Increasing Teachers' Use of Evidence-based Classroom Management Strategies Through Consultation: Overview and Case Studies

ASHLEY S. MACSUGA AND BRANDI SIMONSEN, UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

"Please be quiet now! Please be quiet! I just want to teach!" shouts Ms. Thomas. The *middle school science teacher is standing at the front of her classroom with a sheet of new vocabulary words and trying to read them to her students. As she attempts to manage their behavior and teach her content, Ms. Thomas's students are yelling across the classroom to one another, throwing paper airplanes, listening to music on cell phones, and play fighting in the corner of the room. Ms. Thomas continues to repeat her request for quiet at increasing volumes, and the student noise rises in tandem. Finally, Ms. Thomas throws up her hands and says, "That's it! If you don't want to learn then I'm not going to teach!" Later that day, Ms. Thomas approaches her assistant principal and says, "I can't take another day like this. I think I need help."*

Like Ms. Thomas, many classroom teachers are faced with challenging student behaviors that impact their ability to facilitate learning in productive, safe environments. At the same time, high-stakes testing, increased emphasis on evidence-based instruction, data-based decision making, and response-to-intervention models have put heavy demands on teacher time and resources (Sugai & Horner, 2009). In the presence of these demands, every second of instruction counts. Therefore, when challenging student behavior encroaches on instruction, teachers and students are placed in a frustrating situation.

Research has shown that teachers can minimize inappropriate or disruptive student behavior and increase academic engagement through the use of evidence-based classroom management practices (see Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008, for a summary).

However, many teachers are not aware of or fluent with these practices. Preservice teacher training programs often fail to adequately prepare teachers to manage their classrooms (e.g., Bergeny & Martens, 2006), and traditional models of professional development (e.g., training without follow-up) are largely ineffective (Allen & Forman, 1984; Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). Therefore, schools need an effective way to support teachers' classroom management. Previous research suggests that in-depth training (i.e., modeling, role play, and self-assessment; Slider, Noell, & Williams, 2006) and consultation in combination with self-monitoring and performance feedback (Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, & Merrell, 2008) may increase teachers' use of evidence-based classroom-management practices.

In this article, we present a model developed to increase teachers' use of these practices. This model includes (a) a classroom management checklist that teachers can use to self-assess across time and (b) a consultation approach that incorporates action planning and performance feedback, which experienced personnel can use to assist classroom teachers in implementing evidence-based classroom management strategies. We also share results from case studies of two teachers who used the checklist and received consultation to improve their classroom management.

Model to Increase Evidence-Based Classroom Management Practices

Unlike traditional professional development, the proposed model provides a framework for interactive and individualized support in implementing evidence-based classroom management strategies. Before we describe this model, we define the evidence-based classroom management practices emphasized in it.

Evidence-Based Classroom Management Practices

According to Simonsen et al. (2008), there are "five empirically-supported, critical features of effective classroom management: (a) maximize structure; (b) post, teach, review, monitor, and reinforce expectations; (c) actively engage students in observable ways; (d) use a continuum of strategies for responding to appropriate behaviors; and (e) use a continuum of strategies to respond to inappropriate behaviors" (p. 353). These five evidence-based strategies were identified through an extensive literature search conducted and summarized by Simonsen and colleagues. Each of the five empirically supported classroom management practices can be individualized to fit the needs of teachers and students (see *Table 1* for a description and example of how to implement each practice).

Classroom Management Checklist

To assist teachers in implementing these five strategies in their classrooms, we adapted the checklist originally designed by Simonsen and colleagues (2008) to include items that could be assessed daily or during an individual instructional activity, and we included a template for action planning (see *Figure 1*). Evidence-based strategies implemented prior to instruction and strategies that could

Table 1 EVIDENCE-BASED CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Strategy	Description of Strategy	Applied Example
Maximize Structure	The teacher provides a structured learning environment that includes frequent teacher-directed activity and thoughtful physical configuration of the learning space (e.g., direct instruction, minimizing environmental distractions).	Mrs. Bray moved the bookcases in her classroom and reconfigured desk groupings so that she was able to see all students during whole-group and small-group instruction. The new configuration also allowed her to move around the room with ease and provided students with pathways to the pencil sharpener and bathroom that did not disturb others.
Post, teach, review, monitor, and reinforce expectations	Classroom/school-wide expectations are explicitly taught and referenced across settings/activities, and staff members engage in active supervision.	During independent seatwork, the teacher circulates around the classroom conferring with students as they work (instead of sitting at her desk working on another project while students complete their work).
Actively engage students in observable ways	Provide students with many, varied opportunities to respond across all instructional formats.	During a whole-group direct-instruction lesson on writing equivalent fractions, the teacher provides each student with a whiteboard/dry-erase marker and asks each student to write the equivalent fraction for the fraction she has given, then hold up the board. Other examples include the use of peer tutoring, response cards, and computer-assisted instruction.
Use a continuum of strategies to acknowledge appropriate behavior	Provide individual students with specific and contingent praise; implement class-wide group contingencies, individual contingencies; use behavioral contracting and/or token economies.	After Julia accurately described the difference between similes and metaphors, her teacher immediately said, ''Excellent, Julia! I like how clearly you explained the difference between similes and metaphors to the class!''
Use a continuum of strategies to respond to inappropriate behavior	Provide individual students with specific and contingent error-correction statements, provide students with performance feedback, and utilize strategies that include planned ignoring, response cost, and time-out from reinforcement.	During whole-group mathematics instruction, Mark shouted out the correct answer to a problem that the teacher was solving at the front of the room. The teacher raised her hand (modeling the appropriate response) and calmly said, ''Please remember to raise your hand when you have an answer to share.''

not be assessed daily by an outside observer were not included. Additionally, discrete strategies such as differential reinforcement were subsumed under broad items (i.e., ''I used one or more strategies/systems to acknowledge appropriate student behavior'' [e.g., praise, coupons]) because the use of specific strategies may vary daily. The checklist and action plan serve three purposes: (a) prompting teachers to monitor their use of strategies, (b) collecting daily information on strategy use to facilitate data-based decisions about a teacher's classroom management, and (c) identifying skills to target with action planning. Although an expert teacher (i.e., a teacher who is already fluent with evidence-based classroom management strategies) could use this checklist

independently as a self-assessment, we used this checklist in combination with consultation.

Consultation in Classroom Management Practices

In our approach to consultation, a consultant (i.e., an individual trained in the use of evidence-based classroom management strategies and school-wide positive behavior support) works with teachers one-on-one to help them implement practices assessed by the checklist. The consultation model consists of four parts: (a) initiation, (b) promoting skill acquisition, (c) building skill fluency, and (d) supporting skill maintenance (see *Figure 2*). The duration of each consultation phase is determined by a teacher's response to consultation, as demonstrated by

data compiled from daily classroom checklists completed by the teacher and consultant.

Initiation (Phase 1). Prior to the initial consultation meeting, the consultant observes the teacher daily for 15 minutes and completes the classroom checklist. The consultant also may collect more specific data on the teacher's use of classroom management strategies (e.g., frequency counts of positive and corrective comments, opportunities to respond, prompts for appropriate behavior).

Promoting skill acquisition (Phase 2). The initial consultation meeting consists of four parts: (a) discussion of evidence-based classroom management strategies, (b) training in the use of the classroom management checklist tool, (c) teacher self-

assessment using the checklist, and (d) action planning using the checklist to determine present levels of performance and goals/objectives to increase use of three selected strategies.

Part A, the discussion of evidence-based classroom management strategies, consists of providing the teacher with visual and verbal overviews of each strategy. The consultant reviews the definition of the strategy as well as the research base supporting the strategy and presents applied examples of the strategy in action. During Part B, the teacher is trained to use the classroom management checklist. Training involves the consultant pairing the checklist with the previously introduced strategies and applied examples in order to clarify checklist questions. Part C immediately follows as the teacher completes the checklist for his or her own classroom while the consultant provides support and answers any questions (providing guided practice). During the final part of the consultation (Part D), the consultant and teacher work together to score the classroom checklist. Then, the teacher and consultant identify three main areas for improvement and develop the action plan, including present levels of performance, goals, and steps the teacher will take to achieve his or her goals.

Building skill fluency (Phase 3). After the initial consultation, the teacher completes the checklist on a daily basis while the consultant simultaneously continues to observe and collect data. These data are entered daily into an Excel spreadsheet to create graphs that track teacher progress. Prior to the midpoint meeting, the consultant reviews the graphs of teacher progress. At the midpoint consultation meeting, the teacher completes the classroom management checklist, reviews data collected by the consultant, evaluates his or her performance, and updates his or her action plan. At this point

the process becomes more individualized. If a teacher demonstrates proficiency using the strategies monitored in the classroom checklist, then the final consultation meeting is scheduled. However, if the data show that a teacher is not making progress, then additional consultation meetings are scheduled and daily performance feedback is added.

Additional consultation meetings may provide a review of strategies and strategy components, assistance in determining ways to apply strategies to practice, a task analysis of objectives that need to be achieved to meet goals, a review of data/progress to date, and feedback based on progress monitoring. Daily performance feedback may be provided via e-mail and should include copies of the graphs tracking teacher implementation/ use of the evidence-based strategies, brief summary statements of the teacher's performance of the practice that day (e.g., ''Your use of specific contingent praise increased from an average of 1 time per minute to an average of 1.5 times per minute''), and a brief statement reminding the teacher of the goal previously set (e.g., ''Remember that your target-specific contingent praise rate is approximately 2 times per minute'').

Supporting skill maintenance (Phase 4). During the final consultation meeting, teachers complete the classroom checklist, receive data collected by the consultant, and create a final action plan to address strategy maintenance and/or additional growth.

Case Studies Exploring the Effects of the Model

To explore the effects of the model on teachers' use of classroom management practices, we piloted the model with two teachers, ''Ms. Granger'' and ''Mrs. Heath.'' Both teachers were employed at the same urban middle school in New England. The building principal and assistant

principal nominated both teachers due to difficulties with classroom management. The consultant, a doctoral student in special education with experience teaching across grades K–12, approached the nominated teachers and offered them an opportunity to receive assistance via the consultation model. Both teachers agreed to participate in consultation and gave informed consent for data to be collected.

Meet the Teachers

Ms. Granger had been teaching chorus and general music classes for the past 10 years with her bachelor's degree in K–12 music. At the time of the study, Ms. Granger was teaching a seventh- and eighth-grade general music course to a classroom of 16 students with various academic, language, and social ability levels. Classroom behaviors of concern included students swearing, calling out, and leaving their seats or the classroom without permission.

Mrs. Heath had been teaching in a special education resource room for the past 3 years with a bachelor's degree in special education. At the time of the study, Mrs. Heath taught a scripted remedial reading program to a group of seven seventh-grade students. All of the students in the class were reading at least 3 years below grade level, and some of the students also received additional special education services. Behaviors of concern in Mrs. Heath's class included student work completion, calling out, and swearing.

In addition, both Ms. Granger and Mrs. Heath identified three students in their observed class who demonstrated disruptive behavior and attended regularly. These students were observed in order to document the effects of each teacher's skill implementation on student on- and off-task behavior across the phases of the study. No additional or identifying information was collected on these students.

Figure 1 CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST (ADAPTED FROM SIMONSEN ET AL., 2008). TEACHERS AND CONSULTANTS CAN USE THIS CHECKLIST TO (a) ASSESS AND MONITOR TEACHERS' IMPLEMENTATION OF EVIDENCE-BASED CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND (b) DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

Classroom Management Checklist

The purposes of this checklist are to (a) determine the extent to which effective general classroom management practices are in place and (b) develop an action plan for enhancement/maintenance based on this information. This assessment and action plan can be completed as a self-assessment or by an observer. Consider a teacher-led/directed activity that has a specific learning outcome/objective.

1. Assess whether each classroom management practice was evident.
2. Sum the number of "yes" to determine overall classroom management score.

Teacher: _____   Date_____
Observer: _____

Instructional Activity		Time Start _____ End _____		

Classroom Management Practice	Extent of Implementation			
	Yes	Partial	No	N/A
Beginning of Class				
1. I **greeted** my students as they entered the classroom and **prompted** them to show respect (e.g., use quiet voice) and responsibility (e.g., sit and start work) before class.				
2. I **posted** the **schedule/routine** for the class period and I **reviewed** it with students at the beginning of the period.				
3. I **posted** 3-5 **positively stated expectations** and **reviewed** them at the beginning of the period.				
During Instruction				
4. I **prompted** students to follow 3-5 **positively stated expectations** throughout the period.				
5. I provided each student with **multiple opportunities to respond** and participate during instruction.				
6. My instruction **actively engaged** students in observable ways (e.g., writing, verbalizing).				
7. I **actively supervised** my classroom (e.g., moving, scanning) during instruction.				
8. I used **one or more strategies/systems** to **acknowledge** appropriate student behavior (e.g., praise, coupons, etc.).				
9. I provided **quick, calm, direct, explicit corrections/redirections** in response to inappropriate behavior (or **ignored** the behavior if appropriate)				
10. I provided **more frequent acknowledgement** for appropriate behaviors than inappropriate behaviors (+ to - ratio).				

Note: N/A=not applicable

Figure 1 *(Continued)*

Classroom Management Action Planning

Prioritize the top three items for your classroom from the checklist.

3. For each priority item that was not at all or partially in place, develop an action plan for enhancement.

4. For each priority item rated "yes," develop an action plan for enhancement/maintenance.

Action Plan		
#	Current Level of Performance (Concrete Description)	Enhancement/Maintenance Strategies (Observable, Measurable, Action Steps)

Overview of Case Study Measures, Design, and Procedures

Measures. During the study, each teacher and an outside consultant (first author) completed the Classroom Management Checklist (*Figure 1*) to assess the teacher's use of evidence-based classroom management strategies. Only the items scored in the During Instruction section were used for this study, because the beginning of class was not consistently observed. The teacher's implementation of each item was scored as *not applicable* (no score was assigned and this information did not factor into overall strategy implementation), *no* (score of 0), *partially* (score of 1), and *fully* (score of 2). Possible overall implementation scores range from 0

(i.e., not implementing any of the strategies) to 14 (i.e., full implementation of all strategies). In addition, the consultant marked whether each identified student was on- or off-task at the end of 1-minute intervals throughout the 15-minute observation using momentary time sampling. The absence of interobserver agreement data is a limitation of this study.

Design and procedures. We used a descriptive single-subject case study (AB) design with a baseline (A) phase before consultation and an intervention (B) phase during consultation. During baseline, the consultant observed each teacher and the identified students daily for 15 minutes and completed the classroom checklist. The teacher was

not asked to change her practices during this phase. (Baseline corresponds to the initiation phase of the model depicted in *Figure 2*.)

During the intervention phase, we implemented the previously described model (checklist and consultation); the intervention consisted of the skill building, fluency, and acquisition phases depicted in *Figure 2*. Specifically, the consultant (first author) scheduled an initial consultation meeting and assisted teachers with creating action plans based on their checklist scores. With consultant assistance, the teachers selected the three lowest scoring areas on the checklist to target in their action plans. Following the initial meeting, the consultant continued to observe each teacher

Figure 2 CLASSROOM CONSULTATION FLOWCHART

Initiation

Teacher requests or is referred for support in classroom management.

Gather information on teachers' classroom management (using checklist)

Skill Building

Schedule initial meeting and provide:
(a) training in classroom management (including discussion, explanations, and role-play activities);
(b) summary of data gathered; and
(c) assistance with completing the checklist and developing an action plan.

Skill Fluency

Teacher and consultant both gather information (using checklist).
Do data indicate improvement?

Yes

No

Continue to collect data until a stable pattern of skill use emerges and schedule a midterm meeting.

Schedule additional meetings and provide performance feedback until improvement is noted.

Skill Maintenance

Teacher and consultant continue to gather information (using checklist).
Do data indicate sustained improvement?

No

Yes

Schedule final meeting to review data and update action plan with a plan for on-going skill maintenance and/or enhancement.
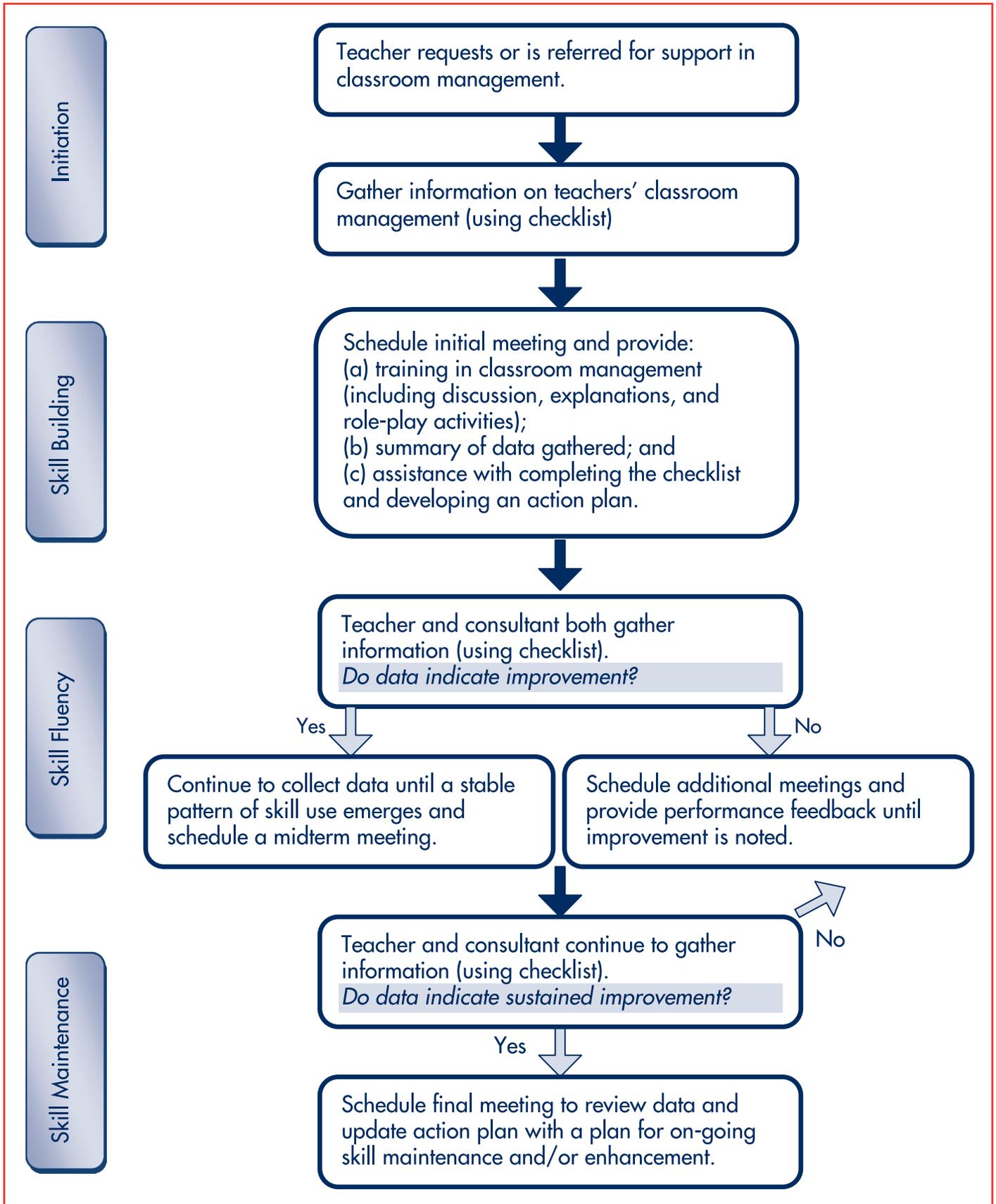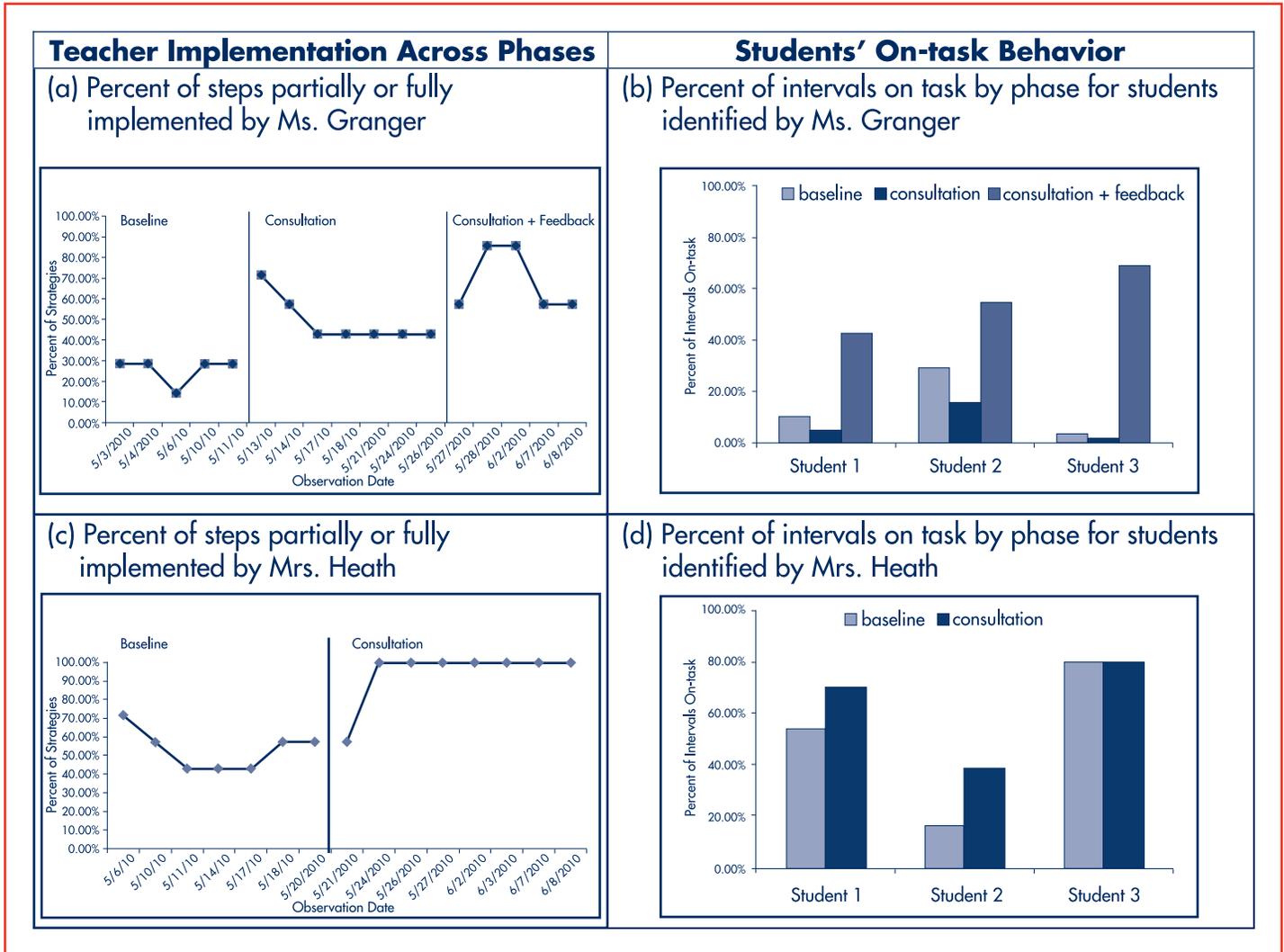
Figure 3 TEACHERS' IMPLEMENTATION AND STUDENTS' ON-TASK BEHAVIOR ACROSS PHASES FOR MS. GRANGER (a AND b, RESPECTIVELY) AND MRS. HEATH (c AND d, RESPECTIVELY)

and their identified students (during the same 15-minute period) and completed the checklist to assess the teacher's use of classroom management strategies. Each teacher was also asked to monitor her own strategy use by completing the checklist daily.

If data indicated that a teacher's performance was improving (i.e., she was increasing her fidelity of strategy implementation), a brief midpoint consultation meeting was conducted and the teacher continued to self-monitor through the end of the study without additional performance feedback. If data indicated that a teacher's performance was not improving, the consultant (a)

scheduled a midpoint consultation meeting, (b) scheduled additional meetings to review classroom management strategies and revise the action plan, and (c) provided daily performance feedback via e-mail.

At the end of the study, the consultant met with each teacher, presented summary data that illustrated her performance across the study, and provided her with suggestions for further growth and maintenance.

Results of the Case Studies

Ms. Granger. During baseline, Ms. Granger's use of strategies was fairly low and stable (*Figure 3a*), and her students demonstrated low rates of

on-task behavior (*Figure 3b*). Following baseline, the consultant met with Ms. Granger and reviewed evidence-based classroom management strategies and the classroom checklist. With consultant support, Ms. Granger completed the checklist and developed an action plan that focused on three areas of weakness identified through the checklist. Ms. Granger chose to work on (a) increasing her use of specific and contingent praise, (b) posting and reviewing her three positively stated classroom expectations, and (c) decreasing her use of negative/corrective feedback to students. Ms. Granger stated, ''These students should know how to behave, and I

shouldn't have to reward them for doing what they need to be doing anyway!'' She further admitted to ''forgetting to praise students'' because she was so focused on trying to ''get control of the crowd.'' Due to Ms. Granger's concerns, the consultant spent time working with her to create concrete steps for implementation of her goals.

Following this meeting, Ms. Granger demonstrated minimal progress (see *Figure 3a*), and her students demonstrated even less on-task behavior (*Figure 3b*). At the midpoint consultation meeting, the consultant showed Ms. Granger her data and helped Ms. Granger revise her action plan to include more specific ways that she could improve her use of strategies, such as giving verbal specific/contingent praise, providing class-wide incentives, and maximizing lesson structure. During this meeting Ms. Granger and the consultant also decided that daily e-mail feedback including graphs of Ms. Granger's performance would be helpful. With the addition of the daily performance feedback (provided by the consultant) and the revised action plan, Ms. Granger increased her implementation of evidence-based classroom management strategies. Her overall level of implementation increased (especially at the beginning of the phase; see *Figure 3a*), and her identified students engaged in more on-task behavior (*Figure 3b*).

At the final consultation meeting, Ms. Granger said, ''When my school first started encouraging us to reward students for behaviors that should be common sense I refused to do it. After working with you [the consultant] and seeing the changes in my classroom when I teach children what is expected, I realize the value of positive behavior support.''

Mrs. Heath. Prior to the initial consultation meeting, Mrs. Heath generally implemented half of all strategies either partially or fully (*Figure 3c*), and her students were on-task for 50% of observed intervals on average (*Figure 3d*). At the initial

consultation meeting, Mrs. Heath completed the same steps as Ms. Granger. Mrs. Heath identified different areas of growth in her use of evidence-based classroom management strategies and formulated an action plan based on those. From the checklist she completed, Mrs. Heath selected three areas in which to identify present levels of performance and for which she could set goals.

One area of focus was Number 10 on the checklist: ''I provided more frequent acknowledgement for appropriate behaviors than inappropriate behaviors (+ to − ratio).'' Mrs. Heath noted that her present level of performance in this area was '''no' to 'partially' acknowledging appropriate behaviors.'' Working with the consultant and reviewing the information provided on how to acknowledge appropriate behaviors, Mrs. Heath decided to create an incentive system linked to the school's three positively stated expectations. Mrs. Heath conducted a social skills lesson plan that provided direct instruction about what these three expectations looked like in her classroom. She then explained to students that when these expectations were followed, students would earn M&M'S in a glass jar. When the jar was filled, students earned outdoor recess time. Mrs. Heath also set a goal for herself that she did not share with the students. At the beginning of each class period, she set aside 15 M&M'S and made it her personal goal to acknowledge at least 15 appropriate behaviors per class period. Through implementing this component of her action plan in conjunction with the other two areas selected, Mrs. Heath was able to reach nearly full implementation of checklist strategies with only one consultation meeting (see *Figure 3c*). Also, two of her three students engaged in higher levels of on-task behavior (see *Figure 3d*); the third student maintained a high level of on-task behavior.

Implications and Conclusions

In conclusion, both of the teachers participating in the study appeared to increase their use of evidence-based classroom management practices when the model (checklist and consultation) was implemented. Both teachers progressed from skill acquisition to fluency, and both developed plans for skill maintenance. The model was also flexible enough to accommodate individual teacher differences (e.g., number of times to meet, amount/type of performance feedback). Thus, this model may be an effective method for increasing teachers' use of evidence-based classroom management strategies when expert consultation is available (e.g., a school-based consultant with fluency and experience in classroom management, outside expert support).

Given that this model has only been piloted with descriptive case studies, further research is needed. Specifically, researchers should (a) use more rigorous experimental single-subject or group designs to study the effects of the model with additional participants over time and across settings, (b) examine checklist modifications to aid in individualization of assessment, and (c) evaluate methods of performance feedback that increase efficiency and efficacy.

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