Can We Nip Blurting in the Bud?

The Effects of Clear Questioning

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Description of Teaching Context

Our Area

As Professional Development School interns, we worked in primary settings in self-contained 1st and 2nd grade classrooms at Radio Park Elementary during the 2008-2009 school year. Radio Park Elementary is part of the State College Area School District. The school contains three first-grade classrooms and four second-grade classrooms with approximately 20 students per classroom.

Monica’s Class

My class of first graders is composed of eleven girls and eight boys (19 students in all). Five of my students receive additional reading instruction in the mornings when we usually have calendar math. Of the remaining students, several perform well above grade level in reading. With regards to math, one child attends second grade math (per parent request) and four regularly perform above average on math tasks. Most students are average though, completing math assignments at an expected speed and accuracy. Two of my students have significant difficulty with basic number concepts.

Overall my class is well behaved. The only children who are regularly disruptive are two restless boys. Their behavior is not so extreme that one would categorize them as having Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), but they have a lot of energy (as many young boys do) and are easily distracted. Therefore, they need frequent reminders to stay on task. I also have two children who require extra emotional support. Their response to frustration can be extreme and requires consistent teacher attention. Socially, my class has two above average students who are strong leaders. They often call out and are quite defiant when convinced that they are right about something. They are also prone to interrupting their peers in order to correct them. Four of my
students are pleasant and compliant students who have trouble completing work (need extra time, easily distracted) and two are truly always quiet and compliant.

**Casey’s Class**

My second grade classroom is made up of a wide variety of individuals who all seem to have their own learning abilities and styles. The class is made up of 10 boys and 11 girls, a relatively equal ratio as far as gender is concerned. According to the standardized test scores we have received, as well as observations made by my mentor and me, the class is working at grade level. In fact, 19 out of 22 students are on or above grade level in both mathematics and reading. Two of the students who are below grade level are English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, and go to ESL for support. The other is provided with learning support in language arts, as well as mathematics. No students in my class receive Title 1 support.

On the whole, my class is well behaved. The one behavior pattern that stands out in my classroom is my students’ chattiness. Many of my students find it very difficult to restrain themselves from calling-out during a lesson. They also struggle with keeping their thoughts to themselves during whole-group instruction or seatwork. They frequently talk to their neighbors throughout the day, no matter the subject or the educational setting.

**Rationale**

Blurting has been a persistent problem in our classrooms this year. As student teachers we have noticed this, our mentors and supervisors have noticed this, and our students have noticed this (see survey in Appendix C). According to a majority of our students, this behavior is distracting and makes students angry. Similarly, we believe that blurting interrupts our lessons and takes away other students’ chances to answer questions.
Through this inquiry, we hoped to refine our thinking so that we know precisely when calling out is appropriate and when it is not. Having this clearly defined in our own minds will hopefully help us become more clear and effective teachers. Furthermore, we hoped that using clear directives before asking a question would help students develop a clear picture about when calling out is appropriate, thus reducing the incidences of calling out in our classrooms.

Wonderings

Main Wondering

How can a teacher curb the incidence of blurting in a primary classroom?

Sub-Wonderings

• How can using clear directives reduce the number of students who blurt?
• What, if any, differences are there between grade levels?
• How does gender influence blurring?

Data Collection

Before - Preparing to Collect Data

Before we could collect data, we needed to gather evidence that our inquiry was of value, decide what strategies we would use to reduce calling out, and develop a method for collecting data. We began with a student survey. We felt that blurring was a problem in classroom, and our mentors agreed, but we wanted to find out what our students thought. To that end, our survey asked whether or not our students thought that calling out was a problem in our classroom and we asked how blurring made them feel (for specific questions and the results, see Appendix
C). The survey overwhelmingly showed that blurting was a problem in our classrooms, so we proceeded to collect a list of strategies that we hoped would help.

We hypothesized that students called out because they did not know that it was inappropriate. If this were the case, then clearly stating our intentions would reduce blurting. To ensure consistency, we collaborated to create a pool of clear directives that we believed would make our intentions clear to our students. We created our list of interventions from the suggestions of experienced teachers and educational research papers with the hope that these tested techniques would be the most successful. For our complete list of directives, please see Appendix D. When analyzing our lessons, we labeled a question a “clear question” when we used one of the directives in this list. The final step was for us to plan out how we would go about collecting hard data to document the results of our inquiry.

Blurting was interfering most with our instruction during large group lessons, so we choose to focus on large group lessons for our research. We further refined our scope to Calendar Math because it occurs daily in both first and second grade in our district. Although the activities are slightly different, the format, length, and general content (math) are the same in both grades. We also wanted to look at selected large group lessons each week to give our data more variety. Including other large group lessons makes our results more generalizable. Once we knew which lessons to analyze, we decided to use Studiocode as our principal means of collecting data.

Studiocode is a program used to analyze video data for recurring events. It was first developed for use in sports; for example, how many complete and incomplete passes were

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1 We did not administer a post survey because the purpose of this inquiry was for our own growth and change. The survey was only necessary at the beginning of the project to prove that the inquiry would be worthy of our time. For the rest of the inquiry we focused on results of the raw data, feedback from mentors, and our own reflections.
thrown in a game. For this project, we used Studiocode to analyze the number of times students called out during a lesson and to tally clear and unclear questions. The codes that we developed for purposes of data analysis are as follows:

- **B** – Boy blurt
- **G** – Girl blurt
- **N** – Neutral blurt (when several students are blurring at once - it is impossible to state a specific gender because a majority of the class is slowly getting off-task)
- **E** – Blurt (this recorded the total number of blurts, gender neutral)
- **C** – Clearly stated questions (questions with a verbal or non-verbal directive)
- **U** – Unclear questions (questions that might cause confusion because we did not state how we expect students to answer the question)

This was an effective way for us to collect data because we did not always have someone to tally the incidence of blurring or clear/unclear questions. In addition, we felt that it was valuable for us to analyze our lessons personally.

*During – Collecting Data Week by Week*

The first week of data collection served as a baseline for our inquiry. During this week, we did not implement the strategies that we developed for reducing calling out. We began implementing our intervention in the second week of the project and used the same strategies throughout.

Each week, we filmed and coded (used Studiocode to mark the incidence of) two or three Calendar Math lessons in both classrooms. Each lesson was 10-15 minutes long. We also found someone to complete a systematic observation of at least one large group lesson in our classrooms per week. These lessons ranged from mini-lessons on writing to half-hour social studies lessons. Some of the data was ultimately not included because of technical difficulties or
an incomplete data set; however, we were able to get good data for at least two lessons in each grade during all five weeks of the inquiry.

We generally coded our own Calendar Math lessons; however, to ensure consistency, we also coded each other’s lessons during the first week of the project. We met informally throughout the project to discuss coding issues so that we would deal with unknowns in the same manner. For example, at the beginning of the project, we found that there were times when a majority of our students began blurting/chatting at once, perhaps because someone just said something unexpected or told a joke. After discussing this, we decided to label such blurs as, “neutral blurts.” Coding a lesson involved watching it once in Studiocode and using our codes to mark the incidence of target behaviors as described earlier.

The list of strategies that we developed was long, so we made a point to review it regularly throughout the project. This was important because it was difficult to integrate all the strategies at once. Furthermore, some strategies were helpful only in certain situations. For example, some strategies were helpful for individual students who chronically blurt and disrupt instruction; however, they were not necessary most of the time. By constantly reviewing the list, we held our options fresh in our mind. This ensured that we were able to integrate as many useful phrases and gestures as possible.

After – Regular Reflection on Our Progress

Reflection was an important element of our data collection. We wrote weekly reflection journals throughout the project to help us prepare for partner reflection and as a way to monitor our own progress. The journals served as a place to record our feelings about the process, particular problems or successes, and our thoughts as to what our results might be. In retrospect, one can also see evidence of our growth as teachers in what we wrote. When we met at the end
of each week, we took time to enter our raw data into a spreadsheet and discussed our progress. This was an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of our technique and make necessary modifications. We also used this time to make sure that we remained consistent in the way we coded our data and treated students who were blurting.

Analysis Process

We began by entering our raw data into a spreadsheet. The numbers that we focused on were instances of the actions that we were coding for, namely, incidence of blurting for boys, girls, and neutral blurts, as well as the number of clear and unclear questions that we asked. This data was organized by week, classroom, and day. We also calculated the total number of blurts per lesson and the total number of questions asked. Using that information, we calculated two ratios that we used to analyze the effectiveness of our techniques. The raw data can be found in Appendix A.

We wanted to know how often students were calling out during lessons, because the more often they called out, the more problematic the behavior; however, tallying the number of times that a student called out was not a fair way to measure this. Longer lessons always had more blurts simply because long lessons provide greater opportunity for blurting. To fix this problem, we calculated the ratio between the number of blurts and the total number of questions asked. A high percentage indicated that students were shouting out answers to most of our questions. A low percentage indicated less blurting. We sometimes had lessons where this ratio was over 100% (Monica’s Calendar Math lesson on March 31st). In theory, this means that more than one student shouted out an answer for some of the questions – not an uncommon occurrence in a first grade classroom.
It was also important for us to look at whether or not we were increasing our clarity by providing specific directives to our students. To measure this, we calculated the ratio of clear questions asked to total questions asked (for a list of clear directives, see Appendix D). Again, this ratio was not dependent on the length of the lesson. If most of our questions were clear, then the percentage would be high, regardless of lesson length or whether or not a particular lesson lends itself to questioning.

To simplify the final analysis of our data, we calculated weekly averages of the four totals that we had for each day (blurts, questions, clear questions to total questions, blurts to questions asked). Based on those numbers and our own reflections (weekly journals), we began our final analysis by discussing what results we had expected and what we discovered. This discussion led to several potential claims, for example: over the course of the inquiry, our classroom management improved, and because we were better at managing whole group lessons, blurtirng decreased. To provide further support for these conclusions, we used our data to create the following graphs, which compare the two ratios that we calculated.

The graphs did not provide strong evidence for our initial claims, so the next step in our data analysis was to reconcile the differences between how we felt about the success of our project and what the data showed. We also needed to take into consideration facts about our class and our lessons that the hard data cannot show. For example, the incidence of blurtiri ng for a single
lesson was sometimes abnormally high because of a single child. This could result in a high incidence of blurting (80%) that would bump a weekly average of 20% to 60%. We tried to consider everything when composing our final claims.

Our data also provided information regarding our sub-wonderings. Specifically, we wanted to develop some claims about the effects of gender on blurting. To analyze this, we used data documenting the number of boys and girls who called out during a lesson to create two more graphs, one for each grade. These graphs clearly showed how often girls were calling out as compared to boys and how often the entire class lost control (neutral blurt). Please see Appendix B Figures 3 and 4 for these graphs. As with our previous data set, the results from first grade and second grade were somewhat different; however, we were able to combine the data with our observations and regular reflection to make claims in this area as well.

Explanation of Findings

Claim 1: *We used clear directives more often when asking questions at the end of this inquiry project than at the beginning.*

Evidence.

As we indicated in the data collection portion of this paper, we coded each question asked during video recorded lessons as either clear or unclear. Each of us showed a steady increase in the use of clear directives as the weeks progressed. Monica began week one of the project using clear directives 53% of the time, and ended in week five using clear directives 84% of the time. Likewise, Casey began asking only 23% of her questions with clear directives and ended performing these actions 84% of the time. Graphs depicting these finding can be found in Appendix B, Figures 1 and 2.
Claim 2: Using clear directives before stating questions improves our management of large group instruction.

Evidence

Figures 1 and 2 in Appendix B show the correlation between use of clear directives and incidence of blurting. The data for second grade clearly shows a decrease in the amount of blurs as the use of clear directives increases. Comments from our weekly reflections also show that we perceived improvement in our classroom management after using this intervention for a few weeks.

“Now, I have several tools that help me keep in control, even if students are shouting out answers. Furthermore, because I know what I expect, I also know what behaviors to ignore, and that response helps bring my students back on track.” – Monica, 3/28/2009

“The further I get into this inquiry project, the more obvious it is to me that kids really need consistency when it comes to a response to calling out. They don’t understand why I might answer some people and ignore others. Therefore, if I recognize someone’s blurt, everyone begins to blurt. If I wait for a quiet hand, my class generally remains quiet.” – Monica, 3/21/09

Our mentors (cooperating teacher) and college supervisors also noticed the difference. In Casey’s room, her management was so good that her mentor teacher wrote a letter to compliment her.

“You are doing such an amazing job! You’re really coming into your own! Such fantastic management skills.” – Casey’s Cooperating Teacher, 4/2/09

Likewise, Casey’s improved classroom management was noted in an observation by her college supervisor.

“It is good to see that you have found your comfort zone for appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Excellent!” – Casey’s College Supervisor, 3/19/09
Disproving Point

While the second grade data supports our claim that using clear directives before stating questions improves our management of large group instruction, we recognize that the data for first grade does not. By all accounts of professionals familiar with the first graders’ progress, it appears that two children in the classroom have influenced the data. These two children seem to struggle with controlling their impulse to blurt. On the whole, the class’s blurring has decreased, however, these two students drastically increase the number of blurts, therefore skewing the data.

Claim 3: Student age is related to the frequency of blurring.

Evidence

Whether focusing on the percentage of blurts, or on the number of blurts per person (split by gender), Figures 1-4 show that, on average, second graders blurt less than first graders. For instance, the highest blurring average for second graders was 12 blurts in week 1. During the same week, first graders blurted an average of 16 times. What is more, second graders almost always have a lower percentage of blurts than first graders. This leads us to believe that the difference in age between grades is a factor in the success of the directive interventions.

Disproving Point

Although a majority of the data indicates that second graders blurt less than first graders, the ratio of blurts to total questions was higher for second graders during weeks 1 and 2. As pointed out in the data collection portion of this document, interventions were not put into place until week two. This indicates that there was more blurring in Casey’s class at the start of the project. At the start of the interventions during week two, the second graders’
blurting decreased dramatically, while the first graders’ blurt remained constant. In week 2, the percentage of blurs to total questions for second graders was just over 1% higher than first graders. In weeks 3-5, second graders always blurted less than first graders. We believe this indicates that the second graders responded better to the intervention and feel confident stating that age affects how often students blurt during large group lessons.

Claim 4: Boys blurt more frequently than girls.

Evidence

Our data indicates that the boys in our classrooms blurted more often than the girls in our classrooms. Figure 4 illustrates that, although overall blurring decreased, the boys always had a higher number of blurs per week than girls. At its lowest point, boys blurted an average of 2 times more than girls in any given lesson.

Disproving Point

While the data in Figure 4 supports our claim, we also recognize that the data in Figure 3 does not. As shown in Figure 3, girls blurted more times than boys during week four. According to the professionals present in the classroom, this data was likely skewed by one female student who appears to have trouble controlling her impulse to blurt. In our minds, the influence of one student does not change the fact that, on the whole, boys almost always blurt more than girls in both grade levels.

Reflections and Implications for Future Practice

Monica

The most important lesson that I learned from this project is that good classroom management begins with setting clear expectations – in the teacher’s mind and the students’.
The trick is to make sure that these expectations are the same. Most people know that it is important to set clear learning objectives. I learned that teachers need to set behavioral objectives as well, because if my students aren’t behaving properly, they will never meet my learning objectives.

The data itself proved to me that clearly expressing my expectations is tricky but also critical to the success of a lesson. Knowing what I expect (and making sure that my expectations are reasonable) is not enough. I need to clearly express my expectations to my students. This is especially important in first grade because so much of what I teach is socialization. Ideally, being clear about what I want will enable me to be clear with my students, so that we are both striving to fulfill the same goals.

I also learned the value of consistency through this project. All year I have witnessed students testing their boundaries. By analyzing teacher language and its effects, I finally noticed that when students see that a teacher means what he/she says, they just do what was asked. They know that testing boundaries is fruitless. Consistency also creates an environment that is safer and more comfortable for students. A consistent environment is a predictable environment in which students learn not only that they are not allowed to call out but also that no one will interrupt them by calling out.

Casey

Upon reflection of this project, I find that the knowledge I have gained as an educator is indispensable. In the beginning stages of this inquiry, I set out to solve a problem that I felt was a present force in my classroom. The knowledge I have gained through the process, though, will come with me as I perfect my craft in years to come. I could not be more pleased with the outcomes of my study. I reached my ultimate goal: blurting in my classroom was reduced.
Aside from that, I have taken away a gift that I never expected—something that is possibly even more important to me. By participating in this study, I have become more aware of the way I ask questions, the directives I need to give, and how to better manage whole group lessons. In essence, I have been practicing using teaching directives that I believe improve the quality of my students’ learning. I have learned to use both the cues that work best for me, as well as, for my students. As a novice educator who truly values every opportunity for professional development, this experience has been priceless.

Through the video recordings and my reflections over the project, I have learned immense amounts about my students. I believe that it is important to have realistic expectations for 7-8 year-old children. As far as expectations go for my classroom, I now expect an overwhelming majority of my class to control themselves from blurting. Throughout this process, I have been able to pinpoint those students who do not seem as developmentally capable of controlling their impulses. One student in particular stood out to me over the period of this inquiry. I have implemented a behavioral modification plan with him as a result of my findings. This leaves me wondering, though, about what the expectations for any given grade level should be. I have developed strong expectations for these students in this particular class, but what about another second grade class? How might my expectations change if I were a 5th grade or Kindergarten teacher?

Overall, my data was conclusive, but some of our findings and disproving points have left me with new wonderings. I have thought much about how the male affinity to blurting might correlate with developmental progress and how age might come into play. Why, for instance, did my second grade class start out with a higher percentage of blurting than Monica’s first grade class? Likewise, why did the incidence of blurting decrease with my second graders while
Monica’s increased? We both improved our use of clear directives during those time periods; so, I am wondering if the difference in expectations for our classrooms should be great, even though the difference in age is only approximately one year.

In the end, this project was a wonderfully collaborative experience. It has left me with quite a few questions about the psychological and developmental implications of our results, but has rewarded me with knowledge that will, without a doubt, aid my future students’ learning. The inquiry has successfully allowed me to monitor my own teaching to better fit the needs of my students.
Appendix A – Raw Data

C – Calendar Math
W – Whole Group Lesson

Week One – Monica’s Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>C 2/24/09</th>
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<th>C 2/26/09</th>
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<td>~16 min</td>
<td>~5 min</td>
<td>~16 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blurt - girl</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blurt - neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question - clear</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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Week One – Casey’s Class

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C – Calendar Math
W – Whole Group Lesson

Week Two – Monica’s Class

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</tr>
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Week Two – Casey’s Class

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C – Calendar Math  
W – Whole Group Lesson

Week Three – Monica’s Class

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<th>W 3-19-09</th>
<th>C 3-20-09</th>
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</thead>
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<td>~16 min</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blurt - boy</td>
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<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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Week Three – Casey’s Class

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C – Calendar Math
W – Whole Group Lesson

Week Four – Monica’s Class

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Week Four – Casey’s Class

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C – Calendar Math
W – Whole Group Lesson

Week Five – Monica’s Class

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<td>~17 min</td>
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Week Five – Casey’s Class

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Appendix B - Graphs

Figure 1 – A comparison of the incidence of blurting to the use of clear questions during large group lessons

Figure 2 - A comparison of the incidence of blurting to the use of clear questions during large group lessons
Figure 3 – A graph of the incidence of blurting separated by gender

![First Grade Graph]

Figure 4 – A graph of the incidence of blurting separated by gender

![Second Grade Graph]
Appendix C – Survey

Survey for First Grade

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
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<td>Do you notice students shouting out answers during lessons?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you think that calling out is a problem in our classroom?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is calling out OK?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you feel when students shout out answers during lessons?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

- I think it’s funny.
- It makes me mad.
- I get distracted.
- I don’t care.
- I think it’s helpful.
Survey for Second Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you notice students shouting out answers during lessons?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think that calling out is a problem in our classroom?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is calling out OK?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do you feel when students shout out answers during lessons?  Circle any feelings that you have (you can circle one or more).

I think it’s funny.

It makes me mad.

I get distracted.

I don’t care.

I think it’s helpful.
Figure 1

**Pre-Test**

Do you notice calling out during lessons?

- **Yes**: 29
- **No**: 8

Figure 2

**Pre-Test**

Is calling out a problem?

- **Yes**: 31
- **No**: 7
Figure 3

**Pre-Test**

*Is calling out okay?*

- **No**: 19
- **Sometimes**: 16
- **Yes**: 2

Figure 4

**Pre-Test**

*How do you feel about calling out?*

- **I think it's helpful**: 0
- **I don't care**: 10
- **I get distracted**: 25
- **It makes me mad**: 24
- **I think it's funny**: 5
Appendix D – Inquiry Brief

**Context**

**Our Area**

As Professional Development School interns, we worked in primary settings in self-contained 1st and 2nd grade classrooms at Radio Park Elementary during the 2008-2009 school year. Radio Park Elementary is part of the State College Area School District. The school contains three first grade classrooms and four second grade classrooms with approximately 20 students per classroom.

**Monica’s Class**

My class of first graders is composed of eleven girls and eight boys (19 students in all). Five of my students receive additional reading instruction in the mornings when we usually have calendar math. Of the remaining students, several perform well above grade level in reading. With regards to math, one child attends second grade math (per parent request) and four regularly perform above average on math tasks. Most students are average though, completing math assignments at an expected speed and accuracy. Two of my students have significant difficulty with basic number concepts.

Overall my class is well behaved. The only children who are regularly disruptive are two restless boys. Their behavior is not so extreme that one would categorize them as having Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), but they have a lot of energy (as many young boys do) and are easily distracted. Therefore, they need frequent reminders to stay on task. I also have two children who require extra emotional support. Their response to frustration can be extreme and requires consistent teacher attention. Socially, my class has two above average students who are strong leaders. They often call out and are quite defiant when convinced that they are right about something and they are prone to interrupting their peers in order to correct them. Four of my students are pleasant and compliant students who have trouble completing work (need extra time, easily distracted) and two are truly always quiet and compliant.

**Casey’s Class**

My second grade classroom is made up of a wide variety of individuals who all seem to have their own learning abilities and styles. The class is made up of 10 boys and 11 girls, a relatively equal ratio as far as gender is concerned. According to the standardized test scores we have received, as well as observations made by my mentor and me, the class is working at grade level. In fact, 19 out of 22 students are on or above grade level in both mathematics and reading. Two of the students who are below grade level are English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, and go to ESL for support. The other is provided with learning support in language arts, as well as mathematics. No students in my class receive Title 1 support.

On the whole, my class is well behaved. The one behavior pattern that stands out in my classroom is my students’ chattiness. Many of my students find it very difficult to restrain themselves from calling-out during a lesson. They also struggle with keeping their thoughts to themselves during whole-group instruction or seatwork. They frequently talk to their neighbors throughout the day, no matter the subject or the educational setting.
Rationale
Calling out has been a persistent problem in our classrooms this year. Based on our research and observations in other classrooms, this seems to be an issue in most elementary classrooms regardless of grade. This behavior interrupts our lessons, can be distracting, and takes away other students’ chances to answer questions. The more we teach, the more we realize that we are confused as to when calling out is appropriate and when it is not. We now understand that it is unfair to expect students to control themselves when we as teachers are not clear and consistent in our questioning and when giving directions.

We hope that through this inquiry we will refine our thinking so that we know precisely when calling out is appropriate and when it is not. Having this clearly defined in our own minds will hopefully help us become more clear and effective teachers. Furthermore, we hope that using refined language helps students develop a clear picture about when calling out is appropriate, thus reducing the incidences of calling out in our classrooms.

The text, Principles of Classroom Management, states that calling out decreases academic learning time across grade levels. This supports our belief that this is an important inquiry project. Calling out also leads to a classroom environment that is suboptimal for each student’s success. We believe that regardless of where we are teaching next year, this project will help us become more comprehensible and successful teachers.

Main Wondering
Which strategies prove to be the most effective in reducing the incidence of calling out during whole group instruction in primary classrooms?

Sub-Questions
1. Do children call out because they do not know that it is inappropriate at that time because of unclear teacher instructions? Will refining our questioning (so that our intentions are clear) reduce calling out?
2. Is student age related to the frequency of calling out?
3. Do boys call out more than girls or vice versa?
4. What are reasonable expectations for primary aged students during whole group meetings?

Timeline
February
- Week of February 16th
  - Develop StudioCode codes
  - Practice coding data real-time
    - File name: date i.e. 2-2
  - Write student survey
- Week of February 23rd
  - Give a student survey to see if our students believe that calling out is a problem in our classrooms
  - Film and code calendar math 2 or 3 times in order to create a baseline for incidence of calling out
• Film and code our own lessons and code for 30 minutes of each other’s lessons each week.
  o Write down: when calling out is appropriate, when calling out is inappropriate, how will we signal our expectations to our students (the results of this discussion, specific interventions that we will use, are included at the end of this brief)

March
• Week of March 2\textsuperscript{nd}
  o Practice consciously refining our language as we teach whole group lessons
  o Film during calendar math 2 or 3 times a week; code using studio code (we code our own lessons and 30 minutes of each other’s lessons)
  o Fill out a checklist for incidence of calling out during a large group activity
• Weeks of March 16\textsuperscript{th}
  o Film each other during calendar math 2 or 3 times a week; code using studio code
  o Fill out a checklist for incidence of calling out during a large group activity
• Week of March 23\textsuperscript{rd}
  o Analyze the data and decide whether to continue with the same strategy or to begin implementing other behavioral interventions as well
  o Film each other during calendar math 2 or 3 times a week; code using studio code
  o Fill out a checklist for incidence of calling out during a large group activity
• Week of March 30\textsuperscript{th}
  o Film each other during calendar math 2 or 3 times a week; code using studio code
  o Fill out a checklist for incidence of calling out during a large group activity
  o Near the end of the week, complete a final analysis of the data to look for a correlation between boys and girls, age, incidence of calling out, etc.

April
• Week of April 6\textsuperscript{th}
  o Write the inquiry paper
  o Continue interventions in the classroom if they prove to be effective
• Week of April 13\textsuperscript{th}
  o Revise our initial draft of the inquiry paper
  o Prepare for the inquiry conference

Data Collection Ideas
• Survey students to determine if students perceive calling out as a problem before and after our interventions
• Use StudioCode to collect video data during calendar math that can be easily analyzed
  o Who calls out and how many times?
  o Is student age related to frequency of calling out?
  o Do boys call out more than girls or vice versa?
• Weekly reflection journals documenting our thoughts/feelings regarding the progress that we are making on with our inquiry project and the refinement of our language
• Anecdotal notes from mentors and PDA’s
• Checklist documenting incidence of calling out and teacher language filled out by our mentors/PDA’s during large group activities

Strategies for Refining our Practice
• Question starters that clearly convey our intentions
  o Raise a quiet hand if you think you know . . .
  o Touch your ear if you think you know . . .
  o I’m going to ask some questions now. I want you to think about them, and in a moment, I will tell you that it is time to raise your hand.
  o I will take ___ suggestions and then you will have the opportunity to share your thoughts with your neighbor.
• Non-verbal ways to clearly communicate our intentions
  o To indicate that we want students to raise their hands and wait to be called on: raise our own hand high as we are stating the question.
  o To indicate that we want students to shout out the answer: point at the students with both hands palm up as we are finishing stating the question.
  o To remind a student who has just called out that he/she needs to raise a hand: look the student in the eye and raise our hand.
• Strategies for keeping student energy at an appropriate level
  o Directly teach students how to be still and quiet when listening to others by practicing being still and quiet every day.
  o Think, pair, share (when everyone has ideas that they want to share).
• Things to keep in mind for consistency
  o Our ears don’t work for students who call out.
  o If a student shouts out a good answer that we don’t want to miss, use one of the non-verbal strategies to remind him/her to raise a hand.
  o If a student is consistently shouting out and disrupting the class say, “Because you have shouted out an answer ___ times, I can see that you are not ready to participate in this discussion, so for today, you are done. You can try again tomorrow, but for now I need you to sit in that seat.”
Appendix E – Annotated Bibliography


The person who posted this message originally was not specific about the calling-out situation in her classroom, aside from that her class is very talkative. I was surprised to see that many of the replies were requesting ideas for help as well. This leads me to believe that calling-out is a serious problem faced daily by teachers who are unsure of which techniques work best to control the problem.


A teacher who was seeking help for a child who was constantly calling out in class originally posted this message. She expressed that she had been trying a self-monitoring technique with the child to no avail. Many people wrote back with suggestions for how to solve the problem. What’s more, several responders spoke from personal experience, or expressed that they had similar problems and needed help as well. This document helps to prove that calling-out is a problem in many classrooms around the country, and that there are many different thoughts on how to solve the problem behavior.


This resource gives succinct strategies for refining questioning so that students understand the teacher’s intentions. The fourth suggestion, “cue students before asking a question,” is the most useful for our inquiry. It lists several phrases that one can start a question with so that students will know how to answer. It also explains when to use each of these phrases. This will be helpful when we are trying to articulate when calling out is positive and when it is problematic.


The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is an excellent source for information about pre-school and primary aged children. Their work is one of the defining factors in early childhood education. This paper summarizes child development (cognitive, social, emotional) and how it impacts performance in school. Perhaps more valuable are the statements of developmentally appropriate practice for primary aged children. Both good and bad examples of curriculum design and classroom management are included.

This article offers advice for teachers on developing discipline and communication skills of their students. Charney provides seven “cures” for bluters. These involve encouraging students’ ideas, allowing students to develop rules for meetings, and ways to deal with interruptions during class discussion. She also provides possible reasons for why children blurt impulsively. These ideas will be helpful when we begin to study why our children are impetuous.


Because it is also an inquiry project, this resource is very useful to us. It provides a model for our own inquiry paper as well as a jumping off point. Instead of repeating this study, we are able to learn from this PDS intern’s research and extend it to suit our situation. The bibliography provided suggestions for good resources. Especially helpful though was her finding that calling out is a problem in every grade. This supports our belief that this is a valuable topic to study. The think-pair-share strategy is also a tested idea that we may be able to implement in our own classrooms.


The section in this text regarding classroom management supports our theory that unclear teacher instruction contributes significantly to student misbehavior in the classroom. It also suggests several succinct suggestions for improving student behavior. Although it does not go into depth, this was a perfect resource for getting started and locating key search terms. It is also a good resource for educational psychology that might be helpful regardless of the direction our inquiry takes.


An important element of this inquiry is to define when calling out is helpful and when it is not. We need to understand the spirit of the law, so to say, in order to be fair in our enactment of it. This can be a nebulous task but Principles of Classroom Management makes it more concrete. It defines disruptive behavior and states what makes the behavior disruptive. The text also provides several suggestions for the refinement of our practice. It is cited in some of our other sources so we can be sure that it is reliable.

This article focuses specifically on behavior problem research for secondary schools. The author states that a majority of school interventions are done on primary-school children, and that similar behaviors from secondary-school children often go unstudied. The article presents the idea that undesired secondary students’ behaviors are typically more violent, but can be dealt with using the same types of strategies as minor problematic behaviors in the primary classroom. This is useful as it provides proof that our study is applicable at all grade levels. It also provides a frame of reference for implementing these strategies in a middle school classroom in the case that we are teaching middle school next year.


As an experienced teacher at all elementary grade levels, as well as the college level, Marion helped us come to understand that using clear, specific language is important for primary students, college students, and everyone in between. She provided us with several introductions to questions that she has found stop calling-out before it starts. She also expressed that teaching students how to be calm and quiet is worthwhile. While most teachers may ask their students to display these behaviors, the students might not actually know what that means. Recognizing when all students need time to share ideas (in a Think/Pair/Share or similar environment) is critical for Marion, as well. She feels that giving students time to share reduces their impulse to call-out.


The authors of this article focus on two areas of the behavior modification model: reinforcement and punishment. According to the authors, “Behavior modification techniques never fail. Rather, they are either applied inefficiently or inconsistently, which leads to less than desired change.” The article provides a wonderful outline for the steps necessary to provide successful behavioral intervention for our students.


This resource is an introduction to and summary of child development. The section on a child’s ability to self-regulate is of particular interest for us. We are looking at what is developmentally appropriate for primary students and this resource provides a picture of what one can expect from young children. It also gives a few neat suggestions for how to help children grow with regards to self-regulation. The fact that it is an introductory text limits its use though. For more in-depth information, we will need to search for the sources it cites.
13. R. Smith (personal communication, February 7, 2009)

As an experienced teacher, Rodger was able to help us concretize how to refine our questioning. We discussed the importance of being clear in one’s own mind about what is expected and why. Rodger also pointed out that being consistent, even when a certain behavior doesn’t bother us, is critical. As a 5th grade teacher, he provides an interesting perspective for our inquiry. Although we are studying primary students, we hope to learn techniques that will benefit us regardless of the grade we are teaching next year. He will also be a useful contact as our project develops.


This document provides a thorough summary of the literature regarding behavior problems in the classroom. It contains several useful definitions of disruptive behavior and some suggestions for reducing calling out. A large portion of the literature review is irrelevant to our research, though. It has a heavy focus on violent behavior in schools across the country. This is more of a problem in middle schools than elementary schools, so many of the management techniques are geared toward upper elementary students.

15. Schneider, B. (personal communication, January 29, 2009)

As a child psychology student at the Pennsylvania State University, Brian has done much research concerning behavior management strategies in the classroom. He has given us several management ideas, as well as information on how to perform behavioral assessments. What’s more, he has provided us with several suggestions for external rewards. This information provided will certainly aid in developing interventions for individual students when that becomes necessary.


The authors in this article suggest that distracting and disruptive behaviors happen more frequently in the classroom than severe behaviors and have a detrimental effect on instructional quality. In four phases, the article describes a procedure that can be used to fundamentally assess problem behaviors in the classroom. These phases will become incredibly valuable when analyzing data on an individual student basis.


While we are not planning on investigating calling-out from children with ADHD specifically, this article does indicate why children might act impulsively. The article goes on to provide solutions within the classroom, as well as at home. These solutions are as simple as hanging a poster of classroom rules to negative reinforcement by guardians. The solutions provided by this article may prove to be useful with our students who call-out, regardless of whether they have ADHD or not.

Although we will be first looking at refining our questioning, this resource lists a wide range of behavioral interventions that we might ultimately need to directly influence the incidence of calling out in our classrooms. One helpful feature of this resource is that it orders the strategies from least intrusive to most intrusive. We believe that the least intrusive successful strategy is the best strategy to use. This menu makes it easy to find the least intrusive but successful intervention.


This resource suggests 10 succinct strategies for behavior management in elementary classrooms. It is particularly helpful for us because the suggestions are simple and exactly what we would like to try when we decide how to refine our practice for this inquiry project. Most other resources do a good job of defining problem behaviors and giving general strategies, but they are not specific to reducing calling out. Wright lists specific phrases that one can use so we will know exactly what to do.


Our goal is to become more effective with our teacher language, and effectively posing questions seems to be a natural aspect of that. This webpage gives a list of tips about how to question effectively so that children will not get mixed messages from the teacher. The author also presents common teacher errors that lead to reduced effectiveness, such as posing a command as a question or being vague in wording.