

**Addressing Challenging Behaviors in the Classroom: A Manual to Enhance Teachers' Understanding of  
Challenging Behavior, Causes, and Evidence-Based Behavioral Management**

Kylee A. Howell

Department of Occupational Therapy, Indiana University

**Author Note:**

There are no conflicts of interest to disclose.

### **Acknowledgements**

My final journey at Indiana University's doctoral occupational therapy program would not have been possible without the help, support, and encouragement of those who always believed in me and helped me to achieve the best of my ability. To each, I would like to extend many thanks and express my gratitude.

To Dr. Terry Petrentrik, thank you for always making yourself available and offering your invaluable wealth of knowledge in supporting me throughout this capstone project. Thank you for being committed to my education and professional development.

To Ben Anderson and all of the teachers and staff at South Central Schools, I want to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation for participating in my project and being so welcoming to me as a graduate student in your school. Without each of you, I could not have created a successful capstone project. I hope our paths cross again someday, as it was a pleasure working alongside you.

To my family and friends, I am forever indebted to you for pushing me, encouraging me, and being my rock throughout the entirety of my graduate school career. I am so blessed by each and every one of you and thank God each day for you. If it were not for you all, I would not be where I am today.

### **Abstract**

Challenging behavior is frequently seen in classrooms across the United States, and schools are in a unique position to support students beyond that of academic achievement through fostering safe, welcoming, and positive learning environments conducive to all students. In a school-based setting, occupational therapy plays a role in helping to create positive learning environments for all students and using holistic, whole-child approach to care. This means advocating for the understanding that in order to optimally learn and be successful academically, a child's personal needs beyond that of the classroom setting should be considered. The purpose of the project was to encourage the use of a contextual, whole-child lens that accounts for a child's stage of development, environmental, sociocultural, physical, emotional, and cognitive factors that should be taken into consideration in order to compassionately and supportively guide a student through times of adversity. This study was a 14-week experience and used both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess and evaluate the need for and the value of a behavior management manual. The capstone student created a research and evidence based behavior management manual that was distributed at the end of the capstone experience. The results of this study propose that the behavior management manual that was created has value, will leave long-lasting effects, and will change perspectives of teachers and staff on challenging behaviors for years to come.

*Keywords:* challenging behavior, school, academic achievement, positive learning environments, whole-child

**Table of Contents**

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
Site Description	8
<b>Needs Assessment</b>	<b>9</b>
Pre-Interview Summary in April 2022	9
On-Site Interview Summary in January 2023	10
Gap Analysis	11
Problem Statement and Purpose	12
<b>Literature Review</b>	<b>12</b>
Role of a School in Behavioral Management	14
Barriers to Managing Challenging Behavior	15
Effects of Challenging Behavior	17
Phases of Acting Out Behavior	18
Best Practices For Classroom Behavioral Management	19
Best Practice for Individual Behavioral Management	21
<b>Guiding Theoretical Model</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Capstone Plan, Process, and Evaluation</b>	<b>27</b>
Capstone Plan: Goals and Objectives	27
Capstone Process Overview	28
Capstone Evaluation	28

ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR	6
<b>Capstone Implementation</b>	<b>29</b>
Capstone Timeline: Weeks 1-4	29
Capstone Timeline: Weeks 5-9	29
Capstone Timeline: Weeks 10-14	31
Development of Behavioral Management Manual	32
Initial Survey Data Collection and Analysis	33
Final Survey Data Collection and Analysis	35
<b>Capstone Discussion and Impact</b>	<b>36</b>
Capstone Discussion	36
Capstone Impact	37
<b>Capstone Sustainability Plan</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Appendix A: Initial Needs Assessment</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Appendix B: Final Needs Assessment</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Appendix C: Student Learning Plan</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Appendix D: Survey Questions</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Appendix E: Survey Results</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Appendix F: Implementation Team Sustainability Survey</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Appendix G: Implementation Team Sustainability Survey Results</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Appendix H: Behavior Management Manual</b>	<b>61</b>

## Introduction

### Importance of School Support and Impact of COVID-19

The importance of supporting students in schools goes far beyond that of academic achievement and success. School is where a child spends a large portion of their day; therefore, schools offer a unique ability to create a positive learning environment that is attentive to the multicausal development of a child, including social, emotional, behavioral, physical, and mental health needs in order to promote a student's highest level of academic success (Nichols et al., 2017). There is an intersection between socioemotional learning, behavioral management, and mental health and their impact on academic success. This intersection can be seen in an article that assessed how youth were affected by COVID-19, which created substantial change in a child's participation and engagement in meaningful occupations, such as play, leisure, social participation, and education. This in turn exacerbated the risk of acquiring a mental health condition due to the negative impacts of the pandemic and the sudden change in daily routines (Chien, 2022). In one study, 114 children and their parents completed the Participation and Environment Measure for Children and Youth and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire in a school-based setting. It was found that due to the pandemic, children had increased externalization of problems due to decreased involvement in school and community activities. It was also found that children presented with decreased social behavior due to decreased participation in all activities (Chien, 2022).

With the increased mental health concerns, comes more challenging behavior, something that teachers and staff at South Central Schools are seeing impact classroom environments more often. Research has also shown that due to COVID-19, students have experienced disruption in multiple areas of daily function, including differing methods of learning, interacting with others, and were challenged with facing big emotions from the effects COVID-19 not only on them but their families, too (Kearney & Childs, 2021). With this in mind, educators and other school staff, including occupational therapy, need

to better understand various behavioral and mental health disorders, how they can exacerbate challenging behaviors in the classroom, and understand the importance of social, emotional, and behavioral practices and strategies to further enhance a positive, nurturing classroom environment for all students.

### **Role of Occupational Therapy**

In a school-based setting, occupational therapy plays a role in helping to create positive learning environments for all students. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which went into legislation in 2015, ensures that all students, no matter their demographic background, have equal opportunity to succeed and receive quality education within an academic setting, holding schools responsible for how students learn and achieve (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Occupational therapists value a holistic approach to care with an emphasis on looking at the whole child. Currently, the profession of occupational therapy is working towards providing services to students beyond medical and developmental concerns and disabilities to include students at risk for learning and socioemotional concerns (Bayzk et al., 2022). Occupational therapy works with students to support skill acquisition, promote overall health and well-being, enhance feelings of competency, and improve occupational performance and participation (Cahill & Beisbier, 2020). Though it is important for a student to succeed academically, it is important to understand that socio-cultural influences and other personal factors a child is experiencing may impact their ability to effectively learn and perform within the classroom. Occupational therapists explore a dynamic approach to helping students succeed in the classroom by taking into consideration all children's culture, values, beliefs, environments, and contexts and assessing how each is influencing the child's daily life, well-being, and academic success (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2017).



**Site Description**

This capstone project setting was located in Union Mills, Indiana at South Central Schools. Union Mills is in the northwest portion of Indiana, in between the cities of Chicago, Illinois and Fort Wayne, Indiana. South Central Schools is established in a small town, rural community. South Central's school building houses kindergarten through twelfth grade, with elementary, middle, and high schools each having their own wings of the building. There are approximately 950 students at South Central between the grades of K-12. This school is also a traditional public school. Living in the community myself, it is clear that the community in which this school is located is very close-knit due to the nature of a small population and generations upon generations of families. The community greatly values its Christian and Catholic affiliations. Being in a small, rural community, resources around the school in the immediate area are limited. For example, the nearest park, outside of the school playground, is eight miles from the school, and the nearest hospital, doctor's office, and grocery store are about twenty minutes away.

At South Central, their mission closely relates to the values of the community, as well as the importance of community in the success of South Central students. The elementary school mission is to "provide a safe, caring, positive learning environment with a solid academic foundation focusing on reading and math. South Central, family, and community will collaborate to prepare students with the life skills needed to be successful lifelong learners in an ever-changing society" (South Central, 2023). The middle and high school mission is to "collaborate to prepare students for the 21st century by providing opportunities for students to practice democratic ideals, develop intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and lifelong decision-making skills while striving for high levels of performance" (South Central, 2023).

## Needs Assessment

### Pre-Interview Summary in April 2022

To complete the initial needs assessment, an interview was conducted with South Central's high school superintendent via a Google Team meeting. To begin, the superintendent was asked what challenges and barriers the school is currently experiencing in providing an inclusive, well-rounded education to all students. The superintendent replied with the recent mental health crisis that students of all ages are experiencing that has only been exacerbated by COVID-19. It was identified that students at the greatest risk are those who are most significantly impacted by disruption in family life, familial stress, falling behind in education, bullying, and in decreased social participation. It was stated that South Central is taking steps in addressing youth mental health, such as having a social service advisor on staff, who has in turn helped create effective individual and group-based services for children in need, but this caseload continues to grow. Currently, most students are referred to the social service advisor by teachers when they notice a student is behaving differently than normal, acting out, or suddenly disengaging with peers and in the classroom. However, they were still looking for mental health resources and ways to increase the stability of students after the long-term effects of COVID-19 continue to settle in. Next, it was asked what potential areas of focus need to be addressed. Within mental health, it was identified that cases related to bullying, COVID related bereavement, falling behind in school due to online classes, and disruption in home life were areas that has greatly impacted student mental health. Teachers had also recently completed an adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) training program to promote education on childhood trauma.

South Central seeks to help the children in this school system and provide them with resources and programs that help a child feel safe and heard and receive support and encouragement. With an increasing need, the superintendent hoped to implement a mentorship program to enhance the well-being of students at the school. The stakeholders that will be directly impacted by this capstone

project are students and community members. Indirect stakeholders include teachers, other school staff, and family members.

### **On-Site Interview Summary in January 2023**

To complete this interview, the superintendent, the middle/high school principal, and the elementary school counselor were interviewed in person. This interview served to see what has changed since the initial interview. It came to my attention that South Central has been effectively implementing a mentorship service called “Big Buddies.” With a decreased need for a mentorship program due to the new program's success, questions were asked to further assess the needs of the school. It was mentioned that mental health is still a concern in terms of teachers and staff understanding and identifying how it is displayed in the classroom through behaviors. South Central's newest concern has moved more towards creating effective strategies to address disruptive, distracting behaviors in the classroom by implementing knowledge of mental health conditions, emotional and behavioral disorders, and learning disorders, effective classroom modification strategies, and the intersection between socioemotional learning, behavior management, mental health, and academic success. Though challenging behavior in the classroom is typical from kindergarten to eighth grade, South Central has seen an increase in this behavior after COVID-19 struck. It was stated that teachers are not required to complete training on conditions that may be impacting a child's academic success or training that helps teachers identify warning signs and triggers of behavioral outbursts and strategies to decrease or prevent those behaviors. It was also stated that teachers may benefit from having a list of evidence-based strategies to promote learning and prevent acting out in the classroom by understanding the predictability of the behavior or overcoming challenging behavior when it occurs.

By the end of the interview, three main priorities for the project had been identified. The first is identifying common mental health and behavior disorders that affect classroom participation and discussing their signs, symptoms, and common triggers. The next priority is creating a module on

behavior, the phases of behavior, and strategies to identify the root of behaviors. The final priority is addressing strategies that teachers can use with a child to promote attention and success in the classroom, such as socioemotional learning activities, environmental modifications, mindfulness activities, and self-regulation activities. With all these in mind, as the school moves toward the Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework, it was also important to use this framework to drive the decision-making process throughout this project to promote a holistic approach to student well-being in South Central's school environment. MTSS is a comprehensive, whole-child framework used by school organizations that takes into consideration academic, behavioral, social-emotional, and absenteeism concepts to support all students within a school (Rosen, n.d.)

### **Gap Analysis**

Teachers and staff at South Central already inspire positive learning environments for all students, but they are continuously looking for ways to improve and enhance these environments to help each student maximize not only their academic success but also their overall health and well-being while encouraging each to dream big, lead well, and believe in themselves. With this in mind, South Central is looking to fill the disconnect between the intersection of socioemotional learning, behavior, mental health, and academic success by committing to learn more about how they can effectively manage behavior and promote overall well-being in the classroom through learning more about the conditions and disorders their students face and how they can walk alongside these students and meet them where they are at. It has been identified that teachers want access to resources and strategies they can provide children to help them overcome adversity, as well as ways in which they can effectively manage and communicate with children who are misbehaving in their classroom. Not only do the teachers want to help the student presenting with challenging behaviors succeed, but they also are concerned about how the other students in the classroom may be affected by interrupted instructional time.

**Problem Statement and Purpose**

Current behavioral management practices within the classrooms at South Central can be improved to enhance a holistic view of a child in order to better understand challenging behaviors presented in the classroom. The small nature of this school becomes advantageous: students are seen, students are heard, and when a student begins to perform outside of their norm, they are noticed. South Central values this and proactively helps immediately as soon as students begin to fall through the cracks. The purpose of this capstone is to help South Central further identify, better understand, and further empower teachers to effectively manage challenging behavior in the classroom by creating an educational manual on what challenging behavior is, giving information on the most prevalent mental health, learning, and emotional and behavioral disorders, understanding the seven phase acting out cycle, and equipping teachers with evidence based strategies to implement with a child to prevent or overcome challenging behavior. This project aims to optimize student success within the classroom, as well as beyond it, by addressing the challenges and adversities children face and equipping them to appropriately manage strong emotions and feelings to promote lifelong skills. The project also serves as a resource and tool to equip teachers with the understanding of challenging behavior, how to identify the cause, and how to provide evidence-based strategies to students.

**Literature Review**

Behavior is described as an observable response that is an outward manifestation of an individual's internal thoughts, emotions, and perceptions (Delahooke, 2019). Broken down further, challenging behavior can be described as repeated patterns of behaviors that impact a student's optimal ability to learn, engage, perform, and participate within a classroom environment (Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children, 2017). Examples of challenging behaviors include, but are not limited to, avoidance of activities, off-task behavior, classroom rule violations, aggression, crying, social withdrawal, escaping, inattentiveness, and defiance. According to the Polyvagal Theory by Dr.

Stephen Porges, behavioral responses are indicative of how an individual's nervous system, both parasympathetic and sympathetic, is regulating its response to stress (Porges, 2009). Challenging behavior is oftentimes more than just acting out for attention, typically, challenging behavior stems from mental health issues, learning disabilities, or emotional and behavioral disorders that impact a child's ability to remain focused and attentive during instructional time (Danielson et al., 2021). When a child feels as though they are unsafe, it is important to remember that their underlying, physiological state is linked to their social behavior, and the environment also impacts the physiological state. When this occurs, the body is responding in a physiological state that is protective and defensive, rather than in a state that allows for appropriate intellectual competencies, such as focus, attention, and interaction (Porges, 2009).

Whether short term or ongoing, frequent or infrequent, challenging behaviors can become difficult for educators to manage and remedy in their classroom. It is vital to understand that behaviors may not be challenging due to educational learning but rather something that is occurring within the student or beyond student boundaries (Marsh, 2016). Behaviors that present as a challenge in the classroom can be externalizing or internalizing behaviors, and each can be associated with various conditions and disorders. Externalizing behaviors, such as impulsivity and shouting, are actions that are directed outwardly into the environment, while internalizing behaviors, such as inattentiveness and frequently falling asleep, are those that are directed inwardly to an individual (Marsh, 2016).

The most common conditions or disorders seen in a classroom setting in students in kindergarten through twelfth grade include attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), conduct disorder, generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), social phobia, major depressive disorder (MDD), panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and separation anxiety (Danielson et al., 2021). Despite the symptoms and physiological and psychological effects it can have on a child, and though important to know the inner workings of

these conditions, it is just as important to remember to look at the underlying causes that are relevant to both behavior and these conditions (Delahooke, 2019). When looking at behavioral engagement in the classroom, a contextual lens that accounts for a child's stage of development, environmental factors, and sociocultural factors, as well as physical, emotional, and cognitive factors should be taken into consideration in order to view the child holistically and beyond that of a school setting in order to determine why the behavior is occurring.

### **Role of a School in Behavioral Management**

The role of a school working with children on overcoming big emotions and teaching them how to effectively overcome them or prevent outbursts becomes an integral part of creating positive, inclusive learning environments. Across the nation, a child in the United States spends, on average, 6.5 hours in school per day (Cahill & Beisbier, 2020). Therefore, this puts schools in a unique position to address a student's needs beyond those of academics. Schools like South Central, centered in a rural community, are oftentimes the center of community activity and involvement and are valued for their ability to create a sense of belonging and connectedness while fostering resilient, lifelong learners. However, within rural communities often comes decreased access to mental health providers, behavior specialists, and other specialized professions (Nichols et al., 2017). In one study, it was found that children who have lower socioemotional and behavioral risks are more engaged in instructional time in the classroom, whereas those who present with increased psychological needs have a harder time remaining attentive (Saeki & Quirk, 2015). A school needs to help a child satisfy their psychological needs on top of their educational needs in order to best support a child's social-emotional and behavioral functioning.

For a student to be engaged in the classroom, it is important that these students feel safe, have a sense of belonging in the school environment, and feel supported when they are experiencing adversity. A strong foundation for helping children is created through feelings of love, safety, and connection in

relationships. When a caring adult acts as a child's emotional co-regulator, it leads to successful self-regulation within the child (Delahooke, 2019). Research shows that positive, supportive teacher-student relationships predicted lower levels of externalizing behaviors and served as a protective factor for students with high levels of internalizing behaviors from early to middle childhood (O'Connor et al., 2011). It was found that teachers who build quality relationships with their students are more likely to have provided children with socioemotional and behavioral support and students more frequently viewed teachers as a part of their support system when facing adversities both academically and in other areas of their lives (O'Connor et al., 2011). Ansari and colleagues (2020) found that teachers who reported closer relationships with their students, produced stronger outcomes in achievement, social-behavior, and educational values. When a student feels safe, welcomed, and understood, despite what they may be going through, it increases the likelihood that they will reach out for help or accept help when a teacher tries to help them overcome an overwhelming situation or problem behavior.

### **Barriers to Managing Challenging Behavior**

When it comes to identifying and managing challenging behavior, three common preconceived notions have been found. The first is that adults tend to fail to determine the root of behaviors before attempting to change them (Delahooke, 2019). Behaviors often extend beyond what one can see through observable behaviors to what is unobservable and hidden below the surface level. At a young age, it is commonly thought that children have the ability to connect and relate their thoughts, feelings, emotions, and actions with one another; however, the ability to connect these dots requires them to learn how to do so from caring adults. When behaviors are viewed as reactions and adaptations to how a child is experiencing the world around them and the model shifts from getting rid of a behavior to what is causing a behavior, behaviors tend to be better understood (Delahooke, 2019). Sometimes, a child's behavior is caused by their level of socioemotional development, and they are in need of relational help to assist them in working through their emotions, thoughts, and feelings.



Another barrier to addressing behavior is that one-size fits all, generalized approaches are used to help a child overcome behavior caused by strong thoughts and feelings (Delahooke, 2019). It is essential that children be viewed as unique individuals, accounting for their very own individual differences, when determining what strategy would be beneficial and effective in preventing or overcoming the behaviors the child presents with. Individual differences account for the individual's perception of the world through mind and body and how it impacts social and emotional development, emotional regulation, and behavioral control and management (Delahooke, 2019). This concept relates back to the Polyvagal Theory, showing that behavior is a reaction to something that is happening within or outside of a child's body and mind when they feel unsafe, uneasy, or threatened by something in their environment, otherwise known as neuroception. When a child feels unsafe, they respond defensively causing the body to act in survival mode, which decreases the brain's ability to focus on the task at hand. For a child to successfully socially engage, a neuroception of safety is required (Porges, 2004). Faulty neuroception can cause underreacting or overreacting to the environment, often depending on the child's history, which may have caused their nervous system to become vulnerable (Porges, 2004). Another common mistake made with interventions is that they often do not align with the developmental level of a child's social and emotional functioning (Delahooke, 2019).

The final mistake commonly made is that adults do not understand that there are optimal times for each approach to behavioral management to be attempted (Delahooke, 2019). It is vital to understand top down and bottom up approaches and problems. Top down processing takes place in the upper brain, and involves conscious effort, thinking, and planning in order to carry out an action. This is controlled by the cerebral cortex, specifically the prefrontal cortex, that plans motor actions, cognition, affection, and social behavior (Delahooke, 2019). Top down processing can be overridden by instinctual behaviors when a child feels unsafe or threatened. Bottom up processing takes place in the lower brain and is a human's innate survival response. These responses are instinctual, autonomic, and help one to

self-protect. This is controlled by the limbic system and the amygdala, which respond when a neuroception of threat leads to a stress response (Delahooke, 2019). When these two concepts are understood, the root of behaviors can be better identified and appropriately managed through interventions.

### **Effects of Challenging Behavior**

With the increasing need for behavioral management in the classroom, one research article stated that increased challenging behaviors have led to increased stress, decreased job satisfaction, and an increased likelihood of becoming burned out and leaving the job (Stevenson et al., 2020). Teacher burnout has been found to be more multidimensional than that of only occupational stress. It was found that student misbehavior plays the largest role in burnout, leading to increased negative attitudes and stress in classroom management and decreased feelings of achievement (McCormick & Barnett, 2011). It was also found that a teacher's ability to redirect or appropriately respond to challenging behavior plays a role in teacher attrition. However, it was noted that teachers are not required to learn or receive training on behavioral management, and those that are unable to manage their classroom in an effective manner report lower levels of job satisfaction in comparison to teachers who are confident in their ability to effectively manage their classroom, which has been exacerbated since the start of COVID-19 (Stevenson et al., 2020). For these reasons, it is important that a teacher has knowledge about student behavior and learning, as well as an understanding of behavior and evidence-based behavioral management practices, in order to decrease attrition and increase student learning outcomes. Students in classrooms that are managed well engage, remain more attentive to instructional time, and present with decreased disruptions in the classroom (Gage et al., 2017). It is just as important for a teacher to know about behavior and how it impacts their job, as much as it is important to know how to overcome burnout. Brasfield and colleagues (2019) found that K-12 educators reported lower levels of burnout and higher levels of job satisfaction when they actively participate in self-care and wellness activities.

Not only does challenging behavior affect and add stress to a teacher and their ability to create an optimal learning environment for all students, it also impacts other students in the classroom. In one article, it was found that students who experience more challenging behaviors performed by their peers negatively impact their achievement just as much as absenteeism would for that same student (Blank & Shavit, 2016). Whether it be talking during class or showing disrespect towards teachers and peers, disruptive behaviors in the classroom lead to decreased motivation to attend to classroom tasks and represent an increased need for effective behavioral management practices within classrooms. With disruptive behavior also comes decreased instructional times, which has an immediate effect on all students in a class and impacts their learning, as well as on the teacher and their ability to effectively lead instructional time (Blank & Shavit, 2016).

### **Phases of Acting Out Behavior**

There are seven phases in the acting out cycle: calm, triggers, agitation, acceleration, peak, de-escalation, and recovery. Each phase presents with different behaviors that are indicative of which phase a child falls in, which is also indicative of what types of evidence based strategies can be tried at each phase (Colvin & Scott, 2015). The calm phase displays behaviors that are cooperative and acceptable, such as maintaining on task behavior and engaging in instructional time and is the time in which students are most responsive and engaged. The next phase, triggers, presents with increased agitation due to triggers that are school based or non school based. The acceleration phase is characterized by unfocused and distracted behavior and an increased inability to manage overwhelming feelings. Behavioral responses in this phase can manifest as increased behavior, such as busy hands and off task and on task behaviors, or as decreased behavior, such as staring into space or contained hands. The acceleration phase is characterized by focused, staff-engaging behaviors, such as arguing or noncompliance. The peak phase is uncontrollable behavior, such as destruction or harm to self or others, causing instructional time to cease in a classroom. In the de-escalation phase, behavior becomes

confused with decreased focus and includes reconciliation, denial, or withdrawal, as the student reintegrates themselves in the classroom setting. The final recovery phase typically presents with an eagerness to work independently on busy work to regain a sense of calmness (Colvin & Scott, 2015).

It is easiest to manage behaviors in the first four phases, as these focus on a proactive approach to fostering student success by engaging them, teaching them appropriate behaviors, and preventing challenging behavior (Colvin & Scott, 2015). It is imperative to know that the behavioral cycle can be interrupted, which in turn prevents the next phase of the cycle from occurring. In order to identify acting out behavior, one must be able to analyze acting out behavior. There are four components to analyzing behavior: prerequisite academic skills, signs of agitation, the presence of an escalating behavior chain, and the presence of successive interactions (Colvin & Scott, 2015). These components work through the understanding that if a child is off task, they either need assistance with their work or they are experiencing thoughts and feelings that are bothering them. If it is not because of decreased mastery at a given task, signs of agitation should be assessed, as should other variables that may be contributing to off task behavior. Here, it is also important to understand the behavior chain and to determine which phase they are in so the behavior does not escalate. Behavior is prompted by preceding behavior. Without preceding behavior, behavior cannot escalate. When a preceding behavior does occur, this provides a stepping stone for further escalation (Colvin & Scott, 2015). Given high probability, evidence based strategies, there is a potential to build a student's self-confidence and independence when dealing with overwhelming emotions.

### **Best Practices For Classroom Behavioral Management**

Classroom behavioral management should align with social-emotional learning, Multi Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and trauma-informed practice to promote equity and inclusion and appreciate student diversity (Sprick et al., 2021). When it comes to best practice in the classroom, students that are in the calm phase are often being challenged, achieving academically, and are engaged

in instructional time making them less likely to display challenging behavior (Colvin & Scott, 2015). With this in mind, there are best practices and strategies that start with effective general classroom management aimed at keeping all students in the calm phase to promote optimal student performance.

One method of best practice is called CHAMPS and is a protective, positive approach to managing classrooms (Sprick et al., 2021). CHAMPS prioritizes seven, evidence-based approaches to effective classroom management: high expectations that promote student success, positive teacher-student relationships, creation of consistent, predictable routines, teaching students problem skills, and how to behave appropriately, provide praise frequently, and correct behavior calmly and compassionately (Sprick et al., 2021). Teacher proximity, praise, and pre-correction to triggers, otherwise known as the three P's, are effective in decreasing the frequency and recurrence of problem behaviors, increasing attentiveness to instructional time, and enhancing the quality of teacher-student relationships (Lampi et al., 2005). When a teacher is able to freely move around the room and is in close proximity to students, on-task behavior increases, as this allows for teachers to identify those that need help, correct them, and provide positive feedback (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005).

Consistency is key when creating a classroom routine and schedule. It has been found that routines provide a sense of predictability and structure in a student's day and decrease the number of interruptions (Lester et al., 2017). Routines in turn help with transition times, which can be quite dysregulating for some students, especially when they do not expect a time of change to occur. In order for routines to flow well in the classroom, expectations should be developed. Expectations are a crucial component of best practice, representative of individual student progress and challenging each to achieve academically and socially to their full potential (Landrum & Kauffman, 2006). Expectations ensure that a child feels safe and successful in their learning environment, further decreases problem behavior, and builds skills related to independence, self-management, and confidence.

**Best Practice for Individual Behavioral Management**

When it comes to personalized, individualized approaches to behavioral management, the root must first be determined. Challenging behavior can stem from one of three things: the child is experimenting with a developmental challenge, a child is encountering a stress response, or a child is displaying intentional misbehavior. Once the root is determined, one can determine the most effective strategy in empowering a child to return to a calm phase through the use of an evidence based coping strategy that the child can then use and continue to develop in the future as a tool for emotional and behavioral control. Effective strategies can be considered bottom up strategies or top down strategies, which is why it is vital to understand whether or not the behavior is stemming from the bottom up or top down (Delahooke, 2019). Before these strategies can be used, it is important that the teacher is self-aware and has the proper communication strategies to effectively assist a child through difficult situations.

***Importance of Being Trauma-Invested***

The first step to addressing challenging behavior is establishing a sense of safety and trust through positive, supportive relationships before addressing the behavior. In terms of teacher-student relationships, they are also strengthened when a teacher proactively supports a child by addressing their physiological and emotional needs and helping to moderate their stress responses in order to help a child access their top down thinking brain (Delahooke, 2019). Emotional regulation cannot occur without emotional co-regulation. When addressing problematic behavior with a student, it is important that a teacher has a trauma-focused mindset and approaches the situation with care and calmness. It is important to understand that how things are said are just as important as what we say (Delahooke, 2019). A caring adult's presence with a student is the first step in understanding what exactly a child is going through. Though it is difficult to address a student calmly when they have been causing disruption in the classroom, it is imperative that each situation be addressed compassionately and kindheartedly.

This requires being in tune with the nervous system and being in a calm phase to effectively communicate with and guide a student through adversity and challenges. However, in order for a teacher to react compassionately and provide optimal support to a student behaving disruptively, teachers need to have mindful awareness of their own therapeutic use of self. That is becoming aware of personal emotional upheavals, learning how to give oneself grace, how to calm oneself, and how to be emotionally present with the child's best interest in mind (Delahooke, 2019). When the neuroception of safety is present, social-engagement behaviors begin to unravel, for both teachers and students alike.

### ***Bottom Up Approaches***

Bottom up approaches are used to regulate physiological responses to stress. These approaches are aimed at making a child feel emotionally and physically safe and decrease the activation their brain is putting on their threat detection system (Delahooke, 2019). Bottom up approaches begin with making a child feel safe and then addressing sensory processing approaches. Sensory processing refers to how every individual responds to, interprets, and experiences environmental stimuli from any of the eight senses: auditory, gustatory, visual, olfactory, tactile, vestibular, proprioception, and interoception. According to Dunn's Sensory Processing Framework, every individual responds to stimuli differently based on their neurological threshold, and each individual also differs in how they self-regulate and manage sensory stimuli (Dunn, 2007). From this, four different patterns of sensory processing were developed: sensation seeking, sensation avoiding, sensory sensitivity, and low registration (Dunn, 2007). In the same article, Dunn states that every individual experiences sensory processing in their everyday life; however, children who are vulnerable have an increased likelihood of displaying extreme sensory patterns that interrupt their daily lives (Dunn, 2007). When a child's threshold is met, causing the nervous system to activate, challenging behaviors begin to occur, and even more so if a child does not know how to appropriately return to their baseline (Dean et al., 2017). Evidence-based sensory processing strategies teachers can implement include, but are not limited to, environmental

modification, movement breaks, sensory integration activities, heavy work, and social stories (Clark et al., 2019; Parham et al., 2019).

### ***Top Down Approaches***

Top down approaches address intentional behaviors that become habitual through connections in the prefrontal cortex and are driven by executive function (Delahooke, 2019). In order for top down approaches to be successful, bottom up approaches must first be understood by the student. For example, mindfulness techniques will not be successful if the student's social-emotional developmental level is not at the stage where they can recognize what their feelings are and why they are occurring. Examples of top down approaches are socioemotional learning and developmental skills and mindfulness.

It has been found that when a child feels safe, opportunities for growth and learning increase, which in turn allows for an increase in a child's resilience, ability to learn and engage in new experiences, ideas, and feelings (Delahooke, 2019). This concept is what is known as socio-emotional learning, or the process in which humans apply skills and knowledge for emotional and behavior control, build healthy relationships, set and achieve goals, make responsible decisions, and problem solve (Mahoney et al., 2018). When socio-emotional learning is ingrained in academic instruction, it leads to a shift toward success both in school, in the community, and within an individual's well-being. Children need to develop both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills to function effectively as an individual and as one building relationships with others, and these socioemotional development skills have been shown to be a protective factor in students at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders, as well as mental health disorders (Domitrovich et al., 2017). Social-emotional skill development has also been shown to decrease challenging behaviors, leave long-lasting, have positive impacts on a student overtime, increase academic efficiency and success, and lead to higher quality teacher and peer interactions (Domitrovich et al., 2017). Social and emotional skills can develop directly through interventions such as social skills



training or indirectly, such as being in a learning environment that promotes social and emotional competence. Evidence-based strategies that target social-emotional competence and learning include but are not limited to: identification of emotions, such as Zones of Regulation, social skills and awareness, such as problem solving and conflict resolution, emotional control, such as mindfulness, and attitudes toward self, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (Mahoney et al., 2018).

Mindfulness interventions can be used to manage stress responses, enhance one's ability to become more aware of what is occurring within an individual and in their environment, and are a way to self-regulate during times of distress. Mindfulness strategies were found to be effective for symptom reduction, increased executive function, decreased challenging behavior, and enhanced socioemotional skills (Perry-Parrish et al., 2016; Porter et al., 2022). Mindfulness strategies are also effective in leading to adaptive coping strategies, increasing self-awareness while decreasing feelings of anxiety and difficulties handling emotions, and increasing cognitive function, specifically impulse control and attention (Perry, Parrish, 2016). Evidence based mindfulness strategies include breathing techniques, body scanning, meditation, mindfulness walks, and yoga (Porter et al., 2022).

### **Guiding Theoretical Model**

The guiding theoretical model for this project consisted of two models: an ecological occupational therapy model, Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) and a school-based theoretical model, Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS) (Law et al., 1996; Rosen, n.d.). Together, these two models helped to inform the decision making process of this project to determine an effective, informative, and holistic approach to addressing challenging behaviors in the classroom.

### **Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO)**

PEO is a model that assesses the transactional relationship between three domains, person, environment, and occupation, and these domains impact occupational performance (Law et al., 1996). Occupational performance is the product of these three dependent domains and results from the

relationship between a person, their occupations and roles, and the environments in which they live, work, and play (Law et al., 1996). PEO encourages practitioners to look at the complexities of functioning within an individual and equips practitioners to help their clients find a balance between the three domains of PEO. When these three domains are unbalanced, this can lead to dysfunction or dysregulation. The person domain is dynamic and ever-changing and looks at the mind, body, and spiritual qualities and what skills and life experiences the person has. This domain includes self-concept, personality, cultural background, and personal competencies related to overall health and well-being, motor skills, and sensory capabilities and determines how a person interacts with their environment and their participation in occupation (Law et al., 1996). The environment domain assesses what is externally impacting a person. This includes cultural, socio-economic, physical, institutional, and social aspects of an environment in which the person is completing a task in. The environment influences one's behavior, but the same is true for one's behavior affecting their environment and their participation (Law et al., 1996). The occupation domain considers the activities, tasks, and occupations the person is participating in. Occupations are seen as what a person is doing in order to fulfill their intrinsic needs within the contexts of their roles and environments (Law et al., 1996).

Occupational therapists are uniquely equipped to assess and analyze a person, an environment, and activities and determine the relationship between the three components of PEO, which helps inform what a person needs to be successful in a given environment or specific activity. When the task-environment requires more than what a person is capable of, the task or environment may need to be adapted in order to increase successful participation (Bazyk, 2022). In the school setting, a child may display challenging behaviors due to an imbalance of these three domains. By using PEO to inform decisions made during this capstone project, educators can learn how to assess the environment and tasks given to their students, as well as remembering that, just like adults, children can be affected by more than just what occurs within the school walls. It is important to look at each of these components

to determine where the area of dysfunction is occurring in order to meet the child where they are and empower them to overcome the feelings or actions they may be displaying through challenging behaviors. PEO supports the school's vision to move toward Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS) in that each assesses and identifies what is occurring within and around a student to effectively determine how to support a child during a difficult time and promote optimal well-being and academic success.

### **Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS)**

The second framework used to guide the completion of this project is the Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS). This framework is also currently in the process of being implemented school-wide by South Central, so it was important that this project closely aligned with the constructs of MTSS, as it relates to occupational therapy, to align with the school's vision. MTSS is a comprehensive, whole-child framework used by school organizations that takes into consideration academic, behavioral, social-emotional, and absenteeism concepts to support all students within a school (Rosen, n.d.). MTSS is a framework designed to align with ESSA and was created to unify practices within a school setting to ensure that each and every student is receiving the same access to support and can thrive in a positive learning environment that is inclusive of all students (Rosen, n.d.). MTSS is designed to identify students who need additional support and allow teachers and staff to intervene more quickly. There are four components that MTSS accounts for in order to focus on the whole child: academics, behavior, attendance, and social-emotional learning (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020). Within the MTSS framework, there are three tiers of support. The first targets universal intervention, otherwise known as core instruction, where early identification, screening, and prevention are crucial. The second tier is targeted intervention given to individuals or small groups. The third is intensive intervention (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020).

MTSS is a framework of occupational therapists within a school setting to help develop and implement plans within a school setting to help all students succeed within the school environment. Within this framework, promotion, prevention, and intervention are all utilized by occupational

therapists. An occupational therapist's unique role in task analysis, modification of an activity or an environment, and skill development in all areas of occupations all become crucial in helping a child achieve their optimal health and well-being and, in turn, maximize their educational success (Bazyk et al., 2022). Within a school setting, occupational therapists can use MTSS to foster participation in a student's most meaningful occupations, promote overall health and well-being, provide individual or small group interventions, and equip and educate school personnel with the tools and resources they need to create positive learning environments inclusive of all students. For the purposes of this project, I will mostly remain at the Tier 1 level of MTSS in creating systemic change at South Central by providing teachers and staff with an educational manual on common mental health, learning, and emotional and behavioral disorders, the process of behavior, and how to help a child work through behavioral occurrences to address challenging behaviors in the classroom. I will then provide simple, effective, evidence-based strategies teachers can implement in the classroom to promote the success of students by taking a universal approach to more targeted interventions in Tier 2 of MTSS as it is important to remember the unique individual differences of every student in finding effective strategies.

### **Capstone Plan, Process, and Evaluation**

#### **Capstone Plan: Goals and Objectives**

The implementation process was on-going over the course of fourteen weeks. Prior to being able to begin the implementation process, a set of goals and objectives were developed to help guide the capstone process. The goals were created by the capstone student, and discussed with the capstone site mentor to ensure that the goals aligned well with that of the school's needs. The first goal consisted of the capstone student completing a literature review to help better understand challenging behavior, the neurology of it, and evidence-based approaches that can be used in a classroom setting. The second goal involved the creation and analysis of a survey distributed to K-8 teachers to understand lived, subjective experiences in regard to challenging behavior within this specific school environment. The final goal

involved discussion around how the behavior management manual can be sustainable for South Central. To view a complete list of the goals and objectives, the student learning plan is displayed in Appendix C.

### **Capstone Process Overview**

Upon arriving at South Central, the final needs assessment indicated that there was a need for educational material and resources on behavior and behavioral management in the classroom. Educators and administration staff at South Central have been growing increasingly concerned with the amount of challenging behavior displayed within k-8 classrooms. Once the needs assessments were completed with the superintendent, high school principal, and elementary counselor, a survey was created for teachers to further understand what teachers are facing within the classrooms at South Central when it comes to challenging behaviors. Upon survey completion, the survey was analyzed and used to determine what areas a behavior management plan for educators should focus on. Between the requests made by the administration and the needs and gaps found based on the survey, a behavior management manual consisting of what challenging behavior is, what disorders and conditions may cause challenging behaviors in the classroom and how they present, and strategies to improve challenging behavior were needed. These components are aimed to create a sustainable manual in which current and future teachers at South Central can use for years to come in overcoming challenging behavior in the classroom.

### **Capstone Evaluation**

Upon completion of the needs assessment, it was decided between the capstone student and site mentor that a comprehensive behavior and behavioral management manual would be beneficial for all educators at South Central. To determine if a behavior management manual for teachers would be impactful, a survey was created and sent out to all K-8 teachers. This is where the administration saw the greatest need for behavioral management practices to be implemented. The survey aimed to identify perspectives on behavior in their classroom, their confidence in addressing challenging behaviors, and

went on to ask if and what types of resources would be beneficial to each respondent. At the end of the capstone project, the behavior management manual will be presented to the staff and teachers who have been chosen to be a part of an implementation team to ensure the project's sustainability after the capstone student leaves. After the presentation and qualitative discussion of the manual with the implementation team, as well as discussing ideas for sustainability, each member of the team was asked to complete a brief survey on sustainability. After these steps were complete, the capstone student and site mentor distributed the behavior management manual to all K-8 teachers.

### **Capstone Implementation**

#### **Capstone Timeline: Weeks 1-4**

The first week of this capstone experience consisted of redoing the needs assessment after determining that the initial capstone project idea prior to coming to the site had already begun to be implemented successfully. The first week led to a new project consisting of developing a behavior management program for K-8 teachers to effectively address challenging behaviors often seen in their classroom. Starting in week 2, the first goal of the student learning plan, creating the literature review, began. The literature review consisted of learning more about challenging behaviors and the neurology behind it, how they impact both students and teachers, looking at the role of behavioral management in schools, potential barriers to effective behavior management, and finally, best practices. The literature review was completed by the end of week 4. The survey was sent out to K-8 teachers during week 3 of the capstone project, after completing a needs assessment with the administration of South Central and beginning the literature review. During week 4, the survey was closed.

#### **Capstone Timeline: Weeks 5-9**

During week 5, the behavioral management manual creation began, and half of the manual was completed by week 8. The behavior management manual began by defining what behavior is, what challenging behavior commonly presents as, and what must be understood in order to effectively

address challenging behaviors. The components used to help educators understand the process of behavior and why it occurs began with the seven phases of acting out behavior, using the iceberg analogy to understand what is seen above and below the surface of the water, and the stages of social emotional development. Finally, to further understand why challenging behaviors occur, the concept of neuroception was broken down and described, consisting of bottom up versus top down processing and the states of autonomic arousal. Next, the most common disorders and conditions seen within school age children were described, and the signs and symptoms were provided. It was noted in the manual that challenging behaviors in the classroom do not always warrant the need for a diagnostic label and that oftentimes, behaviors stem from the student not being at the developmental level or have been taught the appropriate skills to overcome the overwhelming emotions they are experiencing. Next, templates began being made to help teachers identify behavior triggers and the causes of behaviors. The survey results were used to help in the creation of some of these templates to better fit the specific behaviors seen within the classrooms at South Central.

Survey responses were analyzed during week 7, as well as presented to the site mentor. Survey results can be seen in Appendix E. In week 7, the workings of the behavior manual were also presented to the site mentor, as well as the administration staff, for the purposes of ensuring the manual aligns with the vision, is easily understood with valuable and necessary information, and left the floor open for any feedback or changes they would like to see. The response from the administration staff was excellent and full of praise, and it was indicated that at the halfway point, it was easy to understand and had all the information they were hoping to see. The only potential idea at this point in time was the concept of teacher burnout and potentially adding a section at the end of the manual on how to manage burnout and increase job satisfaction, as many teachers indicated their job satisfaction is impacted by the presence of challenging behaviors in the classroom.

**Capstone Timeline: Weeks 10-14**

During weeks 10-13, it was mostly spent creating the rest of the behavioral manual. The intervention session was created with explanations, videos, worksheets for students, and printouts. Interventions consist of bottom up and top down approaches that are all evidence-based. Bottom up approaches include environmental modifications, sensory activities, social stories, and conflict resolution. Top down approaches include body scanning, deep breathing techniques, grounding exercise, thought stopping, and Zones or Regulation. A section on stress and trauma was also created. This section went into detail on what stress and trauma are, how trauma impacts children, and how to communicate with a trauma-invested mindset. Lastly, as aforementioned, there was enough time to add a section to the manual that targeted educator burnout and self-care. This section described what burnout is, the signs of burnout, and what self-care is, and also provided a self-care challenge. Research was completed on burnout and added to the literature review section.

The final week of the capstone experience was aimed at creating a sustainability plan and presenting the behavior management manual. To start, administration and staff voluntarily offered to be on an implementation team. The purpose of this team is to be responsible for encouraging staff and teachers to use the manual and apply the information to students or themselves. A brief survey was created for the implementation team after the presentation of the manual. Each member of the implementation team participated in a qualitative discussion, one on one with the capstone student, to learn about the manual and become familiar with it. Afterwards, they were encouraged to complete the brief survey that asked about the value of the manual, the long-term effects of the manual, how they plan to implement the manual, and how they planned to evaluate its use and effectiveness over time. The feedback received during the qualitative discussions was very positive, and excitement was projected through each individual.



### **Development of Behavioral Management Manual**

During the needs assessment and survey, it was stated that the behavioral management manual would be most beneficial and better fit the needs of South Central if it were created and distributed digitally. By distributing the manual digitally, teachers would easily be able to access it on their computers, search for key terms, fill out templates, and apply information quickly. Keeping this in mind, the behavioral manual was broken down and divided into sections to make it easy to use.

The behavior management manual was 70 pages long and consisted of 7 topics: what is challenging behavior, developmental capacities and how the brain works, common diagnoses seen in classrooms, trauma and addressing challenging behavior, behavior identification, templates, and monitoring logs, evidence-based behavioral management strategies, and strategies for overcoming educator burnout. Each topic was developed with a client-centered mindset based on the needs and wants of the school. The first topic, what is challenging behavior, described what challenging behavior is, broke down emotion, relational, physical, and control needs children may commonly present with when causing challenging behavior, and explained the seven phases of behavior.

The second topic, developmental capacities and how the brain works aimed to describe the stages of socioemotional development, as well as neuroception. Visuals such as the developmental iceberg when shown to demonstrate the importance of diving deeper to identify what is happening below surface level. For neuroception, bottom-up and top-down processing, upper and lower brain, and states of autonomic arousal were explained to better understand what is happening in the brain when a child is dysregulated. For section three, commonly seen diagnoses were discussed, such as autism, anxiety, depression, and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The fourth topic educates teachers and staff on trauma. This included describing what trauma is, understanding the trauma spectrum, and learning how to compassionately communicate with students who may be affected by trauma.

Topic five included logs and templates teachers and staff can use to help identify the cause of behavior, keep track of strategies that work for a child, and monitor a child's progress over time. These templates were also created with the idea that children communicate with multiple staff members throughout the day. The logs and templates provide a means for teachers to communicate with each other to share what they have found works well for specific students.

Topic six included bottom-up and top-down evidence-based interventions. Bottom-up interventions include environmental modification, sensory activities, conflict resolution, and social stories. Top-down interventions included deep breathing techniques, a grounding exercise, Zones of Regulation, thought stopping, and body scanning. Where possible, worksheets and printouts were created to help guide both teachers and students through the activities provided. Links to videos were also added for the times where teachers may not have time to guide a child through an activity, but the child can still be guided through an activity independently by watching videos. Printouts and worksheets may also be sent home with a child so their families can assist them as well. Finally, topic seven consisted of what burnout is and how to overcome it through self-care.

Healthy literacy components and evidence-based reasoning were used in the development of the manual. The binder was also frequently shown to the site mentor throughout the capstone process to ensure it aligned with the needs of the school, ensure healthy literacy standards were being met, and ensure the binder remained easy to use. The final behavior management manual can be seen in Appendix H.

### **Initial Survey Data Collection and Analysis**

After completion of the needs assessment, a 10-question survey was created on Qualtrics based on the knowledge gained from the interview question responses. The survey was voluntary and was sent out by the site mentor to all K-8 teachers at South Central after being reviewed by the site mentor. The survey was created using Qualtrics and included a consent form, 5 Likert scale questions (1=strongly

disagree to 5=strongly agree), 2 open-ended questions, 1 multiple-select question, and 2 multiple-choice questions. It took approximately 5 minutes to complete. Survey questions can be seen in Appendix D. The survey was open for responses for one week to provide ample time for teachers to respond at their convenience. After the survey was closed and analyzed, it was determined that 17 teachers, out of the 34 teachers it was sent to, voluntarily participated and completed the survey. Statistical analysis was used to determine the results of the survey questions by determining the sample size, using cross tabulation to filter and condense results, and finding the mean, standard deviation, variance, or percentage for each question's responses. Based on the statistical results, common trends were determined. All survey question results can be seen in Appendix E.

After the survey analysis, there were a few notable trends. The first was that most teachers understood that challenging behaviors should be addressed in order for a student to achieve optimal learning ( $M=4.00$ ). The next trend was that the majority (71%) of teachers agreed to some extent that challenging behaviors frequently arise in their classrooms. There were no trends that stood out between the differing grade levels in any category of the survey. The most common challenging behaviors, identified by over 50% of respondents were lack of attention, off-task behavior, noncompliance and defiance, arguing, and hyperactivity. Diving deeper, over 50% of respondents stated in the open-ended questions that challenging behavior is problematic due to a decrease in effective instructional time and creating distractions for others. Another notable trend was that challenging behaviors affected a teacher's job satisfaction to some extent ( $M=3.00$ ). All but one of the respondents were interested in learning more about behavioral challenges and expressed interest in evidence-based strategies, educational material, and resources, therefore, confirming the need to implement a behavior management manual at South Central. Furthermore, coding this survey led to the conclusion that there is a need to better understand behavior and to gain knowledge on effective, evidence-based strategies that can be used in the classroom as a whole and with individual students.

### **Final Survey Data Collection and Analysis**

After the behavior management manual was complete and the implementation team was created, an exit survey was sent to all implementation team members. This was a 6-question survey that was created on Qualtrics to assess the value of the manual, as well as the sustainability plans that each member will act on upon the capstone student leaving the site, as well as the impact they see this project having on the school. The survey was completed anonymously and voluntarily by each member. The survey consisted of 4 Likert scale questions and 2 open-ended questions, and it took approximately 5 minutes to complete. Survey questions can be seen in Appendix F. The survey was open for responses for 3 days, and a total of 5 responses were submitted out of the 7 participants that it was sent to. Statistical analysis was used to determine the results of the survey questions by determining the sample size, using cross tabulation to filter and condense results, and finding the mean, standard deviation, variance, or percentage for each question's responses. Survey results can be seen in Appendix G.

Results from this survey were nearly unanimous. All respondents strongly agreed that the manual is a valuable tool for teachers and staff (M=5.00). All respondents also strongly agreed that the project closely aligns with the missions and values of South Central (M=5.00). All respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that the resource will have an impact on the teachers and staff (M=4.78) and that teachers and staff will use this resource now and in the future (M=4.37). Overall, results showed that the manual has the potential to have a lasting impact and a successful outcome. Sustainability plans varied amongst members based on the roles they viewed themselves having on the implementation team. Sustainability plan most commonly mentioned was providing the material to the student support team (60%), or the teachers that frequently work with students displaying challenging behaviors in the classroom. Other ideas included staff redirection to the manual when going addressing difficult challenging behavior situations, effective communication strategies, and quarterly teacher check-ins.

## Capstone Discussion and Impact

### Capstone Discussion

Overall, this project will help enhance an educator's understanding of what challenging behavior is, how the brain functions relating to challenging behavior, how to respond appropriately, evidence-based strategies to help a student overcome challenging behavior, and finally, how to decrease the onset of burnout. The overarching goal of this project was to create a resource that teachers can use to help narrow the gaps and fill the disconnect between understanding what challenging behavior is and how to compassionately help a child overcome adversity in order to promote the child's overall well-being and academic success. The project goals were to research and gain further knowledge on challenging behaviors, to develop an evidence-based program, and to ensure the project's sustainability were all achieved. The student was able to achieve these goals through a series of objectives, which were also all achieved. Objectives included survey creation, survey analysis, evidence-based research, creation of a behavior management manual, advocacy, education, implementation, and sustainability.

To narrow the gaps and effectively address the needs of the school, the capstone student created a multi-component behavior management manual that serves as a tool for teachers to easily access and apply to students in their classroom. The purpose of this project was fulfilled through the creation of this manual to empower teachers to feel confident in addressing and identifying challenging behaviors in order to optimize student success, not only in the classroom, but beyond the school walls. The project serves as a resource and tool to equip teachers with the understanding of challenging behavior, how to identify the cause, and how to provide evidence-based strategies to students.

The sections of the manual include what challenging behavior is and the neurological background behind it, including analogies to make concepts easily comprehensible, common conditions and disorders seen within the classroom, evidence-based strategies for behavioral management, including classroom and individual strategies, monitoring logs and templates to help determine causes of

behavior and monitor and track a child's progress over time, information on trauma and the importance of being trauma-invested, and finally, educator burnout and how to identify when it is occurring and overcome it through self-care.

Upon completion of the manual in week 13, week 14 was dedicated to the manual's presentation and distribution, as well as to impact and sustainability plans. Based on the results of the final survey sent to implementation team members and the interactions the capstone student had with individuals at South Central, the behavior management manual has value to the teachers and staff. The teachers and staff at South Central expressed their sincere gratitude and genuine excitement to begin implementing the behavioral management manual not only in their classrooms, but also in their student support teams.

### **Capstone Impact**

Due to the change in the capstone project upon arrival, the capstone student diligently worked all 14 weeks to complete a new needs assessment and begin and finish a new project. The behavior manual's creation consumed the entirety of the capstone experience, leaving the capstone student unable to see the impact the manual left on the school. After presenting the manual to the implementation team, the capstone student opened the floor for discussion surrounding what impact they see this project having on the South Central School community. The responses were genuine, full of excitement and positivity. One of the most widespread responses was that the manual was exactly what they had asked for and very specific to the needs of the school. Each member was excited to apply concepts from the manual and even more excited to encourage others to use it. One member stated that they felt relief in knowing that the resource would be readily available, easy to access, and simple to use with and apply to students in their classroom. Teachers have a lot on their plate, and time is not always of the essence, and they found confidence and value in knowing they now had a tool right at their fingertips. Another member said he anticipates the impact to leave long-lasting effects on addressing

challenging behavior with students who frequently lose class time due to being dysregulated. He also mentioned that the views of challenging behavior being seen as an act of seeking attention will be flipped on its head, encouraging focus on the whole child to provide them with life-long skills they need to be successful and optimally learn and engage with the world around them.

### **Capstone Sustainability Plan**

The behavior management manual was created throughout the first 13 weeks of the capstone experience. The final week of the project was dedicated to creating an implementation team to ensure the project's sustainability for both current and future teachers. A list of possible implementation team members were created by the site mentor and the capstone student. The list consisted of those who have played an integral role in the completion of this capstone project and has a total of 7 members. These members include the site mentor, who is also the superintendent, the elementary counselor, the elementary principal, the elementary dean of students, the middle-high school principal, and 2 K-8 teachers. Each of these individuals volunteered to be a part of this team, which is responsible for encouraging teachers and staff to use the manual as a tool when facing challenges in their classroom. The capstone student met with each individual one on one to present the manual to them and have a qualitative discussion to assess the value of the resource. As a member of the implementation team, they wanted to be able to ask questions if needed and familiarize themselves with the resources so they can confidently help teachers use this resource. After the manual was presented, the capstone student and each member of the implementation team discussed sustainability ideas.

Once the meeting was over, the capstone student sent each member an exit survey, to be filled out anonymously, which can be seen in Appendix F. The survey targeted the value of the resource, the long-term outcomes of the resource, and ways in which the member will encourage the manual's use and evaluate if it is being effectively used in the classrooms. Results from the exit survey can be seen in Appendix G. Though the results of the survey were previously discussed above, they showed that the

project is expected to have value to the teachers and staff, as well as demonstrated well-thought out plans to ensure the project's sustainability, such as quarterly check-ins with teachers, direct observation, and gauging student growth overtime through the use of the templates in the manual. Beyond that of every teacher and staff member receiving a digital copy of the manual via email, one member from the implementation team placed the manual in the school's shared Google Drive Folder so that each teacher always has easy access to it. The manual was also placed in the school's support team files so it can be utilized by all members on the student support team to further support sustainability.

### **Conclusion**

There is an intersection between socioemotional learning, behavioral management, and mental health and their impact on academic success. This project took a holistic approach in empowering educators to optimally support their students in times of dysregulation. The purpose of the project was to encourage the use of a contextual, whole-child lens that accounts for a child's stage of development, environmental, sociocultural, physical, emotional, and cognitive factors that should be taken into consideration in order to compassionately and supportively guide a student through times of adversity. To do so, a needs assessment and survey were created to help better understand the challenges the site was facing and to gain a better grasp on the gaps that existed. Once those gaps were determined, with lack of evidence-based strategies and difficulty determining the cause of challenging behavior at the forefront, a literature review was conducted to determine best practice and methodology for the project. By the end of the capstone experience, a behavior management manual consisted of seven topics consisting of challenging behavior, neuroception, explanation of common diagnoses seen in the classroom, monitoring templates, evidence-based strategies, and educator burnout to narrow the gaps. Based on qualitative discussion and an exit survey, in combination with the implementation team and their sustainability plans, the project was found to have the ability to lead to long-lasting effects on the teachers and staff at South Central in addressing challenging behaviors.



### References

- American Occupational Therapy Association. (2017). Guidelines for occupational therapy services in early intervention and schools. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 71(2), 711241001 Op1–7112410010p10. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2017.716S01>
- Ansari, A., Hofkens, T.L., & Pianta, R.C. Teacher-student relationships across the first seven years of education and adolescent outcomes. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 71, 101200. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2020.101200>
- Bazyk, S., Myers, S., Romaniw, A., Virone, M., Greene, S., Fette, C., Thomas, L., Test, L., Thorman, J., & Rupp, T. (2022). *Occupational therapy's role as SISPs under ESSA*. Texas Occupational Therapy Association. [https://www.tota.org/assets/FINAL\\_OT\\_Role\\_ESSA\\_4-25-22\\_LONG%201.pdf](https://www.tota.org/assets/FINAL_OT_Role_ESSA_4-25-22_LONG%201.pdf)
- Blank, C. & Shavit, Y. (2016). The association between student reports of classmates' disruptive behavior and student achievement. *AERA Open*, 2(3), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858416653921>
- Brasfield, M. W., Lancaster, C., & Xu, Y.J. (2019). Wellness as a mitigating factor for teacher burnout. *Journal of Education*, 199(3), 166-178. DOI: 10.1177/0022057419864525
- Cahill, S.M. & Bazyk, S. (2020). *Case-Smith's occupational therapy for children and adolescents: School-based occupational therapy*. Elsevier.
- Cahill, S. M. & Beisbeir, S. (2020). Practice Guidelines—Occupational therapy practice guidelines for children and youth ages 5–21 years. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 74, 7404397010. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2020.744001>
- Chien, C. (2022). Effects of the change in activity participation during the COVID-19 pandemic on children's mental health. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 76(2), 7602345010, <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2022.047118>

- Clark, G.F., Watling, R., Parham, L.D., & Schaff, R. (2019). Occupational therapy interventions for children and youth with challenges in sensory integration and sensory processing: A school-based practice case example. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 73(3), 7303390010p1-7303390010p2. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2019.733001>
- Colvin, G. & Scott, T.M. (2015). *Managing the cycle of acting-out behavior in the classroom*. Corwin.
- Danielson, M.L., Bitsko, R.H., Holbrook, J.R., Charania, S.N., Claussen, A.H., McKeown, R.E., Cuffe, S.P., Owens, J.S., Evans, S.W., Kubicek, L., & Flory, K. (2021). Community-based prevalence of externalizing and internalizing disorders among school-aged children and adolescents in four geographically dispersed school districts in the United States. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*, 52, 500-514. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10578-020-01027-z>
- Dean, E.E., Little, L., Tomchek, S., & Dunn, W. (2017). Sensory processing in the general population: Adaptability, resiliency, and challenging behavior. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 72(1), 7201195060p1-7201195060p8. <https://doi.org/10.5014/aot.2018.019919>
- Delahooke, M. (2019). *Beyond behaviors: Using brain science and compassion to understand and solve children's behavioral challenges*. PESI Publishing and Media.
- Division for Early Childhood. (2017). *Position statement on challenging behavior and young children*. Challenging Behaviors. [https://challengingbehavior.org/docs/DEC\\_PositionStatement\\_ChallengingBehavior.pdf](https://challengingbehavior.org/docs/DEC_PositionStatement_ChallengingBehavior.pdf)
- Domitrovich, C.E., Drulak, J.A., Staley, K.C., & Weissberg, R.P. (2017). Social-emotional competence: An essential factor for promoting positive adjustment and reducing risk in school children. *Child Development*, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12739>
- Dunn, W. (2007). Supporting children to participate successfully in everyday life by using sensory processing knowledge. *Infants & Young Children*, 20(2), 84-101. DOI: 10.1097/01.IYC.0000264477.05076.5d

- Gage, N.A., Scott, T., Hirn, R., & MacSuga-Gage, A.S. (2017). The relationship between teachers' implementation of classroom management practices and student behavior in elementary school. *Behavioral Disorders, 43*(2), 302-315. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0198742917714809>
- Kearney, C.A. & Childs, J. (2021). A multi-tiered systems of support blueprint for re-opening schools following COVID-19 shutdown. *Children and Youth Services Review, 122*, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2020.105919>
- Lampi, A.R., Fenty, N.S., Beaune, C. (2005). Making the three Ps easier: Praise, Proximity, and Precorrection. *Beyond Behavior, 15*(1), 8-12. Retrieved from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234708932\\_Making\\_the\\_Three\\_Ps\\_Easier\\_Praise\\_Proximity\\_and\\_Precorrection](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234708932_Making_the_Three_Ps_Easier_Praise_Proximity_and_Precorrection)
- Law, M., Cooper, B. A., Strong, S., Stewart, D., Rigby, P., & Letts, L. (1996). The person-environment-occupation model: A transactive approach to occupational performance. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy, 63*, 9-23. DOI:10.1177/000841749606300103
- Lester, R.R., Allanson, P.B., & Notar, C.E. (2017). Routines are the foundation of classroom management, *Education, 137*(4), 398-412. Retrieved from <http://www.projectinnovation.biz/education.html>
- Mahoney, J.L., Durlak, J.A., & Weissberg, R.P. (2018). An update on social and emotional learning outcomes and research. *PDK International, 100*(4), 18-23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721718815668>
- Marsh, R.J. (2016). Identifying students with mental health issues: A guide for classroom teachers. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 51*(5), 318-322. DOI: 10.1177/1053451215606706
- McCormick, J. & Barnett, K. (2011). Teachers' attributions for stress and their relationships with burnout. *International Journal of Educational Management, 25*(3), 278-293. DOI: 10.1108/0951354111120114

- Nichols, L.M., Goforth, A.N., Sacra, M., & Ahlers, K. (2017). Collaboration to support rural student social-emotional needs. *The Rural Educator*, 38(1), 38-48. <https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v38i1.234>
- O'Connor, E.E., Dearing, E., & Collins, B.A. (2011). Teacher-child relationship and behavior trajectories in elementary school. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48(1), 120-162. DOI: 10.3102/0002831210365008
- Parham, L.D., Clark, G.F., Watling, R., & Schaaf, R. (2019). Occupational therapy interventions for children and youth with challenges in sensory integration and sensory processing: A clinic-based practice case example. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 73(1), 7301395010p1-7301395010p9. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2019.731002>
- Perry-Parrish, C., Copeland-Linder, N., Webb, L., & Sibinga, E.M.S. (2016). Mindfulness-based approaches for children and youth. *Current Problems in Pediatric and Adolescent Healthcare*, 46(6), 172-178. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cppeds.2015.12.006>
- Porter, B., Oyanadel, C., Saez-Delgado, F., Andaur, A., & Penate, W. (2022). Systematic review of mindfulness-based interventions in child-adolescent population: A developmental perspective. *European Journal of Investigation in Health, Psychology and Education*, 12, 1220-1243. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ejihpe12080085>
- Porges, S.W. (2004). Neuroception: A subconscious system for detecting threats and safety. *Zero to Three*, 24(5), 19-24. Retrieved from <https://chhs.fresnostate.edu/ccci/documents/07.15.16/%20Neuroception%20Porges%202004.pdf>
- Porges, S. W. (2009). The polyvagal theory: new insights into adaptive reactions of the autonomic nervous system. *Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine*, 76(2), 86–90. <https://doi.org/10.3949/ccjm.76.s2.17>

- Rosen, P. (n.d.) *What is MTSS? Understood*. <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/mtss-what-you-need-to-know>
- Saeki, E. & Quirk, M. (2015). Getting students engaged might not be enough: the importance of psychological needs satisfaction on social-emotional and behavioral functioning among early adolescents. *Social Psychology of Education, 18*, 355-371. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-014-9283-5>
- South Central. (2023). *South Central Elementary School*. <https://www.scentral.k12.in.us/elementary>
- South Central. (2023). *South Central Jr.-Sr. High School*. <https://www.scentral.k12.in.us/jr-sr-high-school>
- Sprick, J., Sprick, R., Edwards, J., & Coughlin, C. (2021). *CHAMPS: A proactive & positive approach to classroom management*. Ancora Publishing.
- Stevenson, N.A., VanLone, J., & Barber, B.R. (2020). A commentary on the misalignment of teacher education and the need for classroom behavior management skills. *Education and Treatment of Children, 43*, 393-404. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43494-020-00031-1>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2015). *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*. U.S. Department of Education. <https://www.ed.gov/essa?src=rn>
- Wubbels, T. & Brekelmans, M. (2005). Two decades of research on teacher–student relationships in class. *International Journal of Educational Research, 43*(1-2), 6-24. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2006.03.003>

### Appendix A: Initial Needs Assessment

#### Purpose:

The purpose of this interview is to begin collaborating on the needs of the South Central School System and to begin coming up with potential ideas that best fit the needs of the school, whether that be improvement, implementation, revamping, or change. It is also a chance for me as the student to get to know the site better and better understand the workings of the school to see how I can best service them and also allow for the site to get to know me better.

- WHY: to promote inclusion in the school of children (bullying/accessibility) OR to increase academic achievement (sensory processing or communication between parents and teachers (all on same page of expectations)) OR to increase trustworthy relationships between children and staff (trauma informed care)
- WHO: Will be interviewing the high school principal but will need to interview the person/people in the areas I am directed to whether that be instructional aides, teachers, children, parents, counselors, other principles, or the school resource officer
- WHAT: achieve which direction I may go and what mentor I will be working with based on the area the school as a whole feels they need improved upon or changed
- HOW: over the phone or via Zoom

#### Interview questions:

- 1) What challenges and barriers are you currently experiencing in creating an inclusive environment for all students?
  - a) Is there anything in place currently that is working towards overcoming these challenges or barriers?
  - b) Is someone already addressing this?
- 2) What are some potential areas of focus that you may see a capstone project address?

- 3) What are the school's most pressing needs and how can an OT student help address those?
- 4) How do you think I might fit in within your school?
- 5) Who are the stakeholders that will be impacted by this capstone project?

## Appendix B: Final Needs Assessment

### Purpose:

The purpose of this interview is to further collaborate on the needs of the South Central School System and to begin coming up with potential ideas that best fit the needs of the school, whether that be improvement, implementation, revamping, or change in the areas of behavior and socioemotional learning and its relation to academic success. It is also a chance for me as the student to get to know the site better and better understand the workings of the school to see how I can best service them and also allow for the site to get to know me better.

- WHY: to promote inclusion for all children in the school that present with mental health conditions or challenging behaviors in the classroom that impact their overall well-being and academic success
- WHO: Will be interviewing the superintendent and elementary counselor but will also conduct a survey to be sent to teachers and staff
- WHAT: achieve which direction the project will go, what changes are most necessary to be made, and how to help overcome the barrier to academic achievement and overall well-being for all students in the school
- HOW: in person

### New Interview Questions:

- 1) What challenges and barriers are you currently experiencing in creating an inclusive environment for all students?
- 2) What are some potential areas of focus that you may see a capstone project address?
- 3) What are the school's most pressing needs and how can an OT student help address those?
- 4) What are the most pressing needs when it comes to addressing challenging behavior within the classroom?



- 5) What behavioral management training are teachers currently receiving?
- 6) What is SST and who does it consist of?
  - a) What interventions are currently being used within the SST?
  - b) What types of interventions would be beneficial/what should they focus on?
  - c) What is causing intervention implementation to be unsuccessful?

### Appendix C: Student Learning Plan

**Project Goal 1:** The student will gain and utilize knowledge about challenging behaviors, the neurological concepts behind challenging behaviors, and evidence based behavioral management strategies.

- **Objective 1:** The student will access and analyze research articles and various textbook sources for evidence on challenging behaviors in school-aged children.
- **Objective 2:** The student will learn how to create, administer, and analyze a survey to better understand the lived, subjective experiences of the educators and administration staff.
- **Objective 3:** The student will present findings on challenging behaviors through a behavior management manual to be distributed to educators at the end of the capstone project.

**Project Goal 2:** The student will demonstrate the ability to develop a program based on study results and evidence-based research, as well as create an evidence-based handout for staff on effectively addressing concerns.

- **Objective 1:** The student will demonstrate the ability to code study results to determine common strengths and barriers, confidence, and effectiveness of addressing and identifying behavioral challenges within the classroom.
- **Objective 2:** The student will demonstrate the ability to use collected data to develop an evidence based- program to support educators at South Central Schools.
- **Objective 3:** The student will demonstrate the ability to use the survey results related to the concerns and confidence teachers feel in identifying the root of challenging behaviors and use research to create a comprehensive, easy to read handout to support staff, including a general overview of what challenging behavior is, how to identify the cause, and evidence based strategies to effectively manage and overcome those

behaviors.

**Project Goal 3:** The student will ensure sustainability of the program and develop initiatives by week 14 by conversing with administration staff and select educators to ensure that the manual aligns well with their mission at the school and deems all information to be useful, easy-to-use, and beneficial to the educators to use for years to come.

- **Objective 1:** The student will educate staff through use of a manual on common disorders and conditions seen in school-aged children, behavior and behavioral neuroception, and evidence-based behavioral management strategies.
- **Objective 2:** The student will advocate for the profession of occupational therapy to be represented in schools in targeting challenging behaviors and promote occupational therapy based strategies and responses within a school-based setting.
- **Objective 3:** The student will distribute the creation of a manual, based on survey results, for staff to see to determine the programs potential effectiveness and sustainability for the school.
- **Objective 4:** The student will educate about and advocate for addressing challenging behavior in safe, successful, and empowering ways that encourage both the student and teacher to feel confident and competent in overcoming difficult situations through all future professional encounters and apply to other schools that may wish to adapt a behavioral management program when encountered.

### **Appendix D: Survey Questions**

This survey is being conducted by Kylee Howell from the School of Health and Human Sciences at IUPUI, Occupational Therapy Department.

#### **PROCEDURES FOR THIS SURVEY**

If you agree to participate in this survey, you will be invited to complete a brief, 5-10 minute survey.

Survey responses will be archived for analysis and kept anonymous.

#### **RISKS AND BENEFITS**

There are no identified risks associated with this study and if for any reason, the questions asked during this survey causes any discomfort, you may refuse to answer and/or exit the survey. The potential benefits associated with this study include but are not limited to:

- Increasing academic success and overall student well-being by combating challenging behaviors in the classroom
- Enhanced understanding of the most common mental health, learning disorders, and behavioral disorders seen in today's classroom
- Enhanced effectiveness of behavioral management strategies and identification of the root cause of behavior and further understanding of the phases of the behavioral outburst process.

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

There will be no personable or identifiable information collected. Only I [Kylee], directly working with this project will have access to the survey responses that are collected and analyzed. The only organizations that may inspect or use this research for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator, the Indiana University Institutional Review Board and its state and federal agencies, specifically the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), who may need to access research records.

#### **CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS**

For questions about the study, please contact the researcher, Kylee Howell, by calling or texting 219-242-5549 or emailing [khowell@scentral.k12.in.us](mailto:khowell@scentral.k12.in.us).

For questions about your rights as a research participant or to discuss concerns, complaints, or questions about this study, contact IU Human Subjects Office by calling 317-278-3458 (Indianapolis).

### **VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY**

Participating in this survey is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part in all of the survey or leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled and will not affect your current or future relations with any of the associated organizations.

Lastly, your time and efforts are greatly appreciated and will be used to enhance student academic success and well-being at South Central.

### **CONFIRMATION OF AGREEMENT**

To continue, please check the box to state you understand the above information.

I agree.

Please select the grade level you teach.

K-2

3-5

6-8

Please rate the following statements: strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, somewhat disagree, disagree.

- Challenging student behaviors frequently arise in my classroom.
- Challenging student behaviors need to be effectively prevented before they occur/managed when they arise in order for a student to be able to achieve optimal learning within the classroom setting.
- I believe that challenging behavior affects my job satisfaction to some extent.

What do you consider the most challenging classroom behaviors? Please select ALL that apply.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Busy hands                     | <input type="checkbox"/> whining/crying          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom rule violation       | <input type="checkbox"/> Arguing                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hyperactivity                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Escape                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loud sounds/noises             | <input type="checkbox"/> Falling asleep          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aggression                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Destruction of property |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transitions throughout the day | <input type="checkbox"/> Yelling                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of attention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Hitting                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Off-task behavior              | <input type="checkbox"/> Threatening other       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> noncompliance/defiance         | <input type="checkbox"/> Hurting others          |

The following questions were text box replies.

- Are there any other classroom behaviors that you would like to add?
- What makes the behaviors challenging? (i.e. decreases instructional time, distracting to others, behavior continues to escalate, etc)
- What do you personally find the most distressing in terms of behavior management in the classroom?

Please rate the following question based on your familiarity. (very familiar, somewhat familiar, not at all familiar)

- How familiar are you with sensory strategies (i.e self-regulation, heavy work, sensory alerting, sensory calming, etc.)

Please rate the following question based on your confidence. (very confident, somewhat confident, not at all confident)

- How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively manage challenging behavior in the classroom, understand its cause, and determine strategies that help a student refrain from or overcome behavioral outbursts and distracting classroom behavior.

Please rate the following based on your interest in learning more about behavior.

- I am willing and interested in receiving information and learning more about the most common behavioral disorders, their symptoms and triggers, and effective behavioral management strategies for helping a student achieve the highest level of academic success.

If interested, what resources or information do you think would be useful to you in effectively managing and/or better understanding identification of challenging behavior, how to prevent it, and how to overcome it when it does occur?

- Resource manual
- Education material
- Evidence-based strategies for behavioral management

Survey Link: <https://iu.co1.qualtrics.com/homepage/ui/index>

**Appendix E: Survey Results****Respondent Demographics:**

<b>Grade Level Taught</b>	<b>K-2</b>	<b>3-5</b>	<b>6-8</b>
Respondents (%)	18%	41%	41%

**Likert Scale Survey Responses:**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Count</b>
Challenging student behaviors frequently arise in my classroom.	2.00	5.00	3.71	1.07	1.15	17
Challenging student behaviors need to be effectively prevented before they occur/managed when they arise in order for a student to be able to achieve optimal learning within the classroom setting.	4.00	5.00	4.65	0.48	0.23	17
I believe that challenging behavior affects my job satisfaction to some extent.	3.00	5.00	4.06	0.69	0.48	17
How familiar are you with sensory strategies?	3.00	5.00	4.00	0.59	0.35	17
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively manage challenging behavior in the classroom, understand its cause, and determine strategies that help a student refrain from or overcome behavioral outbursts and distracting classroom behavior.	4.00	5.00	4.18	0.38	0.15	17

\*Responses were recorded on a Likert Scale (1: strongly disagree, not at all familiar, or not at all confident to 5: strongly agree, very familiar, very confident)



**Multiple Selection Survey Response: What do you consider the most challenging classroom behaviors?**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Lack of attention	14	82.4%
Off-task behavior	13	76.5%
Noncompliance/defiance	11	64.7%
Arguing	10	58.8%
Hyperactivity	10	58.8%
Classroom rule violation	7	41.2%
Loud sounds/noises	6	35.3%
Transitions throughout the day	3	35.3%
Yelling	6	35.3%
Hurting others	5	29.4%
Aggression	4	23.5%
Destruction of property	4	23.5%
Hitting	4	23.5%
Threatening others	4	23.5%
Busy hands	2	11.8%
Escape	2	11.8%
Whining/crying	2	11.8%
Apathy	1	5.9%
Touching other/their property	1	5.9%
Quips during instruction	1	5.9%

**Open Ended Responses**

Question	Responses	Count	% or respondents
What makes the behaviors challenging?	● Distracts others	11	64.7%
	● Decrease instructional time	9	52.9%
	● Behaviors tend to escalate within individual or onto others	5	29.4%
	● Create unwelcoming environment	1	5.8%
What do you personally find the most distressing in terms of behavior management in the classroom?	● Unnecessary talking after redirection repeatedly	3	17.6%
	● Loss of instructional time/repeating directions over and over	2	11.8%
	● Lack of support and parental support	2	11.8%
	● Arguing and defiance	2	11.8%
	● Nothing new, just more widespread	1	5.8%
	● Lack of respect	1	5.8%
	● Disrupting to others	1	5.8%
	● Too exhausting to correct/deal with all of them; too many too correct	1	5.8%
	● Other students follow suit	1	5.8%
	● Students not caring about consequences	1	5.8%
	● Arguing and defiance	1	5.8%
	● Lack focus and attention	1	5.8%
● Impulsive behaviors	1	5.8%	
● Sounds	1	5.8%	

**Interest Response:** I am willing and interested in receiving information and learning more about the most common behavioral disorders, their symptoms and triggers, and effective behavioral management strategies for helping a student achieve the highest level of academic success.

Response	Count	% of Respondents
Interested	16	94.1%
Not interested	1	5.9%

**Resources Response:** If interested, what resources or information do you think would be useful to you in effectively managing and/or better understanding identification of challenging behavior, how to prevent it, and how to overcome it when it does occur?

Response	Count	% of Respondents
Resource manual	12	70.6%
Educational material	3	17.6%
Evidence-based strategies for behavioral management	2	11.8%

### **Appendix F: Implementation Team Sustainability Survey**

This survey is being conducted by Kylee Howell from the School of Health and Human Sciences at IUPUI, Occupational Therapy Department.

#### **PROCEDURES FOR THIS SURVEY**

If you agree to participate in this survey, you will be invited to complete a brief, 5 minute survey. Survey responses will be archived for analysis and kept anonymous

#### **RISKS AND BENEFITS**

There are no identified risks associated with this study and if for any reason, the questions asked during this survey causes any discomfort, you may refuse to answer and/or exit the survey.

#### **PURPOSE**

As the behavioral management manual project has come to a conclusion, it is important that an implementation team be created to ensure the sustainability of this project now and in the future. You, as a part of the implementation team, have volunteered and chosen to be responsible for encouraging the use of the behavior management manual in the classrooms and to apply to children who are displaying challenging behavior while at school. As part of the implementation team, please answer the following questions about this project.

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

There will be no personable or identifiable information collected. Only I [Kylee], directly working with this project will have access to the survey responses that are collected and analyzed. The only organizations that may inspect or use this research for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator, the Indiana University Institutional Review Board and its state and federal agencies, specifically the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), who may need to access research records.

#### **CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS**

For questions about the study, please contact the researcher, Kylee Howell, by calling or texting 219-242-5549 or emailing [khowell@scentral.k12.in.us](mailto:khowell@scentral.k12.in.us). For questions about your rights as a research participant or to discuss concerns, complaints, or questions about this study, contact IU Human Subjects Office by calling 317-278-3458 (Indianapolis).

#### **VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY**

Participating in this survey is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part in all of the survey or leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled and will not affect your current or future relations with any of the associated organizations. Lastly, your time and efforts are greatly appreciated and will be used to enhance student academic success and well-being at South Central.

#### **CONFIRMATION OF AGREEMENT**

By continuing, you agree to the above statements and wish to complete the survey.

Please rate the following statements: strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, somewhat disagree, disagree.

- I find this resource to be a valuable tool for teachers and staff.
- I believe this resource will have an impact on the teachers and staff.
- I believe teachers and staff will use this resource now and continue to do so in the future.
- This project aligns with the mission and values of South Central.

The following statements were open-ended responses.

- How do you plan to implement this project or encourage others to use this resource?
- How do you plan to evaluate if this resource is being used effectively?

Survey Link: [https://iu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_297ltX3zYtLf9UW](https://iu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_297ltX3zYtLf9UW)

**Appendix G: Implementation Team Sustainability Survey Results****Likert Scale Survey Responses:**

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Count
I find this resource to be a valuable tool for teachers and staff.	5.00	5.00	5.00	0.00	0.00	5
I believe this resource will have an impact on the teachers and staff.	4.00	5.00	4.78	0.45	0.20	5
I believe teachers and staff will use this resource now and continue to do so in the future.	4.00	5.00	4.37	0.55	0.30	5
This project aligns with the mission and values of South Central.	5.00	5.00	5.00	0.00	0.00	5

\*Responses were recorded on a Likert Scale (1: strongly disagree, not at all familiar, or not at all confident to 5: strongly agree, very familiar, very confident)

**Open Ended Responses**

Question	Responses	Count	% or respondents
How do you plan to implement this project or encourage others to use this resource?	● Provide to Student Support team	3	60.0%
	● Redirect staff to the manual when dealing with a difficult situation	2	40.0%
	● Place in shared Google Drive folder all teachers have access to	1	20.0%
	● Present material on teacher work days at the beginning of each school year	1	20.0%
How do you plan to evaluate if this resource is being used effectively?	● Quarterly check-ins or discussions between teachers and school administration	2	40.0%
	● Direct observation	1	20.0%
	● Effective communication	1	20.0%
	● Gauge student growth overtime	1	20.0%

**Appendix H: Behavior Management Manual**

The behavior management manual PDF will begin on the next page of this appendix.