Introduction

Why Do Students Misbehave?

Mrs. Smith is a second-grade teacher. She teaches a group of 25 children, including Barry, an active youngster who frequently gets into conflicts with other children. The class is just finishing spelling, and it is time for a short recess. Today, the children will stay in the classroom and play with games available to them in the back of the room. There are five computers in the classroom, so five students will have an opportunity to play games on them while the rest will break into small groups and play with board games.

As children begin to break into groups, the teacher is gathering the materials she just used to teach the preceding subject. Barry runs to the back of the classroom. He approaches a child who has selected a computer to play with and attempts to commandeer it. The other boy does not give up, and an argument between the two boys ensues, including some pushing. The teacher yells across the room,

"What's going on there?"

Barry yells, "I want to play!"

The other boy chimes in, "But I got here first!"

"Barry, he got there first, so please let him stay on," says the teacher.

Barry yells, "Nooo, I really want to play!"

The teacher approaches Barry and leads him away from the computer. He yells even louder, "Nooo, you can't make me!"

The teacher places Barry in the corner by the building blocks. In anger, he starts to throw the blocks around the room.

The teacher yells, "Stop that!" She returns to her desk to finish what she was doing.

After a moment, Barry goes over to a group of children that just started to play with a board game. He wants to join them, but they already assigned all available spots for the game and tell him he can't play. He goes over to one girl sitting on the side and gets in front of her.

The other children start to yell at him, "No, get away from here!"

Barry swipes his hand across the board, knocking all the pieces to the floor.

The teacher goes over and says, "I told you to stop! Now you have to behave! Go over there, sit down, and read a book!"

Barry protests, "Nooo! It's not fair! I want to play!"

The teacher asks the class whether any group will accept Barry. No one responds. The teacher goes over to one group of children and asks that they let Barry join them. They protest but agree.

As Barry and the group play with the game, Barry attempts to take over the game in the manner in which he likes (not in accordance with the stated rules). Every few moments, when things do not go his way, Barry acts up again. The other children try to shush him, to no avail. Throughout the 25-minute recess, the teacher must frequently go back and intervene with Barry, proclaiming, "I said knock it off!"

As the recess comes to an end, the teacher asks the children to return to their assigned seats. Barry is the last one still in the back of the room. While the children return to their desks, Barry starts to build a tower with the building blocks.

The teacher addresses Barry from across the classroom: "Barry, put those away and return to your seat."

Barry replies, "In a minute."

The teacher starts giving out a handout with a math assignment. Barry is still playing with the blocks. The teacher says, "Barry, I said put those away and come back to your desk."

"But I just want to finish building the tower!" Barry says.

The other children start working, and the teacher starts to circulate around the room to see if anyone needs help. Barry is still playing.

She raises her voice: "Barry, your work is waiting here for you." He responds, "I'm not finished!"

The teacher answers a question from another student and realizes that Barry is still in the back of the room. She tells Barry, "Come to your desk now, or I'll have to tell your mother you're not listening."

Barry does not respond. The teacher, still in the front of the room, answers another student's question and then yells, "Barry, did you hear me? I am calling your mother!"

Barry does not respond and continues to build.

The teacher, now visibly angry, marches toward Barry, starts to take the blocks out of his hands, and pulls him toward his desk. Barry starts yelling and crying: "But I was not finished! It's not fair!" He throws the blocks he still has in his hand across the room.

He gets to his desk, still crying, and his noise is disrupting the other students in the classroom.

After a minute or two, he calms down and turns around to ask the neighbor behind him a question. Other students become distracted and say, "Barry, be quiet!"

The teacher walks over to Barry, who turns toward her. The teacher directs him to do his work. He engages for the moment, but as soon as the teacher walks away, he starts to ask a neighbor to his right for a pencil. The neighbor says, "Barry, stop!" The teacher walks over to Barry.

"What do you need?" she asks.

"I don't have anything to write with," Barry says.

"Where is your pencil?" the teacher asks.

"I don't know," Barry replies.

The teacher gives Barry a pencil, directs him to work, and walks away. After a moment, Barry gets up from his desk and walks to the back of the classroom. "Where are you going?" asks the teacher. He replies, "To sharpen my pencil."

Barry gets to the pencil sharpener and sharpens his pencil loudly and repeatedly. He then starts to walk back. Passing the first desk, he starts to ask his friend a question. The two start talking. The neighbor in the front turns around and says, "Be quiet!"

The teacher walks back toward Barry and his friend. She asks, "What are you talking about?"

He replies, "I had to ask him whether he will come over later to play."

"Now?" the teacher asks.

"But I won't see him later!" Barry replies. The teacher, exasperated, directs Barry to get back to his desk. He complies and starts to work on the sheet, but two minutes later, he again starts bothering his neighbor. The teacher walks over toward Barry and says, "What are you doing?"

"I did not know how to do this one," he replies.

"Then ask me, and I'll help you." The teacher shows him and he again begins to work. A moment later, he again turns to the neighbor and starts whispering. Both boys start giggling. The girl next to them says, "Why don't you knock it off?"

The teacher walks over, but Barry sees her coming and returns to his work. Another few minutes go by.

Barry gets the attention of the teacher and says, "Psst, I want to ask you a question."

The teacher, thinking he needs help, walks over and says, "What is it?"

Barry says, "Tomorrow, can I be the first one to play on the computer?"

"We'll see," says the teacher. "Now get back to work."

He does, for a few moments, after which he again loses focus and becomes distracted. This pattern continues through the whole day.

Does this sound familiar? Perhaps the following example is closer to your experience.

Mr. Spears is a ninth-grade social studies teacher. He has 35 students in his class, including a young woman, Traci, who seems to know how to push his buttons. She dresses suggestive and enjoys the attention her male peers seem to give her. She usually arrives to class a couple of minutes late and makes a "grand entrance," obviously asking to be noticed. One day, as some of the boys in the room started catcalling, one girl yelled out, "Slut." Traci heard that and stormed toward the girl, yelling at her, "What did you say, bitch?" A friend held Traci back, and eventually she walked back to her desk and sat down.

However, this is hardly the end of the problems. Mr. Spears asks the students to take out their homework assignments. Traci does not have hers. When he asks her why, she says, "Because I didn't feel like it. Social studies is boring."

"That's a zero!" the teacher says.

"I don't care!" Traci responds.

Mr. Spears attempts to go on with his class. However, Traci starts humming to herself. The teacher says, "Traci, please stop making noise."

Traci rolls her eyes but stops. A few moments later, however, she leans over to a classmate, and both start talking and giggling. The teacher says, "Stop that laughing and pay attention!" Traci ignores him and continues to talk and laugh.

Mr. Spears yells, "I said stop!" Traci says, "All right, all right." She becomes quiet for a few minutes. However, she takes out a magazine and starts reading it. Another student tells the teacher, "Mr. Spears, Traci is reading a magazine." The teacher, thinking that he must address this or risk losing control over his classroom, goes over to Traci and says, "What are you doing?"

"Nothing," Traci responds.

"Give me the magazine" the teacher says.

"No! It's not yours, you can't take it away from me" Traci says.

"But you can't read it in class," the teacher responds.

"OK, I'll put it away," Traci says.

Traci loudly shoves the magazine inside her desk and rolls her eyes, but she does not reengage in the class discussion. After a few moments, she starts to look out the window and loudly drums on her desk with a pencil. The teacher yells to her, "Stop that!" She again rolls her eyes but becomes quiet for a moment. She then yawns, stretches her arms, and loudly proclaims, "I'm bored," after which the class bursts into laughter.

Perceiving another challenge from Traci, the teacher yells, "If you don't knock it off, I will call your parents." Traci replies, "Go ahead. They're divorced. They don't care!"

Mr. Spears does his best to continue with the class lecture and discussion, and Traci continues to occasionally disrupt. Each time he scolds her, she stops for a moment and then starts again. Mr. Spears feels very frustrated by the situation and dreads each class where Traci is present. Secretly, he wishes she would stop attending his class.

Perhaps you've experienced similar problems yourself. Perhaps you've talked with colleagues who experience these problems with their students. What went wrong in these examples? Why didn't the disruptive students listen? Could the teachers have done something to improve the likelihood that they would listen? The answers to these questions are complex and involve a combination of many factors, such as the students' basic personality, the behavioral habits they have developed, and the behaviors of the teachers.

Judging from both students' behavior, we can safely assume that both have tendencies to ignore teachers' commands and that they may also have problems transitioning from one behavior to another. Perhaps the teachers' approach in these examples would have worked with most ordinary students, but these examples involve two students who appear to be difficult and with whom the ordinary way of doing things may not work. Thus, a different approach becomes necessary.

Many teachers feel that just because they are the teacher in the classroom, students should automatically recognize that their word is law and must be obeyed. Although some students today still respond to this philosophy and listen accordingly, many do not. This approach may have worked many years ago, but times are different now. Most students today won't listen to teachers just because they say so. Most students today need a reason to listen to their teachers, one that is more substantial than "Because I said so."

Why Students Misbehave

Why are some students so difficult to manage? In the examples presented earlier, a number of factors contributed to noncompliance; some pertain to the student, some have to do with the teacher's behaviors and reactions, and some are related to classroom dynamics. It is important to consider the specifics of all of those factors to guide us toward developing an approach that will effectively address classroom behavior problems.

Student Factors

Some personality factors make it more likely that a student will exhibit difficult behaviors. Of these, impulsivity is the most notable. The more prone students are to quick reactions without much fore-thought, the more likely they are to misbehave. When confronted with a situation in which we don't get our way, we all experience a negative reaction. Those who are not particularly impulsive possess the ability to think through the situation, evaluate response choices and the consequences of each option, and select a behavior that results in the most desired consequences. Unfortunately, individuals who are impulsive spend little time thinking through the conse-quences of their behaviors and act too quickly. Often, those actions result in negative consequences that the individual didn't anticipate, and the result is a negative reaction, including frustration and anger.

Impulsivity is the result of many factors, most significantly the underactivity of the brain's frontal lobes. In its most notable form, this underactivity causes psychological disorders such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. It is important to remember, however, that impulsive students don't necessarily have a psychological disorder.

Although extreme impulsivity is a sign of a more serious problem and most likely requires appropriate treatment, many students exhibit less severe symptoms of impulsivity that, nevertheless, result in behav-ioral difficulties. In general, impulsive individuals exhibit limited self-control; their diminished ability to think through the consequences of their behaviors often results in their inability to adapt to situations that don't turn out as they would like. Thus, impulsive students are known to have difficulties with thinking through their actions and often exhibit behaviors characterized by limited self-control.

What makes impulsivity particularly troubling is the way in which it interferes with the person's ability to learn from experience. When required to choose a behavior in a particular situation, those with sufficient ability to stop and think before they act are able to process the situation long enough to recall similar situations, the behavior they chose in the past, and the consequences they experi-enced. This allows them to learn from these situations. When faced with a similar choice, they can select a response that worked best in the past (or, at least, stop selecting the behavior that generally resulted in negative consequences).

However, impulsive students with limited self-control don't think through each situation sufficiently to recall prior experiences, so they are much more likely to repeat the same poor choices. This point is very important to remember: Impulsive students require repeated

exposure to consistent consequences before they eventually begin to think before they act and start to learn from previous experience.

The Strong-Willed Student

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Jodie is a 12-year-old student who is seeing her school counselor. She says that some of her classmates are very domineering and bully her and make fun of her. Her older brother also orders her around all the time and is often mean to her. Jodie's teacher does not see any problems with her but describes her as quiet and fragile; she easily gets upset and usually cries when she encounters something she considers to be unfair, but she does not verbally express how she feels. The counselor works with Jodie to help her recognize that she doesn't have to allow herself to be treated poorly and that she's a person who can exercise her own will and set limits on others, including her friends and her brother. Notably, when asked what she was like as a younger child, Jodie's mother described her as a strong-willed child who often argued when she did not get her way. Jodie admits that her parents used to have to spank and punish her a lot to get her to do what she was supposed to do. When asked by the counselor why she now is no longer so strong-willed, Jodie said, "I gave up fighting—it was not worth it."

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Mike is a 16-year-old student who is currently on home-bound instruction. Mike is unable to attend regular classroom instruction. He has attended different classroom settings, including inclusion and self-contained placements, but none have worked. Mike admits that he does not get along with teachers: "When they start ordering me around, I tell them off and then I walk out." Mike and his parents frequently get into arguments because he challenges them when he doesn't get his own way. He has two siblings and he fights with them all the time, sometimes including physical altercations. Mike has few friends and similarly argues with them whenever they do not do what he wants. In counseling, Mike voluntarily admits that he does not get along with most people: "Everyone has been trying to run my life ever since I was a child. I can't stand it."

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Charlie is an 18-year-old high school senior. Two years ago, Charlie had an idea that high school students need a way to send instant messages as a group rather than individually. Similar to a chat room, he felt that groups of teenagers should be able to have a simple platform on which to establish electronic interactions, just as easy as it is to start talking when a group of friends gets together. He approached major Internet companies, but they did not like his ideas and felt that the services already offered by giants like Google and Yahoo! were similar enough that there was too small a market for what he sought. However, Charlie did not give up. He obtained a loan from a local bank and set up his own computer servers in the garage. He then marketed the idea to students in his high school and obtained enough interest that his efforts attracted one sponsor, who now advertises on his service. Along the way, Charlie's efforts also resulted in interest from colleges, and he just secured a grant that will pay for almost all of his expenses at a well-known college next year. Charlie's parents remark that they respect his strength and determination: "He's always been that way. When he sets his mind to do something, no one can stop him. He still gets upset when things don't go his way." However, they also say that he seems to know when to let go. His mother says, "Somehow, he's learned not to sweat the small stuff."

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What do these three students have in common? One obvious similarity is that they all had tendencies to be strong-willed. These tendencies, however, progressed differently as they became teenagers. For Jodie, her defiance and strong will were squelched. Mike's defiance was exacerbated and eventually started to rule his life. For Charlie, the strong-willed nature became an asset, and he was able to use it constructively.

If these three students started out with similar personalities, what accounts for their different paths? The answer lies, at least partially, in the manner in which their strong-willed natures evolved during development. Jodie's spirit was broken, and she learned that it wasn't worth it to stand up for herself and attempt to have things in life go her way. Mike's defiant tendencies intensified, and he now always seeks to get his own way, although it is obviously to his detriment in school, at home, and with friends. Charlie, on the other hand, seemed able to retain strength of will and perseverance to get his own way when it really matters while having the good judgment to "stop sweating the small stuff."

How do we, as teachers, affect the way in which our students grow as people? We must start by recognizing that some strength of

will is an asset to a person. For it to remain a strength rather than a liability, however, students must develop the ability to judge a situation and determine when persisting to get their own way is likely to be beneficial, and when it is counterproductive and will probably result in negative consequences. As teachers, we don't want our students to lose their resolve and become like Jodie. Likewise, we hope that our students won't be like Mike. Instead, we want our students to retain strength of will and perseverance while moderating it with good judgment, like Charlie. Before I cover the approach that will guide teachers to help students develop better judgment, it is important to consider teacher factors that contribute to problem situations.

Teacher Factors

The overwhelming majority of teachers are education professionals who want to help their students become smart and successful. When students' behaviors interfere with teaching, this makes teachers frustrated because they feel that it prevents them from accomplishing these goals. When frustrated, many teachers lose control over their own reactions and a conflict ensues. Consequently, helping teachers manage their own reactions is an important component of effective student behavior management. To do so, we must start with clarifying the most basic component that underlies teachers' beliefs and expectations, the goals that the teachers set for themselves as education professionals.

The Goals of Teaching

During speaking engagements, I'm often asked about the goals of teaching and the best ways to achieve them. This is obviously a complex question with many answers, but generally I think that teachers mainly have the obligation to facilitate their students' growth and development and to prepare them for adulthood. Although academic achievement and skill building in the major academic areas are part of these larger goals, the focus on growth and development and on preparation for adulthood is more important than any grade or test score.

The first of these goals, facilitating growth and development, is attained through providing an environment in which the students' educational and emotional needs are met. The educational needs are met by creating a setting conducive to learning, exposing students to academic tasks that foster the development of cognitive skills, offering challenge and stimulation to facilitate growth, and encouraging

and monitoring students' progress. The emotional needs, however, are more elusive, although no less important. These include the ability to communicate caring, empathy, and respect for students as individuals and worthwhile human beings. Here, teachers must recognize that students develop their own personalities, even if those personalities are different from those with which the teachers are comfortable.

The other goal, that of preparing students for adulthood, has many facets. Essentially, what we want to accomplish as teachers is to help students develop a set of life skills that will help them function as well-adjusted adults. Many specific skills contribute to this desirable outcome, but the development of good self-control is perhaps most crucial.

Teacher Expectations

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David is a sixth-grade teacher who is seeking advice from the vice principal about one of his students, John. The student doesn't listen to what David tells him and says things like, "No, I don't have to," and "You can't make me." The teacher admits that this makes him very angry. He can't stand the defiance and views it as a direct assault on his authority as a teacher. It isn't the student's place to question anything that the teacher says. In other words, "Students must obey because I say so. When we were in school, we would have never defied our teachers because our parents would beat the crap out of us. If John was my son, I would never go for this. I think John is this way because his parents don't care and they failed to teach him respect."

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All too common, this example exhibits some disturbing trends. First, the teacher expects blind obedience from his students and views the student's misbehavior as a deliberate attempt to usurp the teacher's authority. In addition, it places primary blame outside of the current situation, on the student's parents. Not only is this approach counterproductive to the process of developing constructive solutions, but it also erodes the teacher's relationship with the student's parents, as the underlying assumptions about the parents' failings set negative expectations. In other words, this approach assumes that, "The parents are at fault, and if they don't do anything, there is nothing I can do about it."

In the previous section, when asked about Jodie, Mike, or Charlie, most teachers would likely choose Charlie as a model of how they would like their students to evolve. However, the teachers' perceptions of how such an outcome comes about is often inaccurate. On one hand, they want their students to accept blindly everything that they tell them to do; on the other hand, they expect the students to develop simultaneously the ability to stand up for what they believe and be able to exert strong will as adults. These two expectations are contradictory. A student who blindly accepts everything that teachers say will *not* become an adult who is independently minded and tenacious. The ability to persevere and try to get one's own way starts early in life and will not evolve if squelched. No student can magically become a strong and persistent adult without developing these tendencies gradually in childhood and adolescence.

The Role of Judgment

We all want our students to develop into smart, well-adjusted, and strong adults. We want them to learn to think for themselves and make the right decisions, but we must recognize that the journey to attaining these goals starts very early. The way we manage behaviors has a lot to do with the degree to which children and adolescents become happy, well adjusted, and strong adults. If a student is scorned every time he expresses his own will, the eventual result will be an adult who is unhappy, feels poorly about himself, and lacks self-confidence. In other words, the students will become like Jodie. This doesn't mean that the misbehaviors should go unchecked. If your students don't learn to use good judgment, they may grow up to be like Mike. How, then, do we balance our approach and help our students develop to become adults like Charlie?

One way to do so is to focus on the behavior rather than the attitude. In other words, don't expect your student to do what you say blindly, without any objection. Even though your job as a teacher may be easier, you're much more likely to turn your student into a passive adult. Instead, expect your student to question what you ask or command, and don't view this as a test of your authority.

Remember, your student is still learning how to differentiate settings in which exerting her own will is desirable from those in which it is not. If you want your student to become a self-confident and mentally strong adult, the journey in that direction starts in youth, in our classrooms. Don't squelch the strong will. Don't punish your student for the initial reluctance or refusal.

What your student does is much more important than what he says. (There are exceptions addressed later in this book.) If the student exhibited reluctance or protest but still made the right choice of behavior, don't punish or scold him for the initial reaction. If he made the wrong choice of behavior, allow the consequences to become the tool by which he eventually learns to make a better choice. Unless his words were abusive, what he said along the way is mostly irrelevant.

Keep in mind that you do not want to break your student's spirit. You want to encourage her attempts to exercise her will, but you also want her to learn the difference between doing so all the time and doing so when it is necessary and proper. In other words, you want your student to have a choice about whether to comply with your command or request. In this manner, your student will learn self-control. You want your student to comply with your command because she knows the consequences of complying and not complying and because she decided which of these consequences she desires. Your goal is not to force compliance but to teach your student the consequences of complying versus not complying. This is a crucial distinction.

If your student doesn't listen, this does not mean that you weren't successful as a teacher. Your job is to teach (and administer) proper consequences, and you can do this regardless of whether your student complied with your command. If your student does not comply, you haven't failed. You would have failed only if you didn't administer appropriate consequences.

If you can clearly establish the parameters beforehand, especially with regard to the consequences that your student will experience after either an appropriate or inappropriate behavior, you will eventually teach your student to make the right choices, and this book will help you do so. This teaches your student to exercise reasoning and judgment. This point is so important that keeping just this point in mind, even if you don't follow anything else in this book, will make a significant difference in how you interact with your students and what you expect of them. This will help them grow up to be happier and better adjusted individuals.

How Can This Book Help Me?

You have just learned some of the reasons why students exhibit behavioral problems. However, just understanding those reasons is not enough to change things. In this book, you will also learn how to control your own emotional reactions so that you remain calmer. The more you control yourself and your own reactions, the more effective

you will become in successfully managing your students' behaviors. Breaking the cycle of escalation will allow you to remain in control and therefore short-circuit the spiral that leads to most confrontations.

This book will help you give your students reasons why they should listen to you and help them understand what will happen when they do or don't listen. You will learn how to identify and implement proper consequences for your students' positive and negative behaviors. Throughout the book, there are examples of common behavioral problems that teachers experience. With each, I'll help you understand what went wrong and why the student acted out. You will develop necessary strategies to reduce acting out and increase the degree of control you have over your students' behaviors.

What Can I Expect From This Book?

Please understand that there are no quick fixes, and no strategy in the world will instantly turn a difficult student into a compliant one. Improving the situation is possible, but it will require work, effort, and a commitment of your time. This book offers you a set of tools that have been shown to be effective in reducing behavioral problems, but these tools need time to work, and you'll need to use them consistently.

To further expand on that point, please don't approach the strategies described in this book with a wait-and-see attitude. That is, please don't say "I'll try to use these to see if they will work." This kind of approach will almost surely destine you to failure. The methods in this book will only work if you have enough faith in them to alter the way in which you address your students on a permanent basis.

Start with a conclusion that you are ready to do something different, something that will help you turn things around with your students. If you are like the typical teacher, you probably have already tried everything you could think of, and nothing has worked. So, what do you have to lose? Have faith. The procedures in this book will make a difference, although the amount of change you can expect varies from student to student. If you are willing to commit the effort and perseverance required to implement the following strategies, you'll see results.

You'll also need to give it a commitment of time. Learning new habits, skills, and techniques is a laborious process. Although this book is divided into manageable steps, each of which most teachers can easily accomplish in a typical week or two, obtaining long-term change takes time and perseverance. Do not try to proceed too

quickly. Give each step enough time to work and begin to produce at least some positive results.

How Do I Know This Program Is Effective?

The program contained in this book was developed in the 1990s. As a clinical child psychologist and a school psychologist for nearly two decades, I have worked often with difficult youngsters, in and out of school settings. Teachers of those students need help to break the escalation patterns that are so common with many of those students. For many years, resources have existed for clinicians to help parents and teachers implement strategies that reduce conflicts and improve the manageability of difficult children and adolescents. For example, behavioral contracting has long been known to be effective. Available resources for parents and teachers, however, rarely provide the kind of detailed instructions that assist them in developing an effective behavior contract, and a poorly implemented contract is not likely to be very effective. Thus, I began to identify those components of behavioral contracting that appear to make it most likely to be successful.

Clinicians working with defiant children often follow a program designed by Russell Barkley (1997). I found components of this program helpful, but also in my experience, revising the program made it more effective within school settings. Gradually, I significantly expanded the program, revised certain steps, and added others. Consequently, components of the program contained in this book are loosely based on Barkley's work, with significant additions and changes that are specifically relevant to teachers.

Once this new program was complete, I performed several studies to research its effectiveness. Each step of the technique was researched, and the results are available in professional literature (Kapalka 2005a, 2005b, 2007a, 2008a; Kapalka & Bryk, 2007) or were presented at professional conferences (Kapalka, 2001, 2005c, 2005d, 2006, 2007b, 2007c, 2008b) and are being prepared for publication. The studies revealed that each step resulted in a 25% to 65% reduction in behavioral problems. When you consider the combined effect of utilizing many of the steps, the overall reduction in problems was very significant. Thus, you can be confident that the program you are reading is based on sound psychological principles and is backed by empirical, scientific evidence of its effectiveness. In addition, you can expect that the more steps you implement, the greater the benefit that you will experience.

How Do I Use This Book?

This book describes a behavior management program that involves the use of eight separate but related techniques that collectively will help you bring your students under control. Each step is designed to address a specific problem that students commonly exhibit when acting out. The steps must be mastered individually, and you must be comfortable with using a step on a daily basis before you proceed to the next one. Although the steps each address a different problem, they build upon one another; you need to truly master Step 1 before you proceed to Step 2, you must have mastered Steps 1 and 2 before you should proceed to Step 3, and so on. Consequently, it is recommended that you only attempt one step every one to two weeks. In this way, you'll give yourself and your students enough time to get used to the new way of doing things, and you'll then be ready to proceed to the next step.

The steps are designed to work in sequence. The sequence of steps is not accidental; it is designed to help you master the steps in order because each step builds upon the steps you master before it. Consequently, please don't jump around and try to pick and choose the specific interventions you want to use with your students. You may get some benefit from doing so, but the program won't be nearly as effective. Instead, master all of the steps, in sequence. Once you have completed Steps 1 through 4, you may then pick and choose whether any or all of the remaining steps will be useful, and you can administer those in any order, as needed.

Each of the steps is accompanied by summary checklists. These sheets are intended to be used as reminders to keep you on track. As you proceed through each step, place the sheets in a conspicuous place where they will act as reminders to you. Spontaneously coming across them as you go through your day of teaching will help you remember the details of each technique. The more you consult them, the more success you will experience with the implementation of each step.

Finally, please don't skip the first chapter and proceed directly to the behavioral program. Although you can derive some benefit from the program even if you don't read the next chapter, your administration of the steps won't be as effective. As a teacher, your success in bringing your students under control depends on several factors. Not only must you gain some understanding of why your students are behaving the way they do, but you must also understand why you react the way you do and what specifically you need to change about your own reactions to become more effective as a disciplinarian. So, roll up your sleeves and get ready to start on this important journey.