Classroom Management During the First Days of School: 
Taking the Right Steps Towards Effective Teaching

By

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Abstract

Research studies show that classroom management plays a crucial role in a teacher's success as well as students' academic achievement. It is imperative that teachers demonstrate effective classroom management skills starting from the first days of school as it is during this time when students decide if a teacher is competent or incompetent. This perception, which is difficult to reverse, will dictate their attitude toward the teacher and their overall behavior in the classroom. For this study, I interviewed three exemplary Junior/Intermediate teachers to uncover how they established effective classroom management during the critical first days of school through classroom rules and procedures, verbal and nonverbal cues, and their approaches to consequences and rewards. The impact professional development had on their classroom management skills is also explored.
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Introduction to the Research Study

Effective teachers help students succeed by providing them with a positive environment that is conducive to learning through a proper implementation of classroom management techniques. Research shows that to be an effective teacher, it is not enough to be familiar with the subject content, curriculum expectations, or to develop lesson plans that are stimulating and challenging. In fact, a research study that spanned three decades revealed that if the teacher is lacking in effective classroom management skills, all of the above-mentioned points are not sufficient (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). Thus, for proper learning to occur, a teacher must provide students with a safe classroom environment that is conducive to learning, work-oriented, yet fun, and free from distractions and infractions.

However, classroom management is no easy task. Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering (2003) write: “It is probably no exaggeration to say that classroom management has been a primary concern of teachers ever since there have been teachers in classrooms” (p. 4). The following statement is echoed in several sources emphasizing the first days of the school year in particular: “What you do on the first days of school will determine your success or failure for the rest of the school year. You will either win or lose your class on the first days of school” (Wong & Wong, 1998, p. 3). Therefore, due to the direct impact effective classroom management has on student academic
achievement and teachers' success, it is imperative that teachers know where to begin,
and to begin right from the very first day.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to learn more about effective teaching through proper
classroom management during the “make or break you” (Wong & Wong, 1998, p. 3) first
days of school.

Students form an opinion of their teacher through a variety of ways such as their
teacher's: prior reputation, tone of voice, body language, preparation, rules and
procedures, and rewards and consequences. Whether accurate or inaccurate, this initial
opinion may then dictate how students treat this teacher for the rest of the school year.
With such scrutiny, it is critical that teachers begin the school year with an assertive and
efficient teaching strategy in order to avoid giving students the wrong impression. As the
axiom goes, “You never get a second chance to make a first impression.” A teacher
should be aware of the importance of classroom management and be prepared for it
before entering the classroom in order to win the proverbial battle before it is fought.

It is surprising that although an abundance of research states that successful
classroom management leads to better student achievement and effective teaching
practices, classroom management is not usually taught to pre-service teachers. In a study
conducted by Wesley and Vocke (1992), only 36.9% of 111 universities offered a course
in classroom management. Additionally, in a study conducted by Barrett and Davis (as
cited in Wong & Wong, 1998), the number one in-service training request made by
experienced teachers is to learn how to deal with difficult students and implement
effective classroom management strategies. Evidently, there is discrepancy between what is being asked of teachers and the tools being given to them in their teacher education process.

For these reasons, I wish to explore classroom management strategies for personal professional development, and to add a current study to previous research on this topic. By interviewing exceptional teachers who are known to have exemplary classroom management skills, I will be able to share and analyze what happens in a model classroom. This study intends to alleviate common feelings of anxiety that accompany the first weeks of school. I am fully aware that there is no “one size fits all” remedy. What works for one teacher and class may not work for another. However, the strategies shared will provide student teachers and in-service teachers with multiple strategies from which they can formulate their version of classroom management.

Research Questions

The main purpose of my study is to explore the following overarching question: How do exemplary teachers establish effective classroom management during the first days of school? In answering this main question and subsequent questions, my goal is to provide both new and experienced teachers with optional strategies that may streamline their school year.

First, I asked my highly respected research participants to define classroom management and describe what an ideal classroom might look like or sound like to them. This provided some background and context to the participants' subsequent answers.
Since classroom management is based on numerous components, I inquired about my participants' experiences managing their class during the first days of school in terms of: how they introduce themselves; the tone and body language they use; what their rules, procedures and expectations are and how and when are they conveyed; how they deal with minor and major student infractions (consequences); and how they reward students for following rules and procedures. Additionally, I wanted to understand how students perceive their teacher – whether students believe that the teacher is, for instance, strict, kind, and/or fair. These questions serve to add dimension to the teacher being interviewed. I also inquired as to whether or not they attended any professional development workshops or courses that helped them acquire successful classroom management strategies. Finally, I asked my participants to provide further guidance to pre-service teachers by sharing their personal advice and strategies.

Background of the Researcher

I remember my first year as an English literature teacher in an international school in Egypt. I was informed that one of the classes I was to teach was named “the class from hell” by other teachers. With no prior teaching experience, and with my background in advertising, I planned to dazzle that class with fun activities and to be so kind that they wouldn't even think of wanting to cross me. After the first day of class, things nose-dived from bad to worse; I lost all control of the class. By the latter part of the year, I was able to reel students in again – but it was a very humbling experience. Although the students were infamous for their misbehavior, there was one teacher, however, who was able to teach them well. Passing by the window of her class, the very same students were sitting
in their seats taking notes, raising their hand to participate, and they excelled with her like they never did with any other teacher. How did she do that? This veteran teacher was exemplary in her classroom management skills – and she was consistently effective with every class she taught. If only such skills were shared with the rest of the staff, that class could have gotten a more solid education instead of the time wasted practicing one failed behavior management strategy after the next.

As a Master of Teaching candidate, the number one concern that is voiced by my peers after each practicum placement is centered around lack of classroom management skills – whether it is their own, or their Assistant Teacher's. It solidifies my belief that issues in classroom management will not go away. In the absence of classroom management graduate courses or regular professional development workshops offered, one can at least read about various tried-and-tested methods and explore what works for the individual teacher and class.

Overview

Chapter 1 includes the introduction and purpose of the study, the research questions, as well as why the topic of effective classroom management appeals to me. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature highlighting the significance of classroom management in becoming an effective teacher and in elevating student achievement and performance. Various strategies are described. Chapter 3 provides the methodology and procedure used in this study including information about the sample participants and data collection instruments. Chapter 4 identifies the participants in the study and organizes the findings into themes that relate to the research questions. Chapter 5 includes an analysis
of the research findings, the implications of this study and recommendations for practice, as well as suggestions for further study. References and a list of appendices follow at the end.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, I seek to provide insight into how exemplary teachers establish effective classroom management during the critical first few days of the school year. There are a plethora of resources regarding the broad topic of classroom management; less so with a focus on strategies for the first days of school. My literature review covers books, journals, and articles written by both academic scholars and veteran teachers in an effort to compile a menu of research-based/tried-and-tested strategies that guide new and experienced teachers through the anxiety-packed start of the academic year. The information of interest in this study covers the following themes with a focus on the first days of school: a) the significance of classroom management; b) effective teacher verbal and nonverbal cues; c) establishing rules, procedures, and expectations; d) the use of consequences and rewards to manage student behavior; and e) the accessibility and impact of professional development sessions related to classroom management.

The Meaning and Significance of Classroom Management

Before delving into the significance of classroom management and ensuing strategies, it is important to highlight what it means and entails. Evertson and Emmer (2013) define classroom management as “a broad concept that encompasses the set of behaviors and strategies that teachers use to guide student behavior in the classroom. […] classroom management has both planning and interactive aspects” (p. 1). The planning
aspects may include what the layout of the classroom will look like, establishing the rules, procedures, and expectations to be implemented and how they will be introduced, establishing a clear process for consequences and rewards to manage student behavior, and planning lessons that engage all learners (Evertson & Emmer, 2013, p. 1). The interactive aspects involve a “real-time set of teacher behaviors and strategies including monitoring and interacting with students, providing support and feedback, intervening to redirect student behavior, and working with students to stimulate interest, involvement, and cooperation” (Evertson & Emmer, 2013, p.1).

There are clearly many aspects and pieces to consider when it comes to classroom management, all of which lead to the end-goal of creating a safe, inclusive, respectful, and positive environment where students can learn and teachers can teach (Brainard, 2001; Schwartz & Pollishuke, 2013). The importance of establishing effective classroom management so that learning can take place cannot be underestimated. Across numerous research studies, a direct link has been established between effective classroom management and a higher level of student achievement. Eleven thousand research studies were analyzed over the span of 50 years to determine what impacted student learning; listed as number one was: classroom management (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993, p. 249).

The “key variable” in establishing effective classroom management and ensuring an environment that is conducive to learning is the teacher (McNeil & Wiles, 1990, p. 282). Additionally, numerous research studies show that how a teacher practices classroom management not only determines the success level of students in the class, but also determines the success and effectiveness of a teacher (Emmer, Everston,
Almost all surveys of teacher effectiveness report that classroom management skills are of primary importance in determining teaching success, whether it is measured by student learning or by ratings. Thus, management skills are crucial and fundamental. A teacher who is grossly inadequate in classroom management skills is probably not going to accomplish much. (Brophy & Evertson, 1976, p. 27)

Teachers are “not going to accomplish much” because a poorly managed classroom will lead to distractions, lack of focus, and lack of student cooperation, which will ultimately waste precious learning time (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003).

Accordingly, there is a lot of pressure on teachers to get classroom management right and even more pressure on teachers to get it right from day one of the school year. As Wong and Wong (1998) state repeatedly in their first chapter of The First Days of School, “Your success during the school year will be determined by what you do on the first days of school” (p.3). The first days of school are when teachers begin to interact with students and typically discuss classroom rules, procedures and expectations. It is from what teachers say, the tone of voice they use, how they are dressed, how organized they are, what they allow, and what they don't allow, that a student forms the first impression and subsequently judges the professionalism of a teacher (Wong & Wong, 1998). A teacher's classroom management skills, or lack thereof, will leave an imprint on students as “students will learn attitudes, behavior, and work habits that will affect the rest of the year” (Evertson & Emmer, 2009, p. 70). Corroborating this finding, Jonson, Cappelloni and Niesyn (2011) emphasize:
Your success during the entire school year is often determined by what you do during the opening days of school. The first two or three weeks of school are critical in determining how well students will behave and achieve during the remainder of the year! It is essential to set high expectations for your students and establish firm classroom procedures and understandable routines during these first few weeks. (p. 55)

Additionally, a study conducted by Brooks (1985) confirms that “there is overwhelming evidence that the first two or three weeks of school are critical in determining how well students will achieve for the remainder of the year” (p. 76).

Summarizing the above-mentioned findings, sound classroom management that starts from day one of the school year, and that is maintained, does not only determine how effective a teacher will be; it also determines how well students will perform both academically and behaviorally. In a nutshell, “…until you have your classroom management sussed, you won't be able to do anything much with the students” (Lush, 2009, p. 76).

**Working on Verbal and Nonverbal Cues: Tone of Voice & Body Language**

How does the teacher stand and walk? What facial expression does the teacher show while greeting students? What does the teacher say and in what tone of voice? What does a teacher say or do when interrupted? During the first days of school, students scan their teachers from head to toe and begin to judge them as either competent or incompetent based on what they see and hear. How students decide to treat their teachers is based on their first impression (Wong & Wong, 1998). In the book *Get Ready to Teach: A Guide for the Newly Qualified Teacher*, Lush (2009) also confirms that “the impression that you make at the start of September is crucial” (p. 76).
Brooks (1985) conducted an interesting study that analyzed the verbal and nonverbal cues given by exemplary and average teachers during the first days of school. One of the exemplary teachers conveyed the rules in a clear and professional, no-nonsense manner. The teacher did not smile, paused for effect when reading the consequences, and scanned the room, providing eye contact with all students in the class. This teacher did not have any reported student misbehavior or interruptions. Students thought that she was too strict, however. As for the average teacher, she was vague in conveying the rules, did not stop students from talking to each other while she was speaking, and she smiled 11 times while reading the consequences for breaking the rules. Her eye contact was minimal and did not scan the whole class. Instead, she gave eye-contact to individuals when asking about their summer holiday; students sitting farther away began to act up. By the fourth day in this teacher's class, students were disruptive and misbehaved throughout the lesson; the teacher resigned after completing one semester at the school (p. 67). Since teachers do not get a second chance to create a first impression, any signs of lack of confidence and/or inconsistency expressed either through action or speech may pave the way for a turbulent ride for the rest of the school year.

Several recommendations are made regarding a teacher's verbal cues in terms of what to say and what tone of voice to use. First, teachers are encouraged to model courteous behavior by saying, for example, “please,” “thank you,” and “excuse me” (Evertson & Emmer, 2009, p. 70). Teachers are also encouraged to remember students' names quickly; when a student's name is used by the teacher, it creates a positive environment and validates him/her. Additionally, teachers can create a positive environment by providing students with regular and sincere praise, by getting to know
them well through informal chats, and by actively listening to what they share about themselves (Jonson et al., 2011). Establishing such rapport with students streamlines classroom management by reducing behavioral issues. Teachers are also encouraged to share a little bit about themselves at the beginning of the school year. An experienced teacher warns, however:

> If you give away too much of your true self, you become vulnerable and risk having your authority undermined. You can give away little hints, to remind them that you are human, but if you do it too much they will use it to their advantage. (Leaman, 2008, p. 7)

As for the tone of voice used, it is recommended that the tone should be firm, but gentle (Wong, 1998). When dealing with a problematic situation, Jonson et al. (2011) advise that the tone of voice should be “both firm and kind. Your tone of voice indicates your desire to be kind while your follow-through with appropriate action indicates your firmness. Remain as matter of fact as you can” (p. 73).

A teacher's voice levels may also impact the classroom. A parent recollected how her child's favorite teacher was known to be very calm and spoke in a soft voice, yet commanded the attention and respect of the whole class. The parent marveled, “She was so calm with them, that they couldn't help being calm around her” (Leaman, 2008, p. 65). Leaman recommends that teachers develop their “own sense of personal calm” (2008, p. 65) and avoid overreacting with “a barrage of ranting” or shouting as it has nothing to do with behavior management and has everything to do with desperation and loss of control (2008, p. 67).

Additionally, Wong and Wong (1998) state that the level of a teacher's voice can determine the noise level in the classroom: if a teacher speaks very loudly, students will
also speak loudly during their side-talks; if a teacher speaks softly, students will more likely speak in hushed voices to keep disruption to a minimum level. When students talk while a teacher is speaking, however, it is strongly advised that teachers pause or wait for silence instead of raising their voices over and above the students (McNeil & Wiles, 1990, p. 298; Schwartz & Pollishuke, 2013, p. 38).

As for nonverbal cues expressed through body language and actions, teachers are encouraged to set the tone during the first days of school by greeting their students at the classroom door with an accompanying smile and perhaps a handshake. Some teachers recommend being welcoming, yet adopting a “strong, business-like manner” in the greeting (Leaman, 2008, p. 80). Teachers may also use nonverbal cues effectively to provide students with positive reinforcement, such as a smile or a nod; or to cut disruptions without interrupting the class through hand gestures, a raised eyebrow, or a frown (Wong & Wong, 1998).

Jonson et al. (2011) caution that a teacher’s “attitudes and expectations will act as self-fulfilling prophecies” and advise that teachers project immediate confidence and “with-it-ness” in their body language and actions (p. 70, 79). Several interviews were conducted with teachers regarding how they projected themselves, and their response was that they treated teaching as “a kind of performance, or act” and that acting as if they were confident “enables them to feel strong in front of the students” (Leaman, 2008, p. 7). With the repetition of acting confident, eventually teachers will become so (Lush, 2009, p. 69).

In addition to projecting confidence, some sources advised to “be strict in the beginning and then loosen up when the relationship has been established” (McNeil &
Wiles, 1990, p. 298). This brings to mind the adage “don't smile until Christmas”.

Leaman (2008) expressed strong disagreement with the adage, stating that although it may work for some teachers, classroom management can be established through less hostile means; it starts by establishing a rapport with students, leading to both trust and respect (p. 69).

A teacher-training lecturer observed that many new teachers felt they had to adopt a “don't mess with me” attitude because they “see these big forceful characters [other teachers] throwing their weight around, and think that that is the way to do it” (Leaman, 2008, p. 68). The teacher-trainer warned that such behavior does not lead to positive results; instead, it may lead to being “laughed at” by students who may get a kick out of winding the teacher up (Leaman, 2008, p. 68). Instead, “being calm, fair and consistent” will both enhance classroom management and will strengthen the teacher-student relationship (Leaman, 2008, p. 68).

**Introducing Classroom Rules, Procedures & Expectations**

Some new teachers begin the first days of class with fun activities; some dive into the curriculum within the first week of school. Research shows that this is not an advisable route. Successful veteran teachers recommend shelving the group activities and lessons until classroom rules, procedures and expectations are described, discussed, practiced, clarified, and reiterated – beginning from what students should do upon entering the classroom in the morning, to what students should do upon leaving school (Brooks, 1985). Haverlandt, a trainer at Educational Research and Dissemination (ER&D), introduced the “3 equals 33 rule” which states that teachers who invest three
weeks of going over rules and procedures will save 33 weeks of heartache arising from student misbehavior and lost educational time (“Veteran Teachers,” 2004).

Numerous sources recommend that teachers pinpoint no more than five broad rules at a time to avoid bombarding students with much to remember. It is also encouraged to bring up the rules, procedures, and expectations closer to an expected transition to break down the rules further and add more relevance (Evertson & Emmer, 2009; Wong & Wong, 1998). Once those rules have been sufficiently modeled, practiced, and internalized, more rules may be added. As for the wording of the rules, they should be phrased using “positive and observable terms” such as “Resolve disagreements by talking,” instead of, “No fighting” as they focus on what is to be practiced (Jonson et al., 2011, p. 67).

It is also recommended to post the rules up in order to be visible at all times. For further accessibility, the rules may be distributed to students as a handout, posted on the teacher's website, and may be emailed to parents in order to keep them informed regarding the rules, procedures, and expectations for the academic year. Some teachers also recommend featuring the rules on a poster and having the students sign it. Before signing it, it is imperative that students understand that the rules are not constructed as a means to control them, but rather to facilitate a positive learning environment where all students benefit (Jonson et al., 2011, p. 68).

Should students be involved in creating the rules or not? There is much debate regarding this matter. Wong and Wong (1998) do not recommend involving students in constructing the rules as it should not be left to “student discretion.” Wong and Wong (1998) advise that the time it would take for students to devise rules would be better spent
in a class discussion regarding why the rules are important, how it will help student achievement, and what examples could be given for each rule (p. 148). Regarding the element of lack of time for students to develop the rules, Kohn, a former teacher, now a widely published writer and a speaker, argues that “the heuristic value of such discussions is often overlooked in the rush to get on with the ‘real’ lesson. In class meetings, for example, teachers would do well to remember that, at least to some extent, the process is the point” (1993, p. 14). Instead of teachers coming up with ipso-facto rules, Kohn encourages them to allow students to become involved in the process as the process itself is part of learning:

… students are rarely involved to become active participants in their own education. Schooling is typically about doing things to children, not working with them. [...] much of what is disturbing about students' attitudes and behavior may be a function of the fact that they have little to say about what happens to them all day. They are compelled to follow someone else's rules, study someone else's curriculum, and submit continually to someone else's evaluation. (1993, p. 10)

In Tribes Learning Communities where students learn “democratic group skills” and participate in coming up with the expectations that are centered around four Tribes Agreements (outlined in Chapter 4 of this research paper), students take ownership of creating a positive learning environment. A study based on this democratic process indicated that within three months of teachers “transferring responsibility” to students, there was a 75% decrease in behavior problems (Gibbs, 2006, p. 13).

Many other sources promote student empowerment through the process of drafting the class rules as it fosters “ownership”. Schwartz & Pollishuke (2013) summarize this point:
When students are given opportunities to help establish and monitor classroom rules and routines, they take ownership and begin to realize more and more that the responsibility for their actions and goal setting lies within themselves. Your job as a teacher is to provide feedback and support, encouraging your students to move towards positive goals. (p. 28)

**Consequences and Rewards**

What happens when agreed upon rules are broken? What happens when they are followed? Upon reviewing the literature, several strategies as well as controversy regarding consequences and rewards have surfaced. Recommended strategies for consequences will be addressed first.

Just as it is encouraged to vet rules with students during the first days of school, it is also recommended across numerous sources to do the same for consequences so that students are fully aware of, and on board with, the boundaries set. The agreed upon consequences should logically “fit the behavior in a sensible way” (Jonson et al, 2011), and should be consistently followed immediately after a rule has been broken, otherwise students will take neither the rules nor the consequences seriously (Jonson et al, 2011; Leaman, 2008; Wong & Wong, 1998). Leaman (2008) emphasizes “be persistent and consistent in your approach – change may not happen overnight, but once pupils realize that you are not giving up, they will” (p.75).

When rules are broken and students are held responsible for their misbehavior, it is important to “always deal with the behavior, not the person. You leave a person’s dignity intact when you deal only with the behavior or the issue” (Wong & Wong, 1998, p. 162). It is also recommended across several of my readings to provide students with a choice when they commit a minor infraction. Instead of “punishing” students, they may
be given a chance to turn their actions around; for example, “You need to concentrate on your work or you will have to move to the front desk. It's your choice” (Leaman, 2008, p. 81). Apart from giving the student a chance to turn his/her behavior around, it also allows the student to be responsible for his/her actions and “encourages pupils to identify with the cause and effect of their behaviors” (Leaman, 2008, p. 81).

What if students consistently break the rules? Kohn (1993) encourages teachers to reflect on why the rules are not working instead of blindly subjecting students to consequences for not following them. The rules may not be age-appropriate or realistic. In some cases, it may be that the curriculum is too difficult or easy, which leaves students to bide time by misbehaving. When reflecting, Kohn (1993) emphasizes the need for teachers to ask the right questions. Instead of asking, “How can we make them do what we want?” a teacher should ask, “What do they require in order to flourish?” and, “How can we provide those things?” (p. 14). Kohn (1993) points out that in many workshops, videos, and literature related to classroom management, students are viewed as a source of trouble; kids who need consequences and restraint in order for the class not to spiral out of control. Kohn (1993) advises that teachers need to shift their thinking by reflecting on the nature of the rules and consequences imposed on students. Is it vital, Kohn asks, that students form a straight line before being allowed to leave the classroom? Is it natural to ask students to sit and not move once they are seated? Does that benefit the student or is it for the sheer convenience of the teacher? (p. 13).

Student misbehavior is an opportunity for teachers to reflect on the situation and for students to reflect on their behavior as well; this provides a chance for students to learn and problem-solve under the care and guidance of the teacher. Kohn believes that
teachers often “'reach for the coercion' rather than engaging children in a conversation about the underlying causes of what is happening and working together to negotiate a solution” (1993, p. 10).

Wong and Wong (1998) describe a strategy that fits well with what Kohn advised regarding student-teacher collaboration. Wong and Wong recommend that when a student breaks a rule, teachers should encourage student self-reflection and behavior modification through the drafting of an “action plan”. A student who commits an infraction is requested to answer three questions: 1) What is the problem? 2) What is causing the problem? and 3) What plan will you develop to solve the problem? Once the student writes the action plan, the teacher conferences with the student to discuss the steps. Once reviewed, the student signs and dates what becomes his/her own student-led problem-solving tool. Parents are informed of the plan not for the purpose of disciplining the child, but in order for them to support their son/daughter in following through with the steps written (1998, p. 161). This method has more value than consequences such as detentions which do not teach the student anything about how to fix recurring problems.

As for acknowledging students' positive behavior or achievement through the use of rewards, Kohn (2006) is a staunch opponent of such a system. He warns, “we are discouraged from asking why the children have been set against each other in a race for artificially scarce rewards, or what the long-term effects of that practice may be on their attitudes about themselves or each other or the task itself, or how other features of the classroom may have contributed to a child's failure” (p. 90). Wong and Wong (1998), like Kohn, strongly oppose rewards (such as stickers or candy), likening them to bribes.
Wong and Wong (1998) state, “Let's stop the 'what's in it for me?' welfare and bribery system” (p. 163).

Instead, Wong and Wong (1998) propose rewarding students with the satisfaction of a job well done, or with a warm smile and caring handshake; maybe even a call home to commend the student and his/her parents. Jonson et al. (2011) reflect that “communication with parents often focuses on misbehavior” and advise sending parents a “Your Child Was Caught Doing Something Good” e-mail as a positive reinforcement (p. 74). Another positive reinforcement that is labeled as “the most meaningful reward” (Leaman, 2008, p. 82) and is “one of the easiest and most underutilized proactive behavior management strategies” (Jonson, 2011, p. 71) is: praise. Jonson et al. (2011) point out that providing students with sincere praise leads to a succession of positive results as students strive to continue doing well – whether academically or behavior-wise. They also advise that “praise should be focused on behavior and efforts and not solely on outcomes and achievement” (p. 71).

Leaman (2008) agrees that praise and personal attention are the most important positive reinforcements for students. Although there is a tug of war between providing a “tangible prize” versus an “intrinsic reward”, Leaman found a happy medium that proved successful with her former students: “Perhaps the answer is to provide both: plenty of meaningful praise and attention throughout the year, with a prize provided for special situations or occasions” such as students earning a class trip (p. 82-83).
**Professional Development (PD)**

Although classroom management during the first days of school is of extreme importance to the success of a teacher and the achievement level of students, pre-service teachers are usually not offered training in classroom management before entering the field. Even during practicum placement observations scheduled during the first days of school, student teachers are not usually given the reigns. Brooks (1985) highlights “In student teaching, they have learned how to 'keep it going,' but they have never learned how to 'get it going’” (para 2). In Chapter 4 of my study, I explore the impact PD in classroom management had on teachers' pre-service and in-service classroom management skills. If they did not received any training through professional development, how did they become skilled in classroom management? This will be addressed further on in my research.
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

Procedure

This study explores recommended classroom management strategies during the first days of school as a step towards effective teaching. Based on my literature review, I developed specific research questions in preparation for qualitative interviews with three participants. Data derived from the one-on-one interviews was recorded and transcribed for synthesis and analysis. The following section further describes the procedures taken:

Literature Review

To explore my main research question, commonly cited, research-based literature including books, education journals and articles were reviewed. For a more personal, tried-and-tested account of effective classroom management strategies, sources authored by notable teachers and educators were also explored. Upon reading the literature, themes and sub-themes became apparent; common and opposing views regarding classroom management strategies were noted. The data gleaned provided essential background knowledge into the topic that helped pinpoint issues to broach further with participants in the qualitative interviews.

Data Collection

Based on the literature reviewed, six themes of interest emerged; accordingly, research questions were formed to address those themes: the meaning and significance of classroom management; verbal and nonverbal cues; introducing classroom rules, procedures and expectations; consequences and rewards; the impact of professional development; and advice to pre-service teachers.
After drafting the research questions and dividing them according to theme and sub-theme, they were revised several times. First, I shared my questions with peers to ensure that the wording was clear and bias-free. Next, I conducted a mock interview with a peer to ensure that the discussion flowed in a logical and sequential manner. Finally, I shared the interview questions with my research supervisor for feedback and approval (see Appendix A).

I used snowball sampling for recommended interview participants. Each participant was contacted by email and briefed as to the format and nature of my research. Participants were encouraged to voice any questions or concerns prior to their signing of the consent form (see Appendix B). Participants were provided with a copy of the questions in advance to prepare for the interview.

The 45-minute one-on-one interview sessions took place in an area that was quiet and convenient for my participants; one of which was conducted via Skype. I used the general interview guide approach (Turner, 2010, p. 755) when asking participants to answer the 14 open-ended questions. I chose this interview approach because it is structured to provide consistency in the type of information gleaned from participants but also flexible by allowing room for probing beyond predetermined questions.

The interviews were audio recorded and saved onto my password protected laptop. I took notes throughout the interview of key words or phrases that stood out to me. Following each interview, I listened to the recording to get an overall sense of the data, and then replayed it for transcription.
Data Analysis:

After completing each transcription, I compared and contrasted my primary data with my literature review findings and jotted down initial notes to refer to upon writing my Findings and Discussion.

Next, I coded my transcriptions by sub-themes, and sorted all quotes by filing them under the research questions they addressed. I reread the sorted quotes again to check that: a) they were sorted under the appropriate code, theme and sub-theme; and b) the quotes were not taken out of context when placed in their new “home” (Wellington, 2000, p. 136). However, I shared the same reservation Wiseman (1979) mentioned: “a serious problem is sometimes created by the very fact of organizing the material through coding or breaking it up into segments in that this destroys the totality of philosophy expressed by the interviewee” (p. 278). For this reason, I repeatedly checked and double-checked that my disassembled quotes were accurately contextualized before compiling the research findings.

Participants

In order to gather effective classroom management strategies for the first days of school, it was pertinent to select exemplary teachers who had a positive track record and who were respected in the educational field. To allow for a wide range of experiences with different types of students in terms of challenges and accomplishments, at least five years teaching experience was a reasonable time span. Another criteria was to select teachers who either taught or are currently teaching students in grades 6 to 9 as the nature of the rules, procedures, and motivational factors are similar. The final criteria was to
narrow the research focus to public schools to create consistency when comparing and contrasting between teachers' classroom management strategies.

Three participants, who will be referred to henceforth by their pseudonyms, were selected for the qualitative interviews. Judy is a former grade 9 teacher who is currently an Elementary principal at a public school. I wanted to tap into the participant's 30-year experience in effective classroom management from the dual perspective of a teacher and principal. Peter is an exemplary teacher with over 20 years of experience and is currently teaching grade 6. Finally, Mark is a highly respected teacher with 10 years of experience, who is currently teaching grade 7 at a Tribes certified school.

**Ethical Review Procedures**

The ethical review approval procedures for the Master of Teaching program at the University of Toronto were adhered to as well as the procedures mentioned in the Letter of Consent featured in Appendix B.

Once my research participants were identified, I shared with them the nature of my study, reviewed the Letter of Consent, and explained the interview procedures. Prior to the interviews, I provided them with a copy of the questions and asked for their permission to audio record our session.

To ensure maximum ease and convenience, I left the time, date and location of the interview to the discretion of my participants. I reiterated that they had the right to decline the interview at any point - even after signing the Letter of Consent - and that they may choose to abstain from answering any of the interview questions. I assured my
participants that they would remain anonymous through pseudonyms and that any identifying factors would be omitted.

Limitations

There are three main limitations in this research study. The participants chosen provided me with great insight into effective classroom management strategies for the first weeks of school. However, the small sample size of three participants is not ideal in covering a broad menu of strategies to consider. A second limitation is the narrow scope of this research due to the time constraints of the Master of Teaching program. There are many facets that constitute effective classroom management, some of which have not been tackled in this study such as the layout of the classroom as well as recommended routines for handling transitions. There are also many variables to consider when implementing the best practices recommended in this study such as the number of students in the class, their disposition, their grade level, and whether a teacher is new to a school or not. Hence, the findings are not generalizable as the participants' strategies are specific to their classroom contexts.

Finally, whereby the years of experience my participants shared added greatly in providing sound and informed recommendations, it also served as an obstacle when answering some of the interview questions. Since my participants were established in their schools for so many years, classroom management was facilitated due to their rapport and reputation with students. Recalling strategies became challenging in some cases such as the recommended tone of voice and body language used during the first week of school. Participants, at times, were basing their recommendations on what they
currently do as opposed to what a new teacher should do. The findings are still helpful, however they should be used as an optional menu of strategies to choose from based on a teacher's personal level of comfort.
Chapter 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

Three participants, known for their exemplary classroom management skills throughout the years, have contributed to the findings of this research project. This chapter will highlight the main findings and will be organized according to the themes outlined in the literature review, including an additional concluding theme:

1. The Meaning and Significance of Classroom Management
2. Verbal and Nonverbal Cues: Tone of Voice and Body Language
3. Introducing Classroom Rules, Procedures and Expectations
4. Consequences and Rewards
5. Professional Development
6. Advice to Pre-service Teachers

The participants will be referred to in this research by pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity. Following is their background experience in the field of education:

- Peter has been teaching for over 20 years. He is currently teaching grade 6 at a public school in the TDSB.
- Judy has been in the field of education for 30 years and has held several positions in her journey such as: high school science teacher, high school department head in physical education, secondary vice-principal, elementary principal, and an executive officer with a District School Board. She also taught at the university level.
- Mark has been teaching for 10 years different grade levels ranging from grade 3 to grade 8 and is also a teacher librarian. He currently teaches grade 7 at a public
school and is on the steering committee of the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP).

1. The Meaning & Significance of Classroom Management

In this section of the research, my aim was to create a profile for each participant to get to know the foundation from which they based their decisions and strategies. How did they define classroom management? What would classroom management ideally look like or sound like? To what extent did their practices reflect this ideal classroom management image? And, finally, I wanted to know if the participants, based on their experience, would confirm my literature review findings that classroom management during the first days of school is critical in setting the academic and behavioral tone for the rest of the school year.

Definition of Classroom Management

When asked to define classroom management, both Judy and Mark preferred to use another term: Judy preferred “creating a productive learning environment” while Mark preferred “creating community”. All three participants shared two commonalities in their definitions of classroom management: a) it encompasses more than managing behavior; and, b) it involves creating a conducive environment for learning.

Peter stated, “Classroom management is the ability to manage the children in a way that they are going to be ready to learn. It can be anything from the way you make a
group to whether you hand out a paper before you talk about it. There's so many things to it; it's not just about behavior.”

Judy's definition shared similarities as well as additions:

Classroom management exists when the teacher has created a safe and productive learning environment for all the students in the classroom. So the management is in creating an environment where the teacher can facilitate – and facilitate well – and students take responsibility for their learning. The environment is where it's respectful of who is doing what, at what time. Part of that effective classroom management is having the class, regardless of age – junior, kindergarten to grade 12 – where they're part of setting the tone, setting the standards, and setting the rules in the classroom.

Mark stated that the definition of classroom management may differ depending on whether or not a teacher was new to teaching, and whether or not a teacher was traditional or nontraditional. Traditional teachers may define classroom management as “having a certain degree of control over the structure and the content and the pace of the class” which Mark subscribed to when he first started teaching. The definition changed for him, however, as he gained teaching experience: “Classroom management is more the idea of creating community within the classroom, within the school, that enables your students to want to work and to almost manage themselves.” Mark continued to define classroom management as creating an environment that is conducive to learning and having all the students and teachers and anyone who enters that room sign on to that kind of belief system and the expectations generated within your community, in order to make sure that people are learning, and people are happy, and people are safe.
**Ideal Classroom Management**

In response to the question, “What would classroom management ideally look like or sound like in the classroom?” Peter emphasized that it looks respectful, organized, and well thought out. Judy focused more on students brainstorming, collaborating, and problem-solving in various settings – whether in small groups or with partners. She also highlighted the importance of creating an environment of trust where students ask for help when needed. Similar to Judy, Mark mentioned that ideal classroom management involves creating a community of trust, where “students and teachers practice mutual respect; where students have a legitimate say in how their learning experience is shaped and the teacher is the facilitator of that collective vision.” He added that ideal classroom management lends itself to creating a place where “we see each other in our classroom as true individuals with special considerations and sensitivities,” where discussions are encouraged and differences are respected.

Both Judy and Peter added that the “look” of ideal classroom management also involves managing the layout of the classroom. When I visited Peter's classroom on the first day of school, it was evident that he invested a lot of thought and effort in making the room inviting. The vibrant colors and decorations created a mood – from the baby lights hung around the board to the orange leaves in line with the autumn season. Peter explained:

I believe that children are in a classroom for six hours a day; it should feel welcoming and homelike. They spend a lot of time here. I think it also shows that somebody cares. There are some classrooms that are very, very bare and messy; not very joyous to spend time there – and they're kids... they're kids.
Judy spoke highly of Wong and Wong’s book, *The First Days of School* in creating a classroom layout that lends itself to proper management. She mentioned that there are many considerations and details that need to be planned for in advance, such as the traffic flow from the playground door to the classroom; whether the classroom door is opened or closed; what will be displayed on the classroom walls and how stimulating it is, amongst other details.

**Personal Classroom Management Style**

As an extension to the previous question regarding what classroom management ideally looks like or sounds like in the classroom, I asked participants “To what extent would you say that your classroom practices reflect this ideal classroom management image?”

Peter responded with confidence that his classroom practices highly reflected the ideal image he had shared. He said that everything he did before, during, and after class was carefully thought out and that he would continually reflect on what worked and what did not work.

As part of her classroom management style, Judy also emphasized that she regularly self-reflects. Regarding students who misbehave in class, Judy explained, “it’s not because they don’t want to behave; it’s usually because we haven’t given them the support they need. So that piece is really the *biggest* learning: how we reflect on our own work. What is it that we’re doing, adjusting, and readjusting to make things work?” In addition to self-reflection, Judy shared that part of her success in dealing with difficult children was emphasizing and demonstrating mutual respect; not only between the
teacher and the students, but between the students themselves, as well as respecting the rules, structure, and expectations of the classroom. She achieved this by involving students in the design of the class expectations by giving them a voice. As for establishing an environment of mutual respect, Judy introduced a lot of team-building activities in her classroom, which helped build a sense of community. She concluded, “Every child wants to feel connected and our students are no different.”

Mark felt that “ideal classroom management” was “difficult to navigate” as a term since what is considered ideal for one class of students may not be ideal for another. He explained, “My classroom management is ideal for my style of teaching and the group of kids I have this year. Each group will be different and thus each management style should be tailor-made to those students who walk in the door.”

In describing his classroom management style, Mark said that he gives students the autonomy to manage themselves and “to develop their metacognitive awareness enough so that they know what they need to do in order to be productive.” He rarely makes his students sit at their desks for more than 20 minutes; he makes sure to break up the lessons by including various activities that involve movement and flexible grouping. If he teaches a double period, he gives his grade 7 students a three-minute break in between to stretch, get a drink of water, or go to the bathroom. He also sets high and consistent expectations from the beginning of the year and treats students fairly and equitably:

I don't really have a lot of behavior issues in my class because the expectations and the community is very tight – there are no surprises; it's not like I make things up on the fly. Kids know what I expect and they know what they should expect of themselves.
Significance of Classroom Management

When asked the question, “Based on your experience, what are your thoughts on establishing classroom management during the first days of school?” Peter answered, “Those first two weeks... if you lose them [the students], you're not getting them back.” Peter likened the classroom to a home and stated, “as soon as the child starts realizing they can run the home, they will.” He added emphatically, “You have to come in like a ton of bricks. You cannot back-track. If you lose the class it's almost impossible to bring them back in.” He immediately followed,

but it's a hard thing to manage because kids also need to know that you like them or it won't work; so you have to find a balance. Like sometimes student teachers will come in and try to be really, really tough and I get why, but the kids don't know them yet. So it's a fine line, right? So, you’ve got to find some way to show kindness at the same time letting them know who's boss.

Peter also stated that classroom management differs for new teachers. New teachers have a lot to prove and their confidence will be tested from the start, therefore, they have to appear strong and in charge. As an experienced teacher, Peter finds that he does not have to manage the classroom as much since the students already know him and know of his reputation and expectations.

Similar to Peter, Judy also emphasized the importance of establishing classroom management during the first days of school:

We hear the cliché often that says, “there is no second chances for first impressions” and I think that's really, really important... Basically there's nothing more important than setting the tone. So if you’re asking what are your thoughts on establishing classroom management: it's critical. Teachers need to spend a lot of time on this. It happens much before the first day of school depending on your grade level; but that teacher needs to
establish all the procedures, the rules, and the expectations that are important in that classroom.

In her capacity as school principal, Judy bought copies of Wong and Wong's *The First Days of School* and distributed it to staff members in May so that they could read it over the summer as “classroom management takes planning and thinking well ahead of time.”

In comparison to Peter's and Judy's response, Mark's response did not seem to include the same sense of urgency in setting the stage during the first days of school. For him, establishing classroom management during the first days of school involves getting to know his students. He engages them from the start in discussions about themselves; he also spends time getting to know them one-on-one “even if it's ten minutes during nutrition break.” Mark also made the following clear:

> While I think it important to set broad expectations during the first week of school, I think it is far too premature to standardize a classroom management strategy... During the first week of school, I make clear that we are a Tribes classroom and, more importantly, our space is a place for all students and teachers to express themselves freely and without fear of discrimination or retribution.

Mark also hit upon an important limitation of this study in his response to classroom management: “there is no 'one-size-fits-all' model for managing a class.” This is consistent with his previous response that what he considers to be ideal classroom management may not be ideal for another teacher or another class.

### 2. Verbal and Nonverbal Cues: Tone of Voice & Body Language

Studies indicate that verbal and nonverbal cues such as tone of voice, what is said, body language, and action directly impact how students perceive a teacher. Once a first
impression is created, it is very difficult to change students' perception, therefore, teachers need to get it right from the very first day. In order to tap into the experiences and recommendations of my three participants, I asked them the following questions:

a) How do you introduce yourself to your students on the first day of school?
I probed further by specifically asking about the tone of voice and body language used.

b) Do your tone and attitude in class remain the same or change after the first few weeks of the school year?

Pre-service teachers frequently hear the adage “don't smile until Christmas” and I wanted to probe this further with my participants. I wanted to know if, in their experience and opinion, they felt that this saying was valid. Is there some truth to it? Or would not smiling set a new teacher up for failure?

**Introduction to Self**

Both Peter and Mark shared that how they introduced themselves on the first day of school when they were new teachers was different than how they introduced themselves now. They both said that they were more strict and rules-oriented at the beginning, especially Mark who taught at a tough inner-city school for the first two years.

Although students know Peter at the school, which facilitates the process of introducing himself to them at the beginning of the year, he advised new teachers to show confidence:
You have to be confident, strong, and fearless. First of all, kids can smell fear. I've seen kindergartens just destroy a teacher because they can smell the fear. You need to know their names almost immediately and you have to be aware.

Peter also picks up his students outside and shakes hands with new students on the first day of school.

Like Peter, Mark described himself as more strict at the beginning of his teaching career. He would “lay down the law” from the beginning. After three or four years, Mark radically changed his introduction; instead of showing his strict side, he showed students his silly side. For several years now, Mark shows up on the first day of school dressed in a costume; he was a large crayon one year and a hamburger the next:

It's really important for me for kids to want to come to school and so I want them to be on the first day like, “Whoa! My teacher is fun and has a sense of humor and I'm going to have a good year.” I want those kids now – and it's so different from when I started – I want those kids now to know that they're going to be engaged and they're going to have fun and to know within the first week, too, that I have high expectations. But on the first day especially – kids get nervous on the first day – I don't want them to feel nervous; I want them to feel excited, and I want them to be at ease.

He emphasized that it was not only about demonstrating a sense of humor, but also showing students that he cares about them and respects them. Understanding that students tend to be nervous on the first day of school, he spends a lot of time breaking the ice by getting to know them as a group and by telling them a little bit about himself:

We get to do a lot of Tribes activities like community circle and we talk about what we're nervous about this year, what subjects we're most excited about, what's one thing about grade 7 that we think will be new this year, and we sit and we just chat. We don't do old school pen and paper kind of work but we just chat.
In addition, during the first two weeks, all the intermediate teachers do team-building activities for grade 7 and 8 students. The students are mixed into five different groups, 25 students per group, and are involved in activities where students collaborate together and practice all the skills that are part of the expectations for the classroom. Hence, students are not only introduced to their teacher and classmates, they are introduced to the intermediate team as well, fostering a sense of community at the beginning of the school year.

Judy did not mention changing how she introduces herself to the class on the first day of school. She describes her self introduction as “friendly, personable, but confident and firm” which fuses a bit of both Peter's and Mark's classroom management styles.

**Verbal and Nonverbal Cues: Tone of Voice and Body Language**

Participants were asked what they tend to say on the first day of school as they introduce themselves, and what tone of voice they use. Peter commented that the tone of voice “has to be strong, but has to be kind”. He uses “mild shaming” when students talk while he is speaking as they need to know from the start what is acceptable and what is not. When someone acts up, all he needs to say now is, “That is not going to work here, so you might as well stop.” It is easier for him now to curtail behavior with a simple sentence as students know that he means business, but at the same time they also know that he is kind and they feel guilty when they upset him. He reiterated that new teachers need to find and demonstrate that right balance.

With Mark, the right balance involves getting to know the students first through group discussions and individual, informal chats. Judy also takes the time on the first
days of school to get to know her students. She shares with them a little bit about herself and her summer and encourages students to share their stories as well in a safe environment where there are no put-downs or ridicule. She explained that some teachers think they have to be “over the top” and use a strict tone of voice for the first two weeks of school, and that that may work for them, but she concluded that the most important thing is to treat students with respect and to encourage them to communicate in a safe environment. Judy paves the way for a classroom that is “safe and approachable” by using an invitational tone of voice herself and does not prescribe to yelling.

Participants were also asked to describe the body language that they used when teaching. Most of what they said overlapped with how they introduced themselves to their students on the first day of school. Only a minor addition was made by Judy and Peter. Judy stated that teachers had to be careful how they presented themselves, especially in front of students with behavioral issues or who were struggling with issues outside the classroom. She said, “If they see a teacher as being very meek or nervous, it's going to make it very, very difficult. So presenting that confidence cannot be underestimated.” A teacher has to consider details, as well, such as where s/he stands in the classroom. Peter stated that it is important for teachers to move around the class while talking and to adopt a natural and relaxed posture.

**Consistency in Tone and Attitude**

I asked participants if their tone and attitude remained the same or if it changed after the first few weeks of school. The responses were similar between my three participants in the sense that during the first few weeks of school, teachers may
“subconsciously be more firm and uptight” as Judy described it. She explained that teachers are pulled in a lot of different directions at the start of the school year and the strain starts to show. Peter commented that teachers “become softer” as they get to know their students better.

Mark reflected that for the most part, his tone and attitude remained consistent; that he was “welcoming, supportive, and established a community-based classroom all throughout the year.” One year, however, he taught a very challenging French immersion class where students were known to be defiant and for their hard to please, high maintenance parents. It was with this class that Mark's attitude took a turn. He started off as his usual positive, welcoming self and found that the students quickly took advantage of being given a voice. As Mark explained, “They thought that giving them voice meant they had control of me and were in charge.” Despite it conflicting with his core beliefs about the essence of classroom management, Mark found himself changing his tone, “scaling back”, and “tightening the reigns”.

Upon directly asking my three participants how they felt about the saying, “don't smile until Christmas” the reactions were mixed. For Judy, consistency was important in maintaining an environment of trust and “ensuring that there are no surprises and there are no tricks. We lay it all on the line with our students.” She concluded, “There's no games for me,” and that her tone and attitude remained the same.

For Peter, however, his answer was consistent with his belief that a teacher needs to be tough at the beginning of the year to manage the class:

There's truth in that. Until you know they know who's boss and that you're able to manage that classroom, you need to stay on the tough side. You have to be strong at the beginning; if you're not, you're not getting them
back. I've seen teachers never be able to get them back; it's too late – which I know is defeatist – but the most important thing you can teach new teachers is that you've got to get them at the beginning.

On a personal level, Mark was staunchly against the advice behind the saying “don't smile until Christmas”. For teachers with low confidence in their teaching ability, however, he said that “it might not be the worst advice. If they're too nice, the kids will walk all over them, especially if they're in a tough school.” He added,

If you want your kids to sit down in their chair and shut their mouths and obey all the school rules and the classroom rules, then maybe “don't smile 'til Christmas”. But it's philosophical differences, and I think philosophically, I could never subscribe to something like that.

Mark could not equate being strict and unapproachable to a teacher who could ever be likeable; and he could not see it leading to a “positive classroom environment where kids are learning.” Instead, Mark stated that in all of his experience with kids and in all of his research on students, the way to get students engaged and on board with a teacher's lessons, plans, and activities is, simply stated, “they have to care about you; they have to like you; they have to respect you.” Some teachers, Mark believes, care more about students' respect than having students “like” them. Mark's response to that is that it might be more important to gain students' respect, however:

it helps a heck of a lot to have kids who like their teacher because when kids like their teacher, that means they like their school; and when they like school, that means they're much more likely to engage in what's going on in school. And then if kids like their teacher, parents are happy that their kids are happy and then that creates a whole community of that partnership between the parents and the student and the teacher.
Mark concluded that establishing rapport with the students was the most important and productive way forward in classroom management.

3. Introducing Classroom Rules, Procedures and Expectations

As exemplary teachers, I wanted to know when and how each participant introduced the classroom rules, procedures and expectations. Did they start from day one or did they do ice-breakers first? Were the rules and expectations predetermined, or did their students get to draft them? What type of rules did they enforce?

When and How to Introduce Rules, Procedures and Expectations

All three participants provided similar answers regarding when to introduce classroom rules, procedures and expectations. The answer was: from day one. Peter said that he would begin from the first period of the first day and would spend around an hour discussing the rules. Judy believed that tackling the rules and expectations early and within the first few days is ideal. She added that teachers should not be caught up in covering all of the rules in one day; instead, students should be eased into it so as not to overwhelm them. By the end of the first week, students should have a good sense of what the expectations are, and interspersed between discussing the rules should be team-building activities to create a balance. Following the Tribes system, Mark introduces the rules, procedures and expectations – or the “Tribes agreements and learning skills” – over the first couple of weeks.
Regarding the method that is used to convey the rules, Judy stated that it is important to have them visible to the students or easily accessible for reference. She used various mediums to post the rules, procedures and expectations depending on the age group, from writing them on the board, to projecting them via a PowerPoint presentation, to having students jot them down in their notes. The process is also a collaborative one where the rules are “student-written and owned by the students.” What they come up with is then posted in a high-traffic area in the classroom.

Unlike Judy, Peter preferred to have the rules predetermined and pre-written on the board. He explains them to the class and expands on them as the rules stay posted in the classroom. As the year progresses, Peter modifies or adds more rules as he sees fit and based on his students' behavior. Any changes made to the rules are discussed, copied down by the students, and signed.

When asked what methods he uses to convey classroom rules, procedures and expectations, Mark preferred to refer to rules as “expectations” which conveyed a less negative connotation for him. He also referred to the expectations as “Tribes agreements” and “learning skills” since the school promoted a Tribes Learning Community. Mark explained that there were four main Tribes agreements as well as six learning skills that all intermediate teachers shared with their class. Over the span of a couple of weeks, Mark would share the agreements and learning skills with the students; discussions as well as school-wide activities related to the learning skills would take place. Students would also be asked to put the learning skills into their own words and their work would be posted in all of their different classrooms. Even though there is an overarching outline
of the agreements and learning skills, students still work collaboratively in writing the specific expectations, internalizing them, and monitoring their progress.

Prior to working with “a cohesive group of teachers” and implementing the Tribes agreements, Mark used to tackle classroom expectations in different ways. He would have his students work on generating a list for the class so that it was authored by them. In other years, he would write a list of 20 expectations and would invite students to cross out the ones they did not like or edit the wording. He would also slip in some silly rules such as “The teacher will sing a song every time a student gets 100% on a test” which made the selection process of the expectations fun.

Upon facing a particularly challenging class, Mark would have the students sign a behavior contract to establish the ground rules from the beginning of the year. When asked if the behavior contracts were effective, in his opinion, Mark felt that it was a “good tool to have when there was a major issue.” Since both the students and parents sign the contract, it becomes binding and the consequences of broken contracts are clear from the beginning. This comes in handy when a visit to the principal’s office becomes necessary. Apart from that purpose, Mark felt that because he “didn't reference those behavioral contracts often, they were fairly meaningless.” He concluded that if the rules were revisited consistently and given more context, then it would have been more effective and beneficial.

Selected Rules, Procedures and Expectations

After sharing when and how participants introduce the rules, procedures and expectations, I asked them to divulge the rules they established in their classroom and
why they have selected those particular rules. Participants' answers showed a commonality: demonstrating mutual respect. Although there were many rules that they have posted over the years, participants did not recall all of them during the time of the interview. Their responses were general but gave a sense of which rules were in the forefront:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PETER</th>
<th>JUDY</th>
<th>MARK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Be respectful of yourself  
• Be responsible of your own actions, your own voice, and your own stuff  
• Be kind  
• Have a sense of humor  
• Other rules that involve dos and don'ts | • Demonstrate respect: students' respect for themselves, respect for another teacher, and respect for another student  
• Treat one another as you would like to be treated yourself  
• Operational rules such as when to use electronics; entry and exit into the classroom to avoid disrupting others  
• Classroom “norms” such as speaking and listening respectfully, showing proper body language and not shooting down ideas when another student is presenting something | Tribes Agreements:  
• Attentive listening  
• Appreciation/no put downs  
• The right to pass – the right to participate  
• Mutual respect  

Tribes Learning Skills  
• Example given for “Responsibility” and written by students: “I use my time wisely”; “I'm always giving 100% effort”  
• Example given for “Collaboration” could be “People like working with me”; “I contribute thoughtfully”

Mark mentioned that the expectations were always framed in a positive manner; instead of “don't do this and that”, it is: “We always listen to each other, we treat each other respectfully, we treat belongings respectfully...” The Tribes agreements and learning skills are visited and revisited frequently in school – so much so that he did not need to post the rules for the current class he is teaching. As for the rules Peter focused
on in his class, he reflected, “Elementary school is about learning to be a good person, right?” Judy also concluded that it's not about posting “rules on a wall” but rather, developing “norms” and asking reflectively, “how are we going to create this environment of respect?”

4. Consequences and Rewards

Drawing the line in the form of consequences as well as providing positive reinforcement are all part of classroom management. Regarding consequences, I asked my participants to share what they say or do when students deviate from the classroom rules or expectations by committing minor infractions and major infractions. I also asked them what they say or do when a student consistently follows the rules or expectations. Additionally, in order to gauge how their students perceived them based on the consequences and rewards they enforced, I asked my participants the following question: Based on student formal and/or informal feedback, how do you think your students perceive you?

Consequences: Minimal Infractions

Participants were asked to outline what they say or do when students commit minor infractions such as being chatty, not bringing their materials, or texting in class. Both Judy and Mark highlighted the same point: that before they react to a student's misbehavior or forgetfulness, they try to find out the reason behind it.
Judy emphasized that there is “no gain to embarrassing a student” and that she would “start off with a quiet one-on-one conversation... you find the moment to do it.” She reflected that “sometimes that person needs some time and space; sometimes there’s a really compelling reason why they have forgotten or why that text is on. What is the whole story?” Similarly, Mark reflected that if a student is not working effectively in class one day, he is not quick to judge since “through time I've learned that it's usually something else. They're usually staying up too late, they're stressed out about something... they got yelled at by another teacher, whatever; it's usually something.” Adding to what Mark said, Peter also believed that students who misbehave are usually crying out for attention. Instead of reacting in a negative way, Mark starts with trying to “figure out why” the student is not doing the work. Judy concluded, “You try to get that story while reminding them of the rules – and you're reminding them how what they're doing is impacting their learning or the learning of others.”

Mark described himself as “creative” in coming up with consequences. He makes sure to provide the student with a warning first so that the student gets a chance to positively redirect his/her behavior. If the student repeats the behavior again, Mark comes up with a consequence that fits the action. An example he provided was: if the students leave a mess in the classroom after Mark reminds them to clean up, then he would have them return to clean up the entire classroom and perhaps other classrooms as well, including the hallway. Other examples include: if a student plays with his/her phone, Mark will ask the student to put it away. If it happens again, then the student's phone is confiscated. If a student forgets to bring in his/her homework, Mark will remind the
student to bring it in the next day. If the homework is forgotten again, then he emails the student's parents to bring it to their attention.

Mark mentioned that he is not very consistent in his consequences as he rarely needs to do so anymore since he is currently teaching an easily manageable class. He said that he would not give this advice, however, to new teachers. Peter also commented that he rarely needs to issue consequences since the students know him well and know not to cross him. If a student talks while he is speaking, then Peter would say, “I need you to stop, please” and that usually works. If a student needs constant reminders, then Peter would note that down in his/her report card. Since he knows students' parents very well having taught at the same school for many years, all he needs to say is, “I've got your mother on speed dial” and the behavior would “stop right away.” He mentioned that that works only in an environment where parents are invested in their children.

Consequences: Major Infractions

All three participants mentioned the importance of involving the parents if major infractions were committed such as being aggressive to others, showing lack of respect, or not handing in any assignments. Mark establishes a “positive working relationship” with parents whom he considers as “a partner in their child's learning”; this rapport often comes in handy when there are serious issues to be resolved. Mark finds a quick conversation with the parents is usually sufficient, and the parent helps with following up at home so that the issue does not arise again. When parents are more on the apathetic side, then consequences are dealt with at school. Peter also contacts the parents if his students, after being given a chance, don't hand in homework on a regular basis. He
reiterated that parents at their school cared if they received a phone call; in other neighborhoods or schools, however, parents might not be as accessible or supportive.

Mark shared that in very rare cases, he referred any serious issues that involved major consequences to the principal. Judy also listed other stakeholders to contact depending on the severity of the infraction: caregivers, advocates, child-youth workers, administrators, guidance counselors, special education teachers, and other teachers (if there is a rotary system).

As for issues that could be dealt with on the spot, both Mark and Peter use empathy and rapport to get through to their students. Mark said that if a student showed disrespect towards him, he would talk to the student outside of the class and say, “I've never been disrespectful towards you, so why would you treat me like that?” and that would be sufficient for the student to apologize. Mark would also follow it up with a chat with the student to find out what is behind the student's misbehavior. Peter provided a similar example: if a student misbehaved enough to cause Peter to become angry, he would say to the student, “You need to go stand in the hall right now and I'll be there in a minute.” This would give enough time for Peter to settle before talking to the student. Peter would put the student in his shoes and ask him/her to reflect on how it might feel. Peter added, “I almost always try to put it back on what they did to make me feel that way and that seems to work.”

**Positive Reinforcement**

Participants were asked to share what they do when a student consistently follows the rules. Peter emphasized providing positive feedback as reinforcement, looking for
opportunities to praise the students who are known to misbehave as well. He also makes it a point – especially at the beginning of the year – to call the parents to tell them what a great kid their son or daughter is. He explained, “We spend a lot of time phoning parents when things are wrong,” and continued to say how parents appreciate such positive gestures.

Judy shared that positive reinforcement – not just for following the rules, but for contributing to the class in general – was highly effective when it came from a peer. She finds ways to facilitate - through probing and questioning – peer-to-peer acknowledgement of a job well done. Apart from that, if students are taught by multiple teachers, she shares with their teachers their accomplishments, and emails their parents as well.

Mark shared how the school issues Tribes certificates “that recognize students for exemplary behavior in a specific area every month.” They are also given “Caught Ya Caring” slips, which are positive reinforcement ballots that students receive if they demonstrate one of the Tribes agreements. They place their ballot in a box at the principal's office and a draw is made every Friday whereby the winners receive a small prize. Mark commented that what was more effective than receiving little tokens was honest and sincere positive feedback:

I make sure that my kids know that if they do something good, how proud I am of them and I don't give false praise because I think kids see through it. But I go out of my way – especially kids who don't get a lot of praise – to find things I can praise [....] If you established a good relationship with your students – you telling them how great they are and that they've done something really, really well – that does wonders for their self-esteem and their confidence.
Students' Perception of Teacher

When asked how they thought their students perceived them based on students' formal and informal feedback, the participants answered as follows:

Peter:

I'd say they'd probably say “firm but kind”. I'm probably the strictest teacher here, but I don't know that they'd say that. They're a little bit scared of me, which is good... I think you should be a little bit scared of your mom and your teacher. I also think you need to be afraid to disappoint. If you're talking about behavior, every child needs someone that they're afraid to disappoint... and I think that if you don't have a parent or a teacher or a principal that you're afraid to disappoint, then that's bad.

Judy:

They perceive me as wanting to help them; wanting to be engaging, helpful and supportive. They would know that I'm firm in the sense of expectations that we create together. But they also know that if they need help, that they're comfortable in being able to ask for help and that to me, is really critical.

Mark:

For sure they would say that I'm fair, I'm weird, I'm funny, I have high expectations... They wouldn't say that I'm strict [...] like, they're not scared of me, but I would say that they have respect for me. So I would say that they would describe me as tough but fair, but fun and silly. They would say I don't really care about grades very much... if they fail one test I don't get mad at them so I would say that I have high expectations but I'm more constructive about it. I take the time to help them.
5. Professional Development

How much of what my participants enforced in terms of effective classroom management strategies is due to professional development? Did professional development regarding classroom management add to their skills? I asked two questions to find out:

1) What opportunities have you had, if any, to receive professional development around classroom management – either during teacher education or as in-service?

2) To what extent did these impact your classroom management practices?

**Professional Development (PD) Opportunities**

When asked to recount any professional development sessions centered around classroom management, Peter stated that he did not sign up for any since he never had a problem with classroom management. Coming from the concurrent program, Peter said that he completed several practicum placements followed by a job as an Educational Assistant and learned all he needed to know from those experiences.

Judy could not remember the professional development sessions she attended during her teacher education. For in-service, however, she stated that she attended “tons [...] around classroom management, creating the right classroom, creating an inclusive environment, and focusing on the impact behavior management has on students' success.”

Mark also remembers many opportunities where he attended classroom management PD sessions. He included his four practicum placements as a Bachelor of Education student, stating that he learned a lot about classroom management from that
experience as well as attending four relevant seminars during his studies addressing “real issues in the classroom.” When he was a new teacher in an Ontario school board, he attended PD sessions that were held once every two months as part of the New Teacher Induction Program. Additionally, he attended a seminar on classroom management targeted for new teachers, offered by The Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO). As for school-based PD, apart from the Tribes training he received, he admitted that only a few professional development sessions were offered at the beginning of the school year.

**Impact of Professional Development on Classroom Management**

As Peter did not attend PD seminars related to classroom management, he could not speak for the impact it had on his classroom management style. He did, however, share the following observation:

> The biggest problem, I think, for new teachers is that they don't know how to manage a class. You can't teach that; sometimes it's like common sense, you can't always teach it. [...] I think classroom management is innate, unfortunately. I think being a teacher is a calling; you can teach, but really good teachers are born. You can get better at it, but it's hard to be really good if it's not innate.

Judy, on the other hand, felt that PD helped her in many ways:

> I think they had a great impact on me thinking carefully about how I speak, how I present myself, how I organize my classroom physically, the emphasis on the beginning of the year and maintaining what we said at the beginning of the year, and the emphasis on really being critical, really critical, on how I perceive myself versus how I might be.
For Mark, not all PD sessions were useful. He commented that some speakers made an impact on him, but what made more of an impact were his “teaching mentors” - or the people he has collaborated with throughout the years:

There's always something new you can try or something new you can learn [...] and a lot of that learning comes from people I've worked with. That's where I get all of my ideas from. Very few of them come from a book or a seminar; a lot of them come from what I've seen my colleagues doing and I would think that would have the biggest impact on me.

6. Advice to Pre-service Teachers

In order to collect more data that may not have been expressed through the previous interview questions, I asked my participants the following concluding question: What advice would you give to new teachers regarding the dos and don'ts of classroom management during the first few weeks of school?

Participants provided advice as follows:

*Do your homework*

Both Judy and Peter highly recommended that new teachers connect with the experienced teachers in the school, particularly their students' previous teachers. Judy advised, however, not to get “too caught up in what you hear from others” and that new teachers need to formulate their own assessments. She added that it was very important to access and review students' OSRs in advance of the first day of school in order to help with the planning and programming.
Get to know your students

Both Mark and Judy spoke at length about their primary advice to pre-service teachers: get to know your students. Based on his experience, Mark emphasized that “establishing a positive rapport with students is paramount to having control and having effective classroom management skills.”

Mark shared that at the beginning of the year, he usually has brief one-on-one interviews with all of his students and makes it a point to spend time with students who are known to be troublesome in class. He continued to say, “I get to know those kids and that is so important because if you have a kid who's acting out and they don't respect you and they don't like you, then they don't care.” Judy also emphasized the same point by saying:

If I want to be improving my work in the classroom and improving our school results, improving our communication through writing – whatever our goals are – if I don't have the understanding and the support of my students; if I don't know my students in my classroom; if I don't know the combinations and the ins and outs, I'm not going to do a good job with the bigger picture.

Mark reflected on his own practicum experience and how his Associate Teachers would advise him to “set the expectations firmly”, to “go in really strict” and adopt a “take no prisoners type of approach”. He said that that type of advice would depend on the personality of the new teacher; but his advice to his own student teachers was: “get to know the kids, stay at lunch time, eat lunch with them, when you go out for recess or yard duty, chat with the kids, and make an effort.”

Judy confirmed the same above-mentioned point by advising that “every opportunity counts both in the classroom, outside the classroom, in the hallway when
they're waiting, in the lunch room... *every* opportunity counts and it all impacts the classroom.”

In conclusion, Mark stated passionately:

Different kids require different things to be successful and knowing that is so important; and all that comes from establishing rapport and establishing a positive relationship with your kids and that will get you further than any book, any rule, strategy, anything I could ever think of.

**Communicate with Parents**

Just as getting to know students goes a long way in establishing effective classroom management and a positive learning environment, getting to know their parents is of utmost importance as well, according to all three participants. Because of Peter's close relationship with the parents, he is able to get parents' support at home when a student is slipping in meeting expectations or in behavior. For Judy and Mark, parents are regarded as partners in the students' learning journey; the home becoming an extension of the classroom. Judy and Mark advised to contact parents as early as possible for a friendly introduction and to share with them the expectations for the year.

Mark summed up that parents “are really important in establishing classroom management in your class. If they don't like you or if they don't know you, they're not going to back you up at home which is really important.”

**Be confident**

Reiterating what was mentioned previously in this study regarding the importance of projecting confidence, Peter added that a common pitfall for new teachers was appearing nervous. He warned, “You should always be a little bit nervous, but you
can't let that show. If the kids see you shaking up front, you're going to run into trouble.”

He also mentioned that teachers who are nervous tend to rush through lessons as they worry about timing. In their rush, they do not take enough time to address classroom management issues that arise, such as waiting for everyone to be quiet before continuing on with the lesson.

Additionally, Mark observed that some teachers send students who misbehave to the principal's or vice-principal's office signaling a lack of confidence in being able to handle situations. Mark advised against doing so when possible, adding: “The second you start sending kids down to the office, it's the second that that kid knows that you're not in charge and that the principal is in charge or the vice principal is in charge.”

**Be consistent**

All three participants touched upon the importance of being consistent previously in this research. In addition to what was stated, Peter added that consistency and follow-through cannot be underestimated when it comes to classroom management. If a teacher is not consistent in the consequences and expectations he or she sets, then students will believe that the teacher is a “push-over”. Similarly, Mark advised that teachers should stick to the consequences they have set because otherwise, “kids are going to feel that you have a bag of tricks and you're just throwing them all out.” He highlighted that teachers must stick to their words and to also be authentic as “kids see through what teachers are doing”.

Peter provided an example that he felt was very common not only with preservice teachers, but with experienced teachers as well. Teachers ask students often to be
quiet, yet they don't wait for all the students to stop talking; instead, they continue on with the lesson. When teachers don't wait, they indirectly teach students to repeat the behavior: “What does that kid learn? They learn that you'll never wait for them to be quiet anyway – so they'll just keep on talking.” Peter believed that timing and consistency were pertinent in establishing effective classroom management and both were common pitfalls for many teachers.

**Be aware and be reflective**

Another problem many teachers face, according to Peter, is that they are not “with it”, meaning that they are not completely aware of the “nuances” of what's happening in their classroom. Being with it involves “being aware of exactly what's going on at all times, digging a little deeper, being organized, and thinking through everything you do.” Judy also pointed out the importance of “thinking through everything you do” by way of self reflection:

As educators, we have to look at what we aren't getting. When we get behaviors we don't like or results we don't like, go back within and say, “What as an educator do I need to do to ensure that I'm creating the right condition?”
Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

In exploring effective classroom management strategies with a focus on the first days of school, both my literature review and interview findings confirmed how critical it was to start right in order to streamline the rest of the school year. The commonalities and divergence in the recommended strategies underscore the fact that there are no definitive or absolute answers; that teachers need to choose what works best for them and what compliments the nature of their students. This chapter will address connections to the literature, implications for practice, and recommendations for further study.

Relation to the Literature Review

Across numerous research studies, a direct link has been established between effective classroom management and a higher level of student achievement. Eleven thousand research studies were analyzed over the span of 50 years to determine what impacted student learning; listed as number one was: classroom management (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1993, p. 249). Additional research confirms that how classroom management is implemented determines the effectiveness of the teacher (Everston, Emmer, Clements, & Worsham, 2009; Emmer, Everston, Clements, & Worsham, 2003). What is most critical of all is that teachers are assessed by their students from the first days of the school year:

What you do on the first days of school will determine your success or failure for the rest of the school year. You will either win or lose your class on the first days of school. (Wong & Wong, 1998, p. 3)
My interview findings also echo this quote. Peter asserted, “Those first two weeks... if you lose them [the students], you're not getting them back [...] As soon as the child starts realizing they can run the home, they will.” Judy stated that since teachers don't get a second chance at creating a first impression, they must demonstrate effective classroom management skills from day one. This statement summarizes what I have personally observed during my six-year experience as a teacher. I have witnessed students change in behavior from one teacher to the next during the first days of school. With some teachers, they participate effectively and the classroom environment is buzzing with learning; with other teachers, the same group of students demonstrate disruptive behaviors. Through my own teaching experience and observation of my peers, I was able to deduce a combination of effective teacher practices that facilitate a positive learning environment. My observations are consistent with much of the recommendations and strategies featured in the literature review and interview findings.

Many recommendations and strategies have been shared in this study and although all of them are important in creating a positive learning environment, some are emphasized more than others. Based on the commonalities found between the literature review and the interview findings, as well as the frequency in which they are mentioned, the following summarize key recommendations and strategies to focus on:

- Verbal and nonverbal cues: demonstrate confidence and establish a rapport with students
- Introducing rules, procedures and expectations: involve students in authoring them
• Consequences and rewards: demonstrate consistency, encourage students to reflect on the impact of their behavior, and promote intrinsic motivation

Beginning with the first point, demonstrating confidence through tone of voice and body language is one of the early indicators of classroom management success. The literature and interview findings underscore the fact that if teachers do not project confidence and “with-it-ness” (Jonson et al., 2011) right from the start, they will lose their students. The recommended tone of voice to use during the first days of school is: firm but kind. A balance between the two needs to be established in order for students to be aware of certain boundaries yet feel safe at the same time. There is disparity, however, in terms of recommendations for body language. Regarding the controversial phrase “don't smile until Christmas”, some sources recommend portraying confidence through a more serious, business-like attitude while others emphasize the importance of establishing a personable relationship with students for classroom management to succeed. The same disparity surfaced in my interview findings. Whereby Judy was adamantly opposed to the idea, Peter highly recommended it until students become aware of “who's boss”. Mark did not follow this strategy personally but felt that it might prove necessary for teachers who lacked confidence. The fact that there is no clear-cut and unified response to “don't smile until Christmas” indicates that teachers need to make their own decision based on their personality, teaching philosophy, and the nature of their students.

Apart from projecting confidence from the first day of school, another stepping stone to successful classroom management according to both the literature and interview
findings is: establishing a rapport with students. The findings of this study demonstrate that for students to willingly participate in the learning process, they need to respect their teacher. Without that respect, rules, consequences and rewards become empty terms. One of the means to gaining students' respect is for a teacher to invest time in getting to know them individually. Accordingly, teachers demonstrate care, leading to a positive and safe environment that facilitates classroom management, growth, and learning.

Regarding key findings for introducing rules, procedures and expectations, there is disparity between encouraging student-written or predetermined rules. Peter preferred establishing the rules himself. Some sources state that this method is efficient as time is directed toward practicing and internalizing the established rules. My other two participants, however, recommended student involvement in drafting the rules. Kohn (1993) presents a convincing argument. Instead of telling students what to do which does not teach lifelong skills, students need to think critically, create a plan, and be held accountable for it (p. 10). Research confirms that this method leads to student ownership and buy-in, facilitating classroom management (Schwartz & Pollishuke, 2013).

As for establishing consequences and rewards, there is strong agreement in the literature and research indicating that consistency and follow-through is paramount to effective classroom management. During the first weeks of school, students test the limits of their teachers. If the teacher wavers on the rules or expectations, then, according to my participants, students will learn that they can “get away with it”. A quote derived from the literature review adds: “be persistent and consistent in your approach – change may not happen overnight, but once pupils realize that you are not giving up, they will” (Leaman, 2008, p.75). In my teaching experience, I have seen the by-product of lack of
consistency from my peers. Teachers who did not consistently hold students accountable for breaking the established rules and procedures found themselves at the mercy of students' whims and faced increased defiance.

Providing students with a chance to turn their behavior around was a common recommendation made in the findings. Rather than humiliating the student in front of his/her peers, my participants encourage a private chat with the student to understand the reason behind the behavior. Providing the student with a warning followed by a second chance is one strategy. Another strategy is to present the student with a choice of two options. The decision made by the student becomes self-motivated as opposed to teacher-imposed. Finally, when negative behavior is repeated, Wong & Wong (1998) encourage the teacher to sit with the student privately to work out an action plan. In the plan, the student is asked to describe the incident, pinpoint the reasons behind the behavior, and draft a solution (Wong & Wong, 1998, p. 161). Taking such steps preserves the student's dignity, allows the student to self-reflect on the impact of his/her behavior, and encourages the student to come up with his/her own preventative plan, encouraging the critical skill of problem-solving.

Another key recommendation identified in both the literature and research findings is for teachers to continually engage in self-reflection. If students consistently break the rules, teachers are encouraged to find out why students repeat such behaviors, and of equal importance, teachers are encouraged to self-reflect on their own behavior. How might the teacher be perpetuating such negative behavior? What could be modified to facilitate students' success?
Finally, regarding rewards, there is divergence in the literature in terms of providing intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation. Some sources state that providing students with rewards such as prizes can significantly help in classroom management as students are motivated to earn the reward by demonstrating positive behavior. Other literature, backed by my interview findings, emphasize the importance of rewards of another kind: providing students with sincere praise and verbal encouragement. The result of praise leads to positive self-esteem and self-motivation, creating an enriching environment. I believe that it is important to focus on intrinsic motivation first and foremost, but as one of the sources mentioned in the literature review, a class reward such as a school trip every now and then will not harm (Leaman, 2008, p. 83).

**Implications for Practice**

This research study has had a great impact on me as a teacher and learner. First, it confirmed my belief that the first days of the school year play a critical role in determining whether or not a teacher will be effective for the ensuing months. Second, it gave me comfort to know that a lot of what I have been doing instinctively during the first days of school has been reflected as best practices in both the literature and interview findings. Establishing a rapport with my students from the first day has created a solid ground for a positive learning environment and smooth classroom management. My consistency in adhering to the classroom rules and expectations has also served me well. Students understood that the rules were more than just a poster on the wall and that they were established to foster a safe, respectful, and positive learning environment for all. Third, I discovered that allowing for more student involvement in constructing the rules
is a learning process in and of itself. The benefits derived from student involvement encourages me to include students in constructing the rules as well as the consequences.

And finally, the research brought to my attention that motivating students through extrinsic rewards may do more harm than good. I have used many rewards from prizes to class privileges. Although the rewards worked well in managing the class and leading students forward academically, when I reflect back on those moments, I can see how it muted students' intrinsic motivation. This knowledge will influence me to continue providing my students, first and foremost, with sincere praise as positive reinforcement.

Since there is little to no professional development provided for pre-service teachers on classroom management, this research may prove beneficial – particularly before practicum placements. The strategies and recommendations may provide pre-service – as well as in-service teachers – with a menu of options to enhance classroom management and start on the right foot.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Due to the limited scope of this study in terms of time span and number of interview participants, only a few facets of classroom management during the first days of school have been highlighted. The strategies featured in this research, although beneficial, may not fully apply to rotary, supply, or in some cases, long-term occasional teachers. Expanding the menu of optional strategies to reflect this gap will significantly add to the research.

Another recommendation for further study is to interview exemplary supply teachers. Supply teachers face a set of obstacles and challenges every time they teach a
new class – from rowdy students who believe that supply teachers herald free class time, to dealing with the unpredictable by-product of another teacher's classroom management style. An in-depth, qualitative study that delves into what effective supply teachers do to manage the class would be of great benefit to all teachers, whether pre-service or in-service, new or veteran, full-time or part-time.

A study that explores alternative methods such as mindfulness awareness practice and its impact on classroom management during the first days of school may also shed light on important tools teachers may use to create a conducive learning environment.

Finally, as emphasized in this research, students need to have a say in how they are taught. Qualitative interviews with diverse students regarding what they consider to be effective classroom management practices would serve to enlighten teachers on what may work, what may not, and the reasons behind it. Students will certainly differ in opinion; however, tapping into students' views is crucial in order to acquire a holistic understanding of effective classroom management practices.

In conclusion, statistics prove that pre-service teachers do not receive enough guidance regarding the pertinent issue of classroom management. They enter a classroom and either sink, or swim based on gut instinct. In the absence of classroom management courses or professional development sessions, it is critical that new and established teachers keep abreast of best practices through continual research in order to effectively create a healthy environment where students are happily learning and growing.
REFERENCES


Appendix A: Interview Questions

Experience in Education
1. How many years have you been teaching or working in the field of education?

The Meaning & Significance of Classroom Management
2. In your opinion, what does classroom management mean? What would it ideally look like or sound like in the classroom? *Please be as descriptive as possible.*

   - To what extent would you say that your classroom practices reflect this ideal classroom management image?

3. Based on your experience, what are your thoughts on establishing classroom management during the first days of school? *Please provide examples that support your opinion.*

Verbal and Nonverbal Cues: Tone of Voice and Body Language
4. How do you introduce yourself to your students on the first day of school?
   a. What do you say and what tone of voice do you use?
   b. What is your body language like?

5. Do your tone and attitude in class remain the same or change after the first few weeks of the school year? *For example, do you become more friendly, more strict, consistent in attitude? Some say don’t smile until Christmas...*

Introducing Classroom Rules, Procedures & Expectations
6. When do you first introduce classroom rules, procedures and expectations?
7. What methods do you use to convey classroom rules, procedures and expectations? *For example, participatory student contracts, predetermined rules, A/V presentation, hand-outs, writing on board, etc.*
8. What are the classroom rules/procedures you establish and why have you selected such rules?

Consequences & Rewards
9. When a student deviates from your rules by committing a minor infraction, what do you say/do? *For example, texting in class, not bringing materials to class, etc.*
10. When a student deviates from your rules by committing a major infraction, what do you say/do? *For example, being aggressive to others, showing lack of respect, not handing in any assignments, etc.*
11. When a student consistently follows the rules, what do you say/do?
12. Based on student formal and/or informal feedback, how do you think your students perceive you (e.g., strict, firm but kind)? *Please provide examples.*
Professional Development

13. What opportunities have you had, if any, to receive professional development around classroom management – either during teacher education or as in-service?

- To what extent did these impact your current classroom management practices?

Advice to Pre-Service Teachers

14. What advice would you give to new teachers regarding the dos and don'ts of classroom management during the first few weeks of school?
Appendix B: Consent Form

Dear ____________________,

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am studying effective classroom management strategies during the first days of school for the purposes of investigating an educational topic as a major assignment for our program. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor who is providing support for the process this year is Dr. Arlo Kempf. My research supervisor is Dr. Dick Holland. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of a 45 minute interview that will be tape-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you. I can conduct the interview at your office or workplace, in a public place, or anywhere else that you might prefer.

The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the tape recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the consent form below, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher:                  Rania Zaki ______________________________________
Phone number, email:  416-823-3494, rania.zaki@mail.utoronto.ca

Instructor:                     Dr. Arlo Kempf
Email:                           arlo.kempf@utoronto.ca

Research Supervisor:    Dr. Dick Holland
Email:                            dick.holland@utoronto.ca

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by _____Rania Zaki_______ (name of researcher) and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature: ______________________________________

Name (printed):  __________________________________ _          Date:  ______________________