

**Carpet Time Chaos:
Exploring Ways to Decrease Off-task Behavior**

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Second Grade, Radio Park Elementary School

2007

Appendix:

B: List of different times spent at the carpet

C: Students idea of what the problem is

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I. Context:

Attending The Penn State University as an elementary education major has allowed me the opportunity to become involved with the Professional Development

School (PDS) and take part in a yearlong student teaching internship with the State College Area School District. I was placed in Radio Park Elementary School in a second grade classroom that consists of twenty-three energetic boys and girls. The makeup of male and female students is unbalanced, as the classroom has fourteen females and only nine males. While there are a few students who are generally quiet and keep to themselves, most are highly social, and have lively personalities. Twenty-one of the twenty-three students are Caucasian, while two of them, one male and one female, are from Asian cultures.

While most of the students are the appropriate age for second grade, one male student is only six years old, and has skipped the first grade. His age is apparent by his maturity and the way he acts in the classroom. Though he is extremely bright for his age, he lacks self-control and the ability to sit quietly and attentively for a long period of time. This however, also is a problem for a number of the students in the classroom. There are a few students who enjoy being in the spotlight, regardless of the reason. This is evident during whole group activities, when these particular students make loud comments or exaggerated facial expressions to amuse others. There are about six students who are continually seeking attention from their peers by causing disruptions during instructional time.

There are definite leaders who stand out in the group and always want to be in charge of groups, both during free play time as well as during academic activities. On the other end of the spectrum, there is a group of four or five students who quietly follow what the 'classroom leaders' say or do. The diversity of attitudes among the classroom is very apparent when observing the way the students interact during work and play.

The male students tend to play well and get along with one another. There is one particular male who often is found bickering with the other boys in the class. The remaining eight male students, as well as some of the female students, have keyed in on the fact that little things set this student off, and he is easily aggravated by any comment the students make. The classroom has a group of five or so girls who use this knowledge to pick on and irritate the male student. The females in the class have formed groups that the males have not seemed to form. Although the girls all will play together now and again, they more or less have their own 'groups' that they belong to.

Academically, the class ranges in both math and language arts. Some of the students are just at the beginning stages of where a second grader should be, while others are able to do work at levels above those of a second grader. For math, one of the twenty-three students goes to the learning support room instead of attending math in the classroom. One student has just switched from the learning support room to attending math each day in the classroom and is doing very well with the change. However, she still occasionally has outbursts and doesn't like the work she is doing. In math, the more advanced students tend to work very well with those who are lower in ability than them. These students willingly accept the help and support from their classmates.

In reading, a majority of the class is at a similar level as their peers. All of the students are at an independent reading level, but there is a group of five students who need more support and have a much more difficult time reading words and comprehending what they are reading. In terms of writing, these same students often request the teacher's help during writing assignments, and many times have misspelled no excuse words or spelling words that we have studied. They have a difficult time

keeping focused during their writing as well. The rest of the students range in abilities, but generally are able to write well when they sit down and focus.

II. Rationale:

As a teacher, I have come to strongly believe in the idea that not a second of instruction time should be wasted in these critical years of a child's life. Now is the time to make every second count in order to get students ready for the rest of their lives, to live and function in the world around them. Time spent managing behavior takes time away from instruction. With my own particular classroom, I began to notice that a lot of our time is spent on the back carpet in the classroom.

At the carpet, students participate in numerous activities. The carpet is very important because we start and end our day gathering on the carpet. It is a place for students to be welcomed in the morning and to receive final thoughts and smiles before they leave the classroom and head to whatever home life they face. Along with meetings, whole group activities are conducted here as well. These include read-alouds, receiving directions for different activities, and sometimes language arts or math whole group lessons. Being at the carpet so many times during the day became very apparent to me, and screamed out to me as a time when students should be on task and involved with their classmates and teacher.

As time passed, I began noticing that a lot of time was spent cueing children to get back on task, or asking students to quiet down, keep their hands to themselves, and listen to the teacher. The more it happened, the more it stuck out to me that a significant amount of time that could be used instructionally was being wasted. More time was being spent giving directions or speaking with students about unacceptable behavior.

What was worse was that many of the students were never part of this. They sat quietly and did as they were asked, but those around them did not. The time taken to speak to one or two students took learning time away from the entire class, which did not seem fair.

This realization led me to wonder whether or not there was a way to increase student engagement during this critical carpet time. I began thinking of ways that I could try and change student behavior, or wondering if it was even possible. It always came back to my belief that it is extremely important to maximize instruction time whenever possible. For these reasons, I began to explore the idea of managing behavior, in order to decrease interruptions and increase the amount of time students were actively engaged any of the times that the class was on the carpet.

III. Literature

When I began my inquiry study, I was determined to involve my students with making rules and consequences, so that they were connected to what was happening. I felt if they were able to come up with ideas themselves, they would be more likely to understand them and in turn, follow them. James Allen of Pennsylvania State University, states that “classroom management is important in establishing an environment in which instruction and learning can occur. Without an understanding of students’ perspective on classroom management, negative encounters between students and teachers will lead to ineffective classroom management” (1986).

I strongly agree with the statement that Dr. Allen is making, which strengthened my belief that it was extremely important to involve the students with the rule making process. I did not want negative vibes between me and the students that would lead to

ineffective classroom management, so I felt the best way to avoid it was to involve them with the problem and solution from the very beginning.

As I continued with the beginning days of my inquiry project, I wanted to accurately determine what I was referring to when I said “engagement.” My entire study is based around determining which students are engaged, and trying to figure out how to engage the disengaged. I first turned to dictionary for answers. The dictionary defines the term *engagement* as: the act of sharing in the activities of a group (Random House Inc., 2006). While I agreed with this definition, I wanted to look further into the meaning of engagement to help me with my inquiry.

As I researched, I found an article that defined the term in a way that I agreed with about engagement. It stated that, “engagement refers to active, goal-directed, flexible, constructive, persistent, focused interaction with the social and physical environments” (Furrer and Skinner, 2003). At the other end of the spectrum, they state those individuals who are “alienated, apathetic, rebellious, frightened or burned out show patterns of disaffection” (2003).

In my study, I want to increase the amount of engagement in the classroom. I want students to be active and focused with the environment they face each time they come to the back carpet. Furthermore, I do not want to see students labeled as disaffectionate, who seem disengaged due to a reason that may be unknown to me.

Furrer and Skinner explain, “several lines of research suggest that peers play a role in children’s school participation and completion” (2003). I had several students during the study who appeared to be ‘acting out’ in order to seek attention from their peers. For example, a student who told me over and over that he was not going to listen,

as he peered around the room to see if his classmates were listening. Furrer and Skinner quote Steinberg, Dornbusch and Brown saying that “peers are the most potent influence on their students’ day-to-day behaviors in school” (2006). This makes me question whether some of the disruptions in the class are to seek the attention of peers in the classroom.

As I explored the idea of engagement a bit more, I found more things to think about. According to Kelly Danielson of the Educational Testing Service as reported by Susan Black, “the best teachers keep students highly engaged throughout an entire lesson” (2003). She continues to explain, “students who are deeply engaged in learning are not simply spending time on task, but are intellectually involved with the topics” (2003). This is the way I wanted my students to be during carpet time activities, regardless of how rigorous they may or may not be.

After I defined engagement, I determined with my class which behaviors they felt I was upset about during carpet time. We discussed ways to fix them as well. Kevin Wheldall states, “One of the major problems faced by primary teachers is that of disruptive behavior within the classroom situation.” In doing a study, Wheldall found that “behaviors such as talking out of turn followed by hindering other children were identified by teachers as the most common and the most troublesome classroom behaviors” (1991).

When I looked at my own classroom, I found the same problems were true. Students often spoke out of turn or tried to talk over other students. In addition, these behaviors began to hinder the behaviors of those around them. In my study, I saw several

instances where students who generally followed the rules and stayed engaged strayed away from the rules due in part to the influence of peers around them who were off-task.

One part of my study focused on management strategies to use with the students. I had a difficult time with this part of the study, because I haven't yet learned what my most effective techniques are or which ones will work best for me. For this reason, I have relied on my classroom teacher for support and help. In an article titled Classroom Management For Student Teachers, David Snyder discusses the difficulties student teachers face.

He states, "pre-service teachers' personal histories have a great influence on their approach to classroom management" (1998). As I began the study, I thought about values I held when it dealt with management. I wanted to be consistent with my management strategies, but again, I wasn't sure yet which ones I should use. Snyder goes on to say, "future teachers come with many of their classroom management beliefs and styles in place, based in part on their own personalities and past teacher role models" (1998).

For this inquiry, I looked up to my mentor for help in determining strategies to use. I think this may be an area where I fell short. Because I didn't consider my own beliefs and values very high, I focused more on using my mentor teacher's ideas. This may have been the reason for the results that I found.

IV. Wonderings/Questions:

As stated above, my main question became:

How can I increase student engagement and decrease off-task behavior during carpet time activities in order to maximize instruction time?

This question led me to begin questioning other aspects that were important to helping me go about answering this question. These questions include:

- How many students are engaged a majority of the time?
 - What does “engaged” mean?
- Does the problem stem from the management or does it stem from something else?
 - Seating arrangements, topics, depth of understanding the material, shyness of the student, the number of people in the conversation, the type of activity, the way I am addressing the problem, etc.
- Are the same students participating each time?
- Are the same students off-task each time?
 - Does the location on the carpet affect this?
- Are there clear rules for carpet time? Does this affect it?
- Are there rewards/punishments that would help to manage carpet time?
- What would the students like to see happen?
- How can I help them to see what is happening and how it is taking away from instruction time? How can I make them see that this is important?
- What management strategies are effective with this particular group of students?

V. Project Vs. Inquiry:

Although a vast amount of research has been done on classroom management, I chose my inquiry topic based on the problems I was noticing in my own classroom that were affecting student learning. It is specific to my classroom that I wanted to search for a way to increase participation during carpet time activities. To do so, many questions generated that made me realize it may not even be classroom management that was the problem. I made many observations and used those to determine what I really needed to look at to try and find a way to increase student involvement. I have worked towards creating my own interventions and action strategies to try and find a solution and increase involvement time as well as instructional time in my classroom. While I have taken into account outside research, I have used it to help in my study, rather than just reading information and using just those ideas. My ideas are incorporated as well into this inquiry study.

VI. Inquiry Plan Description:

Appendix J shows the calendar I followed as I implemented my inquiry plan. When I began my inquiry project, I knew that it was important to make my students aware of the problem, as well as allow them to contribute to ideas of how to fix it. I was eager to begin finding ways to control the problem in the classroom, as well as to understand why it might be happening.

The first step of my inquiry was simply to collect baseline data, in order to determine if the problem really was happening as often as I felt that it was. My mentor teacher helped to make observations while I was teaching about who was off-task the most in the classroom, what they were doing that was causing them to be off-task, and where in the classroom they were sitting. The baseline data proved to me that this

problem was happening every single time I had the students back on the carpet, and it did not seem that there was any specific reason students were pulled off-task or were not participating in the activities.

Once I determined that there was a problem, my next step was to talk to the students about it. I felt it was important to include them in the problem as well as finding a solution to help solve it. After I collected the data, I scheduled a classroom meeting. On February 5th, I called the students back to the carpet and told them we had something important to talk about. I told the students that my job as a teacher in the classroom was to teach them as much as I possibly could throughout the year, and that I was noticing recently how often I have to interrupt my teaching in order to re-gain their attention. I explained that it was very hard for me to teach when they chose not to listen, or were not doing their best job to listen and be part of the class. I went on to say that a lot of the time I spend with them is at the carpet, and I wanted to brainstorm ideas with them about how we could make better use of our carpet time.

We determined together that the best place to start was to look at all of the different times that we are back at the carpet, which can be found in Appendix B. I also asked for suggestions of what they thought they were doing during carpet time that I was upset about and that was taking away from teaching time. Appendix C shows the list of ideas that the students came up with. After compiling the list of disruptive behaviors, I asked them if they could help me make a list of rules they thought were important to follow during carpet time, based on the unwanted behaviors we had just discussed.

The students made suggestions about what rules we should follow. The top half of Appendix D shows the notes that I took during this discussion. After all of the ideas

were given, I asked the students if they thought some of the suggestions they gave could be combined into one rule. For example, students decided that ‘don’t poke,’ ‘keep your hands to yourself,’ ‘don’t kick somebody’ and ‘don’t push’ could all be put together and combined into one solid rule. I told the students that over night, I would combine the rest of the rules in a similar way and make a final chart to hang in the classroom.

The students seemed very pleased with their list of rules. The next step I took was to tell them that if we followed these rules each time we were on the carpet, we could spend much more time learning because I would not need to stop to address interruptions. The students suggested that there should be a consequence for breaking the rules. I asked the students for suggestions about what the consequences should be for breaking the rules, which can also be found in Appendix D. Some of the students who, to this point, were causing a significant amount of disruptions were the students who suggested the harshest consequences.

To wrap up the classroom meeting, I told the students how important it was to me that they try and follow the rules we made together. I expressed my faith in each and every one of them to try their very hardest to follow our classroom rules, which can be found in Appendix E. Before moving on to the next part of our day, I asked the students to give me a silent thumbs up if they thought they could follow our rules. Twenty-two of the students gave me thumbs up, while only one refused to do so. This student was one of the students who caused the most disruptions at the carpet so far in the year. I waited until he was able to give me thumbs up, and then dismissed the students from the carpet.

My next step was to consider the consequences the students felt were ‘fair’ and match those with the consequences that I felt were fair if a student broke the carpet time

rules. I created a behavior chart, which can also be found in greater depth in the data collection section. I introduced the behavior chart to the students. Overall, the students were informed that they would receive one warning for breaking a rule, and then if they had to be spoken to again during that carpet activity, they would be sent back to their seat.

To go along with the plan, I created a smile face chart (Appendix F). Each cycle, the students would start with ten smiles next to their name. Any time they were told to leave the carpet for breaking carpet rules; they would lose a smile face and five minutes of recess. The smile faces were used for different rewards each week. Some weeks, the students would receive tickets: one ticket for each smile they had left at the end of the cycle. These tickets would go into a ticket jar, and names would be drawn for several different prizes, such as receiving homework passes or choosing a prize from the prize bin. Other weeks, students were informed that if they kept eight or more smiles by their name for the cycle, they would all receive a reward, such as extra recess.

For the next eight weeks, I used the smile face chart to keep track of student behavior. As the weeks went on, I altered what I was looking at specifically, so that I would have a list of different things to analyze at the conclusion of the study. Each week I kept track of who received warnings and who was told to return to their seats, but I also keyed in on different things as well. The list below shows the actions I took each cycle as well as the behaviors I watched for each cycle.

Cycle 1: General observations about where students were sitting, when they were getting in trouble, who they were sitting by, and more.

Cycle 2: Observations of the location that off-task students were sitting, as well as which classmates they were sitting by. I also experimented with using heavy proximity control to try and decrease off-task behavior.

Cycle 3: Observations on which students were voluntarily participating. I noted where they were sitting and whom they were sitting by, too. I also experimented with using non-verbal cues to increase student engagement and decrease off-task behavior.

Cycle 4: Based on student surveys (Appendix I), I chose a prize that the majority of the class requested, to see if this would increase engagement.

[Spring Break. Students had a week off of school.]

Cycle 5: General observations, in order to get the students back into the swing of things with the behavior system.

Cycle 6: A seating arrangement was made for audience style seating and circle style seating. With the new seating, I carefully observed the regular offenders in the classroom to see if it decreased the number of times that they were off-task. I also noted how often students were participating.

Audience Style: I taped numbers onto the carpet, 1-23. Each student was given a permanent number that became theirs. The arrangement helped separate students who had trouble sitting together. It also moved students to a location where they wouldn't be as distracted (for instance, students who banged on the paper-shelf were moved away from the paper-shelf).

Circle Style: The students were separated into four groups, labeled with colors. The groups, orange, yellow, blue and green were created in order to manipulate who could sit next to who on the carpet. All of the students who had trouble sitting together were placed in the same group. The purpose of the colors was to give students patterns to sit in when they came to the carpet. For example, students would sit in a ‘blue, green, blue, green’ pattern on one side of me and in a ‘yellow, orange, yellow, orange’ pattern on the other side.

Cycle 7: During this cycle, I abandoned the circle seating arrangement. It was taking too much time to get the students into the patterns on the carpet, which began taking away from instruction time. My goal was to increase instruction time, so I felt it was unnecessary to continue with the circle seating arrangement. Observations from cycle seven led me to switch two students’ number’s on the carpet, because they were in areas that were not helping them stay engaged.

VII. Data Collection:

I collected data in several different ways: The majority of data come from observations that I made myself. Other observations included those of my mentor teacher as well as those of my supervisor. Along with observations, I kept the smile face charts each week to examine the frequency of smile faces lost for each student. Finally, I gave a student survey mid-way through the study to collect some data.

Observations:

Mentor Observations: At the beginning of my study, my mentor teacher took observations (which are typed up in Appendix G) as I led activities on the back carpet.

She listed specific times that each off-task behavior was happening, as well as how long they lasted for. I used this beginning data to help determine exactly what behaviors were happening that caused students to be off-task. It also helped me to determine which students were offering answers, which might be sitting quietly but listening, and which were paying no attention at all. These beginning observations helped me determine what observations I wanted to make on my own.

Supervisor (PDA) Observations: Periodically, my supervisor observed carpet time activities. While I never told her I would be using her observations, I read them closely for comments she made that pertained to the behaviors of the students as well as my consistency with the behavior chart. These observations helped me to see an outsider's perspective, and I felt it was best that she did not know I was using these observations to collect data for the study.

Self Observations: Most of my data came directly from self-observations, as I worked towards keeping track of the data myself each time I was on the carpet. I did this in two ways. The first way was simply with post-it notes. Each and every time I was at the carpet, I had two things with me: The smile face chart, and a post-it note attached to a clipboard. Before I went to the carpet each time, I stuck a post-it note on the clipboard and labeled it with the date and the carpet time activity (snack, read aloud, sharing, etc). Generally, I used this to keep track of students who got warnings, and those sent back to their seats. When a student got a warning, I wrote their name on the note. If they were sent back to their seats, I placed an X over the name. This allowed me to remember day to day which students were spoken to, in case I didn't have time to note it down when we left the carpet.

Sometimes when I was back at the carpet, I was able to jot down WHY students received warnings as well. I did this using only short notes, which I expanded in a typed document as soon as I had the chance. Again, these brief notes helped me to remember later what the student was doing to receive the warnings or to be sent back to their seat.

Finally, I used several sheets of scratch paper throughout my study to take notes any time I could when the students were on the carpet. I wrote the date and carpet activity, and took notes on the paper whenever I had the chance. Sometimes this was at the carpet, sometimes it was after the activity, and sometimes it was much later in the day. Often times, I took a moment or two directly before or directly after the activity began to note down where students were sitting or with whom they were sitting. At the end of each school day, I typed my notes into a computer word document to keep them organized.

Student Checklist:

A student checklist can be found in Appendix H. This particular checklist was used to keep track of students who volunteered answers, questions or comments during a science talk at the carpet. The checklists consisted of each student's name with an open box next to it. I chose what I wanted to target, and used the open area to keep a simple checklist each time a student did what I was looking for. Sometimes I used it for when students were giving inappropriate answers or outbursts and other times I used it to note each time the student gave an appropriate answer. This helped me to track on-task and off-task participation.

Smile Face Chart:

Appendix F showed a sample smile face chart that I used during the study. These charts allowed me to see at the end of each week which students had the most trouble staying at the carpet and which students had no trouble at all. It also helped me, during analysis, determine which rewards and management strategies may have been effective.

Student Surveys:

Halfway into the study, I created a student survey to determine what rewards might work best to keep the off-task behavior and distractions to a minimum. The student surveys had two sections, with a total of seven responses given from each student. The first part asked the students to rate the three rewards they were offered as prizes for the behavior chart so far. These rewards included choosing a prize from the prize bin, receiving a homework pass (which allowed them to skip one homework assignment of their choice) or receiving extra recess.

The second part of the survey consisted of four questions for the students to answer about why they did/did not like certain rewards, and what else they might like to be rewarded with. Appendix I shows surveys that were filled out by the students.

VIII. Data Analysis:

In order to analyze my data, I created several charts throughout the study to organize and examine the data. I created a chart that helped me determine the overall favorite class reward based on the surveys. I also used the chart to make a list of the rewards that the students who were often times getting in trouble wanted to have so that I could take that into consideration. I compiled a chart to look more clearly at the pattern of lost smiles for each student. I also created a recording sheet for each of the students

who were sent back to their seats to track what activities were the hardest for them to be attentive during.

Calendar:

In order to analyze my data and keep track of which specific behaviors I targeted each cycle and which management strategies I used, I created a calendar (see appendix J) that broke up each cycle, listed the reward the students were working towards receiving, and the dates that each cycle lasted. As I looked through the calendar and paralleled it with my typed notes, I began creating different charts to help further analyze my data.

Survey Responses Chart:

In order to analyze the student survey, I created a chart (appendix K) that allowed me to view the information all on one sheet of paper. On this sheet, I found the average rating from 1-10 for each reward. I listed each prize across the top of the sheet, and then listed each student's score under the category. Finally, I added the numbers and found the average class rating for each prize.

On the bottom half of the sheet, I listed the students who to this point, had been sent to their seat at least one time since the behavior plan started. Next to their names, I listed the prize that they chose for the following week (the final question of the survey). When I looked at all of the information on the chart, it showed me that the class as a whole enjoyed the homework pass the best so far, and that four of the six students who had been sent back to their seats so far in the study also requested homework passes for the next cycle.

Mentor and Supervisor Observations:

In order to analyze the observations from my mentor and supervisor, I added them into my typed log that I was keeping on the computer. These observations were included in the data analysis I used with my own observational data.

Self-Observations/Smile Chart Analysis:

Again, my self-observations were typed into a computer log and compared with my calendar timeline that I created before beginning the analyzing. I created a chart that listed each cycle, the reward students were working towards, and how many warnings or loss of smile faces each student received for the week. This helped me to see which rewards were effective for each student.

Seating Arrangement:

Appendix L shows the seating charts that I created as I thought about where students generally sat, the problematic areas where each student sat, and students who did not stay attentive when they sat together. To do so, I began by sketching a layout of the carpet, including all of the distractions, such as TVs, whiteboards, computers, easels, etc. After I created the sketch, I copied it again so I could make two charts. One chart was for audience style seating and the other one was for circle seating.

The sketch in Appendix L shows the audience style seating chart. I wrote in student names next to any areas that they had trouble listening in. Many students are listed near the paper shelf and the computer, because these areas have easily distracted many of the students.

In order to determine circle seating, I used the same chart on a new sheet of paper. On the circle seating chart, I wrote in names of people who again, cannot sit in certain areas of the carpet. In the center of the circle, I made a list of students who are easily

pulled off task when they sit together. Both of these sketches allowed me to create the seating charts that were put into action during the sixth cycle of the study. The final audience style seating chart can be found in Appendix M. In this chart, I switched around student names until I found a seating chart that I thought would cause the least amount of off-task behavior and allow for the most instructional time. Along with this seating chart, I used the list of people who should not sit together to help create the four colored groups that were used briefly for the circle time seating.

Seat Group Analysis:

In order to determine how often the seat group was contributing to the disruptions, I created several charts and lists. First, I created a chart listing the names of all students who had been sent back to their seat one or more times. Across the top of the paper, I made columns for each cycle, listing the reward for the cycle as well as any specific strategies I was focusing on. I then made three rows next to their names: one for the number of warnings they received per cycle, one for the number of times they were sent to their seat, and one to list how many times each cycle they were addressed as being disruptive. I highlighted the total number of times each student was disruptive so that I could determine how often he or she were responsible for the overall number of disruptions in the class.

Next, I created a list to document how many disruptions occurred for the entire class for each week. I used my observation log to keep a tally of the number of disruptions. I also recorded the number of warnings that were given and the number of students who were sent to seats each cycle.

With this data, I counted up the total number of times that disruptions occurred during the entire study. With this information, I determined what percentage of the disruptions occurred each week. This allowed me to analyze whether or not different strategies may have helped as well as whether or not the rewards had an effect on student behavior.

Finally, I counted the number of times the seat group were disruptive for each cycle. I then used this number and divided it by the total number of disruptions for the cycle, to determine what percentage of the time the disruptions occurred from one of the six seat group members.

Smile Face Chart Analysis:

I noticed that there were only six students who lost at least one smile over the seven-cycle study, so I analyzed each student individually. I created a sheet, appendix N, to fill out for each student. Each sheet has 6 tables on it. Across the top of the table there are columns created for each cycle of the study. Under the columns are spaces to list the number of warnings the student received each cycle and the number of times the student was sent to their seat. The six tables represent the six times of the day when it was possible for the students to be at the carpet.

After filling in the chart, I used it to determine four things. First, I counted the total number of warnings and times the student was sent to their seat during the study. Second, I determined what time of the day the student received the most warnings, as well as what time of day the students were sent to their seat the most often. After doing all of this, I decided it was important to determine the total number of times each student had to be spoken to throughout the entire study.

Total Number of Disruptions:

In order to determine the total number of disruptions, I used my observation logs to tally each disruption that occurred every cycle. After I found the total disruptions, I determined how many disruptions remained as a warning, and how many led to students going back to their seats.

Comparing Audience Style Seating to Circle Seating:

In order to determine whether more problems occurred when the students were sitting audience style or when the students were sitting in a circle, I created a chart using x's and check marks. Appendix O shows one of the charts I used to determine these numbers. For each cycle, I marked a check for when a student received a warning and an x for when somebody was sent back to their seat. I recorded for each cycle for both types of seating. At the end, I found a final total of how many total disruptions occurred when the students sat audience style and when they sat in a circle, and recorded it for each week.

After this, I wrote the total numbers on a chart that is found in the bottom right of appendix O. This chart allowed me to tally up the total number of disruptions that happened when the class sat audience style as well as the number of disruptions when they sat in a circle.

In order to determine if this would be a fair piece of data to analyze, I also created a chart to see how many times I observed the students sitting in both arrangements. The students were observed in both settings a similar amount of times (sixty-three and sixty-seven) so I felt this was a good piece of data to analyze.

Determining Which Students Received Warnings:

In order to determine which students received warnings throughout the study, I made a simple sheet that listed each cycle. Under the cycle, I wrote each student's name that appeared on the observation list for receiving at least a warning. Once a student was on one time for the cycle, I did not list them again. When I reached the bottom, I determined how many students received only one warning the entire study by looking back through my observation notes. Finally, I made a list of people who did not appear on the list at all, to determine how many people received zero warnings.

Determining the Cause for Students Receiving Warnings but Never Getting Sent Back to their Seats:

I wanted to keep track of students who have received warnings but never got sent back to their seats to see if there were any patterns. To do so, I listed all of the students who have received more than one warning, but who were not sent back to their seats (see Appendix Q). I went through my observation notes and wrote the reason for each warning (using very brief notes). As I finished, I noticed many of the reasons dealt with other students who were often times receiving warnings and being sent back to their seats. Because of this, I used a highlighter to highlight all of the times that another student, one from the seat group, was involved with the warning the student received.

IX. Data Analysis Results:

Survey Responses Chart:

- The students voted receiving homework passes as their favorite reward

- The average score out of 100% for how well they liked the reward was 76%
- The students voted winning extra recess as their 2nd favorite reward
 - The average score out of 100% for how well they liked the reward was a close second with 73%
- The students voted choosing a prize from the prize bin as their least favorite reward
 - The average score out of 100% for how well they liked the reward was only 53%
- During the cycle when the students chose the homework pass as the prize they would work towards, the class had the third lowest number of disruptions during the study.

Seat Group Analysis:

- Although four out of the six seat group students chose the homework pass as their favorite reward and the one they would like to have again, they accounted for 90% of the total disruptions for that cycle
 - This was the cycle that they caused the most disruption
- The cycle that the students chose their own prize was tied for the second lowest number of disruptions from the entire class.
- Six people were the cause of 80% of the total disruptions in the classroom throughout the study. Disruptions included both receiving warnings and being sent back to seats.

- These students caused the most disruptions during the week that I used proximity control to try and minimize disruptions and increase engagement.
 - The students in the group were observed disrupting 55 times.
- These students caused the least amount of disruptions after the behavior chart was created.
 - The students in the group were observed disrupting 21 times in cycle 6 and 32 times during cycle 7.

Smile Face Chart Analysis:

- Students received the most warnings during morning meeting and afternoon meeting
- The students were sent back to their seats the most often during morning meeting and afternoon meeting.
- The student that received the least amount of total warnings had 17 at the end of the study.
- A different student was sent back to their seat the least amount of times, which was 2.

Total Number of Disruptions:

- The least amount of disruptions occurred during cycle 6.
 - 24 disruptions
- The most disruptions occurred during cycle 2
 - 67 disruptions

- Individual students were sent back to their seats on 32 different occasions during the second cycle. 35 received warnings.
- Individual students were sent back to their seats on only 10 occasions during cycle 6. 14 received warnings.
- 20 % of the total disruptions occurred during the 2nd cycle. This was the cycle with the most disruptions.
- 7% of total disruptions occurred during the 6th cycle. This was the cycle with the least disruptions.
- Students disrupted the class a total of 330 times.
- Observations were made during 118 separate carpet time activities

Comparing Audience Style Seating to Circle Seating:

- I observed the students sitting audience style 63 times
- I observed the students sitting in a circle 67 times
- The most disruptions occurred during cycle 3 with audience style seating
- The most disruptions occurred during cycle 2 with circle seating
- The total number of disruptions while sitting audience style was 94
- The total number of disruptions while sitting in a circle was 221

Warnings:

- 4 students received zero warnings during the study
- 6 students received only one warning during the study
- Several students received warnings because they could not focus in the spot they chose to sit

- 70% of the students who were not in the seat group received warnings when they were off-task WITH one of the seat group students

X. Claims and Evidence:

Claim 1: It only takes a handful of students to cause disruptions in the classroom that take away from the entire class' maximum instructional time.

As I analyzed my data, I was shocked by the results that I found. When I analyzed the data to determine how often each student was being spoken to for breaking a carpet rule, I found that over the seven week study, there were only six students who accounted for 80% of the time that I had to stop and give out a warning or send somebody back to their seat. Out of twenty-three students, it was only six, the “seat group”, who accounted for *over* $\frac{3}{4}$ of the disruptions. Appendix P shows the data collection used to determine what percent of the disruptions came from the seat group.

Another thing I found when analyzing the data dealt with the students who received warnings but were never sent back to their seats during the seven-week cycle. As I looked at the students who were frequently spoken to one time but then were able to re-gain attention for the remainder of the time, I began to notice a pattern.

When I observed all of these students, I made a list for each student to look at the reasons why they were receiving a warning, which can be found in appendix Q. I found that 33 out of the 47 warnings these students received were for reasons that dealt with the six students in the seat group. Although these six students may not have caused their warnings, 70% of the time they either received a warning at the same time as a student in the seat group, or they received a warning for talking to or bothering somebody in the seat group. Only fourteen of the 330 problems I had happened for reasons other than

those dealing with the seat group. This finding along with the first finding led me to believe that it really only takes a handful of students to cause a majority of disruptions in a classroom, which in turn takes away from instructional time for others in the class.

Claim 2: Assigned seats, when determined carefully, are very important in a primary classroom in order to keep students engaged in the activity, rather than things that are going on around them.

Although I was not surprised by the discovery itself, I was very surprised at the data I found to support it. I should have implemented a seating chart sooner, though I wanted to be thorough in my observations to determine my next steps. When I finally decided to create a seating chart, the number of times that I had to speak to the students decreased significantly. Up until the seating chart began, the highest number of times that I had to interrupt my instruction to speak to a student was 67 times in one cycle. The week directly following when the seating chart was implemented, the number of times I had to interrupt teaching to address a problem dropped to a record low of 24. The final week of the study the number increased slightly to 37 times.

Although the number of total disruptions increased during the final week, there were still fewer disruptions than any of the previous weeks aside from the prior week, cycle six. During the 1st and 4th cycle, the number of disruptions was similar to that of the seventh cycle. The number of disruptions for the three weeks ranged between 37 and 41. Although this is the case, analyzing the data more allowed me to see that the overall success of the seating chart was a good one. In the seventh cycle, only fourteen students were sent to their seats. Compared to all of the other cycles, fourteen was the second lowest for times that I sent students back to their seats. During cycle one and four, the

students were sent back to their seats 20 and 18 times respectively. This proved the seating chart to be working towards decreasing the number of times any one student was getting in trouble or being sent back to their seat.

Although many students had trouble choosing which classmates to sit next to in order to be able to pay attention, they also had difficulty choosing the specific location on the carpet where they could sit and be attentive. Several students sat in areas of the room that easily pulled them off-task. For example, a handful of the boys always sat in the back corner of the rug next to the computer. These boys often times were spoken to for talking to one another, and the topic of their conversations generally revolved around what was on the computer screen, or laughing at one another because they were being silly and playing with computer cords.

Three specific students were always receiving warnings due directly to the area that they chose to sit. Two of the students always sat near the tin paper shelf or the filing cabinet, both of which make a lot of noise when they are tapped on. I had to stop and speak to them several times about not making noise by tapping. Along with these two, one student always sat next to the shelf where the whiteboard erasers were stored. As soon as I began the seating chart, these problems disappeared. Since the seating chart has been in effect, none of these students have received warnings for being distracted by the things around them, simply because I placed them in areas of the room where they were not next to anything that might tempt them to turn their attention away from the teacher.

Claim 3: Management tools, such as proximity control and using nonverbal cues, had a negative effect on increasing student engagement.

I was surprised to find that both of the management tools I focused on using seemed to fail. During cycle two, I focused on using proximity control, moving students so that they were sitting near the front of the room and directly in my vision. During the third cycle, I focused more on using non-verbal cues to try and cue students before they acted out enough to receive a warning or before they were pulled into the off-task behaviors of a nearby classmate. Interestingly, these two cycles turned out to be the two when the highest number of disruptions occurred. 20% of the total times I had to stop instruction to speak to the students were during the week when I used proximity control. Following closely behind was the week that I used non-verbal cues to control behavior. During this cycle, 19% of the total disruptions occurred. (See Appendix P).

When I sorted through my data, I found remarks students made when I asked them to sit up front or when I used non-verbal cues. Appendix R shows an observation I made after I asked a disruptive student to sit in front me as they students were coming back to the carpet. The student remarked, “Why should I? I don’t have to. I’m still not going to listen.” After he looked around the class to see who was watching, he began to laugh and said “no. No. I’m not listening. I don’t care.” He continued seeking the attention of his peers until I sent him back to his seat. This is just one of several examples that showed me these management tools had a negative affect than the one that I was seeking.

Claim 4: Taking steps to prevent disruptions before they occur is much more effective than finding a means to extinguish a disruption after it has taken place.

During my study, I tried several different methods change student behavior and decrease the number of disruptions. When I tried strategies from week to week, it seemed they were not working well. For example, the weeks that I used proximity control and non-verbal cues ended up being the two weeks with the highest number of disruptions.

Before I began the study, I had unclear carpet rules and inconsistently gave consequences for being disruptive. The students tested this by pushing as far as they could before being sent back to their seats. When they were sent to their seats, they argued and refused to go. As soon as I discussed the rules, consequences and rewards with the students, they knew exactly what I expected of them. From that point on, there was no arguing about leaving the carpet or inconsistencies with consequences.

After I created the seating chart, the data showed that the students disrupted the fewest number of times. The sixth and seventh week were the two weeks where I was able to have the most instructional time with the students because of the low number of disruptions.

Overall, by taking preventative measures, it seems a lot of the disruptions would have been non-existent. By choosing where students sit in the room, and with whom they sit, it decreased the number of disruptions. By creating clear rules and consequences, there were no disruptions to argue about a rule that students weren't aware of or a consequence that wasn't fair. Taking preventative measures before there is a chance for any disruptions to occur is important.

XI. Implications for Future Practice as a Teacher:

I have learned several things from this inquiry. First, I have learned the importance of seating in a classroom. I see now that there are several factors that can affect the way students learn or affect how engaged they are in a lesson. I have learned ways to eliminate some of these factors. In my own classroom, I will set up my room in a way that the least amount of distractions are near the carpet area. For example, I will try to work around placing computers, cabinets, and other distractions on the carpet. I will also create seating arrangements if I see a problem developing in my classroom. This year, I waited too long to develop a seating chart. Now that I have, the students are already involved much more when they are on the carpet. I cannot wait to have my own classroom to try these things with in order to help keep them engaged and on task as well.

I have also learned how important it is to set clear, high expectations. Being proactive to prevent disruptions before they occur is important to managing a classroom. After I began the behavior chart, students knew exactly what I expected of them when they were on the carpet. I learned the importance of taking student input to develop rules and consequences, so that they are meaningful to them as well as myself. With the rules posted on the wall, the students always knew exactly what I was looking for. In my own classroom, I will create rules with my class on the first week of school. Creating them later in the year may have been less useful because the students already knew the way that I responded to different behaviors. By creating the rules right from the start, I feel I will have a much more successful teaching career.

I have learned the importance of experimenting with new methods of teaching and management tools within a classroom. Although I have not yet found a strategy that

works extremely well in my room, I am still searching for ways to do so. In my own classroom, I will try to be more open-minded to different types of management techniques and strategies, and try each of them out in my classroom. Finding several strategies that work well is the best way I see to manage a class. The most important thing is to find what works best with your group of students.

XII. New Wonderings:

Although I have found answers to some of my questions, I have many new wonderings as well. The answers I have found are specific to my second grade classroom at Radio Park. When I move on to my own classroom, I cannot go into the room assuming that all of these findings (or that any) will hold true. What I can do is focus on my new wonderings to further my understanding of engaging students during carpet time activities and lowering the amount of disruptions. In addition to my original wonderings, here are some new wonderings that I have started thinking about:

- Is it possible to spend too much time on the carpet? Should the activities be held elsewhere?
- What management techniques work best with which grades? Does it matter?
- How can I make each student see the importance of being engaged during carpet time?
- Is it possible to make them aware of the fact that when they get off-task, others around them do as well?
- Is it appropriate to use rewards to help engage students in activities? What types of rewards?

XIII.**Bibliography:**

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