

# Teacher Retention and Classroom Management: A Program Theory Evaluation of One District's Approach to Keeping New and Novice Teachers in the Classroom

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## Abstract

*Schools and districts across the United States are facing an unprecedented exodus of teachers from the classroom, which has created an urgent need to fill vacant teaching positions. As a result, many states are expanding the routes of alternative certification pathways for adults with little to no college experience or educational training to gain full-time teaching positions. This unduly need has thrust our least prepared teachers into classroom experiences with little to no content knowledge, and even less knowledge about pedagogy, specifically, classroom management. The purpose of this evaluation was to examine the theory and processes utilized to establish the CMS program. The Classroom Management Specialist (CMS) provided dialogical coaching through observation, feedback loops, and goal setting for two years. Coaching was also supported by weekly or monthly whole-group professional development that targeted specific classroom management strategies. Program evaluation used Stufflebeam's CIPP Model. Context findings highlighted hiring practices that brought more teachers to the classroom, and that those teachers lacked relational capacity and needed support. Input findings included CMSs to offer the needed support. Process findings indicated that some new teachers never enrolled in the required alternative certification programs. They also indicated that there was not a common district commitment to the role of the CMSs, so different campuses used the CMS in different ways. Product findings showed difficulty in tracking 1) new teacher retention due to varied campus hiring practices, 2) discipline data because it was tracked differently among campuses, and 3) improvement of building campus culture due to campus administrators viewing the CMS role in varied ways.*

*Keywords: classroom management, teacher preparation, program theory evaluation, teacher retention, teacher qualifications*

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In the post-pandemic era, many schools and districts witnessed an uptick in classroom management and student behavior issues (see Naff et al., 2023). Further, COVID seemed to have a lasting negative impact on teacher retention, with an even larger number of teachers leaving the profession. In addition, there has been a decrease in enrollment in traditional teacher education programs in colleges and universities (Hill-Jackson et al., 2021; Marmolejo & Groccia, 2022; Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022). To address the rising shortage of teachers in the classroom, state education agencies and districts across the United States began to expand alternative routes to teacher certification, with many states opting to hire uncertified

teachers for the classroom. According to the RAND Institute,

Ninety percent of districts experienced one or more policy changes, which either they or their state enacted, to boost teacher ranks in response to shortages. Chief among these changes were increased pay and/or benefits and the expansion of grow-your-own teacher preparation programs (Diliberti & Schwartz, 2023, para. 6).

While this is one approach to addressing the shortage, many districts (especially rural districts) began hiring

uncertified and undegreed teachers for the classroom, thereby creating a situation where the least prepared teachers in content, pedagogy, and classroom management became increasingly responsible for many students in the public school setting (Learning Policy Institute, 2025).

Research supports the notion that teachers who have been provided with a multitude of opportunities to learn, practice, and utilize research-based classroom management strategies often have better outcomes with their students, and teacher retention is higher (Cells et al, 2023). However, the combination of post-COVID trends, such as increased student absenteeism (Institute of Educational Science, 2024; Naff, et al., 2023), increased social media use, decreased classroom engagement, and a rising number of uncertified teachers in the classroom with limited classroom management skills in their toolboxes, has produced a marked increase in student behavior and disengagement (e.g., Kirksey, 2025).

### ***The Role of Professional Development***

The effectiveness of teacher coaching, especially one-on-one coaching, can be enhanced when the topic of the coaching is supported through additional opportunities to practice the skills introduced during professional development sessions (Brown et al., 2020, p.4). While traditional teacher preparation programs include units or modules on classroom management, some teachers enter the profession without a sufficient understanding of classroom management strategies and their impact on student success (see Garwood & Harris, 2020; Wilkinson et al., 2020).

Professional development opportunities focusing on classroom management are frequently studied, but typically at the elementary level only (Wilkinson et al, 2020, p. 182). Simonsen et al. (2008) suggests that when teachers implement these critical individual practices, “(a) Maximizing structure, (b) Establishing and teaching positively stated expectations, (c) Engaging students with effective academic instruction, (d) Establishing a continuum of strategies to increase appropriate behavior, and (e) Establishing a continuum of strategies to decrease inappropriate behavior” student behavior and academic engagement improve. (p. 360). Student success is even greater when these practices support students with

disabilities, but when do teachers learn these skills? Classroom management is not required in all teacher preparation programs in the United States, and there is scant information related to alternative certification program requirements. Specifically, in-service teachers frequently report receiving inadequate training in classroom management, making the need for effective professional development even more important (see Begeny & Martens, 2006). The Wilkinson et al. (2020) literature review revealed that few empirical studies on classroom management focused on antecedent strategies or instructional strategies to prevent behavior management issues. Further, one study they evaluated looked at the impact of coaching on improving teachers’ use of classroom management (See Kraft et al., 2018). This study utilized a model similar to Knight et al.’s (2015) Impact Cycle Model in that the coach established 3-5 goals for the teacher. In contrast, the Knight model encourages teachers to develop their own goals based on reflection and learning. However, coaches guided a cycle that included observation, feedback (the most important step), goal setting, implementation, and reassessment. The results of the Kraft et al. (2018) study suggest that coaching with subsequent professional development related to the topic of coaching could be more impactful on teacher growth.

Many districts begin each new school year with ‘first days’ classroom management expectations that include setting the framework for the classroom, such as routines, procedures, and expectations (see Wong, Wong, & Jondahl, 2018), as this is a critical attribute of effective teachers (Sanford, 1984). Bohn, Roehrig & Pressley (2004) found that teachers who spent the first three days of school emphasizing classroom management procedures by teaching and practicing those expectations had more engaged students (p. 279). Collectively, the teachers in these studies were presumably more successful because they were clear in establishing their practices by:

- (a) Getting to know students’ names right away,
- (b) Being enthusiastic and telling students of their high expectations for them,
- (c) Avoid punishments when handling misbehaviors,
- (d) Including students in rule creation,

- (e) Having students practice classroom procedures (Bohn, Roehrig, & Pressly, 2004, p. 279-283; Garwood & Harris, 2020, p. 61).

In the Garwood & Harris (2020) study, researchers sought to determine the impact of professional development on classroom management, delivered through screencast, during the first three days of school. The video and professional development were aligned with the tenets of adult learning theory and intended to connect with teachers' lived experiences, creating an opportunity for transformative learning (see Mezirow, 1997, p. 94). The training focused on classroom management related to the structure of the classroom, similar to Sprick's (2009) STOIC model, including:

- a) visibility (Can I see each student? Can each student see the academic displays?); b) accessibility (Can everyone reach the required materials?); c) distractibility (What, in my room, could distract a student?); and d) flexibility (Can things be moved for different instructional strategies?) (p. 64).

The training also focused on:

Active teaching techniques, classroom expectations (rules), procedures, behavior-specific praise, consistency in enforcing expectations, creating systems for grading, giving feedback, opportunities to respond, and positive home-school communications (p. 64).

Teachers were provided with the resources for the study after the completion of the previous school year and had the summer to complete the training. Researchers found that teachers reported a positive change at the start of the year based on pre- and post-test data.

In Heard and Peltier (2021), researchers focused on using video analysis of teacher practice as professional development for educators since traditional professional development is insufficient to improve classroom management skills (p. 163). Specifically, with most pre-service teachers receiving instruction on classroom management and positive behavior intervention supports through the "sit and get" model, they have little opportunity

to practice those skills in the classroom (Heard & Peltier, 2021, p. 163). In this study, researchers developed professional development that met the unique needs of the adult learner, which requires the opportunity to reflect and synthesize the "new" knowledge into their existing practice (Mezirow, 1997, p. 108), as teachers should have the opportunity to "acquire, apply, and generalize their skills (Heard & Peltier, 2021, p. 163). One focus of the study was to determine if there was a functional relationship between professional development with video analysis, corrective feedback, and technical assistance and if it increased the teacher's use of opportunities to respond (OTR) and behavior-specific praise (BSP), while the other focus was determining if an increase in OTR and BSP, similar to the training provided in Garwood & Harris (2020). Results of this study suggest that the inclusion of video analysis in professional development had a medium effect on the teacher's use of OTR and BSP in a pre-kindergarten classroom.

Beginning in the fall of 2022, one district located in the southwest area of the United States piloted a Classroom Management Specialist (CMS) position on each campus in the district to address these concerns. Due to a tremendous growth in the number of students district-wide, and limited qualified candidates in the hiring pool, the district used a state level alternative hiring practice (see Kirksey, 2024) that allows districts to hire teachers without degrees or experience in education, which contributed an astounding 80% of new hires in nearly 25% of the state's counties being uncertified. By assigning a dedicated, district-level staff member to serve as the classroom management coach on each campus in the district, new and novice teachers would have a more knowledgeable peer available to explain, observe, and coach them through challenging classroom behaviors free from formal, administrative, and state required evaluation processes.

The return to the traditional classroom and face-to-face instruction during the 2021-2022 post-pandemic school year resulted in an increase in student disciplinary actions across the district. According to data from the state education agency (see TEA, 2021), there was a significant uptick in not only student enrollment but also student discipline in the year following the COVID shutdown in 2021-2022 as seen in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*District-Wide Discipline Data*

Schoolyear	#totalled enrolled at year-end in district	#students disciplined in district	Percentage of students who had at least 1 discipline incident during the year within the district
2019-2020	12857	1086	0.084
2021-2022 (post-COVID)	16115	2454	0.15
2022-2023*	17583	2680	0.15
2023-2024+			

\*For the 2022-2023, the district established a policy of no telephones and no hoodies in any school building

+For the 2023-2024, the state enacted mandatory placement in an alternative education setting for all possession of vapes and other paraphernalia

The district had traditionally been well-staffed and high-performing until the return to face-to-face instruction occurred in the schools in the 2021-2022 school year. The district was required to hire an extraordinary number of teachers, for which there was not a sufficient number of qualified individuals in the hiring pool. As a District of Innovation (TEA, 2024), the district hired uncertified teachers to fulfill the dire need for teachers in the classroom. The CMS program administrator was also able to solicit support from the district to hire one CMS for each campus in the district, in theory, to support these new teachers.

The creation of these positions was based on the premise that providing support to new and novice teachers would reduce classroom management and discipline issues. There is an abundance of research to support this thinking, particularly for new or novice teachers in classroom management (Heard & Peltier, 2021; Kwok & Svaida-Hardy, 2021).

The purpose of this evaluation was to examine the theory and processes utilized to establish the CMS program.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Teacher Hiring and Retention***

#### ***Alternatively certified***

With the increase in teacher attrition, particularly post-COVID, districts across the United States sought new ways to hire teachers (Grossman & Loeb, 2021). From Grow-your-own programs, where districts hire, for example, their

own paraprofessionals and help with college expenses to earn degrees, to hiring military veterans, districts have had to be creative in identifying solutions to the teacher shortage. While the pool of fully certified teachers available for hire directly out of college is dwindling, state-level alternative certification programs (ACPs) are expanding (Yin & Partelow, 2020). These ACP programs, particularly in Texas, provide an opportunity for those with bachelor's degrees to take courses and complete school-based observations to test for state certification (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2023).

### ***Retention***

Teacher retention is the hallmark of high-performing schools; however, prior to the pandemic, nearly 50% of teachers left the profession before completing five years in the field (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Post-COVID, the number of teachers leaving the profession has increased, and districts across the United States struggle to find qualified teachers for the classroom. Cells et al. (2023) examined teacher retention within the first three to five years of employment. Specifically, researchers examined the specific reasons why teachers leave and why they stay to understand the path to better retention. Further, the role that administrators play through effective management practices and attention to building teacher capacity through their content and pedagogical knowledge is key (Urlick, 2020). Researchers found that many teachers are provided district-mandated professional development that does not align with their own needs and interests, which may suggest that “professional development opportunities based on teacher interest could have an impact on overall teacher satisfaction and retention” (Cells et al., 2023, p. 357).

With the sudden rise in ACP programs of varying quality, new and novice teachers may be ill-prepared for the classroom, leading to attrition, particularly for alternatively certified teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Redding & Henry, 2019). While few studies have been conducted, nearly 25% of all teachers enter the profession through alternative certification routes (Redding & Smith, 2016). Richter et al. (2022) examined the retention intention of alternatively certified teachers in their first year of teaching. Findings from this study suggest that first-year alternatively certified teachers benefit from social

support, especially as it relates to their intention to stay in the profession.

### ***Classroom Management Support***

From the early days of Madeline Hunter's lesson planning approach (see Membreno, n.d.) to Wong's best practices (Wong, Wong, & Jondahl 2018), classroom management practices are a core tenet of a successful classroom. For example, Simonsen et al. (2008) suggested that there are five essential features of classroom management strategies: a) physical and instructional predictability by establishing and teaching a few positively stated expectations; b) clear expectations that are posted, explicitly taught, reviewed, and enforced; c) active observable engagement; d) a continuum of strategies for responding to appropriate behaviors; and, e) a continuum of strategies for responding to inappropriate behaviors. Nagro et al. (2018) are more specific in that teachers should be incorporating proactive management strategies within their lesson plan design, specifically: a) creating a whole-group response system; b) intentionally integrating movement; c) including visual supports for learners, including agendas, steps, timers, first-then statements, anchor charts and consequences scales (p. 136). Importantly, Nagro et al. (2018, p. 132) caution teachers that they view classroom management processes and techniques as an afterthought or add-on, which is inefficient for capturing "the necessary integration of effective planning and in-the-moment decision making that prompts engagement and student growth." Further, research has found that providing classroom management support and training to new teachers through coaching appears to be successful toward developing such skills (Kwok & Svaida-Hardy, 2024, p. 389). In addition, it is important to point out that Rubie-Davies & Hattie (2024) found in a review of the research literature of teacher expectations that overall, teachers have a profound impact on student achievement and behavior when the teachers are unbiased in the approach to students and have high expectations of all students.

### ***Coaching***

Existing coaching research has focused on the impact of coaching on beginning teachers (Brown et al., 2020), as it is often part of a multi-tiered approach for supporting new and novice teachers in a variety of structures, including induction programs (Kwok & Svaida-Hardy, 2021, p. 257;

Cornett & Knight, 2009). Although different programs have varying definitions, Kraft et al. (2018) define coaching as "individualized, time intensive, sustained over the course of a semester or year, context-specific, and focused on discrete skills" (p. 4). Further they describe the coaching process (p. 9) as:

- Individualized – coaching sessions are one-on-one.
- Intensive – coaches and teachers interact at least every couple of weeks.
- Sustained – teachers receive coaching throughout the academic year.
- Context-specific – teachers are coached on their practices within the context of their own classroom.
- Focused – coaches work with teachers to engage in deliberate practice of specific research-based skills (p. 65).

Weekly coaching can help teachers learn new strategies and apply them in the classroom (Brown et al., 2020; see also Kraft et al., 2018). Specifically, "coaching holds great significance for working with beginning teachers and the many challenges they face" (Brown et al., 2020, p. 4). Further, coaching coupled with professional development sessions that reinforce the learning through coaching not only accelerates the "development of a teacher's effectiveness [sic] but can help reduce new teacher turnover" (Brown et al., 2020, p. 4). In this study of instructional coaching and beginning teachers, researchers were tasked with determining if instructional coaching improved beginning teacher instructional effectiveness, increased beginning teacher retention, and promoted a positive and optimistic perspective of the teaching profession. Researchers found that most coaching sessions did not focus on key instructional practices and analysis, but rather addressed "pedagogy, resources, and advise" (p. 21). Although the district appeared to improve its retention rate of beginning teachers, the data revealed a decrease in the rate (p. 24). Researchers did find, however, that the coaching model used in this program supported the development of pedagogical skills, specifically regarding classroom management (p. 26).

### ***CMS Program Theory***

While no formal theory was utilized in developing the CMS program, it was intended to address the drastic change in disciplinary incidents through direct support of new and novice teachers in adopting and utilizing research-based classroom management strategies. With nearly 15% of students district-wide having a disciplinary record, it makes sense that the CMS program administrators would prioritize classroom management skills as a priority for every new and novice teacher. Since many of the district's newly hired teachers had no formal training in education and a minimal understanding of classroom management, they often fixated "on behavior and authority" (Kwok & Svaida-Hardy, 2024, p. 387). Further, they lacked the foundations needed to hone effective classroom management or maintain an environment that demonstrates care for students' socioemotional and developmental needs (see Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2025).

The CMS program also focused on supporting new, novice, and administratively assigned teachers through individualized dialogical coaching and group professional development with the fundamental tenets of "the best parts of existing programs without being restricted to the fidelity of an outside program" (Kwok & Svaida-Hardy, 2024, p. 164). In this case, the classroom management strategies that would be emphasized were a synthesis of research-based approaches like those found in formal programs such as Safe and Civil Schools®, Capturing Kids' Hearts®, and Boys' Town®. The CMS program managers believed that introducing research-based strategies that emphasized the student's well-being and prioritizing teacher-student relationships would result in higher teacher intention and fewer disciplinary referrals.

Stufflebeam's Contexts, Inputs, Processes, and Products or CIPP Model (2003) for program evaluations was the framework for this program theory evaluation study. This allows the researchers to evaluate the theory behind the overall program within its contexts, the inputs and resources utilized in the CMS program, analyze the processes used throughout the CMS program, and identify potential outcomes or products of the program. Focusing on the rationale or theory behind the CMS program allowed researchers to anticipate potential shortcomings of the

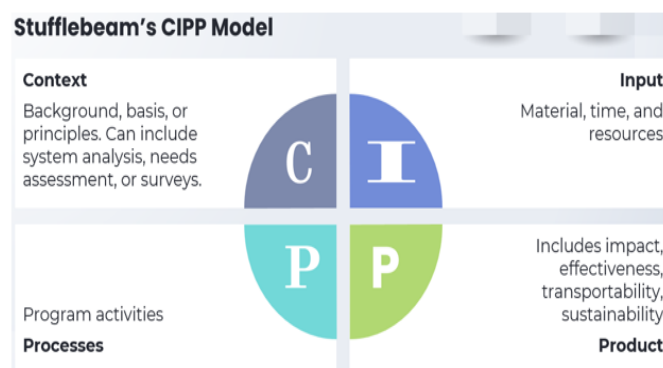
program and identify changes to inputs and processes that could lead to more impactful outcomes for new and novice teachers in their classroom management skills and abilities.

### ***CMS Program Contexts***

In the CIPP Model, contexts relate to the background, basis, or principles (see Figure 1). Contexts can include system analysis, needs assessment, or surveys. It often gives the "why" behind the program, in this case, the CMS initiative. The background for the CMS program includes the increase in hiring of uncertified teachers with limited training and education in the field of classroom management and the distinct increase in classroom management and behavior problems reported in the district post-COVID. Further, there is an abundance of research that supports providing new and novice teachers' intentional support in classroom management, including students who receive services through IEPs, 504, and EB programs. Research also supports building classroom culture through routines and expectations to improve classroom management. Finally, coaching and related professional development are supported by research as approaches to growing new and novice teachers' skills in the classroom.

Figure 1

*Stufflebeam's CIPP Model*



### ***CMS Program Inputs***

Program inputs are the materials, time, and resources used to support a program. In this case, the CMS, the time spent observing teachers, the time spent coaching teachers, and the time spent designing and delivering professional development to teachers as it related to topics covered during coaching sessions and alignment with district goals

using the Capturing Kids' Heart (CKH) curriculum (i.e., monthly themes and goals).

### **CMS Program Processes**

Program processes are the steps or activities the CMS initiative takes to help grow teachers. In this case, activities included tiering teachers, typically done with administrators to determine what level of support a specific teacher would need throughout the year. For example, all "new to district" teachers were initially tiered as Level 2, which required at least once a month coaching and mandatory attendance to monthly professional development that covered the monthly CKH theme and other topics determined by the CMS program. Brand new teachers (years 0-2) would be tiered as Level 1 teachers. Returning and experienced teachers were typically identified as tier 3 or 4, which meant little direct interaction with the CMS.

After the initial tiering of teachers, the CMS would meet with the teacher, discuss the coaching "agreement" (expectations), and then begin the coaching cycle with an observation. After the observation was completed, the CMS would hold a coaching session with the teacher and continue the learning cycle. In addition to observations and coaching, all Tier 1 teachers were also required to attend the monthly or bi-monthly (K-8) professional development opportunities.

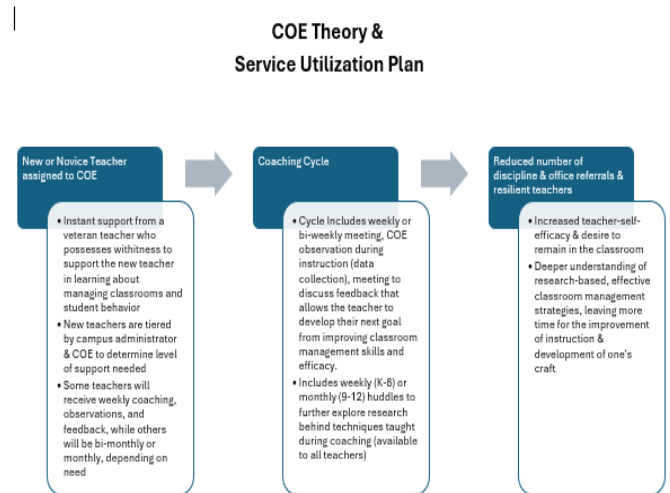
To prepare for coaching and professional development, the CMS team would meet weekly to develop a CMS playbook, formalize the curriculum, and participate in professional development that was offered both externally and in-house from peers with specific certifications and training (e.g., Coaching, Adult Learning Theory, etc.). On the campus level, most CMSs participated in campus administration and leadership teams, particularly those related to campus culture, teacher development, and retention. This usually included at least one meeting per week. For a CMS assigned to two campuses, this could quickly develop into multiple hours spent in meetings. During year 2, surveys were also provided to returning new and novice teachers to gain a deeper insight into their understanding and use of classroom management strategies that the CMS taught.

### **CMS Program Products**

The products that result from a program include impact, effectiveness, transportability, and sustainability. In this case, the product would be an increase in teachers' classroom management ability, which should result in fewer reports of classroom management issues and discipline issues.

**Figure 2**

*Culture of Excellence Theory and Service Utilization Plan*



### **Framework for the Study**

To meet the goals of this evaluation, Stufflebeam's (2003) CIPP model was used to answer the research questions posed below. This model allows for the evaluation of the program's intended premise, theory used, contexts, inputs, processes, and products.

1. Was the premise and theory behind the CMS program sufficient for all program phases (inputs, processes/utilization, products/outcomes)?
2. What perceived immediate impact do classroom management coaches have on new and novice teachers' use of effective classroom management strategies?
3. Was the CMS program able to achieve its intended goals?
4. What recommendations can be developed from the results of this evaluation to further enhance targeted support systems for new and novice teachers (including those without degrees or state teaching certificates)?

### ***Significance of the Study***

The rapid decline in teacher retention and recruitment due to low enrollment in teacher preparation programs may necessitate hiring uncertified teachers with little to no experience in the public school system in the United States. It behooves districts to develop and implement innovative programs to support the new and novice teachers that they hire who have not gone through a traditional teacher preparation program and who may not be certified by their respective states.

### **Methodology**

#### ***Research Design***

The research design for this study was a longitudinal program evaluation of the design, implementation, practices, and perceived impact of the district's CMS program. According to El Mallah et al. (2022), "Program evaluation is a broad term that can include many types of research activities, all involving a systematic process of collecting, analyzing, and using data to answer questions about a program's objectives" (p. 1.4). To evaluate the impact of the COE program, researchers relied upon Stufflebeam's (2003) Contexts, Inputs, Process, and Product or CIPP model. This method was preferred as it allowed for ongoing changes and adjustments in the CMS program on individual campuses and within the school district over the two years of its existence.

#### ***Participants***

There was a total of 113 participants. Those participants were 100 new and novice teachers in the district where the CMS program occurred and 13 CMS specialists. "New and novice teachers" have an operational definition of classroom teachers in grades kindergarten through 12th grade employed by the district with 0 to 2 years of teacher experience. The 13 CMS specialists consisted of certified veteran teachers with more than 10 years of experience, most of whom had a master's degree and 7 of whom also held principal certification. All participants were employees of the district where the CMS program occurred.

The district where the program evaluation and CMS program occurred is considered an NCES Rural Fringe District. This means it is a school in a rural area no more

than 5 miles from an urban area (NCES, 2025). The district's enrollment at the end of the 2019-2020 school year was 12,857. By the end of 2022-2023, the enrollment had increased to 17,583. The percentage of students with at least one discipline incident had increased from 0.084 to 0.15 during the same time frame. Being a state-designated "District of Innovation (DOI)," the hiring practices for the district included individuals being hired as teachers who had a bachelor's degree but were not state-certified to teach, individuals who were not state certified but were in an alternative certification program, individuals with no bachelor's degree but came from industry with solid work experience for what could be considered workforce-type courses (welding, plumbing, cosmetology, etc.) and individuals with no bachelor's degree but were in the District of Innovation program.

#### ***Data Collection***

Data collection consisted of pre-test and post-test surveys of the new and novice teachers in the CMS program, pre-test and post-test surveys of the CMS specialists, monthly survey reports from the CMS specialists, and informal focus groups with the CMS specialists. The pre-test and post-test surveys for the new and novice teachers were based on the different classroom strategies created by Conroy et al. (2014) and adopted by Cooper et al. (2017). The survey consisted of 36 Likert scale questions with answer selections of 1) I am familiar with this and have not received training about it, 2) I am familiar with it but lack formal training in it, 3) I am familiar with it, and use it best with help from more experienced peers, 4) I use it frequently, and 5) I am considered a campus expert in this. The pre-test survey was administered in late September of year one, and the post-test was administered in late May of year one.

The pre-test and post-test surveys of the CMS specialists consisted of 21 program evaluator-created Likert scale questions with answer selections of 1) always, 2) usually, 3) about half the time, 4) seldom, and 5) never. The questions created are as follows:

- My role allows me to support teachers in classroom management.
- My role allows me to support teachers in behavior management.

- My role allows me to support teachers in administrative tasks.
- My role allows me to support teachers with instructional strategies.
- I am asked by campus administrators to do things outside the scope of my position.
- I am asked by campus administrators to assist with individual students and their behavior.
- I am asked by campus administrators to assist other campus administrators.
- I am asked by campus administrators to assist with teacher duty assignments, such as lunch, car line, or other typical teacher duties.
- I am asked by teachers to work with individual students and their behavior.
- My role and district responsibilities are clear to administrators on my campus.
- The administrator(s) on my campus(es) include me in discussions and respect my expertise in classroom management.
- The administrator(s) on my campus(es) support me in holding weekly or monthly community learning sessions.
- The administrators hold the campus accountable for maintaining fidelity to campus-wide implementation of district-wide programming, such as MTSS, CKH.
- I feel well prepared and trained for my role/position.
- I believe I can make a positive impact on teacher capacity when it comes to classroom management.
- I believe I can make a positive impact on student learning outcomes by supporting classroom teachers.
- I believe all new teachers seeking alternative routes of certification should have mandatory, face-to-face “new teacher training” with district leadership that includes:
  - Learning how to design and frame lesson plans
  - Write objectives
  - Bloom’s Taxonomy
  - Dept of Knowledge
- I am confident in working with adult learners (teachers, administrators, and staff).

- I have the necessary resources to do my job well.
- I feel valued on my assigned campus.
- I feel like my district leadership team trusts and supports me and my decisions.

The survey also includes five open-ended questions:

- In my role, I am concerned or have questions about:
- If I could change anything about my role, I would change:
- I could be more successful in this role if I had:
- Campus administrators could better support me in this role to build teacher capacity by:
- Based on your professional experience and education, what skills should all new teachers (certified and uncertified) be able to demonstrate within the first 30 days of teaching? (Examples: write objectives, write lesson plans, understand Bloom’s Taxonomy or Depth of Knowledge, write a professional email, expect to work long hours, plan ahead, create a seating chart, etc.)

The monthly survey reports from the CMS specialists consisted of 14 open-ended questions. The first question asked for the specialist’s email address so that answers could be tracked over time to determine trends. The questions were:

- COE Specialist email address
- Month data was collected for
- How many times this month did you do teacher consultations?
- How many times this month were you required to perform duties that were not part of your of description?
- How many times this month did you lead campus teacher (Professional Learning) training (Collaborative Learning Community)?
- How many times did you have to attend your own department training this month?
- How many times did you have to attend Team Meetings this month?
- How many classroom observations did you do this month?
- How many post-observation feedback meetings did you do this month?

- How many administration referrals to assist a teacher did you receive this month?
- How many administration referrals to assist another administrator or principal did you receive this month?
- How many peer observations did you do this month? (Observe another CMS)
- What were your challenges this month?
- What were the solutions to your challenges this month?

The final data collection procedure involved informal focus groups of the CMS specialists. There were no structured questions for the focus group sessions. Participants in the focus group were allowed to speak freely with copious notes taken by the session leaders.

### ***Validity and Reliability***

The pre-test and post-test strategy surveys from the new and novice teacher participants revealed internal reliability with a Cronbach  $\alpha=0.96$ . Experts in the field of classroom management from higher educational institutions established construct validity.

### ***Data Analysis***

The Mann-Whitney U and Welch's Test were used for the quantitative data. The reason for using these two different statistical formulas was due to the population numbers being different because of teacher attrition during the study's time frame. In addition, descriptive statistics were used for the CMS data from the year 1 monthly reports. Descriptive statistics were used to determine workload. Thematic coding was used for the qualitative data from the focus groups. This was intended to identify any common themes or ideas that could be categorized to establish a framework for CMS experiences (Gibbs, 2007). Thematic coding of the CMS monthly open responses was also used for year 1 to determine any trends in workload creep.

### **Results**

Program administrators believed that increasing classroom management support to new, novice, and administrator-identified teachers through dialogical coaching and intentional professional development focused on classroom management strategies would reduce disciplinary referrals and improve teacher retention. However, state-level data

(which was not available to the CMS Program Administrator prior to the start of the program) demonstrates that overall, the program did not impact the total number of disciplinary events throughout the district.

### ***Quantitative Analysis***

The Mann-Whitney U test was performed to compare whether the new and novice teachers experienced a difference from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year after being a part of the CMS program. The results indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference between the new and novice teachers' self-evaluation of their use of and knowledge of evidence-based classroom management strategies at the beginning of the school year and at the end of the school year;  $U = 587.5, p = .248$ . A Welch's test was also used to evaluate the quantitative data. The test revealed no statistically significant difference between the teachers' use of and knowledge about evidence-based classroom management strategies at the beginning of the school year and the end of the school year for year one of the program,  $t(35) = , p = .016$ .

For the descriptive statistics, the CMSs averaged 25 visits with their teachers per month. Seven of the CMS had been assigned "other duties" by administrators on their respective campuses, such as car line drop-off pick-up monitoring (parents bring their children to school or pick up their children from school, and someone from school personnel must be in the parking lot to watch over the procedure), lunchroom duties, hallway monitoring, and bathroom monitoring, etc. One CMS had a school principal refer an assistant principal to the CMS for mentoring assistance with assistant principal duties. One CMS had the principal refer a teacher to the CMS to mentor who was not in the CMS program.

### ***Qualitative Analyses***

Thematic coding provided the following themes as challenges for the CMSs: 1) Managing all the meetings required with the new and novice teachers assigned to them. 2) MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) meetings for students who are struggling academically or behaviorally, 3) CLC (Community Learning Center) and PLC (Professional Learning Community) meetings for teachers, 4) PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and

Supports) meetings for student behavior, 5) Afterschool meetings, 6) STAAR (State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness) meetings to discuss student academic scores, 7) Other meetings as called. When queried as to the solutions the CMSs developed to handle all the meetings, repeating responses included creating a Google task form to set firm appointments to keep up with all the meetings, staying in their offices so as not to be visible for other tasks that are not part of the CMS job description to be assigned, not finding any solutions to the overwhelming nature of what the CMSs were being asked to do, and a good quote of, “It’s a reality of education – all hands on deck all the time.”

### **Discussion**

While the theory behind the CMS program was rooted in best practices of supporting new and novice teachers, it had some fundamental flaws. For example, the belief that the rise in discipline was due primarily to the rapid influx of students new to the district was incorrect. The published data that researchers obtained showed that there was not only a rapid increase in student enrollment in the first year back on campus post-COVID, but that is also when the discipline issues increased exponentially. It could be that these discrepancies may go beyond classroom management skills and may even suggest that the increase in classroom management and disciplinary issues may be related more to the long-term effects of COVID and school shutdowns. Further, it could highlight the positive impact that formal schooling has on developing students’ sense of routine and their ability to self-regulate (Zimmerman, 1994).

The CMS program would have been more effective in supporting teachers if all teachers had been included, not just new and novice teachers. The belief that new, novice, uncertified, non-degreed, or administrator-directed teachers were the only ones with discipline problems created a scenario in which the CMS impact was only on those selected teachers and classrooms, if at all.

### ***CIPP Model Context***

The need for a program or system to assist the new and novice teachers was based on a sudden increase in discipline referrals due to an increase in student enrollment coupled with an increase in students with special needs, which resulted in an increase in Section 504 plans (504s),

Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and Emotional and Behavior Plans (EBs). It was apparent to campus leaders that many teachers, especially new and novice teachers, lacked relational capacity and needed support. Due to a lack of certified teacher candidates, the district hiring practices brought more uncertified teachers to the classroom. Currently, published research indicates a need for additional support for teachers and additional resources.

### ***CIPP Model Input***

Due to the increased need for support for new and novice teachers in the district and current research, Classroom Management Specialist (CMS) positions were created, and individuals were hired to fulfill those roles. The highest need for support were the new and novice teachers in alternative certification programs, new and novice teachers not in certification programs, and teachers who work with students with IEPs, 504s, and EBs.

### ***CIPP Model Processes***

The CMS program processes included individualized classroom management coaching by the CMSs for the new and novice teachers and bi-monthly professional development meetings for the new and novice teachers. The purpose of the professional development meetings was to build the standard professional language capacity of the new and novice teachers along with basic foundational information that teachers need to know. It was found that after the two years of this evaluative study, there was no mechanism in place at the district to ensure that the uncertified new and novice teachers enrolled in an alternative certification program.

It was also found that there was a lack of district commitment by campus administrators to the role of CMSs. This allowed principals to dictate the role at the campus level so that the CMS role could look very different from campus to campus. This, in turn, controlled the ability of the CMS to schedule coaching meetings with the new and novice teachers. It also resulted in the CMSs being used for mid-level management tasks other than the intent of the CMS role (car line, lunch duty, covering classes, working with students, etc.).

### ***CIPP Model Product***

Determining the measurable impact of the CMSs was difficult due to various factors. The first factor was the inability of the district to track “lower-level classroom discipline events.” These events were for very minor infringements of the student code of conduct that were not applied consistently from campus to campus. An example of a minor infringement would be the wearing of a garment called a “hoodie.” Some of the campus administrators had no issue with students wearing hoodies on their campus. In contrast, other administrators on other campuses did not allow students to wear hoodies on their campuses. Another factor was that it was impossible to attribute a student behavior issue to a single teacher due to the way each individual campus maintained and reported student behavior issues data.

Although one of the purposes of the CMSs was to improve teacher retention, the varying hiring practices on each campus and documentation of those teachers who left before completing the year and why they left were inconsistent throughout the district. Another purpose of the CMSs was to build and improve campus culture. Since there was no consistent way to track CMS impact, which was driven by the campus principal goal for each campus individually, assigning improvement or lack thereof could not be measured reliably to determine CMS program continuation.

### ***Limitations***

One of the most significant limitations of this program evaluation is that the researchers were unable to compare identical data from year to year due to changing district policies. The program theory attributed the increase in disciplinary actions partly to the increase of new and novice teachers within the district, creating a perception that the new teachers’ struggles in managing student behaviors in their classrooms were the cause for increased disciplinary actions. However, in the 2021-2022 school year, every district in the state was adapting to the new post-COVID “norms,” adjusting to an often misunderstood lingering impact of a post-COVID learning environment, which may play a role in the increase in disciplinary actions (Dorn et al., 2021). For the 2022-2023 school year, the district mandated additional district-wide policies

prohibiting students from wearing hoodies within school buildings, prohibiting student cell phone usage during the school day, and no girl could wear dresses after fourth grade. These policies increased the number of discipline referrals, although the district’s system for collecting and disaggregating those numbers from the more traditional discipline incidents made it impossible to track. In the 2023-2024 school year, the state education authority required mandatory 30-day placement in a district education setting for any incident involving vaping. Each of the situations and policy changes could account for the rise in student disciplinary referrals or actions.

Another limitation of the study was the fidelity to which campus administrators utilized their CMSs. For any program to be successful and have the intended impact for which it was designed, it must be implemented with fidelity. In this case, administrators at the individual district campuses retained different visions and an understanding of the program's fidelity parameters. For example, many CMSs found themselves covering classes for teachers either absent or in meetings, monitoring lunch duty, or serving as bus line coordinators or monitors, which was contrary to their primary role of coaching new, novice, and administrator-identified teachers needing extra support, particularly regarding classroom management struggles. By utilizing the CMS role in this manner, the campus-level administrator created an extra mid-level manager who was not a full-time employee (FTE) on their respective campus budgets. Essentially, the CMS became a mid-level campus “manager” with no authority.

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