to recognize the students who follow the school rules. When teachers recognize a

student following school rules, they write and give them a note. The student takes the note to the

office, where a phone call is made to the parents to inform them of the student's behavior. The

student then picks a number and their praise note is put on a "bingo" board.   When a row is

completely filled up, every student in that row receives a reward. All the other names on the board are taken off and the process starts over.

As part of Principal's 200 Club, teachers in the school are required to write notes, but there is currently no expectation that the written note be behavior specific or that a high rate of notes are delivered to a variety of students. In an effort to improve the "note system," changes in the Principal's 200 Club were recommended. The changes included (a) increasing the number of notes written, (b) increasing the number and names of students being praised, and (c) ensuring that the notes are behavior specific. Specifically, it was expected that the teachers include a specific statement regarding the appropriate behavior the student uses (e.g., raising hand, walking quietly in the halls, sitting quietly at one's desk), and a statement of where the behavior was observed (e.g., classroom, lunchroom, hallway). The researcher informed the participants of the changes by providing professional development, which will be described in the independent variable section below.

Independent variable. The independent variable was the professional development training provided to the participating teachers. The professional development included three stages: (a) training the teachers, (b) training the group leaders, and (c) conducting on-going team meetings. Each stage is described below.

Training the teachers. The training involved two components (a) a review of what behavior-specific praise notes should consist of, and (b) instruction on how to analyze past ODR data and Principal's 200 Club notes. The purpose of teachers collecting and analyzing the data on the dependent variables discussed above is to identify what is working and what needs to be changed with respect to attending to the behavioral needs of the students. As per ABC-UBI expectations, ABC-UBI schools are not required to collect and analyze the data in a systematic

way. Furthermore, the manner in which they use the data to make decisions varies. Some schools may analyze it frequently, while other schools may collect data only to meet the requirement put forth by the ABC-UBI. This potential lack of consistency points to a need to include systematic analysis of data as part of the independent variable for this study.

Praise notes. The researcher first instructed the teacher on what a behavior-specific praise note should look like. Teachers were shown both good and bad examples of the notes. Good examples of behavior-specific praise notes consisted of notes with the student's name, the specific positive behavior being observed (e.g. raising hand, picking up trash in the lunchroom, coming into class without talking), the location of where the behavior occurred, (e.g. classroom, hallway, lunchroom), and a signature from the teacher who gave the note. Bad examples of behavior-specific praise notes consisted of notes with the student's name, a general praise statement (e.g. good job, excellent work), and the teacher's name. Teachers then discussed the positive behaviors that are often observed from students.

Data analysis. The second part of the training consisted of training teachers how to review the ODRs and Principal's 200 Club praise note by analyzing data from the whole school using data from the previous school years and monthly data (September and October) from the 2011-2012 school year. The specific purpose of this training was to help teachers learn how to identify patterns in the data (e.g. which students are/are not receiving notes and ODRs, the types of behaviors being praised, the types of ODRs being administered).

As a group, teachers began by learning how to analyze the Principal's 200 Club note data. The researcher modeled how this was done and the teachers had an opportunity to practice. During this training the teachers were specifically taught to look for the following information by month for all the teachers: (a) the number of students receiving Principal's 200 Club notes, (b)

the number of notes that are behavior specific, and (c) the specific names of students who did/did

not receive notes. After the analysis of the notes, teachers turned their attention to the office

discipline referrals. In analyzing the ODRs data, teachers looked at the data by month for all the

teachers. Specifically, they looked at (a) the number of ODRs written, (b) the percentage of

students receiving ODRS, (c) the names of the students who did/did not receive ODRs.

After the teachers mastered analyzing the praise note and ODR data, they were

introduced to a checklist (Appendix B). This checklist was used as an essential part of the

monthly ongoing team meetings where the teachers consistently review their data. The checklist

consisted of specific tasks the teachers needed to do and gave them specific examples of what

they should analyze when looking at their groups data (e.g. did the team discuss the number of

students receiving ODRS, did the team discuss the names of the students' who did/did not

receive a Principal's 200 during that month, did the team compare month-to-month data). The

team meeting/data analysis process is explained below.

Training the building team leader. The building team leader was a member of the

faculty whose current role in the school is a reading specialist. She was required to have monthly

data meetings with each grade level group to discuss students' academic progress. The building

team leader participated in the teacher training to ensure she received the training on how to

analyze the data. In a separate training from the teachers, the building team leader was trained in

her role. Her role consisted of providing support to the teachers and meeting with each team on a

monthly basis. During these meetings they listened to the team's discussions, offered feedback

when the team had questions and/or when they struggled with data analysis, and guided the team

to follow the monthly data checklist (Appendix B) with fidelity.

Conducting ongoing team meetings. After the initial training, teachers met in their teams on a monthly basis for the duration of the four-month study. At these meetings teachers completed a checklist (Appendix B) at each of these team meetings to guide their data analysis and discussion of both Principal's 200 Club notes and the ODRs.

At these meetings, teams analyzed the data as described above. Teachers then compared the Principal's 200 Club note and ODR data from the current month with the previous months' data. The team used the monthly data to reflect on what they learned by using the problem-solving model. Specifically, they used the following questions to guide their analysis: (a) what is the problem? OR what are the data showing us? (b) Why is it occurring? OR What changes teachers and students have made? (c) What can we do about it? OR What are things we can change and what are things we need to keep doing? and (d) Did the plan work? Why? How? As the teachers talked they designated a team member to summarize their reflections in the comment section of the checklist.

Treatment Fidelity

As was mentioned previously, the researcher provided the training to the teachers and building team leaders. An observer completed a yes or no checklist (Appendix C) during the teacher training and a yes or no checklist (Appendix D) during the building team leader training to ensure the researcher discussed all the components of the training as was intended. To ensure that the ongoing meetings proceeded as intended, team members completed a checklist (Appendix E).

The data collection of the Principal's 200 Club praise notes and ODRs is part of a routine completed by the school. It should be consistent from year to year. However, in an effort to understand any changes in data collection associated with the study, the administrator was asked

to describe the procedure for collecting and tracking Principal's 200 notes, the procedure for collecting and tracking ODRs, and any procedural changes that have occurred in the last three years (Appendix F).

The procedures set forth by the school for collecting and tracking Principal's 200 notes consisted of students turning in the Principal's 200 Club note they received from their teacher into the office. The student drew a number and placed it on the 200 Club board. Principal's 200 notes were collected and then counted by teachers and by the UBI Building Coordinator. The students whose numbers were on the first completed row (like bingo) are invited to the Principal's 200 Club luncheon.

The procedure for collecting and tracking Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODRs) consisted of a note being issued by the teacher. One copy of the note goes home for the parent to sign, one copy stays with the teacher, while another is taken to the office. The note is entered in a book kept in the office under the teacher's name. Once the student has counseled with the principal and the note is returned with a parent signature it is initialed in the book. The building coordinator enters the incident written on the note into Encore and initials the note.

According to the principal of the school and the UBI Building Coordinator, the above procedure for collecting and tracking Principal's 200 notes and Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODRs) have been the same since the beginning of the three-year data collection. There have been no procedural changes during the last three years.

Social Validity

To establish social validity, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire after the completion of the study to evaluate their perceptions of the training received, their perceptions of on-going training, and their perceptions of administering behavior-specific praise notes

(Appendix D). This survey was completed during a teacher faculty meeting. The researcher distributed a hard copy of the survey to each participant after which the surveys were collected. The survey consisted of seven items that used a 5-point scale from 1= Strongly Disagree, to 5 = Strongly Agree. The teachers were asked to rate the following statements: (a) the usefulness of the training given on analyzing the Principal's 200 Club notes and Office Disciplinary Referrals; (b) the usefulness on the training on analyzing notes ODRS referrals decreasing the amount of ODRs; (c) the change of behavior in the most concerning student(s); (d) the use of written praise as an effective intervention to increase desired classroom academic and social behavior; (e) the effectiveness of analyzing the monthly data in decreasing the amount of ODRs in my classroom; and (f) the effectiveness and feasibility of continuing to analyze monthly data.

The final survey items included in the survey consisted of how many years have they taught and how many years have they taught at this elementary school. Teachers were also asked on an average how often they delivered written praise on a daily basis. The data from this survey is presented in the results section.

Data Collection and Analyses

Baseline data measures—ODRs and Principal's 200 notes—were collected previously as part of the ABC-UBI initiative for the 2009-2010, 2010-2011 school years. During this particular study, ODRs and Principal's 200 notes were collected during the months of September and October in 2011-2012 and used in the training efforts with teachers. After the professional development training was delivered, post-intervention ODRs and Principal's 200 notes were collected on a monthly basis and used as the key measures for the remainder of the study (November thru February of 2011-2012).

In analyzing the research questions considered in this study, the data were examined graphically in descriptive analyses across the three academic years. Graphs were created for monthly totals of: (a) the frequency of Principal's 200 Club notes for the whole student body, (b) percentage of students receiving Principal's 200 Club notes, (c) frequency of behavior specific Principal's 200 notes for the whole student body, (d) frequency of ODRs notes for the student body, and (e) percentage of students receiving ODRs. Graphs included the data collected during the months of November to February of all three years. Analyses examined patterns in the data across the three years including increases or decreases in the yearly averages, changes in slopes corresponding to the year of the intervention, changes in monthly variance across the three years, and percentage of overlap of data points across the three years.

Results

The following research question was addressed in this study: what is the effect of professional development (i.e. training, team meetings, and data analyses) on elementary school teacher's delivery of written praise, specifically the rate and quality of the written praise (i.e., behavioral specificity) when comparing baseline data from the years 2009-2010 (year 1), 2010-2011 (year 2), to post-intervention data from 2011-2012 (year 3) for the months of November thru February. The following analyses of the data are provided below.

Praise Notes

According to the data for the ratio of behavior-specific praise notes to total praise notes it was found that teachers were consistently writing behavior-specific praise notes both during September and October 2011-2012 the months prior to the professional development training, as well as during the months the professional development training occurred. Additionally, only the total numbers of praise notes were available for the previous baseline years, so the question of whether notes from the baseline years were behavior specific could not be addressed. Thus, the

ratio of behavior-specific praise notes to overall praise notes was not analyzed further. These

data were at or near 100% both before and during the training. The data also suggest that during

the baseline years, as well as the year in which the current study was conducted, teachers were

writing praise notes at a high rate. This rate continued during the months of November through

February (the months in which professional development was conducted during the current

year). A ratio above one indicates that more praise notes were written for a given month than the

total number of students at the school.

Figure 1 shows the ratio of total praise notes written to the total number of students in the

student body for the months of November to February during each of the three years examined.

The number of notes written for February of year one (Feb 1) seems somewhat anomalous for

the months under consideration. Otherwise, there appears to be a gradual increase in the overall

trend across these months for the three years. Excluding Feb 1, the ratio of notes written to the

total number of students at the school during these four months of year two are higher than the

corresponding months of the previous year. Similarly, all but one of these months (December)

during year three indicate a higher ratio when compared to months of the previous year.

Although the ratio falls below January and February of year two, December of year three still

shows a slightly higher ratio of praise when compared to December of year two. Aside from the

gradual upward trend across the three years (if February of year one is excluded) no clear

patterns in trend or variability emerge from the data.

Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODRs)

In an effort to provide answers to the research question: the following analyses of the

data are provided in Figure 2. According to the data associated with ODRs (Figure 2), no clear

pattern emerges from the data when considering the total number of ODRs either in isolation, or

in relation to the ratio of praise notes written. November of year one (Nov 1) also appears to be anomalous, and if excluded, the data again suggests a gradual upward trend across the three years. However, as with praise notes, reasons for variations in the total number of ODRs cannot be determined from the data.
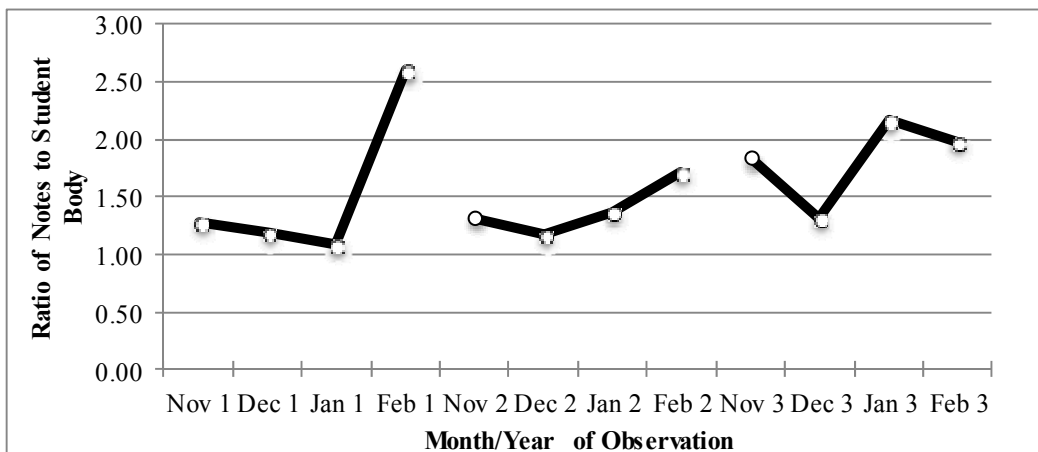
Figure 1. Ratio of notes written to total student body for four months across three years
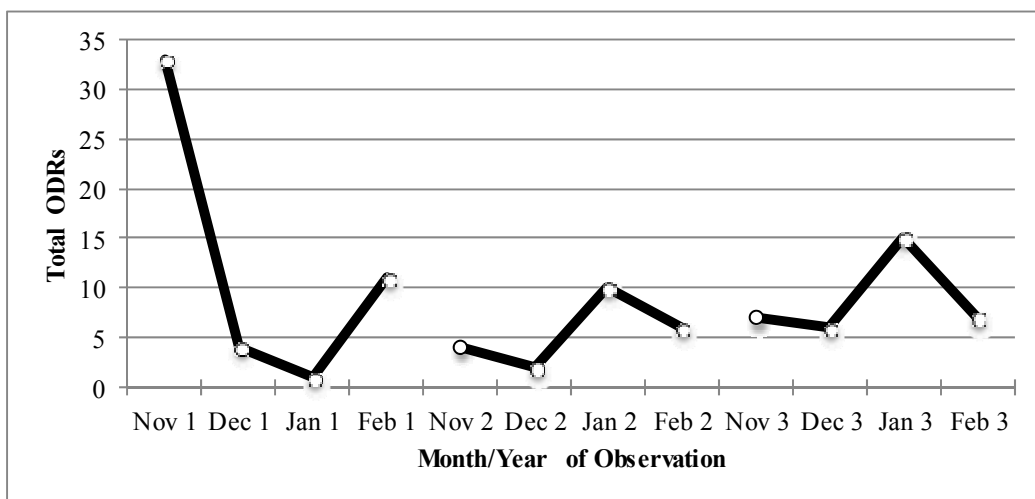
Figure 2. Total number of ODRs for four months across three years.

Social Validity

The final research question was answered by using a social validity questionnaire. Seventeen general education teachers completed the survey, which assessed their perceived need of professional development and a positive intervention of written praise. Table 1 provides the results of the teachers' social validity questionnaire.

Table 1

Summary of Responses to Teachers' Social Validity Questionnaire

	Ineffective	Neutral	Effective
The training given on analyzing the Principal's 200 Club notes and office disciplinary referrals was useful in increasing the rate of Principal's 200 notes in my classroom.	31%	31%	37.5%
The training given on analyzing the Principal's Club notes and office disciplinary referrals was useful in decreasing the amount of ODRs.	33%	60%	7%
The student(s) I was most concerned about has changed his/her behavior as a result of my increase in behavior-specific praise notes directed toward him/her.	25%	31%	44%
Delivering written praise is an effective intervention to increase desired classroom academic and social behavior.	0%	5%	95%
Analyzing the monthly data of Principal's 200 notes and ODRs was effective in increasing the rate of Principal's 200 notes in my classroom.	18%	47%	35%
Analyzing the monthly data of Principal's 200 notes and ODRs was effective in decreasing the amount of ODRs in my classroom.	24%	65%	11%
Analyzing monthly data of Principal's 200 notes and ODRs is an effective and feasible intervention that I will continue to implement in my classroom.	12%	35%	53%

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to examine the effectiveness professional development had on the delivery of written praise and the effectiveness of teacher's delivery had on decreasing office disciplinary referrals. More specifically this intervention tracked the delivery of praise notes and ODRs, as teachers analyzed these data on a monthly basis.

Extension of Previous Research

The present study extended previous research in the following ways. First, it provided an exact measure of who collects the data and how it is being used to design, monitor and assess interventions. As previously mentioned, within the PBS model, schools are encouraged to collect data which in turn informs how interventions are designed, monitored, and evaluated (Sugai & Horner, 2002). However, there are still concerns about who collects the data and how it is being used to design, monitor, and evaluate interventions (Sugai & Horner, 2002). This study focused on how the data being collected were used to design, monitor, and evaluate an intervention.

Secondly, this study provided ongoing feedback to the teachers during the intervention. With most prevention programs, the use of feedback, including praise, has been underscored as an essential element (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2002; Sugai & Horner, 2002). However, most of the time feedback regarding the effectiveness of an intervention is typically provided in a summative as opposed to a formative manner. This study allowed for formative feedback. Specifically, teachers analyzed data both individually and with their team. This in turn seemed to influence a positive change in their behavior and the behavior of their students. Lastly, this study measured the success of written praise. Written praise was found to be successful by way of the social validity questionnaire. Ninety-five percent of the teachers surveyed found written

praise notes to be an effective intervention to increase desired classroom academic and social behavior. Praise has been most often used as a form of verbal praise. Only a few studies have found success in the use of written praise (Nelson et al., 2009; Wheatley et al., 2009). This study contributes additional support to the impact of written praise.

Reflection on Findings

The results of this study suggest that the effect of professional development on the delivery of written praise specifically the rate and quality of written praise is inconclusive because the ratio of behavior specific praise to overall praise notes was 100% before and after the study. The data indicated that the teachers involved in giving behavior specific praise, delivered it 100% of the time during the months of September and October and during the data collection months of November-February. In examining the ratio of total praise notes written to the total number of students in the student body, it was found that more praise notes were written for a given month than the total number of students in the school. In analyzing the Principal's 200 Club data month to month, overall there appears to be an overall gradual increase in the overall trend across the months of November to February for the three years.

However, there appears to be variations in the ratio of praise notes written each month. These variations include February of year one where the ratio was considerably higher than the other months of observation. The reasons for these variations in the ratio of praise notes written each month are not clear from the available data. Thus, it cannot be determined whether the professional development had an impact on either the number or specificity of written praise notes.

In analyzing the results of this study, no clear patterns were found regarding the effect that teacher delivery of written praise might have had on the rate of students' office discipline

referrals (ODRs). There was a gradual upward trend in ODRs across the months of November to February across the three years. However, variations in the ratio of ODRs include a much higher number of ODRs in November of year one. The reason for this variation is not clear from the available data. Thus, it cannot be determined that teacher's delivery of written praise has an effect on the rate of elementary school students' office discipline referrals.

The analysis of the perceptions of the teachers regarding the professional development training suggests that professional development was considered useful as a means of increasing the rate of Principal's 200 Club notes in the classroom as compared to decreasing the rate of ODRs. This would suggest that teachers may be more inclined to use the data of praise note more often than they use the data of ODRs. The majority of the teachers surveyed reported that the delivery of written praise is an effective intervention for increasing desired classroom academic and social behavior. It was also found to be an intervention they will continue in their classroom. However, only a few teachers found that analyzing Principal's 200 Club notes and ODRs to be effective.

Limitations

The greatest limitation of this study was working with a school that already had a high rate of praise notes. This made it very difficult to increase the use of written praise because most teachers gave a significant amount of praise notes each day. Another limitation to this study was only having totals for the Principal's 200 notes and ODRs on a monthly basis and not on a daily or weekly basis. The delivery of Principal's 200 notes may appear differently if these notes were analyzed on a daily or weekly basis. The researcher only had access to the data from previous years, not the actual Principal's 200 Club notes. Therefore, without the permanent product, meaning the actual Principal's 200 Club notes, analyzing these data on a daily or weekly basis

became a difficult, if not impossible task. The lack of these data (i.e., Principal's 200 Club notes) also made it difficult to track behavior specificity for all three years.

Another limitation of this study was that it focused on the general school population and did not focus on individual students with behavior problems. Praise tends to be given more to students who already perform well academically and behaviorally and is not always used as a means for decreasing behavior problems. Focusing on just individual students with behavior problems could allow for a greater change in behavior.

An additional limitation of the study was that it was not blind to the teachers. The teachers were informed of the purpose of the study and their role in the delivery of praise. Therefore, the teachers' data collection and participation may have been influenced by their own desire to give out more or less Principal's 200 notes. The data should be interpreted with this limitation in mind, recognizing that it may impact the validity of the actual findings.

An additional limitation of this study was that each teacher had a different idea of what behaviors constitutes giving a written praise note or ODRs. This inconsistency made it difficult for students to receive a praise note for similar behavior and made it difficult to track students receiving ODRS.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should focus on establishing specific and clear expectations across the entire student body for behaviors that constitute a written praise note as well as the behaviors that constitute an ODR. This would allow for more consistency among the school rules and less confusion among the students.

Future research should include schools that do not use written praise as frequently, a school who is just beginning the process of writing praise notes, or new teachers who are

learning how to implement written praise notes in their classroom. This would allow more flexibility to see if professional development impacts the increase of written praise notes over time. Further research could also focus on teachers and schools that have a greater amount ODRs. This would allow for a greater comparison on the effects written praise notes could have on diminishing the number of ODRs. In this particular study there was a minimum amount of ODRs, so it was very difficult to see the effects written praise notes could have on diminishing ODRs. Additional research could also focus on more clearly defining ODRs and what constitutes an ODR across the whole school. Particularly in this study there was only a minimal amount of ODRs written. It was also noted by teachers in the social validity survey that they rarely used the ODRs information to improve student behavior. Setting clear standards across the school could possibly help teachers become more aware of the ODRs and in return use this data to help improve students' behavior.

Additional research could also focus on a school that has more than just monthly data and includes specific 200 Principal's Club notes for the full duration of the study. As part of the ABC-UBI initiative, participating schools only collect monthly data, which makes it difficult to see frequent change that happens in a classroom. Most children need immediate and frequent feedback. Analyzing Principal's 200 Club notes on a weekly or daily basis would allow researchers to recognize the immediate and frequent feedback Principal's 200 Club notes have on students' behavior. Additionally, targeting the writing of praise notes for individual students, particularly students with repeated ODRs, should be the focus of future studies. In this study 44% of teachers reported that the student(s) they were most concerned about have changed his/her behavior as a result of the teachers increase in behavior-specific praise notes directed

toward the student. This would suggest that behavior-specific praise notes could be useful in changing specific students' behaviors.

Conclusion

The results from this study focused on the effect of professional development on the delivery of written praise and the effect that teacher delivery of written praise has on office discipline referrals. Although the results did not suggest any significant changes, overall the data suggest that there was a gradual increase across the three years in respect to the delivery of written praise and a gradual upward trend for office discipline referrals. Even though the variations cannot be explained given the current data, the results are inconclusive as to whether professional development had an impact on either the number or specificity of praise. The results are inconclusive regarding the effects teacher delivery of written praise might on the rate of students' office discipline referrals (ODRs). With that said, the majority of teachers support the notion that delivering written can be an effective intervention to increase desired classroom academic and social behavior.

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Appendix A: Literature Review

With the changes in educational policy, demands on teachers often increase. Teachers are being asked to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds including students with a variety of disabilities (Jenkins & Yoshimura, 2010). Many teachers have not received adequate training to address the needs of these students and are not always confident in their own ability to teach them (Jenkins & Yoshimura, 2010). Teachers' confidence in their ability to teach is highly connected to student's success in school (Jenkins & Yoshimura, 2010). Professional development is a critical component in raising teachers' confidence and in improving education (Jenkins & Yoshimura, 2010; Speck, 1996).

Within classrooms and schools exists a variety of learning and behavioral needs and ability of students. Meeting the varied needs and abilities of students can be challenging. Most classroom teachers face students who demonstrate problem behaviors. Sometimes these problem behaviors are a result of academic deficiencies and other times they are a result of social, emotional or behavior issues (Alber & Heward, 2000). No matter the source, the typical way for most teachers to handle challenging behaviors is to design a classroom management procedure that focuses on the rules of identifying unacceptable behaviors and consequences that address (commonly punishes) problem behaviors (Alber & Heward, 2000). The mentality in using this approach is that every student receives the same consequence for the same behavior. Likewise, teacher attention often focuses on the inappropriate behaviors of students instead of the positive (Robinson, Ervin, & Jones, 2002) and on the students who frequently misbehave (Maag, 2001). This approach to management is designed to merely reduce inappropriate behaviors: it can also have a negative impact on the social development of students (Robinson et al., 2002).

There are other problematic issues associated with classroom management strategies. One issue is the traditional approach of using punishment to decrease student's inappropriate behavior. Punishment is often used to manage students' behaviors because it is quick and easy to administer and most will-behaved students respond to this approach (Maag, 2001). Punishment can produce a quick suppression of students' inappropriate behaviors, but that change is often temporary (Maag, 2001). Another issue associated with effective classroom management procedures is encouraging educators to be invested in the monitoring of problem behaviors. Effective classroom management consists of analyzing behaviors, deciding what to change, collecting data on the target behaviors, using reinforcements, and monitoring the progress of the identified behaviors (Maag, 2001). This approach requires more time and effort than reactive approaches and for this reason many teachers continue using reactive (e.g., punitive) strategies to manage behaviors (Maag, 2001). Although effective management procedures often require more time and effort, it allows teachers to be proactive in recognizing and identifying students with academic, social, behavioral, or emotional concerns. Early identification of these concerns allows for interventions to be implemented early and helps to prevent the development of greater problems.

Prevention

Prevention in the educational system consists of teaching positive behaviors and expectations, rewarding students for compliance with such expectations, and establishing consistent consequences for negative behaviors (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). Prevention can happen at all levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary prevention helps keep problem behavior from occurring, while secondary prevention is used after a disorder is beginning to be manifest. Prevention at the secondary stage is intended to help disorders from

progressing. Tertiary prevention focuses on disorders that have reached a significant stage of development (Kauffman, 1999). Prevention at this stage aims to help individuals adjust to others, as well as their environment (Kauffman, 1999).

As a society, we typically react to problems and like to be "absolute" before intervening (Kauffman, 1999; Ripple & Zigler, 2003). As a result, much of our efforts focus on tertiary prevention. In many cases an intervention is recommended only after a problem becomes severe and is a threat to society. Interventions at this time are usually too late and punitive measures are put into place (Kauffman, 1999).   Schools are no exception to this reactive approach.

In a school setting, punitive measures usually consist of office referrals, suspension, expulsion, and corporal punishment (Osher et al., 2010). These measures are typically imposed for a very small portion of serious, problem behaviors (e.g. drug and alcohol use, violence, truancy, vandalism) found in the school environment, and as a result they cause the public to call out for prevention (Kauffman, 1999; Sugai & Horner, 2002). However, schools typically witness a higher frequency of subtler behaviors such as talk-outs, disruptions, and social isolation, than serious problem behaviors. The initial onset of these subtle behaviors does not usually result in emotional or behavioral disorders but they can contribute to the development of inappropriate behaviors that lead to more serious problem behaviors (Kauffman, 1999). Using proactive classroom management strategies with all children and implementing such strategies early can minimize many of these inappropriate problem behaviors (Kauffman, 1999). In other words, focusing on prevention at the universal and secondary level, rather than the tertiary.

Strategies that are carefully designed and implemented can be effective in preventing many of the problems facing children and adolescents in society and school (Nation & Crusto, 2003). Although problem behaviors can be reduced or even prevented by research-based

interventions, evidence has shown there to be difficulties in implementing prevention programs in schools as compared to using them in more controlled research settings (Payne, 2009). This is because of the substandard level of implementation of these programs in schools; "low quality of implementation leads to poor program effectiveness" (Payne, 2009, p. 1). Considering the principles of effective prevention, as identified in a meta-analysis completed by Nation and Crusto (2003) may offer support to those invested school-based prevention efforts.

The focus of Nation and Crusto's (2003) meta-analysis was to evaluate programs intended to prevent problem behavior at the primary level. The effective prevention principles discussed in this meta-analysis include (a) comprehensive, varied teaching methods, (b) adequate dosage of intervention, (c) basis in theory, (d) opportunities for positive relationships, (e) appropriate timing, (f) sociocultural relevance, (g) outcome-based evaluation, and (h) well-trained staff (Nation & Crusto, 2003). Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2002) offer additional recommendations to ensure successful implementation of school prevention programs. Their recommendations include sufficient training of teachers, principal support, integration of program into normal school operation, and long-term implementation of services. With these recommendations in mind, how then can researchers and educators promote the use of prevention methods, effectively in schools? Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) research-based is one prevention model to strongly consider.

Positive Behavioral Support

Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) is designed to use behavioral evidence-based interventions and preventive strategies on a school-wide, classroom, or individual level in order to aid in students' academic and behavioral success (Nelson, Young, Young, & Cox, 2009). The goal is to prevent behavior problems by focusing on the teaching and reinforcing of desired behaviors of students and spending more time on strengthening the academic success of students

(Sugai & Horner, 2002). This proactive, preventative approach differs from a reactive approach, which only addresses behavior problems after they have occurred (Bradshaw, Reinke, Brown, Bevans, & Leaf, 2008). Additionally, the purpose of the PBS model is to create an environment in both classroom and non-classroom settings that focuses on defining, teaching, and monitoring positive behavioral expectations for all students by implementing a continuum of services (Reinke, Splett, & Robeson, 2009). Some of the services that are commonly seen within the PBS model include setting and teaching school-wide expectations, encouraging expected behavior while discouraging problem behavior (Lewis & Sugai, 1999), and providing opportunities for modeling and reinforcing appropriate behaviors (Reinke et al., 2009). All these services are offered using a three-tier model to respond to behaviors in the context of where they occurred (Reinke et al., 2009).

Four critical elements of the PBS model include (a) clear outcomes for students and teachers, (b) research-based programs, (c) data-driven decisions, and (d) high fidelity implementation (Sugai & Horner, 2002). When these elements are fully-integrated, a social culture is developed and students learn to support appropriate behaviors from their peers. This allows teaching and learning to be maximized while experiencing a safe, positive, and consistent school environment (Horner, Sugai, Smolkowski, Eber, Nakasato, Todd, & Esperanza, 2007) (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

The PBS model emphasizes the need of making informed data-based decisions for students. Making informed decisions require that relevant data be identified, accurate data collection methods be used, efficient data summarization and presentation procedures are available, and clear decision rules are in place to guide data analysis and structures and mechanisms (regularly scheduled meeting and administration support). (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

Data are used to define and prioritize areas of concern, select practices to address these areas of concern, evaluate the impact of these practices in achieving desired outcomes, and guide long-term action planning and sustainability goals (Sugai & Horner, 2002). At the school level, data are often collected using standardized achievement scores, academic grades, attendance/tardy, and office discipline referrals (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

Office discipline referrals. Office discipline referrals (ODR) are one practical way to monitor disruptive behaviors in schools (Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000). An office disciplinary referral represents an event in which (a) a student engaged in a behavior that violated a rule or social norm in the school, (b) the problem behavior was observed or identified by a member of the school staff, and (c) the event resulted in a consequence delivered by administrative staff (Sugai et al., 2000). Therefore, collecting and monitoring these data can serve various purposes in school systems.

ODRs can be used to improve school-wide discipline by examining the total number of office discipline referrals for a school year, the number of students enrolled during the school year, the number of school days in the year, and the allocation of office discipline referrals by student, location, and date (Sugai et al., 2000). Although there are schools that collect ODR data, many schools do not necessarily analyze the data and use it to make decisions (Sugai et al., 2000). Again, ODR data can serve various purposes. These purposes include (a) the development or selection of specific environmentally appropriate interventions (e.g., if a significant number of ODRs are being written during recess, interventions need to focus on teaching positive behaviors on the playground), (b) as an outcome measure, the evaluation of the effectiveness of programs, and (c) as an early screening procedure the identification of students

who might benefit from interventions (Marchant, Anderson, Caldarella, Fisher, Young, &

Young, 2009; Nelson Benner, Reid, Epstein, & Currin, 2002).

The PBS model involves using school data to design, monitor, and assess interventions.

These data often identify problem behaviors or the settings in which a behavior is occurring.

Monitoring of data can be applied to the universal level as well as the groups or individual levels.

ODRs are the most common method of monitoring data within the PBS model because they

include information that is easy to collect, are generally completed at the time of the incident,

and contains teacher-generated information on student behavior that can be used for preventative

purposes (Clonan Clark, & Davison, 2007). Although the use of ODR data is one way to analyze

the school's climate, identify the environments where inappropriate behaviors occur, and as a

means to identify students who might benefit from interventions, these approaches measure

negative behaviors rather than positive replacement behaviors that are being taught and

reinforced. Having a way to measure positive behaviors could be another method to analyze the

needs and climate of a school (Nelson et al., 2009). One possibility is to evaluate the frequency

and quality of positive affirmation and reinforcement given by educators in respect to the

expectations and behaviors established within the school's PBS model.

Praise

Praise is a form of social approval in the school setting and is a powerful, effective, low-

cost reinforcer that can be used by teachers (Alber & Heward; Brophy, 1981). It is an easy-to –

use, readily available, naturalistic strategy that all teachers have at their disposal (Kalis, Vannest,

& Parker, 2007; Sutherland, Wehby, & Copeland, 2000). In a functional analysis by Brophy

(1981), praise is defined as "an expression of worth or a statement of approval" (p. 5). This

wording gives more emphasis on teacher's response to students' actions rather than just feedback

of a correct response. Praise is often used, as a positive reinforcement to maintain or reinforce

desired behaviors. Positive reinforcement means adding something to the environment, tangible

or non-tangible, to create a positive change (Witzel & Mercer, 2003).

Verbal praise. For praise to be an effective reinforcement it must contain three

principles: contingency, specificity, and credibility (Brophy, 1981). First, for praise to be

effective it must be dependent on the performance of the behavior being reinforced; thus it is

contingent (Brophy, 1981). Praise does not influence a target behavior when it is unrelated to the

task (Chalk & Bizo, 2004). Praise should indicate the specific behavior being reinforced, clearly

show what appropriate behavior the student displayed, sound sincere, and be varied in its

delivery so that it is credible (Brophy, 1981, Sutherland et al., 2000). Additionally, it should be

given by the preference of the student and should be given in a variety of settings or situations

(Brophy, 1981).

Research has shown that when praise is given correctly, it can be a powerful tool for

increasing academic success (Sutherland & Wehby, 2001), and decreasing disruptive behaviors

(Madsen, Becker, & Thomas, 1968). A meta-analysis by Partin, Robertson, Maggin, Oliver, &

Wehby (2010), found the use of praise to be beneficial in increasing students' appropriate

behavior and decreasing inappropriate behavior by reinforcing student responses and increasing

the opportunities for students to respond to academic questions. It also has the potential to build

students' self-esteem and positive relationships between student and teacher (Burnett, 2002).

Behavior-specific praise. Behavior-specific praise is defined as verbal praise that

focuses on a specific behavior of a student (Kalis et al., 2007; Southerland et al., 2000). When

praise is specific it becomes more than just a positive remark. It is more effective than general

praise because it makes the contingency between behaviors and praise more explicit as compared

to statements such as "good job" or fantastic" (Brophy, 1981; Chalk & Bizo, 2004). Examples

of behavior-specific praise may consist of statements such as, "I like that you raised your hand

before making a comment" or "I like the way you are walking quietly in the hall."

Although behavior-specific praise (BSP) is the most effective form of praise, it makes up

only a small percentage of the praise students receive (Sutherland et al., 2000). Research has

shown that only 5% of praise statements are behavior specific (Alber, Heward, & Hippler, 1999).

It is for this reason that researchers have felt inclined to investigate both the effect of BSP and

methods for increasing is use among teachers. Sutherland et al. (2000) examined the effects of

BSP on on-task behavior of students. Results showed an increase in the percentage of on-task

behavior when the rate of BSP increased and a decrease of on-task behavior when BSP

decreased. A study by Chalk & Bizo (2004) showed an increase in levels of on-task behavior

when using specific praise rather than using general positive praise. Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, &

Merrell (2008) revealed an increase in the use of behavior-specific praise due to the use of a

consultation model at the classroom level for assisting with classroom management strategies of

teachers. These studies suggest that there is value in conducting further research using BSP as a

classroom management strategy.

Praise notes. Clearly there is substantial evidence, as noted above, that praise is an

effective and feasible classroom management strategy that produces positive outcomes on

student behavior. It should be noted, however, that praise has typically been used as a verbal

strategy when addressing students' behaviors. One might wonder if there is possible value in

approaching praise in a written format. A few researchers have started exploring the benefits of

written praise, (e.g. praise notes) as a means of changing student behavior (Nelson, Young,

Young, & Cox, 2009).

In a study done on praise notes, Nelson et al. (2009) examined the effect of using of praise notes to decrease office disciplinary referrals (ODR) in a middle school setting. Over two consecutive years, teachers wrote praise notes to students whose behavior reflected the schools positive behavior support (PBS) goals. Before the start of the school year teachers were taught how to administer praise notes during a 2-day PBS training. Praise notes consisted of the name of the student, the name of the teacher, the date, and the behavior of the student that was being praised, in other words behavior-specific praise. Students who received praise notes were entered into a weekly drawing.

For the first seven months teachers were not given incentives or feedback for writing praise notes. During the final two months of the year and the beginning months of the next year, in order to increase the number of praise notes written, teachers received gift certificates when they reached benchmark numbers of written praise notes. Teachers also received feedback about the students who had not received a praise note during the year (Nelson et al., 2009). The results of this study showed a significant negative correlation between praise notes and office referrals. Over the course of two years, 14,527 praise notes were written, and 2,143 ODRs were received. Outcomes show that as praise notes increased, ODRs decreased, thus praise notes appeared to have an impact on the decrease of ODRs. It should be noted that the correlation between ODR and praise note was not empirically designed up front, but was analyzed post-hoc.

Although this study (Nelson et al., 2009), showed significant results, there are limitations. The findings were correlational, and causal relations should not be assumed. Several variables may have also influenced the decrease of ODRs: (a) teachers' skills in responding to students' inappropriate behavior, (b) administrators' skills at teaching more positive behaviors to students sent to the office for discipline purposes, and (c) the effects of administrators reporting ODR data

to the faculty. Nelson et al. found that teachers began to recognize and understand the effect of praise notes on student behaviors only after the data on praise notes were summarized and feedback was given to the teachers. Therefore, future research should empirically design and systematically investigate various components of a praise note intervention. For example, researchers could investigate the impact of training teachers in effective praise techniques, the value of school personnel monitoring and analyzing behavior data (e.g., praise notes, ODR), and the influence of reinforcing school personnel for writing and distributing praise notes.

Support for the use of praise notes to improve student behavior has also been found at the elementary school level. Wheatley, West, Charlton, Sanders, Smith, and Taylor, (2009), studied the use of praise notes in decreasing student's behavior in an elementary school lunchroom. This study focused on problem behaviors of littering, inappropriate sitting, and running that are often prevalent in the lunchroom. With a goal of decreasing student's problem behaviors an intervention was put into place consisting of providing students and faculty with clear expectation for lunchroom behavior and implementing a praise note system to reward student behaviors meeting the expectation.

Students, teachers, custodians, lunchroom staff, and school administrators all participated in this intervention. Students received training on the praise note system, how to earn a praise note, what to do with a praise note and specific examples of what littering, appropriate sitting, and running looked like. Teachers and lunchroom staff members also participated in training where they were taught when to deliver a praise note, how to deliver a praise note, and what the behaviors of littering, appropriate sitting, and running looked like. Praise notes were delivered when a student displayed one of the appropriate behaviors of not littering, appropriate sitting,

and not running in the lunchroom. The results of implementing a praise note system, shows a decrease in all three inappropriate behaviors in the lunchroom.

As with Nelson et al.'s (2009) work there are limitations that need to be addressed in Wheatley et al.'s (2009) efforts. One limitation is an inability to isolate the impact of each component of the praise note intervention on the target behaviors. It is hard to determine which strategies in this study could stand alone as an intervention. Even with the limitation, this study suggests that praise notes can have an effect on decreasing students' inappropriate behaviors.

Although minimal, the current research on praise notes is promising in suggesting that praise notes may play a role in decreasing student's problem behaviors. The use of praise clearly supports the recommendation found in the positive behavioral support literature that incentive programs should focus on the social acknowledgement and the interaction between the student and the school, not just a token or tangible reward (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Strategies for encouraging expected behaviors can be developed and often maintain the desired behaviors in schools (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Because of the impacts that praise notes and other proactive management strategies can have on students' academic, social and emotional success, it is critical that teachers learn and use these strategies. What, then, are the most effective professional development techniques that will ensure that teachers acquire these valuable skills?

Professional Development

Professional development is a critical component for raising teachers' confidence when working with students of diverse backgrounds and in improving education (Jenkins & Yoshimura, 2010; Speck, 1996). Professional development should ground teachers in both pedagogy and content knowledge, engage teachers in an active learning process (Doppelt, Schunn, Silk, Mehalik, Reynolds, & Ward 2009), and provide opportunities for teachers to

practice new ideas in their own classrooms (Klein & Riordan, 2009). Professional development that focuses on pedagogy and content knowledge provides teachers with the skills to help meet student's needs and can have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction (Jenkins & Yoshimura, 2010). The ensuing paragraphs will offer information about the pedagogy and content used by various researchers who investigate the effects of praise.

A study conducted by Partin et al. (2010) evaluated the effects of praise and opportunities to respond (OTR) in altering the classroom environment. In completing this study, teachers received training from the Vanderbilt Behavior Research Center. Teachers received training in the importance of specific, contingent, and meaningful praise and identifying and self-monitoring their use of effective praise and OTR. Teachers were required to audio record at least fifteen minutes of instructional activity each week. On a weekly basis, a consultant for the study reviewed five minutes of the recording with the teacher and offered support and feedback. At the completion of the intervention, there was an increase in the use of praise by teachers. In a questionnaire, teachers were satisfied with the experience of the self-monitoring intervention. This study shows that training and feedback that focuses on teachers own instruction can improve how teachers self-monitor their own use of praise and can have an increase in their use of praise. Although this study's outcomes indicate the positive impact of a consultant's training and feedback, as well as self-monitoring, on teacher praise, this study did not investigate intervention's influence on students' behavior.

In a study conducted by Reinke et al. (2008), teachers were trained to increase their use of praise with individual students in their classroom. This study evaluated the effects that the Classroom Check-Up (CCU) had on teacher's implementation of effective classroom management strategies in particular teacher use of praise. The CCU is a program that uses

consultation strategies to make classwide changes. In this study the classwide change was behavior-specific praise and general praise. Through ongoing performance feedback, teachers increased their use of behavior-specific praise for the targeted student as well as other students in the class. In assessing the social validity of this intervention, teachers found behavior-specific praise to be important, effective, and helpful. The results of this study indicate that providing ongoing feedback and consultation to teachers can increase the use of praise, change a teacher's outlook about behavior-specific praise, and help improve behaviors for both the teacher and student. Additionally, the outcomes of this study suggest that once the ongoing feedback was taken away, teacher's use of behavior-specific praise decreased.

Chalk and Bizo (2004) analyzed the use of praise instruction on increasing on-task behavior of students. Teachers received a 45-minute briefing on specific-praise after the baseline data were collected. Teachers were instructed to link praise statements to individuals or groups of students. Teachers completed tally sheets at the end of each lesson of the type of praised used. Teachers' responses were measured using the Observing Pupils and Teachers in Classrooms (OPTIC) tool before and after the intervention. Results confirmed that teachers increased the type of praise following the intervention. Outcomes from this study also showed an increase in on-task behavior and an increase in children's own perception of themselves as academic learners when behavior-specific praise was used.

Teachers also participated in an interview as part of their debriefing and reported a change in their behavior. Specifically, they indicated that with the training they received on administering praise, it was easier to praise individuals, and they were more focused on "whom" and "what" they were praising. The findings from this study suggest that training coupled with tracking behavior across time influences the frequency with which teachers praise, the types of

praise teachers deliver, and to whom they direct their praise. This study specifically focused on the type of praise (behavior-specific praise) teachers gave to students and not the amount or rate of praise. However, an indirect outcome that was noted in the result was an increase in the amount of praise given by teachers.

In analyzing the above studies, it is noted that professional development is more effective when teachers are provided with ongoing training and feedback, a method for teachers to self-monitor their own behavior, and opportunities to collaborate with both peers and coaches. The results of these studies indicate training teachers to use specific types of praise does not necessarily influence their rate of praise. Additionally, the outcomes suggest that although feedback to teachers can increase the use of praise it does not necessarily increase the influence that praise had on students' behaviors. This influence was usually implied and not necessarily demonstrated by way of data. Another interesting outcome from these research endeavors is that when feedback was removed, the teacher's use of behavior-specific praise decreased. These finding suggest that providing professional development with the aforementioned components may have an impact on teachers' confidence and in bringing forth improvements in education.

The findings from the praise studies discussed above supports other salient themes found within the professional development literature. Klein & Riordan (2009) purport that professional development needs to be should be ongoing and provide support as well as opportunities for collaboration among peers and coaches. An article by Speck (1996) discussed the best practices in professional development, and emphasized the importance of professional development being an ongoing process and not just a one-time event. Offering multiple workshops and continual support allows teachers to receive support on specific concerns they may encounter over time (Doppelt et al., 2009).

Additionally, taking a collaborative approach to professional development allows teachers to build social supports and relationships with colleagues (Berry, Daughter, & Weider, 2010), which also supports to eliminate inefficient practices. Such collaborative efforts give teachers opportunities to unlearn old practices, and gain feedback about new approaches (Gersten et al., 1995). Collaboration also helps in reinforcing the relationships among teachers, students, and administrators (Shalock, Fredericks, Dalke, & Alberto, 1994). Clearly, the commons themes across disciplines, in respect to professional development, align with and support one another when selecting best practices.

Appendix B: Monthly Data Checklist

Teachers: During each team meeting please discuss each of the following questions. Mark yes when the team discussed the questions and no if they did not. Write notes in the comment section about specific observations you make regarding your data discussion and analysis. Please consider trends, concerns, themes, and ideas about students, settings, behaviors, and so forth.

Specific Team Skill Did the team...	Yes	No	Comments:
discuss the number of students receiving ODRs?			
discuss the names of the students who did/did not receive a Principal's 200 during the month?			
discuss the number of students receiving Principal's 200 Club notes?			
discuss the specific names of students who did/did not receive a Principal's 200 note during the month?			
discuss if the notes written were behavior-specific?			
compare month-to-month data?			
look for themes in the data?			

Appendix C: Treatment Fidelity Checklist for Training Teachers

Observer: Please answer each question yes or no if the skill was observed during the training. Please add any additional comments if needed.

Specific Researcher skill **Did the Researcher...**	Yes	No	Comments:
1. describe behavior specific praise?			
2. provide written examples and non-examples of behavior-specific praise?			
3. discuss the number of students receiving Principal's 200 Club notes?			
5. discuss the number of notes that are behavior-specific			
6. discuss the specific names of students who did/did not receive notes.			
7. discuss the number out of school suspension?			
8 discuss the number of students receiving ODRs?			
9. discuss the names of the students who did/did not receive ODRs?			
10. compare data month to month?			
11. describe any themes that are in the data?			

Appendix D: Treatment Fidelity Checklist for Building Leader Training

Observer: Please answer each question yes or no if the skill was observed during the training. Please add any additional comments if needed.

Specific Researcher Skill	Yes	No	Comments:
1. Did the researcher discuss the monthly checklist?			
2. Did the researcher provide examples and non-examples of the correct way in analyzing the data?			

Appendix E: Treatment Fidelity Checklist for Ongoing Training

Building team leaders: During each team meeting please mark yes after the team discussed question. Please add any additional comments if needed.

Specific Team Skill **Did the team...**	Yes	No	Comments:
discuss the number of students receiving ODRs?			
discuss the names of the students who did/did not receive a Principal's 200 not during the month?			
discuss the number of students receiving Principal's 200 Club notes?			
discuss the specific names of students who did/did not receive a Principal's 200 note during the month?			
discuss if the notes written were behavior-specific?			
compare month-to-month data?			
look for themes in the data?			

Appendix F: Reliability Check for Administrator

Questions	Comments
What is the procedure in your school for collecting and tracking Principal's 200 notes?	
What is your procedure for collecting and tracking ODRs?	
What are the procedural changes that have occurred over the last three years?	

Appendix G: Social Validity Teacher Questionnaire

TEACHERS: Thank you for your willingness to take part in this study. Your feedback is valued.

Circle the number that matches the strength of your agreement or disagreement with each statement below.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
The training given on analyzing the Principal'ss 200 Club notes (blue notes) and office disciplinary referrals (white notes) was useful in increasing the rate of Principal's 200 notes in my classroom?	1	2	3	4	5
The training given on analyzing the Principal'ss Club notes (blue notes) and office disciplinary referrals (white notes) was useful in decreasing the amount of ODRs?	1	2	3	4	5
The student(s) I was most concerned about has changed his/her behavior as a result of my increase in behavior-specific praise notes directed toward him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
Delivering written praise is an effective intervention to increase desired classroom academic and social behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
Analyzing the monthly data of Principal's 200 notes (blue notes) and ODRs (white notes) was effective in increasing the rate of Principal's 200 notes in my classroom?	1	2	3	4	5
Analyzing the monthly data of Principal's 200 notes (blue notes) and ODRs (white notes) was effective in decreasing the amount of ODRs in my classroom?	1	2	3	4	5
Analyzing monthly data of Principal's 200 notes (blue notes) and ODRs (white notes) is an effective and feasible intervention that I will continue to implement in my classroom.	1	2	3	4	5

On average I delivered written praise:	10 times daily	7-9 times daily	4-6 times daily	2-5 times daily	0-1 times daily

I have taught for _____ years?

I have taught at this school for_____ years?

Appendix H: Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction
This research study is being conducted by Shalon Wilmott, a graduate student at Brigham Young University, to determine the impact of professional development on the delivery of written praise and office disciplinary referrals. You were invited to participate because you are a teacher at Centerville Elementary.

If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur:
- you will attend training on the use of behavior specific written praise, and analyzing data collected for the Principal's 200 club.
- You will write behavior-specific praise notes to students according to the Principal's 200 club program implemented in your school.
- Once a month you will analyze the behavior-specific written praise data and office disciplinary referral data with other teachers that teach the same grade and complete a monthly data check from during these meetings.
- you will be asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire at the end of the research
- total time commitment will be from 30-45 minutes monthly

Risks/Discomforts
There are minimal risks for participation in this study. However, you may feel some discomfort discussing data from your classroom and you may feel as if you are losing classroom time. If you feel undue stress or discomfort during the research, you may choose to decline or excuse yourself from the study.

Benefits
The goal of this study is to help teachers have a better understanding of on how to analyze and use data they collect in school in hopes to improve the services rendered to students.

Confidentiality

Data will be kept in a secure location in a locked cabinet and on a password protected computer. Only Dr. Michelle Marchant and Shalon Wilmott will have access to the complete data. At the conclusion of the study, all identifying information will be removed and the data will be kept in the research's locked cabinet. You are welcome to have a copy of the results of the study upon request.

Compensation
You will be entered into a drawing to receive a gift certificate for completing the research; compensation will not be prorated.

Participation
Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate entirely without affecting your employment or standing at the school.

Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study or a research related problem, you may reach Shalon Wilmott at (801) 362-1551, shalon.wilmott@gmail.com or Dr. Michelle Marchant at (801)422-3857, michelle_marchant@byu.edu.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact IRB Administrator, (801) 422-1461, A-285 ASB Campus Drive, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, irb@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

Signature:_____Date:_____