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# Teachers' Perceptions of Classroom Management Factors that Contribute to Stress and Likelihood to Seek Consultation from School Counselors

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Teachers' Perceptions of Classroom Management Factors that Contribute to Stress and

Likelihood to Seek Consultation from School Counselors

Kathryn L. Gallup

The College at Brockport, State University of New York

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**Abstract**

This manuscript examines the various factors that contribute to classroom teachers' stress as they relate to classroom management, and their likeliness to seek consultation from school counselors on such issues. This study takes place in a suburban high school where the participants were teachers. Participants were asked to rank their level of stress on eight factors which current research identifies as being the leading causes of classroom teachers' stress, and how likely they would be to seek consultation from school counselors in regard to each stressor. Results of this study reflect the teachers of this high school do experience at least some level of stress and are very likely to consult with school counselors in instances of students' behavior issues, students' mental health needs and student involvement in harmful activities. However, the participants were not very likely to seek out school counselors in the other arenas.

Teachers' Perceptions of Classroom Management Factors that Contribute to Stress and  
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The object of this study was to determine teachers' perceptions of: (1) the factors that contribute to their stress as it relates to classroom management, and (2) their likelihood to seek consultation from school counselors. According to the current research, teachers have identified classroom management as a major concern for both new teachers as well as veteran teachers (Rosas & West, 2009). Recent literature has also noted that teachers are balancing many more tasks than exclusively teaching their students a specified curriculum, and with these tasks come concerns (DiBara, 2007). These concerns include, yet are not limited to the following: student academic achievement, curriculum planning and development, student behavior problems, personal/social/mental health needs of students, and teaching modifications for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

As public education trends toward performance based evaluation for teachers, this study was significant in exploring the deeper ramifications of such trends. There is limited amount of research focusing on where teachers' highest level of concern lies when it comes to their ability to successfully deliver their lesson content to students. The literature, however, has cited classroom management, and other factors, which contribute to teachers' ability to focus on delivering their lesson content to their students.

The role of the classroom teacher has become increasingly complicated, however, some of the roles teachers are finding themselves faced with are those outside of their expertise. The American School Counselor Association, (ASCA) stated that School Counselors should assist teachers with classroom management (The ASCA National Model, 2005). Teachers do not have

the training or expertise to assist students with mental health concerns. In such cases, it is beneficial to know what the likelihood teachers would consult with the School Counselor about these issues pertaining to their students as well as classroom management. With this information gathered, School Counselors can then assist teachers in classroom management as well as the additional stressors teachers face on a daily basis.

### **Review of the Literature**

Today, teachers work within a complex school context and find themselves doing more than exclusively teaching their students a specified curriculum (DiBara, 2007). Teachers are continuously planning and developing curriculum to meet changing state standards and have ultimately become responsible for student academic achievement. According to current research, both new and veteran teachers identify classroom management as a major concern impacting their ability to effectively deliver course content to students (Rosas & West, 2009). While delivering content to students, teachers need to incorporate differentiated learning instruction, modifications for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 plans, and manage behavior issues within the classroom. Managing student behavior problems, as well as the personal, social, or mental health needs of students, may be beyond teachers' preparation or current abilities (DiBara, 2007). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) states that school counselors provide support to students in three areas, including academics, career, and personal/social, but that they should also assist teachers, particularly with classroom management (The ASCA National Model, 2005). ASCA indicates school counselors are required for assisting teachers in meeting the needs of their students (The ASCA National Model, 2005). ASCA states that school counselors are responsible for collaborating with



teachers in order to improve the overall development of classroom management practices, as well as ensuring students' academic, career, and personal/social success (The ASCA National Model, 2005).

### **Teacher Stress**

Literature indicates today's teachers are under a large amount of stress. Sometimes this increased level of stress can affect the ability of teachers to meet students' needs, whether these needs be academic, personal, or social (McEachern, Aluede, & Kenny, 2008).

It appears that now more than ever before, teachers are feeling the effects of job-related stress and, in many instances, this stress is taking a toll on these individuals. What is perhaps most concerning is that this added stress teachers are experiencing can potentially trickle down to their students, thus having a negative effect on them. If students witness their teacher as being stressed and overwhelmed, then they too may become agitated and stressed (Nagel & Brown, 2003).

While students certainly can be affected by teacher stress, the teachers themselves bear the greatest burden. Research identified that teacher stress leads to anger, frustration, tension and depression (Kyriacou, 2001). Teachers have identified their main stressors as: a lack of motivation among students; discipline issues; time restraints; having a challenging case load/work load; evaluation based on students' grades and test scores; and unfavorable working conditions (Kohn, 2000; Kyriacou, 2001; Nagel & Brown, 2003). Sorenson (2007) found that stressors among teachers also include their students' performance on high-stakes tests; assisting in their students' academic achievement; administrator requests; strained relationships with

fellow faculty members; and task completion. This stress can cause anxiety as well as other health issues for teachers.

Aside from health issues, stress leads to a high turn-over rate among teachers (Sorenson, 2007). This high teacher turn-over rate can have a negative impact on students, because a cycle of established teachers leaving and new teachers entering may lead to breaks in the curriculum, and ultimately disrupt the learning process (Rosas & West, 2009). Teachers indicate they are having difficulty staying motivated in their job because of the extreme amount of pressure they are under. This lack of motivation is a contributing factor for these teachers wanting to leave the education field (Sorenson, 2007).

Research suggests a high attrition rate is especially true for first year teachers. In their study, Schlichte, Yssel, and Merbler (2005) found many first-year educators leave the teaching profession for the following reasons: student behavior issues; high teacher-student ratios; pressure to complete administrative tasks including grading, lesson planning, and curriculum developing; and a perceived lack of support from their administrators. They also did not feel like they were part of a team at their workplace and wanted more emotional support from their colleagues. These individuals indicated that they believed the political and financial aspects of the education field seemed to be more important than faculty's feelings and concerns (Schlichte et al., 2005). Educators without support are likely to move on to other careers (Rosas & West, 2009). The study concluded that teacher mentoring, networking, and the ability to maintain an optimistic outlook, has a great deal to do with a teacher's success during the first year (Schlichte et al., 2005).

**No Child Left Behind, (NCLB)**

Contributing to teacher stress is the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which was enacted in 2002 (Shriberg & Kruger, 2007). The primary goal of NCLB is to have all students in the United States reach proficient levels in subjects such as reading, math, and science by the year 2014 (Hanson, Burton, & Guam, 2006). NCLB also mandates that all states give the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), as well as an additional annual test in third through eighth grade (Hurley & Padro, 2006). How students perform on these tests reflects not only on the students, but also their teachers and school.

Standardized achievement tests are now used as a way to assess a school's effectiveness (Kohn, 2000). Every school is given a report card that identifies how their students are performing under the mandated academic requirements. The report card, distributed by the state, demonstrates where a particular school stands in relation to other institutions (Hanson et al., 2006). The school report cards have been used for more than a motivational tool for school personnel; real estate agents are including report card results in their listings as a way of alluring potential home-buyers (Triplett & Barksdale, 2005).

**High Stakes Testing**

Over the past decade, high-stakes testing has become a prominent issue in the education field. With the passing of NCLB, standardized testing has become a controversial issue and is the cause for much debate among educators (Kohn, 2000). Because of the significant impact that high-stakes testing has on school districts, and specifically on teachers, every student in the United States has been, or will be, affected (Maylone, 2006). High-stakes tests were at one time simply a way to estimate how aptly students would perform academically once they entered

college (Popham, 1999). For example, a standardized aptitude test, such as the SAT, is an assessment used for predicting one's collegiate ability based on SAT exam scores (Popham, 1999).

Academic achievement high-stakes tests, as opposed to aptitude tests, were developed in effort to assess the academic achievement of students. Although the test makers believed the tests would help students and assist educators in designing academic plans, these tests may be doing more harm than good (Kohn, 2000). Many believe these tests are not accomplishing the goal, and are actually failing to assess the skills that are of most importance (Kohn, 2000). The tests may not only be neglecting to reach the desired outcome, but may also be failing our nation's children. In many cases, students who excel academically in the classroom perform poorly on high-stakes tests, and those students who do not commit to their studies sometimes do surprisingly well on the tests (Kohn, 2000). Studies have also found that, although these tests may set out to assess a child's knowledge in a particular subject area, they do not measure one's resourcefulness or problem solving ability (Maylone, 2004).

Student performance on these tests often labels schools and teachers as adequate or inadequate (Popham, 1999), which may lead to rewards or punishments. Schools can either be praised and given financial assistance by the federal government for doing well, or they can be publicly criticized and taken over by the state if a large percentage of their students fail these tests (Kohn, 2000). The higher the scores, the more funding a school receives, but the lower the scores, the stronger the threat of the school losing its accreditation (Cunningham & Sanzo, 2002). In some cases, teachers can be granted a pay increase if their students perform very well on high-stakes tests. At the same time, teachers may also take a significant pay cut if their students do not do well on these tests (Kohn, 2000). Principals may also be affected by their

school's overall performance on these tests; they may be suspended and/or terminated if the school does poorly (Cunningham & Sanzo, 2002).

The existence of high-stakes tests can sometimes have an extremely negative effect on the morale of a school. If a school is determined to be under-performing as a result of a large percentage of its students doing poorly on a test, both students and faculty may be profoundly affected (Groves, 2002). Teachers may become cynical about their teaching ability. Students may begin to feel defeated, and even not wish to continue attending school—some may even decide to drop out (Kohn, 2000). It is important to note that all tests have inherent errors no matter how carefully they were constructed, and that too much value is assigned to the scores (Kohn, 2000).

Another disadvantage of high-stakes tests is they are purposely designed for some students to fail (Maylone, 2004). Test makers attempt to make these tests “one size fits all,” which means these tests are not easy enough for everyone to pass. Not every student, however, possesses the same test taking abilities; some students are naturally good test takers and some are simply not (Maylone, 2004). Students with learning disabilities, specifically those with a processing impairment, may not be adequately assessed by achievement tests. It has been found that students with disabilities seem to lose motivation in their academics because they do not perform well on the various tests and assessments they are required to take (Christenson, Decker, Triezenberg, Ysseldyke & Reschly, 2007). This lack of motivation and fear of academic failure has been shown to lead to these students choosing to drop out of school altogether (Christenson et al., 2007).

As standardized tests involve a broad range of topics within a subject, teachers are often finding themselves restricted as to what material they are able to cover throughout the school

year (Kohn, 2000). Teachers also frequently discover they do not have enough time in an academic school year to cover parts of the curriculum they would like to, because they must make sure they teach the material which will most likely be on the test (Groves, 2002). In many instances, this actually prevents teachers from teaching their students subjects of great importance, sometimes resulting in students not receiving a well-rounded education. In one study, teachers have stated that they believe standardized tests have a negative effect on students, as well as on the education field in general (Mulvenon, Stegman, & Ritter, 2005).

The positive characteristics of high-stakes tests can, at times, be difficult for some to see. However, these exams do have several benefits (Hansen et al., 2006). A child's performance on these tests is informative to both teachers and parents. It is an easy way to potentially assess how an individual is doing in a particular subject. With these tests, parents and teachers may learn about a student's strengths and weaknesses. With the knowledge of how a student performs on these tests, targeted remediation can be provided to students (Hanson et al., 2006). Another benefit of these tests is they can show academic growth over time.

### **Classroom Management**

In addition to the pressures presented by NCLB and high-stakes testing, teachers are also expected to create a classroom setting, which promotes the academic success and emotional well-being of their students. Successful classroom management is imperative in ensuring the academic achievement of students. This hope, however, is perhaps much easier discussed than accomplished (Rosas & West, 2009). In fact, research shows that there is a large percentage of teachers who either move to other schools, or even give up working in the education field entirely, due being unable to successfully manage their classrooms (Rosas & West, 2009). It has

also been found that teachers with several years of experience use a practical method in regard to their classroom management. Experienced teachers seemed to have a better grasp on which strategies and techniques worked, and which did not, on the subject of managing their classrooms (Rosas & West, 2009). New teachers, however, often depend on their own intuition to get them through their struggles with students (Rosas & West, 2009).

In their study regarding teachers' beliefs about classroom management, Rosas and West (2009) looked at the differences between the ways in which pre-service teachers and in-service teachers viewed classroom management and its impact on their teaching. The study found that a difference does in fact exist between pre-service teachers and in-service teachers (Rosas & West, 2009). Pre-service teachers rated student behavior problems relatively low compared to the in-service teachers. Both groups felt assured in their ability to handle behavior problems within their classrooms, and demonstrated optimistic views about their ability and confidence to manage a classroom (Rosas & West, 2009). Despite acknowledging classroom management problems exist, both groups of teachers indicated they felt prepared to address such problems (Rosas & West, 2009). However, although both groups stated they felt prepared, the groups differed significantly in the way the teachers handled disruptive students (Rosas & West, 2009). Those individuals who had been teaching for several years relied on their past experiences, in addition to the various educational programs they had attended during their teaching career, when it came to tackling disruptive behavior (Rosas & West, 2009). Newer educators did not have these same experiences and, therefore, did not have these same references on which to rely (Rosas & West, 2009). While a potential limitation of this study is that it only examines the state of Ohio, these results can be generalized to teachers in other states, providing that factors such as differences in state standards, academic practices, and demographics are considered.

Teachers are required to juggle various tasks throughout their work day in order to meet the diverse needs of their students (Rosas & West, 2009). These responsibilities include planning their classroom lessons, developing the academic curriculum, differentiating instruction in order to encompass all students, managing student behavior issues, supporting students who are experiencing test anxiety, contending with student substance use, and meeting students' mental health needs (Finn & Willert, 2006; Geltner, 2008; Kohn, 2000; Kyriacou, 2001; Nagel & Brown, 2003; Rosas & West, 2009; Repie, 2005). In order for teachers to produce a successful academic setting, effective classroom management is essential (Rosas & West, 2009). Teachers are under a significant amount of pressure to ensure that they provide a classroom setting conducive to students' academic and emotional success (Rosas & West, 2009).

### **Lesson Planning and Curriculum Development**

Lesson preparation and curriculum development are perhaps two of the most important tasks teachers must complete. These are also perhaps the duties in which they are most educated and prepared for prior to entering the education field (McCutcheon & Milner, 2002). Lesson development and planning are essential tasks because they ensure both teachers and schools adhere to educational guidelines and regulations, such as NCLB (McCutcheon & Milner, 2002). Teachers often find they have to alter their classroom lessons in order to stay abreast of the changing academic standards (Hughes, 2005). Although creating and implementing lessons are vital parts of a teacher's job, the tasks often prove to be very time consuming. Research has found teachers often borrow ideas from published plans, for their classroom lessons (Hughes, 2005). Those educators borrowing lesson plans include a large number of new teachers who look to these lessons as references as to what they should be including in their curriculum



(Hughes, 2005). A potential drawback of using such lessons is that they can be very simplistic and lack creativity, which can hinder their effectiveness (Hughes, 2005). Lesson planning and curriculum development can be especially stressful and time consuming for novice teachers; they lack teaching experience, and therefore, may not have a clear idea of what to do when it comes to planning their classroom activities and lectures (Schlichte et al., 2005). Teachers also must ensure their lesson plans meet the varied academic needs of all their students (Hughes, 2005). Ensuring that each lesson includes the diverse needs of all students can add to teachers' stress (Woolfson & Brady, 2009).

### **Students with IEPs**

Aside from the various daily tasks teachers are responsible for, it may also be necessary for them to differentiate their classroom instruction so they can be sure to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities (Christenson et al., 2007). Students with learning disabilities and who have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) have diverse needs that by law must be met. Teachers and other members of the faculty have been participating in IEP meetings for the past 30 years (Geltner, 2008). Teachers are often required to take time out of classroom instruction in order to attend these meetings, which can contribute to their stress (Woolfson & Brady, 2009). However, ensuring these needs are adequately met can be difficult for a teacher to provide individualized instruction, given all the other issues present (Woolfson & Brady, 2009).

After the passing of NCLB and the revisions to the Individuals with Disabilities Act, (IDEA) in 2004, those students with learning disabilities are required to take most of the high-stakes tests, thus drastically raising the standards for many students with disabilities (Christenson et al., 2007). Preparing students with disabilities for these high-stakes tests

contributed to teachers' stress. Teachers found that they needed to take more time out of their day to focus on the additional academic needs of those students who required the extra assistance to understand the material.

### **Test Anxiety Among Students**

It has become impossible for the nation's students to not be required to take high-stakes tests (Rothman, 2004). With the passing of NCLB and an increase in high-stakes testing, there also comes an increase in test anxiety among students who are forced to take these tests (Buck & Skybo, 2007). It is counter-intuitive for a program designed to ensure the success of all students to be performed in such a manner that essentially ensures some children will be left behind.

Test anxiety, according to Peleg-Popko and Klingman (2002), "involves the unpleasant experience of worry and emotionality in situations where a person feels he or she is being evaluated" (p. 452). Test anxiety occurs in 10-30% of all students and is more evident in both children with learning disabilities and minorities (Peleg-Popko & Klingman, 2002). Research shows test anxiety is related to a child's level of self-esteem, below average achievement level, and high fear of failure. It has been found that 20% of students with test anxiety did not graduate from school (Peleg-Popko & Klingman, 2002). In many instances, both teachers and students have mistaken test anxiety as unimportant and simply a normal implication of tests (Rothman, 2004).

When students either performed poorly or failed a test altogether, they have often been found to experience feelings of inadequacy, embarrassment and ignorance, which can greatly contribute to their overall self-esteem (Rothman, 2004). Test anxiety has been demonstrated by school-age children through physical systems including absences from school and displays of

anger (Triplett & Barksdale, 2005). Research has found that test anxious students more often attain lower scores on tests and repeat a grade compared to those students who are not anxious (Peleg-Popko & Klingman, 2002). Based on this research, it is evident that high-stakes testing is not serving what NCLB has set out to accomplish, as students afflicted with anxiety over these tests will invariably be left behind.

What's more, it may be possible to predict the demographics behind the students that do get left behind. A recent literature review focusing on test anxiety showed there is a distinct difference between genders (Hurley & Padro, 2006). One study found that although there did not appear to be differences in the performance on the test between males and females, females demonstrated more test anxiety than their male counterparts. This study also showed minority students indicated a higher level of test anxiety than white students (Hurley & Padro, 2006). Research also revealed that students from a low socioeconomic background (SES) tended to perform poorly on high-stakes tests compared to their wealthier peers (Cunningham & Sanzo, 2002). In areas of low SES, more of an emphasis is currently placed on passing high stakes tests rather than supplying students with a full curriculum, which would assist them in surviving in the post-grade school world (Guisbond, L., & Neill, 2004). Students who live in impoverished areas are held to the same achievement standards as their middle and upper class counterparts. This is an expectation which many educators believe is unfair (Cunningham & Sanzo, 2002). Factors exist outside of the classroom that drastically impact students' ability to be academically successful. It is unrealistic for the educational system to ignore this fact (Kohn, 2000).

In order to further examine such factors outside of the classroom, a recent empirical study was conducted, in which researchers set out to find out if a child's home environment is correlated with that child's level of test anxiety (Peleg-Popko & Klingman, 2002). If a child

comes from a middle class or upper class home he or she may have more resources in addition to emotional support available than a child of a low SES background (Peleg-Popko & Klingman, 2002). Researchers studied a sample of 456 people, some of which were students and some were their parents (Peleg-Popko & Klingman, 2002). The results of this study showed that those children whose home environment is less-than-optimal had higher levels of test anxiety than those children who received encouragement from family (Peleg-Popko & Klingman, 2002).

An internal factor directly linked to an external factor, which has been found to affect the quality of a school's education, is the amount of time spent in core and non-core subjects (Alexander, 2002). After conducting a study, it was found that New York State schools in impoverished areas devoted less instructional time to courses of advanced study, therefore greatly limiting what students learn. Within this study it showed that poverty of a school's student body proves to be a predictor of the amount of time spent in the different types of courses.

Gustafson (2002) supported the idea that students learn better and achieve a higher level of proficiency when they are able to make connections about what they are learning to their individual lives. He believed high-stakes tests do a disservice to those students of low SES backgrounds, because these particular individuals lack the life experiences that act as a foundation for learning (Gustafson, 2002). In his research, Gustafson realized that low SES students have a difficult time relating to the outside world. If these students cannot directly relate to an issue they cannot fully understand it. Gustafson used the example of students of a school in an impoverished area not possessing knowledge of the various landmarks in their own neighborhoods. These students were simply not afforded the same opportunities as those students from wealthier areas (Gustafson, 2002). They were unable to acquire the same

knowledge which is often taken for granted. It is possible that, because of these limitations, students from low SES backgrounds experience a high level of test anxiety.

Because of the lack of research on students' perceptions of high-stakes tests, a qualitative study was conducted to shed light on this. In the study, researchers focused on a sample of elementary students in grades 3 through 6 (Triplett & Barksdale, 2005). In this study, on the day after the test was administered, students were asked to draw a picture about their testing experience. Once they drew the picture, the students were then instructed to write about their illustration. The findings in this study revealed that the majority of the children in the sample did not have a positive experience with the test (Triplett & Barksdale, 2005). Many of the illustrations drawn were depictions of the students having a difficult time with the material on the tests. Several students drew pictures of clocks conveying the time restraints on the tests, while others drew themselves with question marks above their heads. In the writing portion of the study the words "nervous," "confused," "hate," and "sweating" were often written by the students (Triplett & Barksdale, 2005). The study concluded that there is a high level of test anxiety among the elementary students who participated and that this anxiety also contributes to a child's level of self esteem (Triplett & Barksdale, 2005). Although this particular study focused on elementary students, it still provides an indication of the feelings students experienced while taking tests.

Test anxiety has become a prominent issue in the education field and, as the test stakes are on the rise, so is anxiety among the students who have to take these tests. Over the last several years, various studies have been conducted on the presence of test anxiety. These studies showed there are numerous treatments available that can be used to assist in decreasing one's test anxiety. Possible treatments include the use of relaxation techniques, Rational Emotive Therapy

(RET), breathing exercises, meditation, individual counseling and group psychotherapy (Rothman, 2004).

The increase in test anxiety among students has also impacted teachers. Teachers have stated the increase in standardized tests and student test anxiety is responsible for the decrease in student motivation and creativity (Mulvenon, et al., 2005). Teachers are finding themselves faced with helping their students with their test related anxiety (Kohn, 2000). Teachers have been known to provide students with additional academic support by offering review sessions in effort to help prepare students for tests, thus lowering their anxiety levels (Kohn, 2000). Teachers have also indicated that dedicating time to test preparation in hopes of reducing students' test anxiety leads to the loss of classroom instruction, which can ultimately lead to more stress (Mulvenon, et al., 2005). The effects of NCLB can be seen whether one is in favor of it or opposed to it. Educators, school administrators, school counselors, students and parents are being forced to face the fact that the new standards in education, and the high-stakes tests that accompany them, are here to stay (Kohn, 2000). At this time, it does not appear that these higher academic standards are going to lessen in the near future, so it is imperative that teachers are adequately equipped with the knowledge and resources needed to assist their students (Popham, 1999).

### **Student Behavior Problems**

Modern students are acting out in the classroom more than has been previously recorded, and teachers are expected to deliver a specified curriculum in such a way that all students will perform well on high-stakes tests, while also managing student behaviors. When teachers contend with students' poor behavior, this shift in attention and focus takes them away from classroom instruction, which can ultimately lead to an increase in their level of stress (Clunies-

Ross, Little, & Kienhuis (2008). There does not appear to be one definitive reason why there is an increase of student behavior issues. Research has identified several factors that have been found to contribute to behavior issues among students, as well as the effect behavior problems have on teachers. In addition to these findings, research has recognized various techniques teachers can use to combat the behavior issues among students.

To further illustrate the impact student behavior can have on teachers, an empirical study was conducted in attempt to determine whether teachers are more likely to use proactive or reactive classroom management strategies and the different impact these two approaches have on student behavior (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). A total of 21 schools participated in this study including both public and private institutions. Altogether, 216 primary school teachers volunteered to take part in this research study. The researchers measured teacher stress, behavior problems in students, classroom management approaches, and collected demographic information (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). Those teachers, who responded to the questionnaires, stated they generally utilized proactive approaches rather than reactive approaches when it came to managing their classrooms. The participants also seemed to have more positive than negative responses to the questions asked on the various surveys, which is rather interesting seeing that these same individuals cited students' behavior as the cause of most of their stress (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008).

Research indicates that children and adolescents continually try to challenge and defy authority, specifically in schools (Gregory & Ripski, 2008; Maag, 2008; Malmgren et al., 2005). A recently conducted study examined the correlation between the quality of teacher-student relationships and behavioral issues in high school classrooms (Gregory & Ripski, 2008). This study focused on urban high schools where students were required to go to in-school suspension

as a consequence of disobeying their teachers. The teachers included in the study were those teachers who gave out the most disciplinary referrals to misbehaving students. The researchers looked at both teachers and students for their perspectives as to what contributed to behavior issues in the classroom. For this particular study, a survey on student behavior was used, as well as an interview. For the interview portion of the study, teachers responded to questions pertaining to how they dealt with problematic student behavior. The participating students took a survey which measured their beliefs regarding authority and authoritative figures.

The study found that 53% of participating teachers reported using a relational method, meaning they tended to focus on building and maintaining relationships with their students in order to establish trust (Gregory & Ripski, 2008). The remaining participants did not report using this same method. This study found that when teachers used a relational approach, there was a lower instance of behavior problems among their students. The study also discovered that students felt more involved in the classes where their teacher formed and maintained relationships (Gregory & Ripski, 2008). Students also felt that when they had established a relationship with their teachers, they accepted them as authoritative figures without questioning or challenging their requests (Gregory & Ripski, 2008). A limitation of this particular study is that the majority of the participating students were African-American and the research was only conducted at one high school. This is perhaps not an accurate representation of what all teachers and students believe because of the limited sample size.

Teachers have been found to struggle with power matches with their students. Teachers may have a hard time managing their own behavior while their students are acting out. They may find it hard to keep calm and in control while students are misbehaving (Maag, 2008). In such cases when teachers are feeling that they are losing control over their classroom, they are



more inclined to make rash decisions and display their own poor behavior (Maag, 2008). One possible intervention teachers can use in managing difficult behavior is utilizing Rational Emotive Therapy, (RET) to assist teachers with controlling their emotions and behaviors (Maag, 2008). By implementing RET, teachers can learn to deal with their own behavior better. RET helps an individual shift the focus from unreasonable and self-doubting thoughts to more optimistic beliefs (Maag, 2008). If teachers can effectively manage their own behavior they can also be more effective in remaining composed and in control in their classrooms.

Perhaps the most important realization that can be taken away from the current research on student behavior problems is that students needed to feel as though they matter and are cared about by their teachers. Students wanted to feel as though their teachers are not only concerned with them academically, but personally as well. Students desired that their teachers take an active interest in them as people, not just as students (Morganett, 2001). If a student believed that he or she was valued and appreciated by teachers, he or she was more likely to respect the teacher's authority (Morganett, 2001).

### **Mental Health Needs of Students**

In addition to contending with students' behavioral problems, teachers were frequently finding themselves faced with the mental health needs of their students (Repie, 2005). In the majority of cases, teachers were unprepared and untrained to effectively deal with such issues, which only contributed to their stress. When mental health issues are present in childhood and adolescence, this is often demonstrated through acting up and behaving disorderly, especially in the classroom setting (Repie, 2005). This disorderly behavior can cause disruptions in the

classroom and therefore affect teachers' ability to effectively manage their classrooms (Gregory & Ripski, 2008).

Several years ago, a study was done in order to gain an understanding of how teachers, school counselors and school psychologists perceived the presence of mental health issues and availability of mental health services in school (Repie, 2005). The study included a random sample of mental health professionals in schools. The differences between the three professions were then looked at. Self-esteem, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and relationships with classmates were identified as the three most popular behavior issues the mental health professions were dealing with at their sites. In their responses, participants identified various outside agencies which provided support to their students. According to this study, it seemed to be more acceptable for students to receive mental health services from outside agencies than from within their schools. Those who responded to the survey also indicated that they did not believe the mental health services available in their schools were valuable. The group consisting of school counselors believed the mental health services were valuable in schools. However, the majority of teachers responded that there is not really a need for these types of services in their schools (Repie, 2005). The results of this study are rather interesting considering that teachers identified several mental health issues among their students, yet did not see the need for mental health services within the school. This finding is contradictory because on one hand the participating teachers in the study identified behavioral problems resulting from the mental health needs of students as a stressor (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008); yet at the same time suggested mental health services in the school are not of value.

### **Drug Use Among Students**

Another stressor today's teachers are coping with is the existence of drug and alcohol use among students. Substance abuse among adolescents has been found to be related to depression, poor academic performance, peer pressure/peer acceptance, and behavior problems which all contribute to the classroom environment (McMahon & Luthar, 2006). Student drug use can potentially impact the classroom in several ways. Students who are under the influence often display disruptive behavior, episodes of acting out, and engage in verbal and/or physical altercations with their classmates and teachers (McMahon & Luthar, 2006). This takes both the students as well as teachers away from the lesson content and can prevent them from completing tasks, which can contribute to teachers' stress (McMahon & Luthar, 2006). Research has found there is a connection between adolescent drug use and student anxiety (McMahon & Luthar, 2006). Some students who experience anxiety have an increased chance of using drugs compared to those individuals who do not (McMahon & Luthar, 2006). It has also been found that students who display disruptive behavior are at higher risk for using drugs. It often becomes a cycle of behavior issues and substance abuse (McMahon & Luthar, 2006).

As a step toward understanding this issue, a research study was done in order to determine the likelihood students would engage in substance use and what factors contributed to their involvement in drug use (Hallfors, Cho, Brodish, Flewelling & Khatapoush, 2006). Information was gathered from the students' records including their grade point averages and instances of teacher referrals. High school students from 10 schools participated in this study. Participating students took part in the program, "Reconnecting Youth," which lasted the duration of a half an academic year. The intention of this program was to reduce drug and alcohol use and to improve academic achievement and students' overall behavior. A second research group consisting of

students who were not identified as "high risk" was also used in this study (Hallfors et al., 2006). A total of 930 out of 1995 students completed the research survey for this study. The results indicated students with low grade point averages had higher instances of tobacco, alcohol and drug use. These students also demonstrated less protective factors than those students in better academic standing (Hallfors et al., 2006).

To further the knowledge base on this subject, another study focused on three high schools in southern Connecticut. The majority of the population studied was made up of predominately Caucasian students. This study took place over three academic school years. Several different instruments were used in this study in order to measure the various areas in which substance abuse affects students. One of the surveys used indicated how often the participant has used drugs and/or alcohol in the last year (Hallfors et al., 2006). The study also found students admitted to using drugs and alcohol in their middle school years. What is perhaps most interesting about the findings is students from suburban schools indicated more drug and alcohol use than their counterparts in low SES areas (Hallfors et al., (2006). A limitation of this study is the small sample size and that it only looks at the state of Connecticut. Because of this, it is perhaps not an accurate representation of drug and alcohol use across the United States. A recent study found that many teachers believed that drugs were sold in the institutions they worked in (Finn & Willert, 2006). The majority of the participants stated they did not have the training or understanding of how to effectively deal with student drug use (Finn & Willert, 2006). These individuals also indicated they felt alone in dealing with this and were not aware of where to get assistance with this issue (Finn & Willert, 2006). When asked from whom within their school they would seek support, none of the participants said school counselors (Finn & Willert, 2006).

### **Teacher and School Counselor Relationship**

Research suggests that classroom teachers can benefit from consulting with school counselors (Clemens, 2008). By participating in consultation with school counselors who are knowledgeable on these subjects, teachers may be able to learn additional information pertaining to managing student behavior and providing students with emotional support (Clemens, 2008). Because research has consistently identified classroom management and student behavior issues as causes of teacher stress, it would only seem to make sense that school counselors consult and collaborate with teachers in these areas.

Researchers have identified potential ways for teachers to work through their job related stress. These strategies include relaxing, being proactive in facing daily challenges, taking the necessary steps in order to be fully prepared for their daily tasks, and striving to lead a well-balanced personal and professional life (Kyriacou, 2001). One study found that the use of creative problem solving was effective in managing teacher stress (Nagel & Brown, 2003). The researchers made the argument that although stress is often tied to negative thoughts and feelings, it can also serve as a motivator for teachers. They suggested that teachers modify their thinking patterns and turn negative behaviors into positive behaviors by a combination of acknowledging, behavior modifying, and communicating (Nagel & Brown, 2003). When teachers successfully master these three tasks, it can prove to have a positive effect on their teaching and can also assist them in staying motivated and becoming more productive (Nagel & Brown, 2003).

To gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions of educators, a national study of was conducted to see how high school teachers viewed the role of the school counselor as identified

by ASCA (Reiner, S. M., Colbert, R. D., & Perusse, R. 2009). In this study, participants were asked if they believed school counselors either did participate or would participate in the various activities illustrated by ASCA (Reiner, et al., 2009). The participating teachers indicated they believed that school counselors should be involved in the majority of the appropriate role responsibilities as defined by ASCA (Reiner, et al., 2009). This study also found that teachers believed that school counselors should collaborate more often with teachers on counseling curriculum lessons (Reiner, et al., 2009). Most teachers, however, did not believe that school counselors had a role in assisting teachers with classroom/ study hall management issues. It seems that many teachers are not fully aware of school counselors' role within the school. Perhaps teachers would not appreciate school counselors telling them how to manage their classrooms, but maybe they would welcome support regarding student behavioral and mental health issues.

Oftentimes, classroom teachers refer students to the school counselor for behavioral and academic issues (Jackson, 2000). When teachers make such referrals, it is expected that the school counselor provide the referred student with individual counseling in order to work with the child on whatever issue was identified by the teacher (Jackson, 2000). School counselors surveyed on the referral process, however, believed the referring teachers sent students expecting the school counselor to rectify the problem, and promptly returned the student to class (Jackson, 2000). This is an unrealistic request to make considering the limited amount of time a school counselor would have with the student, and also warrants the question of whether or not classroom teachers have an accurate understanding of the services school counselors provide.

Another study examined student behavior problems and teachers' perceptions of the support systems available to them when dealing with such issues (Axup & Gersch, 2008). A

questionnaire was distributed in order to gain insight into teachers' actual thoughts regarding student behavior. One of the questions asked about the various support systems teachers perceive they have, however, school counselors were not mentioned as a possible source of support (Axup & Gersch, 2008). It is evident that there is a lack of understanding of how school counselors can collaborate with teachers.

On the whole, school counselors can consult with teachers on many of the factors that contribute to classroom management (Clemens, 2007). By providing consultation, school counselors can respond to various issues teachers face in a timely, efficient manner (Clemens, 2007). A school counselor can meet with a student sent to him/her on a disciplinary referral and, at the same time, work with the student on other issues which may be present (Clemens, 2007). Consultation can prove to be a very effective way of getting to the root of a student's problem without taking too much of a teacher's time (Clemens, 2007). Because research points to student behavior as being a leading cause of teachers' stress, school counselor and teacher consultation is warranted (Clemens, 2007).

## **Conclusion**

As previously discussed, there are various tasks pertaining to classroom management at the micro-level, and NCLB at the macro-level, that can lead to increased stress in teachers, and can have an effect on their students. Research, however, does not identify which factors contribute to the greatest amount of stress. Such a lack of information leads naturally to the question, what do teachers believe to be the factors contributing to their stress, as it relates to classroom management? In some cases, such as student behavior problems, and mental health issues of students, teachers may not have the training or the expertise to assist students with such

issues. However, just how often would teachers in such situations take advantage of the school counselor as a resource? In such cases, it would be beneficial to know the likelihood teachers would consult with the school counselor about issues pertaining to their students, as well as classroom management issues. Once this is known, school counselors can assist teachers with classroom management by providing teachers with consultation and collaboration. In order to discover this information, this study is centered on two essential questions:

1. What do teachers believe to be the factors that contribute to their stress as it relates to classroom management?
2. What is the likelihood that they will seek consultation from school counselors?

## **Method**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research study was to determine teachers' perceptions of classroom management factors that contribute to their stress and the likeliness that they will seek consultation from school counselors. Literature points to several different factors as being the leading causes of classroom teachers' stress (McEachern, et. al., 2008). However, research is currently lacking in whether or not teachers would seek assistance from school counselors with these stressors. With this said, this research study focused on determining which factors created the highest level of stress for teachers and whether or not the teachers would reach out to school counselors.

### **Setting**

This research study was conducted in a suburban high school located outside a metropolitan area in Western New York. This high school served approximately 1600 students



in grades 9 through 12. During the 2008-2009 school year, this building employed 122 full-time teachers, resulting in a student-teacher ratio of 13:1 (New York State Education Department [NYSED], 2010). These students reside in a community where the 2008-2009 median household income was \$74,148 (Onboard Informatics, 2010). Of the students enrolled at the school, 10% were eligible for free lunch and 5% of students were eligible for reduced-price lunch (NYSED, 2010). The ethnic origin of the student population was predominantly Caucasian, at 91%. African Americans and Asian Americans each comprised 3% of the population, while Hispanics/Latinos accounted for 2% (NYSED, 2010). Of the 409 graduating students in the 2008-2009 school year, 76% indicated plans to pursue a college education, while 16% planned to directly enter the workforce (NYSED, 2010).

### **Participants**

Approximately 120 individuals were chosen as potential participants in this research study. This population consisted of the full-time teachers at the high school. This particular population was chosen for the primary reason that these were the individuals who utilized classroom management skills on a daily basis. Furthermore, because of their use of classroom management skills, the stress level of these individuals may have been amplified to the point where they would potentially seek assistance from support staff in regard to these stressors. Support staff that could possibly be sought out might include school counselors.

### **Materials**

An anonymous survey was used to collect data regarding teacher attitudes and concerns towards the various factors that contribute to their stress as it relates to classroom management, and their likeliness to seek consultation from school counselors. Within the distributed packet, both a letter of consent and a copy of the instrument were included. The instrument, which was

previously created by the investigator, consisted of 13 questions in a Likert-type Scale format based upon what current literature identified as stressors for teachers in regard to classroom management and the various situations a school counselor could potentially provide consultation. Additionally, 6 additional short response questions were included for demographic purposes.

In part 1 of the survey, the participants were asked to rate the various statements on their impact on their lesson content delivery with “1” being “*No Stress*,” “2” being “*Little Stress*,” “3” being “*Moderate Stress*,” and “4” being “*Extreme Stress*.” The following identified stressors were included in the research instrument: *preparing for the New York State Regents exams, the No Child Left Behind Act, (NCLB), lesson planning, curriculum planning, student behavioral problems, mental health needs of students, differentiation of instruction for those students with IEPs and student use of electronics in the classroom.*

In Part 2 of the survey, the participants were asked to rate how likely they were to seek consultation from school counselors regarding those factors that contribute to their stress. In this case a response of “1” indicated “*Not at all Likely*,” “2” indicated “*Somewhat Unlikely*,” “3” indicated “*Somewhat Likely*,” and “4” indicated “*Very Likely*.” The following situations were rated on the participants’ likelihood to seek consultation from school counselors’: *When a student demonstrates test anxiety while in my classroom, when a student demonstrates behavioral problems, when a student comes to me with emotional issues, when I have a question regarding one of my student’s Individualized Educational Plan and when I believe a student is engaging in harmful activities, (violence, drugs, etc.).*

In Part 3 of the survey, the participants were asked to respond to 6 demographic questions, including the number of years they had been teaching in any institution, the number of years they had been teaching at that particular institution, the subject area they taught, which

grade(s) they taught, the number of students they taught, and their gender. There was neither reliability nor validity information on the instrument, as it was created by the investigator and prior to this study, had not been used before.

### **Procedure**

The instrument used in this study was a survey created by the investigator and was placed in the participants' mailboxes located in the school's main office. As indicated in the letter of consent, participants gave their consent by completing the survey. The participants were instructed to place the completed surveys in a sealed drop box located in the main office near the participants' individual mailboxes. They were given 2 weeks to complete and return the surveys. The completed surveys were retrieved by the researcher once they were placed in the sealed box, two weeks following the administration of the survey. Surveys were distributed to the 120 participants, and 68 were completed resulting in a 57% return rate. Of the 68 completed surveys, 6 were not completed in their entirety, and were therefore discarded.

### **Results**

The results were analyzed using PASW Statistics 18 (PASW 18, 2010). Analyses focus on the participants' responses to the research instrument. The methods of analysis used were a frequency analysis and the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient. The results were first analyzed to determine factors that participants identified as causing stress in relation to classroom management. The results were then analyzed to determine the likelihood that participants would seek consultation from school counselors.

Of the 62 surveys analyzed, 61% of those who returned the survey taught a core course, (English, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science and Physical Education). 8% of participants

taught Occupational Education courses and 3% indicated teaching both a core course and other subject. None of the participants indicated that they taught Languages Other Than English, (LOTE) courses; therefore, teachers of this subject matter were not represented. Of those individuals who completed the survey, 47% indicated that they taught Ninth Grade, 72% taught Tenth Grade, 61% taught Eleventh Grade and 69% taught Twelfth Grade. The mean number of teaching years among the participants was 15, with a range of 1-48 years. The average number of students each participant reported having on his or her caseload was 87.

Participants rated the potential stressors New York State Regents Preparation, Lesson Planning, Curriculum Development, Student Behavioral Problems, and Mental Health Needs, as causing moderate stress, with frequencies of 38%, 52%, 44%, 40%, and 52%, respectively (see Table 1). In the case of the following stressors NCLB, Differentiation of Instruction for IEPs, and Student Use of Electronics, participants rated these as causing little stress, with frequencies of 40%, 47%, and 39%, respectively (see Table 2). Using the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient, the variables of grade levels taught and the aforementioned stressors were examined in order to discover significant correlations (see Table 3). While the results indicated some minor levels of connection between the stressors and grade levels taught, certain relationships stood out. A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between those participants who taught Eleventh Grade and the amount of stress created by Regents preparation. A moderate positive correlation was found ( $rho(60) = .319, p < .011$ ), indicating a significant correlation between the two variables. Regents preparation tends to create high levels of stress for Eleventh Grade teachers. Also calculated was the relationship between those participants who taught Twelfth Grade and the amount of stress created by Regents preparation. A moderate positive correlation was found ( $rho(60) = .483, p < .001$ ), indicating a significant

correlation between these two variables. Regents preparation tends to create more stress for Twelfth Grade teachers. The data also indicated a relationship between Eleventh Grade teachers and stress caused by NCLB. A near-moderate positive correlation was found ( $\rho(60) = .246, p < .054$ ), indicating a significant correlation between these two variables. NCLB tends to create more stress for Eleventh Grade teachers than for other grade levels. When examining Student Behavioral Problems and grade level taught, relationships were found in Ninth and Twelfth Grades. With Ninth Grade, a moderate positive correlation was found ( $\rho(60) = .297, p < .019$ ), indicating a significant correlation between the two variables. With Twelfth Grade, a near-moderate positive correlation was found ( $\rho(60) = .289, p < .023$ ), also indicating a significant correlation between these two variables.

Participants indicated they would be somewhat likely to seek consultation from school counselors in regard to the situational factors Test Anxiety and Behavioral Problems, with frequencies of 37% and 48%, respectively. With Emotional Issues and Students Engaging in Harmful Activities, participants indicated they would be very likely to seek consultation from school counselors, with frequencies of 67% and 87%, respectively. With IEP-related Questions, 36% of participants indicated they would be somewhat unlikely to seek assistance from school counselors (see Table 4). A Spearman  $\rho$  correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the number of years the participants have taught and their likeliness to seek assistance from school counselors in regard to the five variables. The data reflected minimal to no connection between years of teaching experience and potential to use school counselors as a resource in those situational factors (see Table 5).

Conclusions indicate that each stressor created stress, in some capacity, for some of the participants; no stressor was unanimously rated as creating zero stress. The data also supports

that all of the factors of which classroom management is comprised do create stress for some participants to some degree. In addition, the data reflects the level at which teachers would seek assistance from school counselors in regard to those factors that cause them stress. The findings also indicate that in the majority of instances, participants reported that they were not likely to seek support from school counselors.

## **Discussion**

### **Overview**

This study was conducted to determine how teachers perceived the potential stressors outlined in the study, how they rated their stress, and how likely they were to discuss their stress with school counselors. Each teacher is stressed by something; no teacher was completely stress-free. Also, while each teacher was likely to consult with a school counselor on at least one of the survey items, the majority of the participants exhibited a stereotypical perception of school counselors as resources.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The findings from this study confirm that classroom teachers experience various levels of stress, due to the variables defined within this study. Furthermore, the findings suggest teachers remain unclear as to all the arenas in which school counselors can provide consultation or assistance in regard to the previously identified stressors. On the whole, every participant in the study indicated experiencing some level of stress created by one or more of the variables. Of the potential reasons to seek consultation with school counselors, participants were more apt to do so when it was in relation to the emotional and behavioral issues of students. Participants were least likely to seek such assistance in regard to students' IEPs or test-related anxiety. What is

very interesting to note is that the number of years a participant has taught had no correlation to the likelihood they would seek assistance from school counselors (see Table 5). This indicates that teaching years is irrelevant, and that the participants are either not taught to utilize school counselors as a resource, or else are not made aware of that option within the building.

One of the leading causes of teacher stress was students' behavioral issues, which is supported by previous research. Such research has noted that poor student behavior potentially creates distractions within the classroom, taking the teacher's focus away from instruction (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). Thus, teacher stress is amplified. The majority of the participants in this study (40%) experienced moderate stress related to students' behavioral problems. This is supported by the fact that the majority of the participants (48%) indicated they were somewhat likely to seek consultation from school counselors on these issues. Within this study, the mean teaching years of participants is 15, with a range of one year to 48 years. Knowing this, it would indicate that both newer and more experienced teachers are stressed by behavioral issues. These findings do seem to question other previous research, in which it was found that teachers had a positive perspective concerning their confidence to manage student behaviors. Furthermore, pre-service teachers rated student behavior problems lower than their in-service counterparts (Rosas & West, 2009).

More than half of participants stated they experienced moderate stress as a result of their students' mental health needs. Additionally, more than half were very likely to collaborate with school counselors in regard to these student needs. There is literature to corroborate these results, citing that classroom teachers were, on the whole, not trained and lacked the necessary skills to effectively handle such situations (Repie, 2005). However, another research study revealed that respondents in that study did not see the value in having such support services in their buildings.

In addition, some respondents did not even know that such services even existed within their schools (Repie, 2005). The aforementioned research runs contrary to the finding of this study, where 52% of participants are moderately stressed, and 67% would seek collaboration, in relation to mental health needs. It would seem based on the results that the teachers at the school within this study are not only aware such services exist within the building, but are also conscious of the fact they would seek assistance from school counselors for such issues. Along the lines of mental health needs, more than three-fourths of participants were very likely to consult with school counselors about students' involvement in harmful activities (violence, drugs, etc.) (see Table 4).

Previous research coincides with this study in terms of stress generated by lesson planning and curriculum development. More than half of participants indicated lesson planning created moderate levels of stress, and the majority (44%) also indicated moderate stress due to curriculum development. Prior research states these two activities are a significant drain on teachers' time, especially so for novice teachers (Schlichte et al., 2005). Such a taxing activity is sure to take its toll on teacher creativity, potentially resulting in disillusionment or disenchantment with the profession.

For the Regents preparation factor, the majority of participants (38%) indicated moderate stress in this area, and the majority (37%) was somewhat likely to discuss the test-related anxiety demonstrated by their students with school counselors. In this study, a significant correlation exists between Eleventh Grade teachers and stress from Regents preparation (see Table 3). This would stand to reason, as the majority of New York State Regents Examinations are given in Grade 11 (NYSED, 2010). There is also a significant correlation between Twelfth Grade teachers' stress and Regents preparation. It is reasonable to infer that this is in part related to



students who failed their junior year examinations, and are retaking the tests in their senior years. Results also show a weak correlation between Regents preparation and Ninth Grade teachers, which also is expected, as the fewest Regents Examinations are given at Grade 9 (see Table 3). It is also interesting to note that this factor created such stress for the participants, as the NCLB factor—inherently linked to high-stakes testing—was rated by 40% of participants as creating little stress. This would seem to indicate that participants did not equate Regents preparation with the influx of high-stakes standardized testing—a significant component of NCLB.

Accommodating the needs of students with IEPs was rated as causing little stress by 47% of participants. This is aligned with the 36% of participants who stated they were somewhat unlikely to discuss IEPs with school counselors. Other research is consistent with these findings, acknowledging that differentiation of instruction, in order to encompass the learning needs of all students, contributes to teacher stress (Woolfson & Brady, 2009). Although participants stated the stress created was of a lower level, it still contributes to the overall stress of teachers, as it pertains to classroom management.

### **Limitations**

Although this study had a 57% return rate of the survey, it would have been beneficial to have even more responses to analyze. Because less than half of the 122 potential participants did not return a survey, it is difficult to ascertain if the data gathered is an accurate representation of the faculty. Were this study to be repeated, the researcher should redistribute the survey several weeks after the initial distribution. This might increase the odds of a higher return rate.

In the demographics portion of the survey, participants were asked to indicate their gender. However, the phrasing of the question was unclear as to whether it was asking for the participant's gender or the breakdown of student gender in the classroom. It would have been

interesting to gather consistent gender information of the participants, in order to see if there was a relationship between gender and both teacher stress and likelihood to seek assistance from school counselors.

As 87% of the participants indicated they were very likely to collaborate with school counselors on the subject of students' involvement in harmful activities, it would have been beneficial to break down this category even further. Constructing a survey question directly asking about student drug use, or the perception of drug use, would have been helpful in clarifying this. Furthermore, it would have been beneficial to clarify for the participant that "School Counselor" meant the school counselor, in case the term was being confused with other mental health service staff (i.e., School Psychologist, Social Worker, etc.). This is because of the possible belief that those other mental health staff members would help with these issues, and not the school counselors, despite school counselors being a part of the mental health staff.

Lastly, because the instrument used in this study was created by the researcher, it has no validity or reliability history.

### **Implications for School Counselors**

The findings of this study can provide invaluable information and potential next steps for school counselors. Perhaps most importantly, school counselors need to advocate for their profession. What can be taken away from this study is that there are significant gaps in teachers' perceptions pertaining to the different knowledge bases in which school counselors are trained. Some gaps identified by this study include involvement in the IEP process, as well as support for students affected by test-related anxiety. School counselors need to make it known what they are capable of. ASCA stated that school counselors are just as accountable for the overall success of their students as are teachers, thus both counselors and teachers should have a better

understanding of the capabilities of both. Furthermore, school counselors should consult with Administration to help spread this information.

An additional suggestion is that school counselors examine their own buildings for target areas that need attention. One method would be to conduct a needs assessment in order to determine on what to focus.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

One recommendation centers on student behavior in relation to overall classroom management. There are currently several classroom management models teachers can choose to utilize. Three such models include the Assertive Discipline model, the Logical Consequences model and the Teacher Effectiveness Training model (Malmgren, Trezek & Paul, 2005). The Assertive Discipline model focuses on rewards and punishments and reinforces the positive behavior and actions of students. This particular model can be used in any grade level. The Logical Consequences model stems from the belief that if students' needs are not met they will then misbehave or act out. This model works off the fact that students seek acceptance, in this case, from their teachers (Malmgren et al., 2005). This model can be used in middle and high school settings. The Teacher Effectiveness Training model holds students responsible for their own actions as opposed to teachers being responsible for students' misbehavior. This model stresses the self regulation of students and suggests students are in control of themselves and their own behavior (Malmgren et al., 2005). The Teacher Effectiveness Training model has been shown to work well with secondary students (Malmgren et al., 2005). There are numerous other classroom management techniques teachers use, however the three models previously described seem to focus more on teacher and student interactions and what actions teachers can take in order to maintain control in their classrooms and help ensure their students' needs are satisfied

(Malmgren et al., 2005). Since research points to the Teacher Effectiveness Training model as a good fit for the high school level, it would be interesting to conduct a study to examine if implementing this model would off-set the trend of teachers alone being responsible for their students' misbehavior, placing the responsibility back on the students. This would make it a student's individual responsibility to monitor his or her own behavior. Perhaps this would alleviate teacher stress in this regard.

With this study's completion, it has been determined certain factors cause teachers stress, and that likelihood exists for them to approach school counselors with some of these concerns. A study to survey what classroom teachers want consultation on from school counselors would only serve to complement this information. In this way, school counselors can be more proactive to make sure they are not just meeting the needs of their students, but their colleagues as well. Thus, all would benefit.

### **Conclusion**

These factors are clearly causing stress within teachers, and this study has identified a willingness to seek consultation with school counselors. However, the subjects discussed with the highest frequencies center around a stereotypical profile: emotional issues, behavior issues, and involvement in harmful activities. To a small degree, the participants in this survey stepped outside of this profile, but on the whole, they fit right into it. As it stands, school counselors are neither perceived nor utilized for the full range of resources they can provide.

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## Appendix A - Tables

Table 1

*Frequencies of Potential Stressors among Teachers*

		Regents			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	No Stress	16	25.8	25.8	25.8
	Little Stress	12	19.4	19.4	45.2
	Moderate Stress	24	38.7	38.7	83.9
	Extreme Stress	10	16.1	16.1	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

		Lesson Planning			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	No Stress	7	11.3	11.3	11.3
	Little Stress	21	33.9	33.9	45.2
	Moderate Stress	32	51.6	51.6	96.8
	Extreme Stress	2	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

		Curriculum			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	No Stress	11	17.7	17.7	17.7
	Little Stress	20	32.3	32.3	50.0
	Moderate Stress	27	43.5	43.5	93.5
	Extreme Stress	4	6.5	6.5	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

		Behavior			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	No Stress	5	8.1	8.1	8.1
	Little Stress	23	37.1	37.1	45.2
	Moderate Stress	25	40.3	40.3	85.5
	Extreme Stress	9	14.5	14.5	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

		Mental Health			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	No Stress	3	4.8	4.8	4.8
	Little Stress	20	32.3	32.3	37.1
	Moderate Stress	32	51.6	51.6	88.7
	Extreme Stress	7	11.3	11.3	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Table 2

*Frequencies of Potential Stressors among Teachers (Lower Stress Levels)*

<b>NCLB</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Stress	14	22.6	22.6	22.6
	Little Stress	25	40.3	40.3	62.9
	Moderate Stress	16	25.8	25.8	88.7
	Extreme Stress	7	11.3	11.3	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

<b>Differentiation for IEPs</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Stress	5	8.1	8.1	8.1
	Little Stress	29	46.8	46.8	54.8
	Moderate Stress	20	32.3	32.3	87.1
	Extreme Stress	8	12.9	12.9	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

<b>Electronics Usage</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Stress	9	14.5	14.5	14.5
	Little Stress	24	38.7	38.7	53.2
	Moderate Stress	20	32.3	32.3	85.5
	Extreme Stress	9	14.5	14.5	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Table 3

*Spearman Correlation Coefficient between Grade Level Taught and Potential Stressors*

			Ninth	Tenth	Eleventh	Twelfth
Spearman's rho	Ninth	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.288*	-.051	-.078
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.024	.692	.547
		N	62	62	62	62
	Tenth	Correlation Coefficient	.288*	1.000	.031	-.173
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	.	.810	.178
		N	62	62	62	62
	Eleventh	Correlation Coefficient	-.051	.031	1.000	.477**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.692	.810	.	.000
		N	62	62	62	62
	Twelfth	Correlation Coefficient	-.078	-.173	.477**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.547	.178	.000	.
		N	62	62	62	62
	Regents	Correlation Coefficient	.147	-.004	.319*	.483**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.253	.974	.011	.000
		N	62	62	62	62
	NCLB	Correlation Coefficient	.085	-.132	.246	.196
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.514	.308	.054	.126
		N	62	62	62	62
	Lesson Planning	Correlation Coefficient	-.201	-.083	-.171	.233
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.117	.624	.183	.069
		N	62	62	62	62
	Curriculum	Correlation Coefficient	-.226	-.230	-.179	.094
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.077	.073	.165	.468
		N	62	62	62	62
	Behavior	Correlation Coefficient	-.297**	-.038	-.053	.289*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	.771	.681	.023
		N	62	62	62	62
	Mental Health	Correlation Coefficient	.050	.132	.119	.204
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.702	.306	.357	.111
		N	62	62	62	62
	IEPs	Correlation Coefficient	-.169	.025	-.101	.015
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.188	.847	.436	.909
		N	62	62	62	62
	Electronics	Correlation Coefficient	.044	.009	-.021	.200
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.736	.948	.869	.120
		N	62	62	62	62

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4

*Frequencies of Likeliness to Seek Consultation with School Counselors*

		Test Anxiety			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Not at all likely	7	11.3	11.3	11.3
	Somewhat unlikely	19	30.6	30.6	41.9
	Somewhat likely	23	37.1	37.1	79.0
	Very likely	13	21.0	21.0	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

		Behavioral Problems			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Not at all likely	3	4.8	4.8	4.8
	Somewhat unlikely	16	25.8	25.8	30.6
	Somewhat likely	30	48.4	48.4	79.0
	Very likely	13	21.0	21.0	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

		Emotional Issues			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Somewhat unlikely	6	9.7	9.7	9.7
	Somewhat likely	14	22.6	22.6	32.3
	Very likely	42	67.7	67.7	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

		Harmful Activities			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Somewhat unlikely	2	3.2	3.2	3.2
	Somewhat likely	6	9.7	9.7	12.9
	Very likely	54	87.1	87.1	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

		IEP Questions			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Not at all likely	6	9.7	9.7	9.7
	Somewhat unlikely	22	35.5	35.5	45.2
	Somewhat likely	15	24.2	24.2	69.4
	Very likely	19	30.6	30.6	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Table 5

*Spearman Correlation Coefficient of Number of Years Taught and the Likelihood to Seek Consultation with School Counselors*

		Teaching Years	Test Anxiety	Behavioral Problems	Emotional Issues	IEP Questions	Harmful Activities	
Spearman's rho	Teaching Years	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.028	.009	.098	-.029	-.044
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.826	.946	.459	.825	.736
		N	62	62	62	62	62	62
Test Anxiety		Correlation Coefficient	.028	1.000	.443 <sup>**</sup>	.166	.044	.403 <sup>**</sup>
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.826	.	.000	.197	.732	.001
		N	62	62	62	62	62	62
Behavioral Problems		Correlation Coefficient	.009	.443 <sup>**</sup>	1.000	.342 <sup>**</sup>	.331 <sup>**</sup>	.352 <sup>**</sup>
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.946	.000	.	.008	.009	.005
		N	62	62	62	62	62	62
Emotional Issues		Correlation Coefficient	.098	.166	.342 <sup>**</sup>	1.000	.146	.156
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.459	.197	.008	.	.258	.227
		N	62	62	62	62	62	62
IEP Questions		Correlation Coefficient	-.029	.044	.331 <sup>**</sup>	.146	1.000	.056
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.825	.732	.009	.258	.	.665
		N	62	62	62	62	62	62
Harmful Activities		Correlation Coefficient	-.044	.403 <sup>**</sup>	.352 <sup>**</sup>	.156	.056	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.736	.001	.005	.227	.665	.
		N	62	62	62	62	62	62

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Appendix B – IRB Proposal****PROJECT INFORMATION****Items 1-8****1.) Objective**

A.) The object of this study is to determine teachers' perceptions of: (1) the factors that contribute to their stress as it relates to classroom management, and (2) their likeliness to seek consultation from school counselors. According to the current research, teachers identify classroom management as a major concern for both new teachers as well as veteran teachers (Rosas & West, 2009). Recent literature also notes that teachers are balancing many more tasks than exclusively teaching their students a specified curriculum, and with these tasks come concerns (DiBara, 2007). These concerns include, yet are not limited to the following: student academic achievement, curriculum planning and development, student behavior problems, personal/social/mental health needs of students, and teaching modifications for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

**B.) Methods and Procedures**

Information for this study will be gathered by distributing a survey to approximately 134 individuals. These individuals are the full time faculty members at Webster Schroeder High School. The survey has been created by the investigator and will consist of questions in a Likert scale format based upon what current literature identifies as stressors for teachers in regards to classroom management. The paper survey will be distributed to the research population via mail boxes in the school's main office.

**C.) Purpose**

As public education trends toward performance based evaluation for teachers, this study is significant in exploring the deeper ramifications of such trends. There is currently a limited amount of research focusing on where teachers' highest level of concern lies when it comes to their ability to successfully deliver their lesson content to students. The literature, however, cites classroom management, and other factors, which contribute to teachers' ability to focus on delivering their lesson content to their students.

The role of the classroom teacher has become increasingly complicated, however, some of the roles teachers are finding themselves faced with are those outside of their expertise. The American School Counselor Association, (ASCA) stated that School Counselors should assist teachers with classroom management (The ASCA National Model, 2005). Teachers do not have the training or expertise to assist students with mental health concerns. In such cases, it will be beneficial to know what the likelihood teachers would consult with the School Counselor about these issues pertaining to their students as well as classroom management. Once we gather this information, School Counselors can then assist teachers in classroom management as well as the additional stressors teachers face on a daily basis.

**D.) Human participant involvement**

The above topic and complete procedure will be entirely innocuous in nature and there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to the participants.

**E.) Instrument (administration and source)**



An anonymous survey will be used to collect data regarding teacher attitudes and concerns towards the various factors that contribute to their stress as it relates to classroom management, and their likeliness to seek consultation from school counselors. The instrument will consist of 13 questions in the format of a Likert Scale as well as 6 additional short response questions for demographic purposes. The participants will be asked to rate the various statements on their impact on the participants' lesson content delivery. The instrument used in this study is the survey created by the investigator and will be placed in the participants' mailboxes. The participants will be instructed to place the completed surveys in a sealed drop box in the main office. The completed surveys will be retrieved by the researcher upon completion. The researcher will pick up the completed surveys two weeks after the administration of the survey.

**2. Subjects.** All teachers in Webster Schroeder High School will have the opportunity to participate in this study; however, participation will be voluntary.

**3. Subject Selection.** The survey will be distributed to approximately 134 individuals by placing the materials in the individuals' mailboxes located in the Main Office of Webster Schroeder High School. Subjects will not receive compensation for taking part in the study.

**4.** There are no research assistants working on this study.

**5.** The investigator will provide the funding for this study.

**6.** This research project will begin upon IRB approval and will conclude by December 1, 2010.

**7.** Attached are copies of the cover letter and questionnaire which will be distributed to the selected research population.

8. Attached please find a copy of the investigator's completion of the online basic training course, as well as, the refresher course.

**Appendix C – Letter of Consent**

Dear Faculty,

I am currently a student in the Department of Counselor Education at the College at Brockport, State University of New York. As a requirement of my graduate studies; I am conducting a study on teachers' perceptions of factors that impact their ability to meet students' learning needs in a suburban high school. This study involves a survey which will take approximately 10 minutes of your time to complete. Your responses to this survey are important because they will help assess the various concerns teachers have in regards to delivering their lesson content to students.

You are being asked to participate in this study and your responses to the attached survey signify your consent to participate. Please understand that your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Please understand you are not required to participate. Both anonymity as well as confidentiality are guaranteed. Please DO NOT write your name on the survey. There will be no way in which you will be connected to this survey, and the results will be reported in aggregate form only. You are not required to respond to any of the questions should you not want to, and you may stop participating in the survey at any point. It is hoped that each of the 134 full time faculty members will participate in this study. The results will be used as part of my thesis to identify areas concerns that teachers rate as impacting their ability to delivery their lesson content.

Thank you in advance for your participation in my survey. You may return the completed survey by Friday, June 4, 2010 by placing it into the specified drop box located in the main office near the faculty main boxes. Should you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact either myself or my professor/advisor.

Thank you.

Kassy Gallup

Department of Counselor Education

SUNY Brockport

(XXX) XXX-XXXX

Dr. Summer Reiner

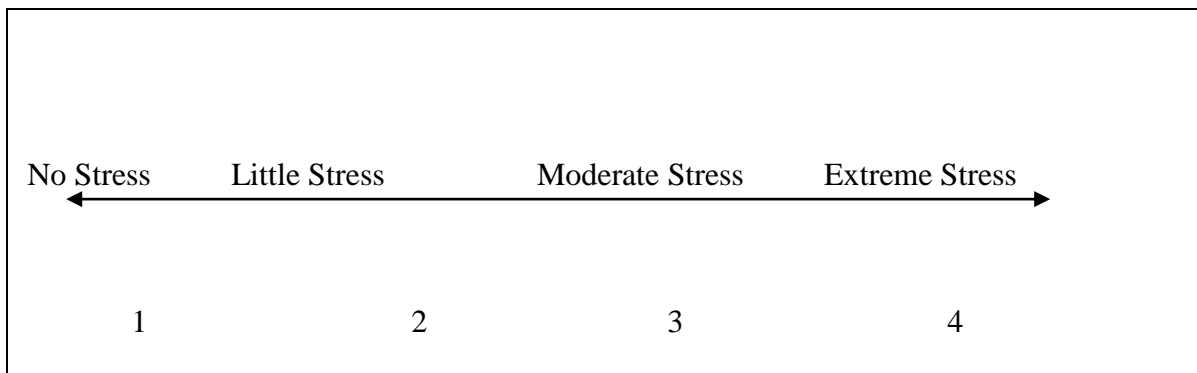
Department of Counselor Education

SUNY Brockport

(XXX) XXX-XXXX

**Appendix D – Research Study Survey****PART I:**

**Directions:** Please rate the following factors on the extent they contribute to your stress as it relates to classroom management. Use the following scale to rate each question. Remember that all of your answers will remain anonymous. Please do NOT write your name anywhere on the packet. Thank you in advance for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.

**1.) Preparing students for the New York State Regents Exams**

No Stress	Little Stress	Moderate Stress	Extreme Stress
1	2	3	4

**2.) No Child Left Behind, (NCLB)**

No Stress	Little Stress	Moderate Stress	Extreme Stress
1	2	3	4

**3.) Lesson Planning**

No Stress	Little Stress	Moderate Stress	Extreme Stress
1	2	3	4

**4.) Curriculum Development**

No Stress	Little Stress	Moderate Stress	Extreme Stress
1	2	3	4

**5.) Student Behavioral Problems**

No Stress	Little Stress	Moderate Stress	Extreme Stress
	1	2	3
			4

**6.) Mental Health Needs of Students**

No Stress	Little Stress	Moderate Stress	Extreme Stress
1	2	3	4

**7.) Differentiation of Instruction for those students with IEPs**

No Stress	Little Stress	Moderate Stress	Extreme Stress
1	2	3	4

**8.) Student Use of Electronics in the classroom, (ipods, cell phones, smart phones, etc.)**

No Stress	Little Stress	Moderate Stress	Extreme Stress
1	2	3	4

**PART II:**

**Directions:** In the following situations, please rate the likelihood you would consult with the School Counselor about that particular issue.

1.) When a student demonstrates test anxiety while in my classroom, I am \_\_\_\_\_ to consult with the School Counselor.

Not at all Likely    Somewhat Unlikely    Somewhat Likely    Very Likely

1

2

3

4

2.) When a student demonstrates behavioral problems while in my classroom, I am \_\_\_\_\_ to consult with the School Counselor.

Not at all Likely    Somewhat Unlikely    Somewhat Likely    Very Likely

1

2

3

4

3.) When a student comes to me with emotional issues, I am \_\_\_\_\_ to consult with the School Counselor.

Not at all Likely    Somewhat Unlikely    Somewhat Likely    Very Likely

1

2

3

4



4.) When I have questions regarding one of my student's Individualized Educational Plans, I am \_\_\_\_\_ to consult with the School Counselor.

Not at all Likely    Somewhat Unlikely    Somewhat Likely    Very Likely

1

2

3

4

5.) When I believe a student is engaging in harmful activities, (violence, drugs, etc.) I am \_\_\_\_\_ to consult with the School Counselor.

Not at all Likely    Somewhat Unlikely    Somewhat Likely    Very Likely

1

2

3

4

### **PART III:**

**Please indicate what subject matter you currently teach by checking the appropriate box.**

- Core Courses (English, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, Physical Education)
- LOTE
- Occupational Education
- Other

**What grade level(s) do you currently teach? (Check all that apply)**

- 9

- 10
- 11
- 12

**How many years have you been teaching, including at Webster Schroeder High School as well as any other institutions?**

**How long have you taught at Webster Schroeder High School?**

**How many students do you currently have on your caseload?**

**Sex:** \_\_\_\_\_ male \_\_\_\_\_ female

**Thank you!**