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Insight on Behavior Management Competencies from the Field of Special Education

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Behavior Management Insight from The Field of Special Education

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ABSTRACT

About Our Research

This study was conducted as an online survey sent out to over 500 Special Educators from across Michigan. We received over 150 responses which were analyzed for results and conclusions. Prior to the study, Professor Finn became interested in other research showing behavior management as a challenging area for beginning teachers. Furthermore, we concluded that the Special Education classroom presents its own unique challenges and obstacles which vary greatly depending on the disabilities of the students. Federal law and school policies also require assessments and documentation that may prove to make management of a Special Education Classroom a complex issue. This led us to collaborate on specific areas of Behavior Management that we could get insight on from current Special Education Teachers and Administrators. We decided to include current practices in the classroom, strategies they were taught in their pre-service programs, development opportunities and resources that are available to them now, behaviors they have notice increase and or decrease and finally, what they believe to be the most important or useful aspects of behavior management.

The findings of our research as summarized in the poster are intended to guide in two facets. 1.) This research can provide insight for current Administrators on how they can better support and develop the Special Educators in their schools to create functional classrooms. 2.) Our conclusions give ideas to institutions of Higher Education on how they can supplement their pre-service teacher programs with valuable instructional focuses on behavior management. The greater goal being happy and prepared first year and beginning teachers that can successfully manage Special Education Classrooms. Our research is based on responses from educators about the 2015-2016 School year. Some limitations include the gender gap of our responses (81% female, 19% male), the selection of emails manually versus using a random selection and only polling educators who practice in the state of Michigan.

We plan to continue this research by expanding it to a national study. We hope to get further confirmation of the trends and results to write a paper and proposal for valuable topics that could be included in a college textbook for a course in Special Education Behavior Management.

Our Research Question:

What are current teachers' and administrators' insights on behavior management competencies in Special Education and how can those insights be prescriptive for educating pre-service teachers and developing beginning special educators?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the following studies was done to understand previous research and results on the topic of Behavior Management in Special Education:

On what is typically taught in behavior management courses:

Special Education Teacher Preparation in Classroom Management: Implication for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (Oliver, R and Reschley, D).

On shortages of special education teachers:

The Supply of and Demand For Special Education Teachers (McLeskey, J., Tyler, N., Flippin S.)

On behavioral management problems causing burnout in the special education field:

Special Education: Teacher retention and attrition (Nance, E. & Cabrese, R.)

Burnout amount special education teachers in a self-contained cross-categorical classrooms (Nicholas, A., & Sosnowsky, F.)

On essential skills for special education teachers to instruct and work with parents of students with behavioral disorders

Essential Skills for Success: Feedback from beginning teachers of students with emotional/behavioral disorders (Finn & Holmes).

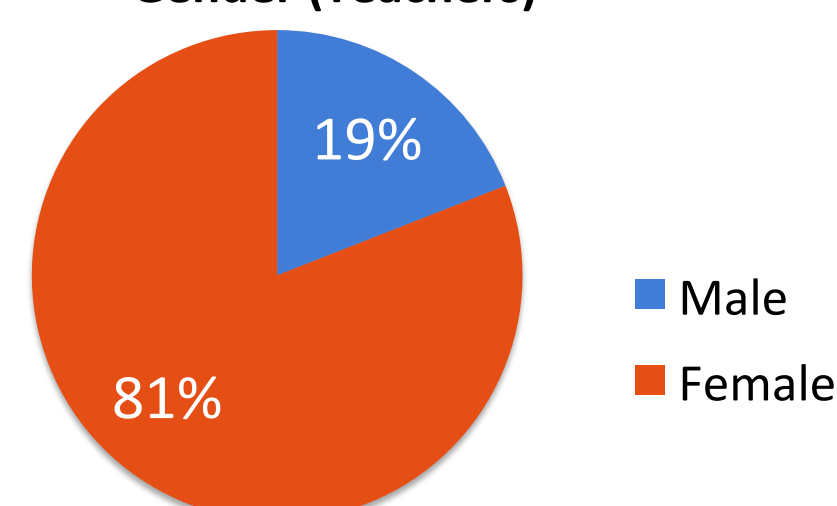
PROCEDURE

- The professor (Jane Finn) and student (Claire Kenyon) met to discuss interest in a research project about behavior management in special education
- A thorough literature review (Above) and initial research was conducted on the area of interest
- Ideas for how to gather research and research questions were formed
- A proposal was written and student commitment was established
- The project was reviewed by the HSRB through the Hope College Frost Research Center
- Over 500 emails of special education teachers and administrators were compiled using district websites from across the state paying attention to include teachers from various regions
- The survey was created using Google Forms including sections of demographics, beliefs and advice, and additional comments.
- The survey was sent out via email and the responses collected in Google sheets
- The data was transferred to SPSS and recoded into variable for analysis
- The Data was split based on whether a Teacher or Administrator completed the survey
- The data was run with frequencies and ANOVA using SPSS
- Demographics information was compiled using the data from the responses
- The information from the ANOVAs were analyzed and conclusions were made based on the responses
- The poster was created including the findings of our study

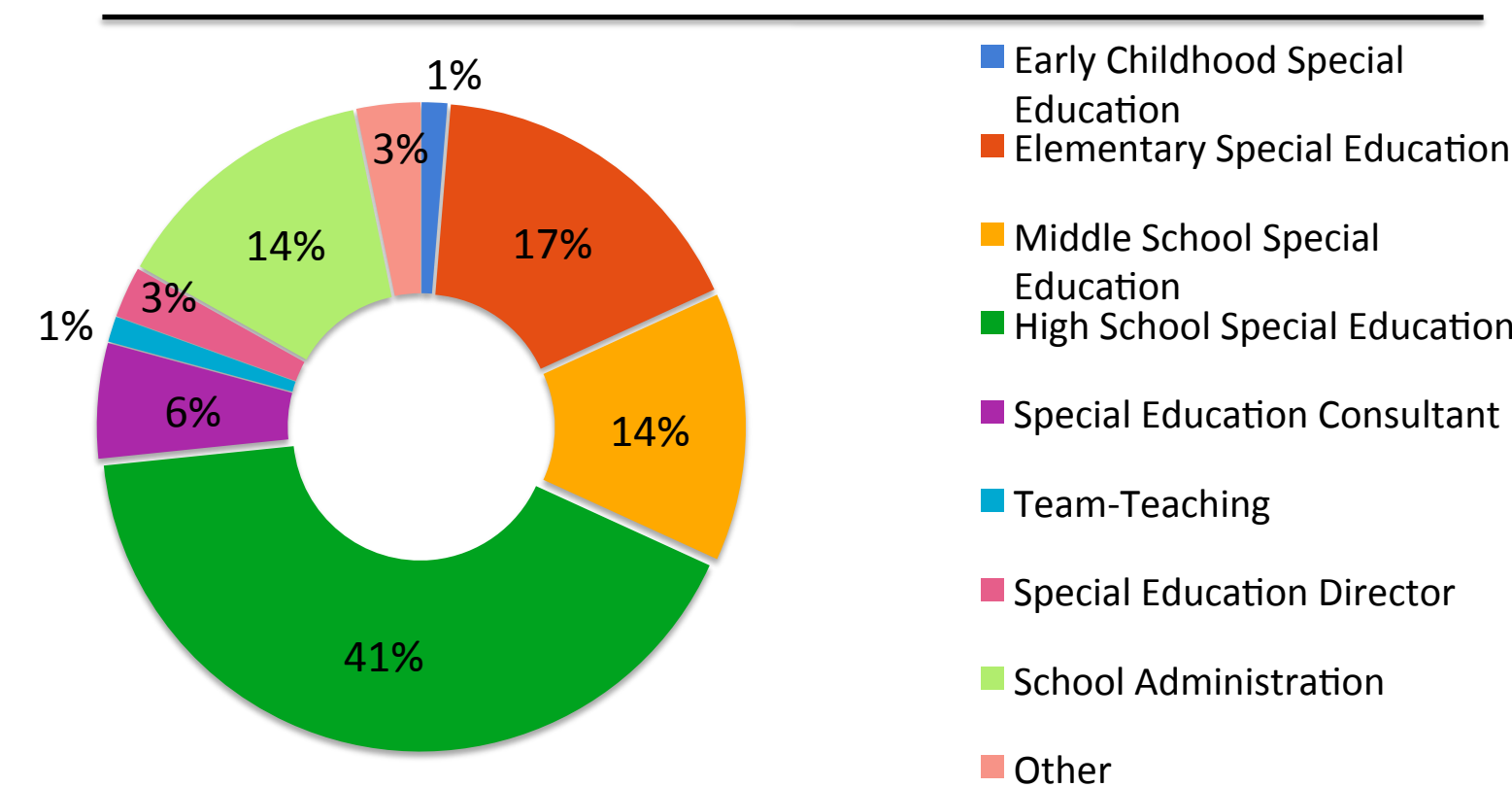
DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECTS

Data was collected on Special Education Teachers and School Administrators pertaining to their gender, current position, years teaching, classroom makeup and basic insights.

Gender (Teachers)

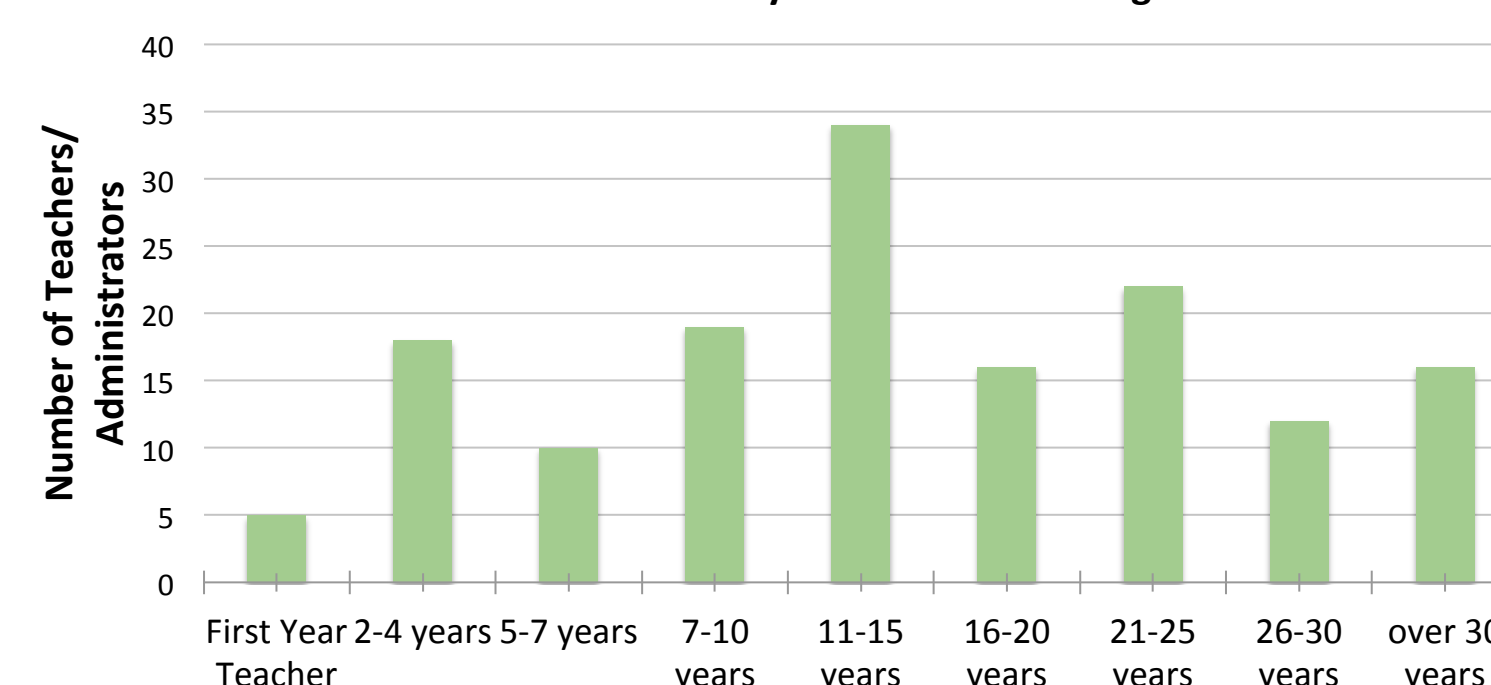


Of the 129 Teachers who completed this survey, 102 (81%) were female and 24 (19%) were male



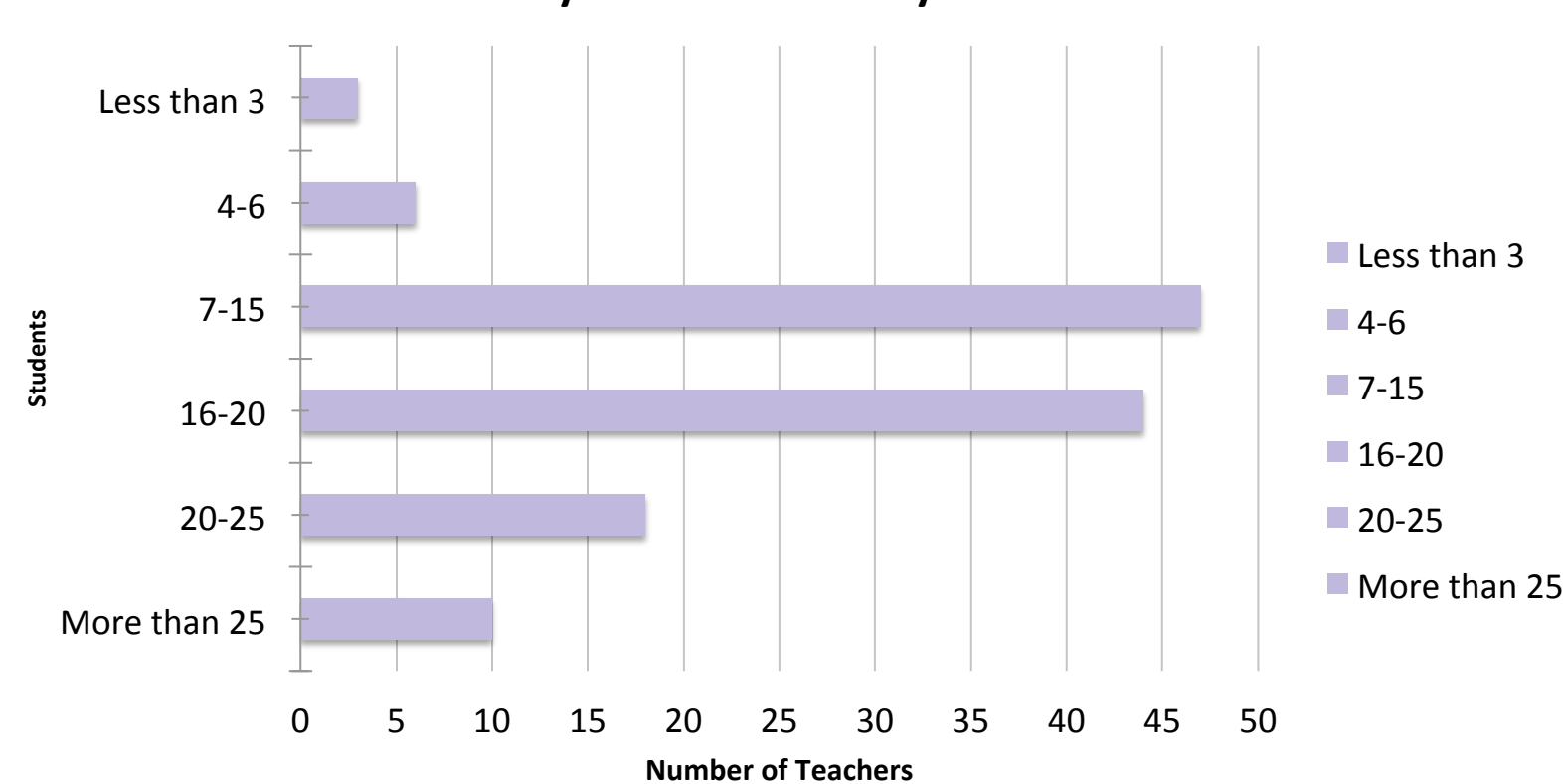
Of the 154 individuals who completed this survey, 64 (41%) of them worked in High School Special Education. The second and third most populous were Elementary and Middle School Special Education. Only two individuals identified as Early Childhood and Team Teaching.

Number of Years They Have Been Teaching



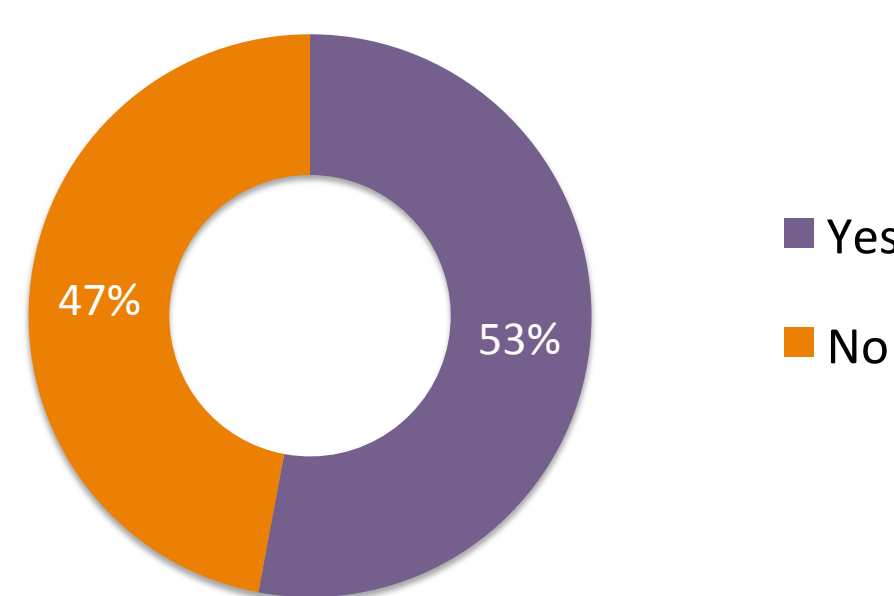
Of the 154 Individuals surveyed, 34 (22.1%) of them had been teaching for 11-15 years, but the population as a whole represented a wide range of experience. 23 individuals stated that they were beginning teachers with 1-4 years of experience.

How many Students are on your Caseload?



Of the 129 teachers who completed the survey, 91 (70.5%) of them had between 7 and 20 students on their caseload, an interesting aspect to note when dealing with behavior management.

Did your teacher training program effectively prepare you?



Of the 154 individuals who completed this survey, 81 (53%) said they were effectively trained prior to entering the field of teaching while 72 (47%) said they were not. This was an alarming statistic that prompted us to compile the statistical analysis as well as spur us on in planning further research on what Pre-Service programs can do to prepare their future educators.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS (ANOVA)

Competencies that need focus when instructing at Teacher Preparation Institutes

A one way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluation the relationship between which types of areas that the teachers believed that their teacher preparation program could have prepared them better to deal with problems behaviors in their classroom. The independent variable were the areas that were reported that teacher preparation institutes could have prepared better and the dependent variable were the discipline issues seen in the classroom.

The ANOVA was significant ($F(9, 1278)=16.421; p<.001$). The chart below shows the Means and Standard Deviation of type types of behaviors that the teacher believed their teacher preparation could have prepared them better

Teacher Perceptions of Competencies Areas: Mean and Standard Deviation

| Teacher Preparation Behavior Competencies Areas | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------------------|
| Developing and implementing classroom rules and procedures | .2791 | .45029 |
| Managing the physical environment of the classroom | .2126 | .41077 |
| Developing relationships with students | .2016 | .40272 |
| Fostering peer relationships among students in the classroom | .2868 | .45404 |
| Managing ongoing problem behaviors | .5891 | .49391 |
| Increasing student motivation | .5969 | .49243 |
| Teaching at-risk learners | .3876 | .48910 |
| Conducting Functional Behavior Assessments and writing Behavioral Intervention Plans | .5504 | .49399 |
| Conducting a Manifestation of Determination | .3721 | .48525 |
| Knowing your ethical and legal responsibilities as a teacher | .1705 | .37758 |

Note: There were 129 teachers who completed this survey

Please note that the top areas that the teachers believed that they could have been taught better dealt with (1) increasing student motivation (2) managing ongoing problems behaviors and (3) Conducting Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) and writing Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs)

The following are anecdotal comments and other areas that these teachers thought teacher preparation institutes should teach teacher candidates:

"Have them use data, collect data, and practice holding an IEP, go through the REED process"... "Data is very important in order to create plans and to receive help from the intermediate school district".

"The more you can observe (good and bad) the more experiences you will have to draw on when writing your own classroom rules"

"If anything I'd suggest role playing scenarios, not doing them paper/pencil"

When the administrators (principals and special education directors) were asked the same question, they reported that all competencies were important and there was not any one competencies that arose to the top. A one way analysis of variance was conducted on just the administrators perceptions and showed no significance ($F(6,168)=1.23, p=.292$). When looking at the details, the principals did suggest that being able to identify behaviors quickly and act accordingly was the top skill needed for future educators.

Important aspects of behavior management for Beginning Special Education Teachers

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate what practicing special education teachers thought were the most important aspect of behavior management to teach future teachers. The independent variable was the most important areas to teacher and future principals believed needed to be taught to future teachers and the dependent variable were the types behavioral competencies. For the teachers, there was significance between subjects effects ($F(6,896)=24.5, p=0.01$). Below is the mean and Standard Deviations of each behavioral competency.

Teacher Perceptions of which Aspects of Behavior Management are important for Beginning Teachers: Mean and Standard Deviation

| Aspects Of Behavior Management | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------------------|
| How to create a comprehensive classroom behavioral structure | .3876 | .4891 |
| How to work with administrators to help with behavior problems | .0078 | .0881 |
| How to collaborate with other professionals (social worker, counselor etc.) to help with special behavior problems | .2248 | .4190 |
| How to collect Data and Create a Behavioral Intervention Plan | .1163 | .3218 |
| How to conduct a Manifestation of Determination | .0000 | .0000 |
| How to work with parents and family members on targeted behaviors | .1783 | .3843 |
| How to be able to identify behavioral problems quickly and act accordingly | .3721 | .4853 |

Note: There were 129 teachers who completed this survey

"A special educator's worth has come down to secretarial skills with focus given to perfection"

"Working with school social workers has been the best resource I have found"

"It is about getting to know one's students and what their triggers are, what motivates them, and what factors can be controlled to create a safe environment at school".

"...the educator must realize they will wear many 'hats' in their job and at times work harder than the student/parent/family in order to have the student receive a passing grade in school".

For the principals and Directors of Special Education, these individuals thought that all the behavioral competencies were very important ($F(6,168)=1.23, p=.292$). Therefore, there was not a significant difference in each competencies. Below is the Mean and Standard Deviation of each behavioral competency according to the Principal and Special Education Directors.

Administration Perceptions on the Aspects of Behavior Management That are important for Beginning Teachers: Mean and Standard Deviation

| Aspects Of Behavior Management | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------------------|
| How to create a comprehensive classroom behavioral structure | .2400 | .4359 |
| How to work with administrators to help with behavior problems | .0800 | .2769 |
| How to collaborate with other professionals (social worker, counselor etc.) to help with special behavior problems | .2000 | .4083 |
| How to collect Data and Create a Behavioral Intervention Plan | .2000 | .4083 |
| How to conduct a Manifestation of Determination | .0800 | .2769 |
| How to work with parents and family members on targeted behaviors | .2400 | .4359 |
| How to be able to identify behavioral problems quickly and act accordingly | .3200 | .4761 |

Note: There were 25 administrators who completed this survey

Looking at the data, the highest rating was in "how to identify behavioral problems quickly and act accordingly" and the second highest rating was "how to create a comprehensive classroom behavioral structure and "how to work with parents and family members on behaviors"

"The biggest part of behavior management not listed is lesson planning and knowing your curriculum".

"I think it would be beneficial for the future educator to have experience in dealing with parents... new teachers are not ready/prepared to deal with difficult parents".

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS (CONT.)

Increased behaviors seen in Special Education

A one way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluation any problem behaviors that the special education teachers have seen an increase in their classroom. The independent variable were the behaviors areas that were reported that were increasing and the dependent variable were the discipline issues seen in the classroom. It was noted that there has been a significant difference in the increase of behaviors ($F(3,612)=17.045; p<.001$). Below is a table showing the Mean and Standard Deviation on each behavior.

Teachers' Perceptions of Increased Problem Behaviors: Mean and Standard Deviation

| Increased Problem Behaviors | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------------|
| Sustained noncompliance with classroom rules and procedures | .54 | .500 |
| Verbal Defiance | .54 | .500 |
| Physical aggression/ violent behaviors toward the teacher or peers | .31 | .465 |
| Refusal to do classwork/homework | .70 | .459 |

Note: There were 129 teachers who completed this survey

"It is hard to compete with the constant texting and social media interaction"
"Students are getting more challenging!"

"Students with mental health issues has increased significantly at my school and district in general. WE have had a very difficult time getting help from outside agencies"

When the principals were asked the same question, they reported that they have seen no significant area of increase in problem behaviors when compared to the rest ($F(3,91)=2.489, p=.065$) Below is a table showing the administration perceptions on increased problem behaviors

Administrators' Perceptions of Increased Problem Behaviors: Mean and Standard Deviation

| Increased Problem Behaviors | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------------------|
| Sustained noncompliance with classroom rules and procedures | .4500 | .5104 |
| Verbal Defiance | .4000 | .5000 |
| Physical aggression/ violent behaviors toward the teacher or peers | .3200 | .4761 |
| Refusal to do classwork/homework | .6800 | .4761 |

Note: There were 25 administrators who completed this survey

It is interesting to note that the administrators do not see such a significant increase as the teachers do in areas such as verbal defiance and noncompliance with classroom rules. One wonders if the teachers take care of the problems in their own classrooms and often do not report such behavior to the administrators in contrast with the issue of refusal to do classwork.

Decreased behaviors seen in Special Education

On the other hand, both the teachers and administrators were asked if they had seen any decrease in problem behaviors. To find this out, a one way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate any increase in problem behaviors. The independent variable was the decreased behavior and the dependent variable was the discipline issues seen in the classroom. It was noted that there has been a significant difference in the decrease of behaviors according to teachers ($F(3,512)=4.8; p=0.03$). Below is a table showing the Mean and Standard Deviation of each behavior according to the teacher responses:

Teachers' Perceptions of Decreased Problem Behaviors: Mean and Standard Deviation

| Decreased Problem Behaviors | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------------------|
| Sustained noncompliance with classroom rules and procedures | .1705 | .3776 |
| Verbal Defiance | .1860 | .3907 |
| Physical aggression/ violent behaviors toward the teacher or peers | .3023 | .4611 |
| Refusal to do classwork/homework | .1240 | .3310 |

Note: There were 129 teachers who completed this survey

When the principals were asked the same question, they reported that they have seen no specific significant decrease in problem behaviors ($F(4,272)=1.263, p=.289$) Additionally, the area of "noncompliance with classroom rules" was taken out because only one of the 25 administrators reported it as a decreased behavior.

The following are some final comments given by teachers that explain how they have improved behavior in their students:

"Most of my students don't need "rules". I use character qualities and we have open dialogue about the importance of character.

"Stay calm and be objective... Keep and use your sense of humor, it can help in some of the most difficult situations".

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SOURCES:

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