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Ethnographic Research of the Impact of Catalyst Strategies on the Engagement and Relationships within the Classroom for 6th Graders Versus 2nd Graders in the General Education Classroom

Amber Keller
amber.keller.2@go.mnstate.edu

Casey Poland

Rene Beaird

Sara Kubicek

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Casey Poland
tf7726by@go.minnstate.edu

Rene Beaird
uo4492jx@go.minnstate.edu

Amber Keller
amber.keller.2@go.mnstate.edu

Sara Kubicek
yg0572wu@go.minnstate.edu

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Ethnographic Research of the Impact of Catalyst Strategies on the Engagement and Relationships within the Classroom for 6th Graders Versus 2nd Graders in General Education

A Qualitative Research Methods Project Presented By

Rene Beaird

Amber Keller

Sara Kubicek

Casey Poland

In Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Master's of Science in

Curriculum and Instruction

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Moorhead, Minnesota

ABSTRACT

This 2023 study focused on the effectiveness of the Catalyst Approach to classroom management in a second-grade versus sixth-grade classrooms in the same district. The Catalyst Approach is a comprehensive classroom implementation model that includes strategies for getting attention, engaging students, setting up for success, and supporting success. Whole group strategies are emphasized in this approach to aid in building a productive classroom environment (Burns & Brinkman, 2018). Our focus with this study was threefold: to see how the Catalyst Approach affected classroom management, how the Catalyst Approach affected relationships within the classroom environment, and how the Catalyst Approach compared in a second-grade versus sixth-grade classrooms. Classroom observations, field notes, and Likert scale surveys were used to collect data for analysis. This research took place in a Minnesota district in one second-grade and three sixth-grade classrooms with a sample size of 68 students in total. While the results differed slightly between the second-graders and the sixth-graders, the teachers' field observations indicated that the Catalyst Approach was effective and had a positive impact in both grade levels. The researchers believe that the Catalyst strategies were effective, in part, because they had been using this approach with fidelity all year long. Overall, the teacher researchers found that the Catalyst Approach is effective for increasing student engagement and fostering positive relationships in the classroom.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Educators are becoming increasingly more interested in employing effective classroom management strategies due to the challenging behaviors that are becoming more common in today's classrooms. Classroom management is one of the most important factors that teachers must consider when working with a group of students (Bozkus, 2021). Effective management is key to curbing those increasing behaviors (Ozen & Yildirim, 2020; Stewart, & And Others, 1997; Sun & Shek, 2012). Many schools are implementing a multi-tiered system of support to address the challenges being faced by today's educators (Rosen, 2021). This system provides various levels of support for the general student population, students who require small-group interventions, and students who need one-on-one support. In this tiered system, having a solid foundation of classroom management for all students can maximize an effective learning environment.

Brief Literature Review

There has been a significant amount of research surrounding the history of classroom management and the effectiveness of different approaches. Classroom management can be defined as the steps a teacher takes to maintain an environment in which both academic and behavioral learning can occur (Erden, 2008; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Woolfolk, 1995). The literature on this topic can be broken down into these common themes: teacher-student relationships, clear and consistent expectations, and teacher perceptions of self and students. Each of these factors are essential to creating an environment that ensures students can be

successful and safe. The literature states that consistency in expectations reduces the need for redirection which can preserve the teacher-student relationship. Gutierrez (2019) indicates that warm and trusting teacher relationships commonly correlate with positive school outcomes for students including increased effort, academic self-efficacy, and better grades and standardized test scores. Some research indicates that teachers who display higher self-efficacy tend to spend more focused energy on relationship-building rather than disciplinary actions. To increase student participation and engagement while reducing students' undesirable behaviors, educators should employ research-supported best practices in classroom management.

Statement of the Problem

Classroom management is a topic of ongoing debate in the world of education. Over time, the methods of classroom management have evolved based on studies that have determined the best possible outcomes for students. However, there is still much debate about which strategies are most effective. Classroom management is vital for learning to occur and a safe environment to be achieved. Teachers value effective classroom management to make the best use of instructional time. The Catalyst Approach is one management style that emphasizes the importance of that instructional time. The Catalyst Approach uses nonverbal communication to save time and energy for both teacher and student.

Purpose of the Study

The Catalyst Approach was adopted by our district and is used across all grade levels. The Catalyst Approach is a set of classroom management strategies that focuses on preserving teacher energy and positive student-teacher relationships. The purpose of our study was to determine the effectiveness of the Catalyst Approach when used in second-grade and sixth-grade

classrooms. The goal was to increase student participation and involvement in the learning process while decreasing undesirable behaviors.

Research Questions

In response to the needs of our classrooms and the research that has already been done, we have developed the following research questions:

1. How does the Catalyst Approach to classroom management affect classroom engagement?
2. How does the Catalyst Approach to classroom management affect relationships within the classroom environment?
3. How does the effectiveness of Catalyst classroom management strategies compare in a second-grade classroom versus a sixth-grade classroom?

Definition of Variables.

The following were the variables of study:

Independent Variables:

1. Catalyst Strategy Get Attention: "The sequential steps for shifting students' focus from one thing to another," (Burns & Brickman, 2018)
2. Catalyst Strategy Engage Teaching: "Delivering instruction and interacting through questioning or discussions," (Burns & Brickman, 2018)
3. Catalyst Strategy Set Up for Success: "Preparing students for work they will do on their own or with peers," (Burns & Brickman, 2018)

4. Grade Level: refers to 2nd grade students in our district and/or 6th grade students within three district classrooms.

Dependent Variables:

1. Engagement: Engagement within the classroom can be described as students actively listening and participating in the lesson activities.
2. Disengagement: Disengagement can be described as students sleeping or daydreaming, distracting others, disrupting the lesson activities, or failing to participate in the lesson.
3. Classroom Relationships: relationships will be defined within two different lenses: Teacher-Student and Student-Student. Positive classroom relationships consist of mutual respect, a feeling of safety, and a sense of belonging.

Significance of the Study

Effective classroom management is an indicator of a successful teacher, and successful teachers lead to successful students. Since the Catalyst Approach (previously ENVoY) has been adopted across every grade level in the district, we wanted to test the effectiveness in our own classrooms. Based on the literature available, we noticed that there are limited studies available that discuss the effectiveness of the Catalyst Approach in classrooms since its creation in the 1980s. This study will fill a gap in the literature.

Research Ethics

Permission and IRB Approval.

To conduct this study, the researcher will seek MSUM's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to ensure the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects (Mills & Gay, 2019). Likewise, authorization to conduct this study will be sought from the school district where the research project will take place (See Appendix A and B).

Informed Consent.

Protection of human subjects participating in research will be assured. Participant minors will be told of the study's purpose via the Method of Assent (See Appendix C) that the researcher will read to participants before the study begins. Participants will be aware that this study is conducted as part of the researcher's Master's Degree Program and that it will benefit their teaching practices. Informed consent means that the parents of participants have been fully informed of the purpose and procedures of the study for which consent is sought and that parents understand and agree, in writing, to their child participating in the study (Rothstein & Johnson, 2014). Confidentiality will be protected through pseudonyms (e.g., Student 1) without using any identifying information. The choice to participate or withdraw at any time will be outlined both verbally and in writing.

Limitations.

There were several limitations to this study. There were four different classrooms used in this study, each with different student populations and demographics. These differences, including the differing needs of students, potentially skewed the results of our study. Our study took place within one school district, limiting our sample size to one community of learners. Other limitations the teacher researchers experienced during this study were absenteeism among

the population of students being researched, disruptions in the projected research schedule due to snow days, late-start days, and other scheduling conflicts. Though the four teachers within the study have all been trained in the Catalyst Approach and implemented the same strategies, they are all unique in their teaching practices. The teacher researchers were using Catalyst strategies within the classrooms before completing this action research, potentially influencing the control period of this study. These limitations had the potential to change the students' experiences and the outcomes of the research in the classrooms.

Conclusions

This chapter introduced the problem, significance of what will be studied, and overall limitations. A brief glimpse of the research that has previously been done on the topic of effective classroom management has been included to set the stage for our study. Also described in this chapter were the variables of the study. The independent variables that impacted the study included three of the four stages of the Catalyst Approach to classroom management. The Catalyst Approach is a classroom management bundle that focuses on preserving positive relationships within the classroom and reducing teacher fatigue. The dependent variables that impacted this study included engagement, disengagement, and overall classroom relationships. The ethics involved in this study were also listed in this chapter. One can see approved IRB permission and consent of participants. In the next chapter we will take a deep dive into the literature surrounding classroom management and the themes surrounding it.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The school district under study has adopted the Catalyst Approach (previously known as ENVoY) for classroom management across the district. “The goal of [the Catalyst Approach] is to help teachers maximize their communication skills to preserve relationships while maximizing learning in the classroom,” (Burns & Brickman, 2018, p. 6). The Catalyst Approach is a comprehensive classroom implementation model that includes strategies for getting attention, engaging students, setting up for success, and supporting success. Whole group strategies are emphasized in this approach to aid in building a productive classroom environment (Burns & Brinkman, 2018). In a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), which is a framework many schools are using to provide support for struggling students, there are three tiers of interventions to address academic and behavioral challenges. Tier 1 consists of whole-class interventions led by the teacher, Tier 2 includes more targeted support in small groups, and Tier 3 is intensive individual support provided by support staff within a school community. Each Tier builds on one another, so students receiving Tier 2 interventions will also continue to benefit from the Tier 1 interventions being used during whole-group instruction (Rosen, 2021).

In recent years, we have noticed classroom behaviors becoming more challenging and the need for Tier 1 (classroom) interventions have increased. The approaches to classroom management within the Catalyst Approach are common across grade levels, which lead us to question these strategies' effectiveness for different age groups. Our research focused on the differences in the effectiveness of the Catalyst Approach in sixth-grade classrooms versus a

second-grade classroom. The purpose of this research study was to provide evidence of the impact of the Catalyst Approach and determine if the Catalyst Approach met the needs of our students across different grade levels as a Tier 1 classroom management intervention.

Body of the Review

Classroom Management

Classroom management is defined as everything a teacher does to maintain an environment in which both academic and behavioral learning can occur (Erden, 2008; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Woolfolk, 1995). With effective classroom management, not only can students' undesirable behaviors be prevented, but their participation and engagement in learning can increase (Ozen & Yildirim, 2020; Stewart, & And Others, 1997; Sun & Shek, 2012). According to Bozkus in the article *A Systematic Review of Studies on Classroom Management from 1980 to 2019*, "classroom management aims to ensure the regular practice of class-life and self-control of all students," (Bozkus, 2021, p. 434). Ozen and Yildirim (2020) revealed that students were so aggressive and disruptive that they lost more than four hours of teaching time per week which disrupted the learning of all students. Evidence has suggested that student misbehaviors such as disengagement and mild disruptive behavior often consume more than 80% of teachers' instructional time (Scott, 2017; Simonsen et al., 2010). Wong and Wong (2009) controversially state that classroom discipline is not classroom management, and that a well-ordered environment is key.

According to Hunter and Hayden (2019), one classroom management package that has been deemed effective focuses on a combination of active supervision, precorrection, and explicit timing. Active supervision, or withitness, requires the teacher to be actively present and

mobile throughout the learning environment. Precorrection is when the teacher foresees possible classroom disturbances and teaches students the expectation before an issue arises. Explicit timing refers to when the teacher utilizes time limits and gives students reminders about how much time is left for a particular activity or task (Hunter & Haydon, 2019). Other criteria for effective classroom management includes engagement in learning activities, on-task rates, and the frequency of disruptive behavior.

Classroom behavior management skills are of utmost importance when creating an effective learning environment (Bozkus, 2021). Research indicates that ineffective teacher practices are linked to disruptive behavior and emotional regulation. Students in classrooms with poor classroom management are more likely to have long-term negative academic, behavioral, and social effects than students in well-managed classrooms (Reinke et al., 2014). Conversely, another component theorized to be an indicator of strong classroom management is trust between teachers and their students. “In well-managed classrooms… a sense of trust, which is a basic need of students, would be provided, and a classroom environment based on love and respect could be established,” (Ozen & Yildirim, 2020, p. 101). As classroom behaviors continue to be one of the most difficult components of being a teacher in today’s educational climate, educators are becoming increasingly more interested in cracking the code on classroom management to ensure the best possible outcomes for their students.

Teacher-Student Relationships

The ability to build meaningful relationships with students is a vital factor in a teacher's ability to effectively manage their classroom. “According to Wolk (2003) student-teacher relationships are the single most important component of classroom management and an

essential part of creating a highly effective community of learners," (Jones et al., 2013, p. 24). In an effort to understand each student on a personal level, teachers put time and energy into learning about their students' interests, hobbies, and their families and backgrounds. While the main goal in learning about students is to build positive rapport, building strong student-centered relationships is also a way for teachers to set high expectations for students and encourage high levels of learning and participation. "Overall, positive connections with teachers can promote students' academic and social-emotional wellbeing, safety, and belonging in learning environments that can have long-term impacts on social and academic outcomes," (Gutierrez et al., 2019, p. 2).

Quality relationships with students built on a foundation of respect can also play a key role in student behavior throughout the day. According to Myers and Pianta (2008), harboring positive teacher-child relationships often helps reduce problematic behavior and increase student engagement. Studies suggest that warm and trusting teacher relationships are associated with positive school outcomes– including increased effort, academic self-efficacy, and better grades and standardized test scores (Gutierrez et al., 2019). Students who feel comfortable and safe in their classroom due to feeling cared for by their teachers will strive to meet the expectations set for them by their teachers. Given the lasting impact of positive student-teacher relationships, relationship building is key to promoting school success. According to Hunter and Hayden (2019), building and maintaining positive relationships between students and teachers can increase student success. With strong positive relationships, teachers can also "establish environments in which few reprimands are necessary," (Hunter & Hayden, 2019, p. 75). Positive teacher-student relationships bring a plethora of positive effects for everyone in the classroom.

Clear and Consistent Expectations

"In highly effective classrooms, students are not well-behaved because of teacher threats or coercion but rather because they are held to high expectations and given clear, direct scaffold for reaching them," (Jones et al., 2013, p. 24). Students thrive on rules and routines. While students may complain about a teacher who is considered 'strict', one will find that those classrooms tend to have the highest amount of learning that takes place. If a student knows what is expected of them, and they know the fair and equal consequence of not following that expectation, they are more likely to show consistent behavior (Klem & Connell, 2004). But clear and consistent expectations do not develop overnight. It takes a lot of time and effort on the part of the teacher to establish consistent routines and procedures. Once those expectations, routines, and procedures are in place, teachers know that they must stick to them and that not following through even once can undo a whole year's worth of practice (Jones et al., 2013). Inconsistencies can also hold a high impact on classrooms.

> Inconsistencies in rules' setting between teachers may also trigger disruptive behaviors. Also, when there are no rules or when rules are not explicit, some students may test the boundaries of classroom order and may disturb the class, thus interfering with classroom activities. (Lopes et al., 2017, p. 471)

Therefore, studies show that expectations and routines are best set at the beginning of the year and should be consistently enforced through both verbal and nonverbal cues.

According to Kellogg and Lawson (1993), upwards of 82% of a teachers' communication is nonverbal. This nonverbal communication includes, but is not limited to body language, facial expressions, and posture. Often, after expectations have been set for the year, teachers can

redirect a student not on-task by using a subtle nonverbal cue or proximity. More often than not, a student can get back on track without the need of calling them out in front of the whole class, saving face for both teacher and student (Jones et al., 2013). “By employing the full range of non-verbal skills of ENVoY [Educational Nonverbal Yardsticks], we can learn to manage with finesse and thus nurture the powerful relationships of influence with students,” (Grinder, 2019, p. 3).

Teacher Perceptions of Self and Students

Teachers set the tone and climate of their classroom through their beliefs, words, and actions. “The teacher’s attitude toward children and education determines to a very real degree how children perceived school, themselves, and each other…” (Smith et al., 1978, p. 84). Stewart also went on to say that a teacher’s personal style and approach are the factors that influence the climate and mood of the classroom the most (Stewart et al., 1997). Similar to a teacher’s attitude, their tolerance for misbehavior also influences students. Teachers’ perceptions of students can become self-fulfilling prophecies. Therefore, tolerance and expectations of teachers can significantly impact student achievement and classroom behavior. (Good & Brophy, 1978; Paine et al., 1983).

A teacher’s self-efficacy impacts the teacher’s decision making within the classroom as well. “Bandura (1982) defines perceived self-efficacy as a set of judgments about one’s ability to perform a certain action or to deal with a specific situation,” (Lopes et al., 2017, p. 471). Teachers are unique professionals who consistently reflect on their own teaching practices and build on their skill knowledge but have differing beliefs and self-efficacy. Bandura explains that people with similar skills can perform differently based on their beliefs in his or her own

capacity or self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). “High self-efficacy seems to be associated with effective classroom management and to be positively correlated with democratic classroom management,” (Lopes et al., 2017, p. 472). There are many positive effects of a teacher having a higher self-efficacy. “Teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to devote time to instructional activities rather than classroom discipline,” (Phan & Locke, 2015, p. 73). With less time devoted to discipline, more time can be spent on academic instruction and positive relationship building. Teachers who have a higher self-efficacy are more likely to experience students who show higher engagement in class, more on-task behavior, positive attitudes, and higher motivation in their schoolwork. They also tend to feel more effective in their teaching and find more enjoyment in the student learning process (Mireles-Rios et al., 2019).

While there are benefits for all parties involved in the learning environment when teachers display high self-efficacy, there are also negative effects to teachers who have low self-efficacy. Less confident teachers are more likely to express negative thoughts and reactions towards their students who display disruptive and challenging behaviors due to their lack of self-confidence in responding to behaviors. These teachers are more likely to be less motivated and dissatisfied in their jobs as educators (Mireles-Rios et al., 2019).

Theoretical Framework

There has been much research done on classroom management and ways to create positive learning environments to increase student achievement. One theory that supports our research is the Social Learning Theory created by Albert Bandura (1971). Social Learning Theory considers how human behavior and learning are impacted by both environmental and cognitive stimuli. One key idea of this theory is that behavior is learned through observation in

an environment, and behaviors are replicated by students. In short, students learn how to act based on how they observe their peers and teachers in the classroom setting. Bandura (1971) states, “Most of the behaviors that people display are learned, either deliberately or inadvertently, through the influence of example,” (p. 5). Teachers are agents of the classroom environment. This means that teachers have a tangible impact on the classroom environment based on their actions, belief systems, emotional regulation, and how they use their influence in the classroom (Bandura, 2001). Bandura’s Social Theory also supports the Behaviorist Theory created by B.F. Skinner which states that a stimulus in an environment elicits a response. Bandura’s Social Learning Theory puts a stronger emphasis on how humans retain information to understand the relationships between a behavior and its consequences (Woolfolk, 2019).

Research Questions

In response to the needs of our classrooms and the research that had already been done, we developed the following research questions:

1. How does the Catalyst Approach to classroom management affect classroom engagement?
2. How does the Catalyst Approach to classroom management affect relationships within the classroom environment?
3. How does the effectiveness of Catalyst classroom management strategies compare in a second-grade classroom versus a sixth-grade classroom?

Conclusions

This chapter reviewed literature that supports our study in determining the effectiveness of Catalyst-based classroom management strategies and the impact these strategies have on

teacher instructional time. The themes we found in the current research that is available on classroom management include but are not limited to the impact of teacher-student relationships, the importance of clear and consistent expectations, and effect of teachers' perceptions of self and student. In the next chapter, we will discuss the methodology of how we conducted our research within a second-grade classroom and sixth-grade classrooms using specific Catalyst strategies.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

This study intended to determine the effectiveness of the Catalyst Approach to classroom management in a second-grade classroom and sixth-grade classrooms. The Catalyst Approach uses nonverbal communication to save time and preserve energy for both teacher and student. This approach also emphasizes the importance of positive relationships, or relational capacity, in the classroom. Classroom management is a key component that takes place in every single classroom. Effective classroom management can lead to higher self-efficacy in teachers, less teacher turnover, more engaged students, and positive classroom culture (Gutierrez, 2019). Based on the literature available, we noticed that there are limited studies available that discuss the effectiveness of the Catalyst Approach in classrooms since its creation in the 1980s. This study and its findings will fill a gap in the literature. The Catalyst Approach can be an effective way for teachers to manage learning and opportunities within the classroom to enhance student success and engagement.

Research Question(s)

In response to the needs of our classrooms and the research that has already been done, we developed the following research questions:

1. How does the Catalyst Approach to classroom management affect classroom engagement?
2. How does the Catalyst Approach to classroom management affect relationships within the classroom environment?
3. How does the effectiveness of Catalyst classroom management strategies compare in a second-grade classroom versus a sixth-grade classroom?

Research Design

Our approach to this study utilized the ethnographic research design. We are looked at the everyday classroom experiences of students and how the Catalyst Approach to classroom management impacts the relationships and engagement within the classroom environment. The independent variables for this study included three focus areas of the Catalyst Approach and two different grade levels. The dependent variables were student engagement, student disengagement, and classroom relationships. We used observations and student surveys to gather qualitative data for this study. Due to the whole group nature of the Catalyst Approach and the dependent variables we selected, we believed the ethnographic research design was the most beneficial.

Setting

This study took place in a second-grade classroom and three sixth-grade classrooms. The district of study is in Northwestern Minnesota in a mid-size city. According to the US Census Bureau, the makeup of this city is 87.6% white, 5.1% Black or African American alone, 1.6% American Indian and Alaska Native alone, 1.8% Asian alone, 0.2% Native Hawiian and Other

Pacific Islander alone, 4.6% Hispanic or Latino, 3.2% two or more races, 84.3% white alone not Hispanic or Latino.

The total number of students in this district is 7,154, of which 66.9% identify as white, 11.9% identify as Hispanic/Latino, 10.4% identify as Black/African American, 6.6% identify as two or more races, 3.2% identify as American Indian/Alaskan Native, less than 1% identify as Asian and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Of the students within this district, 38% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch, 3.1% are homeless, 7.4% are English learners, and 18% receive special education services. The graduation rate in this district is 85.5%.

Participants

In the elementary school that houses the second-grade classroom of study, 62% of the students were receiving free/reduced lunch. In the middle school that houses the three sixth-grade classrooms of study, 49% of the students were eligible for free/reduced lunch.

Second-Grade Class: The participants were second-grade students with varying academic needs and abilities in a class of 20, 15 of whom participated in this study. Of the 15 participants, 60% were female and 40% were male, 7% were receiving special education services, and 27% were receiving English Language services. Of the 15 students, 47% identified as Black or African American, 40% identified as White, 6.5% identified as Hispanic or Latino, and 6.5% identified as two or more races. The class served as the control and experimental group at separate times in the study.

Sixth-Grade Class 1: The participants were sixth-grade students with varying academic needs and abilities in a class of 24, 18 of whom participated in this study. Of the 18 participating students, 44% were male and 56% were female, 6% were receiving services from an IEP (Individualized Education Plan), and 6% were receiving English Language services. Of the 18

participating students 55.6% identified as White, 16.7% identified as Black/African American, 5.5% identified as Asian, and 22.2% identified as two or more races. The class served as the control and experimental group at separate times in the study.

Sixth-Grade Classroom 2: The participants were sixth-grade students with varying academic needs and abilities in a class of 27, 18 of whom participated in this study. Of the 18 participating students, 61% were female and 39% were male, and 6% of them were receiving special education services. Of the 18 participating students 50% identified as White, 17% identified as Black/African American, and 33% identified as two or more races. The class served as the control and experimental group at separate times in the study.

Sixth-Grade Classroom 3: The participants were sixth-grade students with varying academic needs and abilities in a class of 26, 17 of whom participated in this study. Of the 17 students, 70% were female and 30% were male, 12% of them were receiving special education services, and 6% were receiving ELL services. Of the 17 participating students, 76% identify as White, 12% identify as Black or African American, and 12% identify as two or more races. The class served as the control and experimental group at separate times in the study.

Sampling

This was a convenience sample since the students in this study participated simply because they were in the homeroom classes of the researchers. The groups were observed in both grade levels during the control periods of the study and the experimental portions.

Instrumentation

The researchers used a field journal to self-report data from their observations and anecdotal records. The researchers looked for specific indicators of engagement and disengagement. The study subjects had the chance to share their perspectives on their level of

engagement and relational capacity with their peers and teacher by completing a survey of Likert scales.

Data Collection

Students were observed in the classroom environment and the researchers collected data about the level of engagement that was observed. The teacher action researchers looked for specific behaviors that indicated engagement or disengagement such as participation, completing work, getting supplies, off-task, out of seat, talking, et cetera. The students also completed a Likert scale assessing their level of engagement when Catalyst strategies were used and were not used. They assessed their own engagement at the end of the control period and at the end of each experimental period for each of the three Catalyst strategies being researched.

Data Analysis

The researchers used content analysis and descriptive statistics from the field notes, observations, and student responses on the Likert scales. The researchers summarized the data from the Likert scales on engagement and relational capacity for each grade level to see how the second-grade results compared with the sixth-grade results. The researchers also used these results to see if it would be practical to use one classroom management strategy over another.

Research Question(s) and System Alignment

Table 3.1 describes the alignment between the study Research Questions and the methods used in this study to ensure that all study variables have been adequately accounted for.

Table 3.1

Research Question(s) Alignment

Research Question	Variables	Design	Instrument	Validity & Reliability	Technique (e.g., interview)	Source

How does the Catalyst Approach to classroom management affect classroom engagement?	IV: Catalyst Strategy Get Attention; Catalyst Strategy Engage Teaching; Catalyst Strategy Set Up for Success; Grade Level DV: Engagement; Disengagement; Classroom Relationships	Ethnographic research design	Likert Scales and Field Observations	Chronic absence from students	Likert Scales, and Field Observations	Second-grade and sixth-grade students Sample size: 68
How does the Catalyst Approach to classroom management affect relationships within the classroom environment?	IV: Catalyst Strategy Get Attention; Catalyst Strategy Engage Teaching; Catalyst Strategy Set Up for Success; Grade Level DV: Engagement; Disengagement; Classroom Relationships	Ethnographic research design	Likert Scales and Field Observations	Chronic absence from students	Likert Scales and Field Observations	Second-grade and sixth-grade students Sample size: 68
How does the effectiveness of Catalyst classroom management strategies compare in a second - grade classroom versus a sixth - grade classroom?	IV: Catalyst Strategy Get Attention; Catalyst Strategy Engage Teaching; Catalyst Strategy Set Up for Success; Grade Level DV: Engagement; Disengagement; Classroom Relationships	Ethnographic research design	Likert Scales and Field Observations	Chronic absence from students	Likert Scales and Field Observations	Second-grade and sixth-grade students Sample size: 68

Procedures

Our total data collection took approximately four weeks total to complete. The participants consisted of one second-grade class and three sixth-grade classes. Within each week, we studied a separate focus area of Catalyst strategies. During each week, two days served as our control period. This control period consisted of the teacher researchers mindfully using non-

Catalyst classroom management strategies. At the end of each control period, students completed a Likert scale to assess their own engagement and relational capacity. The remaining days of each week served as our experimental period during which the teacher researchers implemented the assessed Catalyst strategies. Identical Likert scales were used during both the experimental and control periods. Throughout the four-week data collection period, the teacher researchers continually recorded observational data via field notes.

The first week of data collection focused on the effectiveness of the first focus area of the Catalyst Approach. This first focus area prioritized getting the attention of the students at the beginning of the lesson and throughout the lesson as needed. During the control period, the teacher researchers did not utilize the Catalyst "Getting Attention" strategies and then consistently utilized these strategies during the experimental period. This focus area consists of teacher actions such as waiting in a designated area of the classroom with a nonverbal signal to gain student attention. "Getting Attention" also consists of waiting for every single student to be fully attentive to the teacher before the teacher begins instruction. Another component of the Catalyst Approach for getting attention is to have all instructional materials ready prior to the lesson, and once all students are quiet and attentive, the teacher anchors students' attention by whispering one or more words prior to starting instruction.

The second week of data collection focused on the effectiveness of the second focus area of the Catalyst Approach. This second focus area prioritizes continually engaging students throughout the primary lesson and the teacher's ability to clearly express what is expected of the students. During the control period, the teacher researchers did not utilize the Catalyst "Engage" strategies and then consistently utilized these strategies for the experimental period. This focus area consists of the teacher utilizing nonverbal signals while they teach to let the students know

what is expected of them. "Engage" also consists of the teacher adjusting or redirecting the students based on their participation throughout the lesson. For example, if the teacher signals the students to raise their hands, but multiple students reply verbally, the teacher can then choose to redirect the students to raise their hands or change to a whole group response model.

The third week of data collection focused on the effectiveness of the third focus area of the Catalyst Approach. This last focus area prioritized setting the students up for success during independent work. During the control period, the teacher researchers did not utilize the Catalyst "Set Up for Success" strategies and then consistently utilized these strategies for the experimental period. This focus area consists of creating a detailed and visual representation of student expectations during work time. These detailed instructions include information such as necessary materials, explicit directions of activity, and what to do when they complete the activity. "Set Up for Success" also consists of the teacher setting work stamina by waiting near the visual directions until all students get started on the activity. Once all students begin, the teacher may then help students.

After the four weeks of data collection were completed, we used our observations and the Likert scales to analyze the data collected.

Ethical Considerations

Students partaking in this study were not at risk of harm physically or psychologically. The students' school routine remained the same during both the control period and the experimental period. The changes in the lesson structure were made by the teacher, and the students were the recipients of those changes. The students might have noticed the teacher taking more notes and making more observations during lessons, but the students were not harmed in the process.

Conclusions

This chapter discussed how the teacher researchers collected, interpreted, and analyzed the data gathered from the Likert scale assessments, the student engagement observation tally forms, and the field observational notes. We also detailed the demographics of the community in which the study took place and the student populations used for this research. An ethnographic research design method was used to gather data on the effectiveness of the Catalyst Approach on classroom management strategies. In the next chapter we discuss the overall results and findings from our study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

In this chapter, we will present the data collected from the control period, without Catalyst strategies, and the experimental period, with the use of Catalyst strategies. This study is intended to determine the effectiveness of the Catalyst Approach to classroom management in a second-grade classroom and sixth-grade classrooms. The Catalyst Approach is a whole-group classroom management model that includes strategies for getting attention, engaging students, setting up for success, and supporting success. Catalyst also emphasizes the importance of positive relationships, or relational capacity, among students and teachers in the classroom. This study and its findings will fill a gap in the information available about the effectiveness of the Catalyst Approach. After presenting the data collected during this research study, we will discuss the implications of the data for our second-grade and sixth-grade classrooms.

Data Collection

Throughout the research study, students were observed in the general education classroom environment. The researchers collected data about the level of engagement in the classroom using anecdotal field notes and student surveys. The teacher action researchers looked for specific behaviors that indicate engagement or disengagement such as participation, completing work, getting supplies, off-task behaviors, movement around the classroom, talking, et cetera. The student surveys consisted of Likert scales (Appendix E) for assessing their level of engagement and feelings of mutual respect when Catalyst strategies were used and were not used in the classroom. The students were asked to self-assess their engagement and relational capacity

at the end of each control and experimental period for each of the three Catalyst focus areas being researched.

Research Questions

1. How does the Catalyst Approach to classroom management affect classroom engagement?
2. How does the Catalyst Approach to classroom management affect relationships within the classroom environment?
3. How does the effectiveness of Catalyst classroom management strategies compare in a second-grade classroom versus a sixth-grade classroom?

Results

The three research questions will be analyzed under the three focus areas of Catalyst: "Getting Attention," "Engage," and "Set Up for Success." Each focus area had a control period and an experimental period in which the teacher researchers collected data. All three research questions will be answered in a narrative format within the interpretation section of each focus area.

Catalyst Focus One: "Getting Attention"

The Catalyst "Getting Attention" strategies consists of teacher actions such as waiting calmly in a designated area of the classroom with a nonverbal signal to gain student attention. When using the Catalyst Approach with fidelity, the teacher should wait for every single student to be fully attentive before beginning instruction. Another component of the Catalyst Approach for getting attention is to have all instructional materials ready prior to the lesson, and once all students are quiet and attentive, the teacher anchors students' attention by whispering one or

more words prior to starting instruction. During the control period, the teacher researchers intentionally did not use these strategies. Instead, they began lessons by talking over students and did not wait for all students to give attention.

Second-Grade Survey Results

Table 4.1

Likert Survey Results for Second-Grade Students of Focus One: Getting Attention

Focus One: "Getting Attention"	Control Period			Experimental Period		
	No	Somewhat	Yes	No	Somewhat	Yes
Did you notice when your teacher started the lesson?	16.6%	41.7%	41.7%	7%	15.5%	77.5%
Did you stop and give your teacher your attention right away when the lesson started?	16.7%	50%	33.3%	0%	37.3%	62.7%
Did you use whole-body or active listening when the teacher was talking?	16.6%	41.7%	41.7%	7%	54.2%	38.8%
Did you feel safe and respected by your teacher while the class got ready for the lesson?	0%	25%	75%	7%	22.8%	70.2%
Did you feel safe and respected by your classmates while the class got ready for the lesson?	33.3%	16.7%	50%	46.5%	7%	46.5%

Second-Grade Observations

During the control period of our first focus area "Getting Attention," the teacher researcher noted that it took many verbal reminders for the students to sit down appropriately for the lesson. As you can see from the survey data in Table 4.1, the students were not aware of

when the lesson started and struggled to give their full attention. Students were engaging in a lot of side conversations and off-task behaviors. There was a lot of movement among the second-graders which was distracting not only to the students but also to the teacher. There were elevated levels of frustration from multiple students because they could not hear. Two students yelled, “Be quiet!” to their peers during the lesson. The overall environment felt stressful, and frustration was expressed by the students.

During the experimental period, the second-grade students responded quickly to a familiar attention-getter. The teacher waited for all students to stop what they were doing and give attention before beginning the lesson. This led to students being aware of when the lesson started and engaging with the content. Overall, there were more students participating by answering questions directed by the teacher and in peer discussions related to the lesson. From the teacher’s perspective, the students were less fidgety and calmer throughout the lesson. The energy in the classroom was more focused and felt less stressful.

Sixth-Grade Survey Results

Table 4.2

Likert Survey Results for Sixth-Grade Students of Focus One: Getting Attention

Focus One: "Getting Attention"	Control Period			Experimental Period		
	No	Somewhat	Yes	No	Somewhat	Yes
Did you notice when your teacher started the lesson?	4.8%	9.5%	85.7%	9.8%	7.3%	82.9%
Did you stop and give your teacher your attention right away when the lesson started?	4.8%	47.6%	47.6%	9.8%	53.6%	36.6%
Did you use whole-body or active listening when the teacher was talking?	11.9%	47.6%	40.5%	7.3%	65.9%	26.8%
Did you feel safe and respected by your teacher while the class got ready for the lesson?	0%	16.7%	83.3%	0%	10%	90%
Did you feel safe and respected by your classmates while the class got ready for the lesson?	7%	33%	60%	0%	26.8%	73.2%

Sixth-Grade Observations

During the control period of our first focus area "Getting Attention," the teacher researchers noticed the classroom environments were quite loud and disruptive. Due to this, the students' body language gave negative feelings towards both the teacher and their peers. In one classroom, several students even gave a noticeable negative reaction towards the teacher when she yelled over the commotion in the room to get the lesson started. In two of the three classrooms, multiple students were unaware when the lesson started and seemed confused when

they realized that instruction was going on without them. In the third classroom, students were aware of when the lesson started but were offended by how the teacher got their attention. Instead of utilizing the Catalyst strategies that the students were used to, the teacher yelled over the commotion in the room, which startled many students. In all three sixth-grade classrooms, the teacher researchers noticed that there was a lot of repetition of directions and students were having a lot of side conversations during instruction or instructional videos. It took students longer to accomplish simple tasks due to the overall inattention in the classroom. The overall energy levels in the room felt negative for the students and the teacher researchers in all classrooms.

During the experimental period for our first focus area "Getting Attention," the classroom environment felt calmer in all three sixth-grade classes. While it took the classes longer to show active listening, the students sustained attention much more effectively during the lessons. For example, one teacher noted that the students were quick to transition from an unstructured social environment to a productive learning environment. As shown in Table 4.2, the students felt more respected when Catalyst strategies were used. The teachers also noted feeling more respected in their field notes. All three teachers noticed that their overall voice level was lower. The students responded well to the nonverbal directives given, and they aided their peers, who were inattentive, in focusing.

Interpretation

The data collected from the student surveys and the teacher researchers' observations during the focus area "Getting Attention" was interesting when looking at classroom engagement. At the second-grade level, the survey results showed an increase in focused

attention and active listening when the Catalyst Approach was used which aligned with what the teacher researchers expected. However, the survey results at the sixth-grade level were the opposite of what the teacher researchers expected as students reported feeling less engaged and focused when the Catalyst strategies were used. The observational field notes for both grade levels noted an increase in student engagement and productivity when Catalyst strategies were used, which researchers expected. When the expectations and routines were not used consistently during the control period, the teacher researchers noticed more disruptive behaviors and inattentiveness during the lesson. According to the literature available on classroom management, the researchers found that "teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to devote time to instructional activities rather than classroom discipline," (Phan & Locke, 2015, p. 73) which correlates with the results of this study. The surveys used for this focus area were the first to be completed by the participants, and students needed to be reassured that their honest answers would not negatively impact them in any way. Overall, the teachers noticed improvements in the level of classroom engagement when Catalyst was used. The second-grade students also felt more successful on the days when Catalyst strategies were used, but the sixth-grade students felt less engaged and successful on the days when Catalyst strategies were used.

When looking at the results of the survey questions that focused on classroom relationships, the teacher researchers noticed student perceptions vary greatly between the two different grade levels. For example, the second-graders seemed to have a difficult time separating how they felt during the lesson versus how they felt that day. They reported negative feelings toward their peers related to issues outside the study time. The results of the sixth-graders' surveys showed that the students felt safer and more respected by both their peers and teacher when the Catalyst strategies were used.

When comparing the results of the second-grade students to the results of the sixth-grade students, we noticed that the second-graders reported an increase in their overall engagement when Catalyst strategies were used. However, the sixth-grade students reported a decrease in their engagement. As teacher researchers, we felt like the classroom environment was calmer and more productive at both grade levels during the experimental period. This calm environment impacted the teachers' perceptions of the lessons as well. For example, the teacher researchers felt more respected when Catalyst strategies were used.

Catalyst Focus Two: "Engage"

The Catalyst "Engage" strategies consist of the teacher utilizing nonverbal signals while they teach to let the students know what is expected of them. This set of strategies also consists of the teacher adjusting or redirecting the students based on their participation throughout the lesson. For example, if the teacher signals the students to raise their hands, but multiple students reply verbally, the teacher can then choose to redirect the students to raise their hands or change to a whole group response model as needed. During the control period, the teacher researchers intentionally did not use these strategies. Instead, the teacher researchers did not redirect off-task behavior or clarify how to respond during the lesson and continually paced around the room during instruction.

Second-Grade Survey Results

Table 4.3

Likert Survey Results for Second-Grade Students of Focus Two: Engage

Focus Two: "Engage"	Control Period			Experimental Period		
	No	Somewhat	Yes	No	Somewhat	Yes
Were you focused while the teacher was teaching the lesson?	0%	30.1%	69.9%	0%	20%	80%
Did you use whole-body or active listening when the teacher was talking?	53%	13%	34%	7.6%	23.1%	69.3%
Did you understand the teacher's expectations during the lesson?	7.6%	30.7%	61.7%	7.6%	7.6%	84.8%
Did you feel safe and respected by your teacher during the lesson?	7.6%	20%	72.4%	0%	20%	80%
Did you feel safe and respected by your classmates during the lesson?	40%	13.3%	46.7%	23.1%	15.4%	61.5%

Second-Grade Observations

During the control period for our second focus area of engaging students, students were not given visual signals from the teacher as to how to respond to questions. The students appeared engaged during the lesson and raised their hands to answer questions. During the 20-minute lesson there were only two instances of students blurting answers. This was less than expected. Students engaged in peer discussions related to the lesson when prompted verbally by the teacher. Half of the peer groups successfully engaged in peer discussions, with the other half

engaging in off-topic conversations or sitting silently. The teacher needed to ask for students' attention more than three times before peer discussions stopped. After having peer discussions, the teacher needed to remind students of whole group lesson expectations several times before resuming the lesson. The students' high energy level and the need for continuous redirecting by the teacher resulted in less time spent on lesson content.

During the experimental period for our second focus area of engaging students, the teacher researcher noted that utilizing the Catalyst “Engage” strategies created a calmer and more predictable environment. Students were given visual signals from the teacher as to how to answer content related questions. Students followed the teacher signals during the lesson and there was only one instance of blurting. The number of students actively participating in the lesson and answering questions was higher during the experimental period than during the control period. Students engaged in peer discussions related to content area questions when given a visual signal by the teacher. More than half of the groups discussed the prompt given by the teacher. The teacher used a countdown to regain the class's attention during peer discussions, after which they were quiet and ready to continue with the lesson. The overall feel of the classroom environment was calmer, with more students actively engaged and participating in the lesson.

Sixth-Grade Survey Results

Table 4.4

Likert Survey Results for Sixth-Grade Students of Focus Two: Engage

Focus Two: "Engage"	Control Period			Experimental Period		
	No	Somewhat	Yes	No	Somewhat	Yes
Were you focused while the teacher was teaching the lesson?	8.5%	36.2%	55.3%	6.7%	22.2%	71.1%
Did you use whole-body or active listening when the teacher was talking?	6.4%	48.9%	44.7%	8.9%	44.4%	46.7%
Did you understand the teacher's expectations during the lesson?	0%	21.3%	78.7%	0%	11.1%	88.9%
Did you feel safe and respected by your teacher during the lesson?	0%	6.4%	93.6%	0%	8.9%	91.1%
Did you feel safe and respected by your classmates during the lesson?	0%	34%	66%	2.2%	20%	77.8%

Sixth-Grade Observations

During the control period for our second focus area of engaging students, the teacher researchers had many observations of student confusion and off-task behavior. One teacher had students explicitly state "I can't focus," during the lesson. Another student in that same classroom raised her hand to offer input during the lesson and became frustrated when students were talking over her since she was trying to wait until everyone was paying attention. She eventually gave up and just shared her comment. While students were on-task while the teacher

was pacing near them, many students were quietly engaging in side-conversations on the other side of the room. Many student conversations stopped when the teacher passed them. There was also an increase in content-related blurting during the lesson as students were unsure of how to respond to prompts during the lesson. One teacher noted that students struggled to stay on task and complete the expected work during the class period. When one teacher instructed students to talk about the topic, a student expressed confusion and asked, “With our table or...?” Within the same classroom, a different student who was not clearly called on had to clarify if they had been called on or not. The general feeling of all the sixth-grade classrooms was chaotic, and students appeared disappointed and confused when they were interrupted while talking.

During the experimental period for our second focus area, the teacher researchers noted that utilizing the Catalyst “Engage” strategies created a more respectful environment but did not necessarily make for a more engaged classroom. Students were able to follow the teacher’s instructions of how to respond to questions and quietly listened while their peers or teacher spoke. Two teachers noted that fewer students were willing to verbally share with the class when the Catalyst strategies were used versus when they were not; the same few students were willing to participate when Catalyst strategies were used. The students were sure to hold one another accountable during the "listening" portion of the lesson. If a student was off task, some students used gestures to indicate to one another that it was time to listen. The overall listening portion of the lesson seemed effective. Consequently, the students were very self-directed during worktime because they had listened well and knew what they were doing. While all three teachers noticed a decrease in off-task behaviors, one teacher noted that there seemed to be an increase in productivity when Catalyst strategies were used.

Interpretation

The focus area “Engage” allowed the teacher researchers to observe how students responded to stimuli during their instructional time. At the second-grade level, the students reported a significant improvement in their level of focus and use of active listening during the lessons when the Catalyst Approach strategies were used. The sixth-grade students also reported an increase in focus and understanding of teacher expectations during the lessons. The sixth-graders reported comparable levels of active listening during the control and experimental period. However, the teacher researchers noted that the students did not necessarily appear disengaged during the control period and were able to successfully participate in the lessons. The classroom environment was calmer and less chaotic in both second-grade and sixth-grade when Catalyst was used. According to the results of the student surveys, the overall levels of respectful engagement seemed to increase with the use of Catalyst across both grade levels. These results are in line with what the teacher researchers expected. This is also supported with literature available about classroom management. According to Lopes et al. (2017), inconsistencies in the expectations or rules can trigger disruptive behaviors and students may test boundaries.

When looking at the data collected about relationships within the classroom from the student surveys and the teacher researchers' observations, some results from this period of data collection were surprising. Myers and Pianta (2008) claim that harboring positive teacher-child relationships often helps reduce problematic behavior and increase student engagement. The second-grade students reported feeling more respected by both the teacher and their classmates when the Catalyst Approach was used. Even though sixth-grade students reported feeling more focused with a better understanding of expectations when the Catalyst Approach was used, they

reported feeling slightly less respected by the teacher, but more respected by their peers. The sixth-grade teachers noted in their observations that many students were talking over one another, and some became visibly frustrated with one another when Catalyst strategies were not used. When Catalyst strategies were used, the students were seen holding one another accountable for appropriate participation in the lesson.

Catalyst Focus Three: "Set Up for Success"

The Catalyst "Set Up for Success" strategies consist of creating a detailed and visual representation of student expectations during work time. These detailed instructions include information such as necessary materials, explicit directions of activity, and what to do when they complete the activity. This focus area also consists of the teacher setting work stamina by waiting near the visual directions until all students get started on the activity. Once all students begin, the teacher may then help students. This strategy helps lessen teacher stress and improve student independence. During the control period, teachers did not provide any visual directions for students to refer to and kept verbal directions to a minimum.

Second-Grade Survey Results

Table 4.5

Likert Survey Results for Second-Grade Students of Focus Three: Set Up for Success

Focus Three: "Set Up for Success"	Control Period			Experimental Period		
	No	Somewhat	Yes	No	Somewhat	Yes
Were the directions clear for today's activity?	15.4 %	23.1 %	61.5 %	0 %	7.7 %	92.3 %
Did you start today's task right away?	0 %	45.6 %	54.4 %	0 %	23.1 %	76.9 %

Did you understand the teacher's expectations during the lesson?	7.8 %	23.1 %	69.1 %	0 %	15 %	85 %
Did you feel safe and respected by your teacher during work time?	0 %	15.4 %	84.6 %	0 %	7.7 %	92.3 %
Did you feel safe and respected by your classmates during work time?	0 %	23.1 %	76.9 %	15.4 %	31.1 %	53.5 %

Second-Grade Observations

During the control period for our third focus area of setting students up for success, the students were only given verbal expectations for independent work time rather than both verbal and visual instructions. Students were also only given verbal directions for the materials they needed to complete their assignment and the page number they needed to complete out of a three-page packet. Students were dismissed to get started on their work, and two students asked what they were supposed to do before leaving the whole group learning space. Several students asked their classmates what materials they needed to get and what page they needed to complete. Seven students asked the teacher what page they needed to complete, and it took more than five minutes for them to get started on their work. Four students asked the teacher where they needed to put their assignment when they were done and what they were supposed to do next. Many of the students were engaging in off-task behaviors that prevented them from completing their work. Due to the number of questions regarding directions and expectations, the teacher was not able to provide individual students with the help they needed on their assignment. The classroom environment was very loud, with several students completely disengaged from their work. While

the students were apathetic towards the number of students talking, the teacher felt stressed and frustrated.

During the experimental period for our third focus area, students were given verbal and visual directions and expectations for independent work time. Visual pictures were used to show students what they needed to get, and a ¨To-Do" list was written in numerical order of the tasks they needed to complete. Visual aids were also posted for where students needed to put their completed work, as well as what they needed to do when they were done. Once students were dismissed to work, every student gathered the materials they needed without asking the teacher or their classmates. Students followed the voice level expectation that was posted on the board and got started on their work as soon as they were settled. Students that completed their work put their assignment in the desired location and got started on their next task by referring to the previously posted directions. Two out of twelve students that completed their assignment asked the teacher what they needed to do next. The teacher gave a non-verbal reminder to the students by gesturing toward the displayed directions. Due to greater independence from students during independent worktime, the teacher focused more time and energy on assisting students with academic questions. The teacher researcher noted that the classroom felt much calmer and that students seemed more productive and engaged in their work.

Sixth-Grade Survey Results

Table 4.6

Likert Survey Results for Sixth-Grade Students of Focus Three: Set Up for Success

Focus Three: "Set Up for Success"	Control Period			Experimental Period		
	No	Somewhat	Yes	No	Somewhat	Yes
Were the directions clear for today's activity?	0%	7%	93%	0%	0%	100%
Did you start today's task right away?	2.3%	34.9%	62.8%	4.3%	17.4%	78.3%
Did you understand the teacher's expectations during the lesson?	0%	14%	86%	0%	11%	89%
Did you feel safe and respected by your teacher during work time?	0%	7%	93%	0%	4.3%	95.7%
Did you feel safe and respected by your classmates during work time?	0%	25.6%	74.4%	0%	21.7%	78.3%

Sixth-Grade Observations

During the control period for our third focus area of setting students up for success, the students were only given verbal expectations for independent work time rather than both verbal and visual instructions. Throughout the days observed during this period, all three teacher researchers noticed that students asked more clarifying questions during independent work time than usual. In one classroom, a teacher noted a student asked, "What slide do we stop on?" while working on an online assignment with a partner. The students were more off task once their assigned work was completed. Multiple students transitioned to working on preferred tasks such as drawing or playing online games instead of choosing one of the options presented by the

teacher. A student in one of the classrooms stated, “I didn’t really hear you,” when she was redirected after the teacher noticed she was off task. In two of the three classrooms, the teacher researchers noted that students were less intentional about utilizing their time wisely and seemed unfazed if they did not get all the expected work done during the class period. The same two teachers also noticed that students were forgetful of resources available to them throughout the lesson or did not correctly utilize them to be as successful as possible.

During the experimental period for our third focus area, students were given verbal and visual directions and expectations for independent work time. All three teacher researchers noticed that the students appeared more on-task and were quicker to get started on both days that data was collected. If a student had questions on what to do after an activity was done, all three teachers were able to non-verbally redirect students to next steps by pointing at the “To-Do” list on their boards. There were also fewer clarification questions asked overall in all three classrooms, most of which related to individual needs rather than the class.

Interpretation

The third, and last, focus area of our research consisted of determining the effect that setting students up for success had on their engagement and relationships within the classroom. When it came to student engagement, the teacher researchers noticed that overall, both second-graders and sixth-graders responded well to the Catalyst strategies. More students responded “Yes” on their surveys which indicates a higher level of engagement and feelings of success from students when the Catalyst Approach was used. This is also supported by the data in which 100% of the sixth-grade participants reported that the directions were clear for the activity. The second-grade participants also reported about a 30% increase in their understanding of the directions when

Catalyst was used. One surprising finding was that the majority of students in both second-grade and sixth-grade reported that they clearly understood the instructions and expectations even when the teachers did not provide a visual "To-Do" list. The teacher researchers expected more students to report that the directions were not clear and that they did not understand the teachers' expectations when Catalyst strategies were not used. The teacher researchers noted that the number of clarifying questions students asked significantly decreased on the days when Catalyst was used especially in the second-grade classroom. The researchers also noted that the questions asked when Catalyst was used were able to be answered nonverbally by directing students to the visual instructions. The second-grade teacher researcher noted that it was more difficult to aid struggling students during the control period due to the number of students asking clarifying questions and needing redirection related to expectations. When the Catalyst strategies were used, the teacher was able to help students that needed academic support because of the level of independence and engagement from the rest of the class. Other research suggests that student misbehaviors such as disengagement and mild disruptive behavior often consume more than 80% of teachers' instructional time (Scott, 2017; Simonsen et al., 2010).

According to Jones, et al., (2013) the most integral component of classroom management is the relationships between students and teachers. These relationships are an essential part of creating a highly effective community of learners. When looking at the data collected about relationships within the classroom from the teacher researchers' field observations, the teacher researchers perceived an overall improvement in the level of respect in the atmosphere when Catalyst strategies were used. As previously stated, the teachers were better able to help students that needed academic support when Catalyst was used which allowed students to feel more supported. The one outlier in the results was for the question that asked whether the second-

graders felt safe and respected by their peers. While 76.9% of the second-graders answered "Yes" to feeling safe and respected by their peers during the control period, only 53.5% of them answered "Yes" to this question during the experimental period. The teacher researchers believe these results may be due to the lack of social-emotional awareness of the students at this grade level. At the sixth-grade level, the data concerning relationships showed an improvement in relationships, but it should be noted that this improvement was minimal.

Synthesis of Results

According to Bandura (2001), teachers are agents of the classroom environment. This means that teachers have a tangible impact on the classroom environment based on their actions, belief systems, emotional regulation, and how they use their influence in the classroom. Overall, the teacher researchers found that the Catalyst Approach is effective for increasing student engagement and fostering positive relationships in the classroom. In particular, the second-grade classroom saw significant improvements in classroom engagement with the use of Catalyst. The sixth-grade classes also saw improvements in engagement, but it was not as significant as the improvements in the second-grade classroom. The sixth-grade classrooms saw marginal improvements in the perceptions of classroom relationships when Catalyst was used, but based on the data collected in this study there was no clear indication that the Catalyst Approach significantly impacted the relationships in the second-grade classroom. This, in part, could be due to the lack of social-emotional awareness of younger students. While the results for each focus area differed slightly between the second-graders and the sixth-graders, the teachers' field observations indicated that the Catalyst Approach was effective and had a positive impact in both grade levels. The researchers believe that the Catalyst strategies were effective, in part, because

they had been using this approach with fidelity all year long. Clear and consistent expectations do not develop overnight. It takes a lot of time and effort on the part of the teacher to establish consistent routines and procedures. Once those expectations, routines, and procedures are in place, teachers know that they must stick to them and that not following through even once can undo a whole year's worth of practice (Jones et al., 2013).

The teacher researchers utilized Likert scale surveys to collect data on the student experience throughout the study. The Likert scale surveys asked questions centering around engagement and relationships that were tailored to each specific Catalyst focus. The teacher researchers noticed that students appeared anxious about getting in trouble based on their answers to the surveys. The students also expressed increasing feelings of annoyance as they continued using the surveys due to how many surveys they were asked to complete. The teacher researchers felt the relationships within the classroom were well represented by the surveys at the sixth-grade level. However, it was noted that second-grade students seemed to struggle with separating interactions throughout the lesson with interactions they had during other less-structured times in the day. The results of the engagement questions could have been affected by student interest and understanding of what the questions were asking. For example, when asked if the students started the assignment right away, students may have had a different understanding of what that looks like compared to the teacher. Due to these reasons, the teacher researchers think conducting student interviews could have potentially provided a clearer understanding of student perceptions.

The teacher researchers also utilized field notes to collect data on teacher observations and feelings throughout the study. The teacher researchers found this instrument useful because

they could make observations as they happened in the classroom. The observations allowed the teacher researchers to look for commonalities among the field notes. Specific observational categories were decided on prior to conducting the study, so the researchers knew what to make note of. The teacher researchers realized that it was difficult to balance the tasks of teaching and recording their observations. It would have been beneficial to have an additional observer to take notes and lessen the burden on the researcher. Another improvement that could have been made would be to have a more specific list of behaviors on a tally sheet in addition to narrative field notes to make the record-keeping more efficient.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed how the teacher researchers collected, interpreted, and analyzed the data gathered from the Likert scale assessments and the observational field notes. They also synthesized the results of the study to note how effective the Catalyst Approach was for this group of students during the time of the study. The teacher researchers also noted the effectiveness of the instrumentation used and the impacts it may have on the study's results. In the next chapter, the implications of this study, including how the teacher researchers will use the findings to improve their teaching practice and how the results will be shared are discussed.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Introduction

The Catalyst Approach was adopted by our district and is used across all grade levels. The purpose of our study was to determine the effectiveness of the Catalyst Approach when used in second-grade and sixth-grade classrooms. The Catalyst Approach is a set of classroom management strategies that focuses on preserving teacher energy and positive student-teacher relationships. The goal was to increase student participation and involvement in the learning process while decreasing undesirable behaviors. After analyzing the data, the teacher researchers have determined that the Catalyst Approach is effective in improving student engagement and fostering positive relationships in the classroom.

Action Plan

Since the Catalyst Approach has been adopted by the school district the teacher researchers teach in, they will continue to use the strategies every day in their classrooms. The results of this study have reinforced their confidence in the effectiveness of the Catalyst Approach. The teacher researchers found that the overall classroom environment is calmer when Catalyst strategies are used which helps to preserve teacher energy. They also noticed that most students could transition more quickly and were more independent when Catalyst strategies were used. These positive results indicate a higher level of engagement. Overall, the student surveys showed that the positive relationships within the classroom were strong during both the control period and the experimental period. However, in the sixth-grade classrooms, the peer-to-peer

relationships were stronger when Catalyst strategies were used. These results lead them to believe the Catalyst Approach should be used with more fidelity across their school district.

Plan for Sharing

The Catalyst Approach is used widely throughout the teacher researcher's school district, so the results of this study are relevant to many teachers and administrators. The teacher researchers plan to share the results with the other teachers at the second and sixth-grade levels. Each school building site in the district has a resident Catalyst building coach that helps staff implement the strategies. That said, the plan at both grade levels is to share our results with the Catalyst coordinators at each building site and our Professional Learning Communities. At the sixth-grade level, during the teacher researcher's back-to-school professional development days, there will be a panel for all teachers in the building where current fifth through eighth-grade teachers are able to ask questions about Catalyst and its effectiveness within the classroom. This panel will consist of the resident Catalyst building coach, the teacher researchers involved in this study, and Catalyst certified staff members. Before questions are asked to the panel, there will be a brief presentation about the results of this study.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the implications of this study including how the teacher researchers will use the findings to improve their teaching practice and how the results will be shared within their school district.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval

Institutional Review Board

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY MOORHEAD

DATE:	February 21, 2023
TO:	Michael Coquyt, Principal Investigator
FROM:	Dr. Robert Nava, Chair Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB
ACTION:	**APPROVED**
PROJECT TITLE:	[2011667-1] Ethnographic Research of the Impact of Catalyst Strategies on the Engagement and Relationships within the Classroom for 6th Graders Versus 2nd Graders in General Education
SUBMISSION TYPE:	New Project
APPROVAL DATE:	February 21, 2023
EXPIRATION DATE:	
REVIEW TYPE:	Exempt Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Exempt Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to the Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB.

This project has been determined to be a project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of .

- 1 -

Generated on IRBNet

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact the Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been issued in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Minnesota State University Moorhead's records.

Generated on IRBNet

Appendix B

District Approval

Research Study Request Form

Administrative Procedure: 922.1 **Section:** 900 COMMUNITY RELATIONS **Date Adopted:** 3/11/1980
Date Revised: 5/29/2018 **Dates Reviewed:** 1/14/99, 2/27/2006, 11/16/2009, 11/10/2014

RESEARCH STUDY REQUEST FORM

Required Approval	Department	Signature	Date	Approval	
				Yes	No
	Superintendent		2/14/23	X	
	Building Administrator		1/23/23	✓	
	Building Administration				
Please indicate reactions to this project in writing to the Superintendent or designee.					

Researchers:

Name Sara Kubicek Date Jan. 21, 2023

Phone Number [redacted] Organization MSUM

Address [redacted]

Name Casey Poland Date Jan. 21, 2023

Phone Number [redacted] Organization MSUM

Address [redacted]

MOORHEAD
AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Independent School District 152
Probstfield Center for Education
2410 14th St. S., Moorhead, MN 56560 • Fax: 218-284-3333
www.moorheadschools.org
• Superintendent: 218-284-3300
• Assistant Superintendent for Learning and Accountability: 218-284-3310
• Human Resources and Operations: 218-284-3350

Name Rene Beaird Date 01/21/23

Phone Numbers [redacted] Organization MSUM

Address [redacted]

Name Amber Keller Date 01/24/23

Phone Numbers [redacted] Organization MSUM

Address [redacted]

If the study is part of your work for a degree, indicate type of degree:

Undergraduate ____ Masters X Specialist ____ Ed.D. ____ Ph.D. ____

Other:

1. DATE OF STUDY:

February - March, 2023

2. PURPOSE OF STUDY: The purpose of our study is to determine the effectiveness of the Catalyst Approach when used in second-grade and sixth-grade classrooms.

3. What request are you making of the Moorhead Area Public Schools? Give specific information on sampling, measuring instrument, time schedule, amount of time required by staff, and number and names of schools to be involved (if known). If non-standardized instruments are to be used, please attach copies.

The researchers are requesting to use four classrooms consisting of approximately 96 district students as subjects of the study.

4. If you have discussed this proposal with Moorhead Area Public School personnel, indicate whom you have talked to and the nature of your discussion.

We have informed principals, Carla Smith and Amanda Henry of the nature of our study and have recieved supportive comments regarding our topic.

5. What practical implications does your study have for the Moorhead Area Public School system? (If none, say none, but describe what value the study may have for children in general.

This study will reinforce the district's decision to adopt the Catalyst Approach.

MOORHEAD
AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Independent School District 152
Probstfield Center for Education
2410 14th St. S., Moorhead, MN 56560 • Fax: 218-284-3333
www.moorhead.schools.org
• Superintendent: 218-284-3330
• Assistant Superintendent for Learning and Accountability: 218-284-3490
• Human Resources and Operations: 218-284-3350

6. Have you conducted previous studies in the Moorhead Area Public Schools? Yes ____ No X If yes, give sufficient information about the most recent or pertinent study so that it can be located, i.e., date, who your contact was and title of nature of the study.

7. List the names of all personnel who will be involved in carrying out field operations.
Casey Poland, Sara Kubicek, Rene Beaird, Amber Keller

8. Do you have any objection to publicity of your study at this time? Yes X No ____

9. Do you have the support of your supervisor? (For staff members only) Yes X No ____

10. If you have a formal research proposal, please include it with this request.

If this request is granted, I agree to abide by School Board Policy 922 and Administrative Procedures for implementation.

Signature of Researcher Sara Kubicek Date Jan. 21, 2023

Signature of Researcher Casey Poland Date Jan. 21, 2023

Signature of Researcher Rene Beaird Date Jan. 21, 2023

Signature of Researcher Amb. Keller Date Jan, 24, 2023

Institution of Higher Education Minnesota State University Moorhead

Signature of Advisor Carla Smith Date 1/25/23

Return to:

Superintendent
Moorhead Area Public Schools
2410 14th Street South Moorhead, MN 56560

Appendix C

Statement of Assent

I will explain to the students, “Your parents have given you permission to participate in a project that I am conducting, but you have a choice on whether you do or do not want to participate. If you do not wish to participate, there will be no effects on your grade, our relationship, or your daily routines at school. This is voluntary. The only effect of this study is to help me decide how to make you feel the most respected and engaged while in this classroom. Here is what will happen: You will come to class and participate as you normally would, and you will complete a series of surveys. Are there any questions?”

Appendix D

Parental Consent Letter

January 2023

Horizon Middle School West
3601 12th Avenue S
Moorhead, MN 56560

Probstfield Elementary School
2410 14th Street S
Moorhead, MN 56560

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child has been invited to participate in a study to determine if the Catalyst Approach to classroom management is effective in increasing engagement and positively affecting classroom relationships.

Your child was selected because he/she is in my regular education classroom. If you decide to participate please understand that your child will be asked to do the following, and these are typical classroom activities that involve no risk to your child.

1. Your child will be participating in learning activities that incorporate strategies from the Catalyst Approach to classroom management. Your child's teacher has been trained in this approach and will use the strategies throughout the school day.
2. Your child may be asked to complete reflections to self-assess their level of engagement or on-task behavior during the study.

Although Principal Dr. Amanda Henry and Principal Carla Smith have granted us permission to conduct this study, since this information is being used to help us complete our master's degrees at Minnesota State University Moorhead, we need to have parental consent to use this information in our final paper that we are required to do as part of our degree. If we didn't need this information to complete our master's degree, we would be conducting this same type of research in our normal everyday lessons and we would not need signatures.

If you sign this form, you are giving me consent to use the information that I gather. All information that is used will be confidential, no identifying factors will be used. Please also note that your child can choose to not participate at any time without any consequences.

Contact: If you have any questions about the study, you may contact any of these people:

Sara Kubicek (Grade 6) [redacted]	**Dr. Michael Coquyt, Ed.D.** **Principal Investigator** **Associate Professor, School of Teaching and Learning** **Lommen 216C** **College of Education and Human Services** **Minnesota State University Moorhead** **Phone: 218.477.2019** **Email: Michael.coquyt@mnstate.edu**
Casey Poland (Grade 6) [redacted]	
Rene Beaird (Grade 6) [redacted]	
Amber Keller (Grade 2) [redacted]	

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep. You are deciding whether or not to allow your child to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow them to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

Name of Child (Print)	**Date**
Signature of Parent or Guardian	**Date**
Sara Kubicek **Signature of Investigator**	Jan. 21, 2023 **Date**
Casey Poland **Signature of Investigator**	Jan. 21, 2023 **Date**
Rene Beaird **Signature of Investigator**	Jan. 21, 2023 **Date**
Amber Keller **Signature of Investigator**	Jan. 24, 2023 **Date**

Appendix E

Likert Scale Surveys

Catalyst Survey

Week 1: Getting Attention

1. Did you notice when your teacher started the lesson?

No  Somewhat  Yes 

2. Did you stop and give your teacher your attention right away when the lesson started right?

No  Somewhat  Yes 

3. Did you use whole-body or active listening when the teacher was talking?

No  Somewhat  Yes 

4. Did you feel safe and respected by your **teacher** while the class got ready for the lesson?

No  Somewhat  Yes 

5. Did you feel safe and respected by your **classmates** while the class got ready for the lesson?

No  Somewhat  Yes 

Comments:

Catalyst Survey

Week 2: Engage

1. Were you focused while the teacher was teaching the lesson?

No  Somewhat  Yes 

2. Did you use whole-body or active listening when the teacher was talking?

No  Somewhat  Yes 

3. Did you understand the teacher's expectations during the lesson?

No  Somewhat  Yes 

4. Did you feel safe and respected by your **teacher** during the lesson?

No  Somewhat  Yes 

5. Did you feel safe and respected by your **classmates** during the lesson?

No  Somewhat  Yes 

Comments:

Catalyst Survey

Week 3: Set up for success

1. Were the directions clear for today's activity?

No  Somewhat  Yes 

2. Did you start today's task right away?

No  Somewhat  Yes 

3. Did you understand the teacher's expectations during the lesson?

No  Somewhat  Yes 

4. Did you feel safe and respected by your **teacher** during work time?

No  Somewhat  Yes 

5. Did you feel safe and respected by your **classmates** during work time?

No  Somewhat  Yes 

Comments: