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Elizabeth Poole
eap14a@acu.edu

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Student Perceptions of the Color Clip Chart Behavior Management System

Alex Poole

Abilene Christian University
Abstract

The color clip chart behavior management system is a classroom staple for many teachers, as it is a simple, quick and effective way to address problematic behavior. But how do students feel about the clip chart? The purpose of this study was to observe and understand student perceptions of the public clip chart method, and to see whether or not student perceptions of the clip chart change when the public aspect is taken away, and a hidden chart is implemented. This study took place in a second-grade classroom composed of 18 regular education students, three English Language Learners, and two students receiving special education services. Data regarding student perceptions were collected from student surveys, student interviews, a teacher interview, and observation notes, and analyzed through qualitative analysis and descriptive statistics. The researcher found that the majority of students expressed a dislike for the clip chart system, whether public or hidden.
Student Perceptions of the Color Clip Chart Behavior Management System

“I hate school!” Tommy yelled, as he stomped his feet back to his desk (all names have been changed to pseudonyms). “Man! That’s not fair!” Jake huffed as he stomped to move his clip down, and then stomped back to his spot on the carpet. The rest of the class watched him, despite Mrs. Smith’s attempts to keep them engaged in the lesson. This was typical behavior for Tommy and Jake after being told to move their clips down for misbehavior. Many students responded to moving their clip down with shouts, attitude, and disrespectful remarks, causing them to clip down further, until eventually consequences led them to time in the principal’s office. What causes such outbursts? Were students displaying anger towards the teacher, the clip chart or themselves? “I hate the clip chart! This sucks!”

Purpose

Second grade teachers at Thistle Elementary School have been using the color clip chart behavior management system in their classrooms. The color clip chart behavior management system is a chart hanging on the wall containing seven different color blocks. Each of the students’ names is posted on a clip that is attached to the chart. The students all start the day in the middle of the chart on the color green, and then move up and down the color chart as needed for both negative and positive behavior. The teachers received comments from parents as well as other teachers in the district expressing their dislike of the clip chart system. Many teachers at Thistle Elementary School agreed that they love having a clip chart in their classroom; however, there has not been a significant amount of research done regarding the use and student perceptions of the clip chart behavior system. When asked, the second-grade teachers at Thistle Elementary explained that they were unaware of the student perceptions of the clip chart, and whether student feelings of shame, embarrassment, comparison, etc., were the case for their
students. The purpose of this study was to determine student perceptions of the public clip chart used in the classroom, and to see what happens when the public clip chart was switched to a hidden clip chart. The research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

**Main Research Question:** What are student perceptions of the clip chart used in second grade at Thistle Elementary?

**Sub Question 1:** Do student perceptions change when we implement a hidden clip chart?

At the time of the study, I was a graduate student fulfilling a yearlong clinical teaching placement in second-grade at Thistle Elementary School. Thistle Elementary is located in a West Texas town with a population of approximately 122,999 people. Thistle Elementary has a population of 521 students, ranging from kindergarten to fifth grade. The student population is made up of 48% Hispanic, 15% African American, 33% Caucasian, 3% two or more races, and 1% Asian. Approximately 76% of students qualified for free or reduced lunch. For the purpose of the study, only one second-grade class served as participants.

**Literature Review**

While behavior management is a hot topic among educators, there is little research regarding forms of the clip chart method, specifically student perceptions of the clip chart. Kluge (2018) claimed that there is a gap existing in both research and literature on how color clip behavior charts impact positive student behavior, and a positive classroom environment. Some teachers have claimed that the use of a clip chart is “pitting students against one another, rewarding those who already know how to self-discipline and shaming those who needed to learn” (Watson, Daly, Smith, & Rabin, 2019, p. 16). Other teacher-researchers explained that “more than ever, the public perception is that student behavior is out of control… people are most concerned with the lack of discipline and control in schools” (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negron,
2008, p. 32). Karin Compise of the University of the Pacific found in her doctoral dissertation study that many students experienced shame and embarrassment with the use of a classroom clip chart (Compise, 2019). Parents have also expressed worry that clip charts affect their students’ “inner voice,” and shift their identity to that of the “bad kid” (Jung & Smith, 2018, p. 13). One teacher even explored the idea that a child’s dignity, privacy, and self-respect are disturbed by the use of a clip chart (Night, 2012).

Purpose of the Clip Chart

Despite conflicting views of this particular behavior management strategy, for many teachers throughout all levels of elementary school, the clip chart is a key component of classroom management. In fact, one of the most important tasks that teachers must take on day in and day out, is to manage students who exhibit problematic behavior (Kluge, 2018). This is where some form of a clip chart comes into play, as they are a simple and seemingly effective way to measure student behavior throughout the day. A clip chart is made up of two components, a color blocked chart typically featuring seven different levels, and a clip or clothespin for each student in the class. The clip chart can be defined as a leveling system that corresponds to certain colors, focusing on student behavior, and then administering rewards and consequences based on the levels of behavior (Kluge, 2018). Morris (2009) explained the process of a clip chart as follows: “during the course of the day, the [clips] move up and down the chart based upon the behavioral choices each student makes. Good behavior causes the [clips] to move up one level, and inappropriate behavior causes the [clip] to move down one level” (p. 2).

Failure

For some teachers, the clip chart method was unsuccessful for students with problem behavior. Lower, Young, Christensen, Caldarella, and Williams (2016) observed a particular
student whose teacher chose to use a clip chart as her primary behavior management system in her third-grade class. The clip chart was unsuccessful for this student, to the point where tier 3 behavior interventions were necessary (Lower et al., 2016). Simonsen et al. (2008) concluded the importance of a successful and consistent positive behavior management system before a school can experience the capacity needed to meet the needs of students who require more intensive behavior management interventions.

**Foundational Discipline Methods**

The clip chart system comes from a foundation of assertive discipline, a behavior management method emphasizing positive reinforcement as the key to appropriate, positive student behavior (Desiderio & Mullennix, 2005). Desiderio and Mullennix (2005) explained that “assertive discipline can be an effective tool in reducing the number of incidences of inappropriate and disruptive student behavior in the classroom” (p. 384). While effective, assertive discipline is just one foundational discipline method.

Developmental Discipline, as discussed by Watson et al. (2019), is a classroom management approach focused on building caring and trusting relationships in the classroom and guiding students towards caring and responsible behavior. Watson et al. (2019) revealed that many teacher candidates witness classroom management practices used by their mentor teachers that do not align with developmental discipline, one of which being the clip chart system. One teacher candidate in Watson’s et al. (2019) study modified the clip chart system in her mentor teacher’s classroom. In her modification, she made sure to discuss the reasoning behind every move on the clip chart, giving her students a chance to understand why their behavior was problematic, how to go about making better choices, and giving them an opportunity to practice
positive behavior. This modification transformed the clip chart to be helpful and developmental to students, rather than to cause shame.

Another foundational discipline method worth mentioning is Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The PBIS model is a three-tiered framework used to improve and implement evidence-based interventions promoting positive student behavior (Kluge, 2018). Use of a color clip chart can fall under PBIS only when positive reinforcements are used alongside consequences for problematic behavior. However, in most cases, the use of a clip chart is only associated with the negative consequences. Because of the threat that comes with moving a clip down a level for inappropriate behavior and the possibility of activating a child’s fight or flight, “students would benefit from PBIS supports and interventions [instead] in order to develop and improve self-regulation abilities” (Kluge, 2018, p. 30).

**Classroom Climate and Student Shaming**

It is evident in the research that the climate of one’s classroom can make or break the entire school experience for a student. Kluge (2018) claims that “it is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to implement efficient and effective classroom management strategies to establish and strengthen social-emotional skills in order to maintain a positive classroom and school climate” (p. 2). The classroom climate, affected either positively or negatively by the classroom management method, plays a key role in student safety. If students do not feel safe within their classroom environment, they will not be able to learn both academics and social-emotional skills.

As teachers, the physical and emotional well-being of the children in our class should be a top priority. It is safe to say that one’s emotional well-being is at risk of harm when experiencing any form of shaming or public humiliation. One teacher candidate participant in the
study conducted by Watson et al. (2019) concluded that the clip chart system puts students up against one another, shaming students who needed to learn self-discipline while rewarding those who are already able to self-discipline. With students experiencing feelings of shame, embarrassment and failure, we cannot expect our students to put forth their best effort to learn in an environment threatening their emotional safety.

While the literature reveals that the color clip chart has been discussed at length by both teachers and parents, research is lacking the component of student perception. This study will add meaningful data regarding how students actually feel about the scale that their behavior is being judged on. The study also reveals what happens to student perceptions when the publicity of the clip chart is taken away through the implementation of a similar, private version of the clip chart.

**Methods**

The following explains the methodology of the action research study conducted in my clinical teaching placement. I studied the perceptions of my students regarding the clip chart behavior management method that had been in place for the entirety of the school year. I also studied what happens to student perceptions of the clip chart when a hidden clip chart is implemented instead, taking away the concept of public humiliation. This was a mixed methods study.

**Participant Selection**

The participants of this study included a single classroom of second-grade students and one classroom teacher. A parent information letter and consent form were sent home, and the students were also asked to sign an assent form. All 22 students in the class received parent permission and assent, and participated in the study. My class consisted of 13 boys and nine
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girls. Thirteen of the students were Caucasian, four were Hispanic, and five were African American. The classroom teacher was a Caucasian female.

Data Collection

The data collection methods that I used included student surveys (see Appendix A), student interviews, a teacher interview (see Appendix B), and anecdotal notes. I conducted a pre-survey of all 22 students using a picture Likert scale to determine initial perceptions of the public clip chart, which had been used since the beginning of the school year. An open-ended question asking students what they thought of the clip chart was included at the end of the survey. I conducted individual student interviews at the beginning of the study with three students based on the survey results. I selected students for interviews with a range of perceptions, one who disliked the clip chart, one who was indifferent to the clip chart, and one who liked the clip chart. Each interview lasted approximately 10 minutes. All interviews were semi-structured, using questions that had been pre-planned (Hendricks, 2017).

After the interviews, I implemented a hidden clip chart in the classroom. The hidden clip chart was kept at my teacher table, and was only seen by students when they are asked to come move their clip up or down with me. The hidden clip chart was implemented for three weeks. For the hidden clip chart, each student had their own personal clip chart located in a binder (see Appendix C), labeled by a tab with their name on it. Paper clips were used to keep track of their color throughout the day. On the front of a binder was a list of clip chart rules (see Appendix D). The rules for the hidden clip chart were only slightly changed from the public clip chart. During the implementation, I observed the class daily, and documented behaviors and reasons for moving clips through anecdotal notes during each observation day. I documented how often students had to move their clip. At the end of the implementation period, I conducted a post-
survey of all 22 students again, this time based on their perceptions of the hidden clip chart. I conducted one teacher interview with my cooperating teacher. This interview took place towards the end of the implementation period, and lasted approximately 15 minutes. I also interviewed the same three students from the beginning of the study to gather further information regarding any change in student perceptions of the clip chart. All of the student and teacher interviews were recorded and transcribed. Additional questions were asked depending on the responses of the participants.

**Data Analysis**

The qualitative data taken from the interviews and anecdotal notes were analyzed through the constant comparative method. This included the initial coding of 15-20% of the data to create level 1 codes. This was followed by the creation of hierarchies of categories and supporting codes (Hubbard & Power, 2003). The level 1 codes were then used to analyze the remaining 80% of the data. Based on these initial main codes that were uncovered, I was able to create five level 2 codes in order to further organize the data, and in turn identify any major underlying themes (Tracy, 2013). The purpose of the level 1 and level 2 codes is to deepen the understanding of the data and the emerging findings. After the creation of different level codes, a codebook and memos for each of the level 2 codes was created (see Appendix E) to offer a deeper explanation of the codes used to analyze the data (Tracy, 2013). The data from the student Likert Scale survey questions was analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics (see Appendix F). Student responses to the survey questions were tallied to determine the percentages of students who liked and disliked both the public and hidden clip charts.

**Findings**
Throughout the data collection and analysis process, the following major themes emerged: negative feelings towards the clip chart, positive feelings toward the clip chart, a sense of pride, feelings of embarrassment and humiliation, and feelings towards consequences, motivation and rewards. These trends were not surprising, and I will preface by saying that I have never been a fan of the clip chart behavior management system. I have always believed that this method for managing behavior causes embarrassment in the classroom, and therefore takes away from a positive, welcoming, and safe learning environment. This personal belief may present a possible bias. The following sections include descriptions of the five major themes taken from level 2 codes, and further explanation through student vignettes taken from surveys and pre- and post-interviews.

**Negative Feelings**

The first major theme identified through the coding process was the theme of negative feelings towards the clip chart behavior management system. Students tend to have negative feelings towards getting in trouble, consequences, realizing that they have made poor behavior choices, and realizing that other students also recognize when they have made poor behavior decisions.

The theme of negative feelings came about in the data when words such as “mad,” “sad,” “angry,” “frustrated,” “upset,” and “embarrassed,” were repeated throughout each student interview, and in their short answer questions on both the pre- and post-surveys. Students reflected that anytime they have been told to move their clip down for misbehavior, they find themselves getting mad, upset, sad, embarrassed, frustrated, and angry. They also expressed having these feelings when they notice that other students can see when they are getting in trouble, resulting in being made fun of or talked about among other students.
Student expressions of negative feelings towards the clip chart behavior management system in the interviews and surveys show that students have a negative perception of the clip chart. Overall, they tend to dislike this method of managing and maintaining behavior, and would prefer that a different management system be used. Four level 1 codes fall under the category of negative feelings: feeling sad and angry, disappointment, feeling like a “bad kid,” and bad colors. Students expressed disappointment in themselves, and even believe that having to move their clip down makes them a “bad kid.” One student, Jake, explained that moving his clip down makes him feel as though he is bad and dumb. These negative feelings tend to be associated with the “bad colors,” identified by students as yellow, orange, and red, and carry a negative connotation.

**Positive Feelings**

Another emerging trend from the data was the theme of positive feelings regarding the clip chart behavior management system. Positive feelings appeared when students discussed feeling happy and proud of themselves any time they were asked to move their clip up on the chart. Their positive and happy feelings were associated with the “good colors,” which were identified by the students interviewed as green, blue, purple, pink, and “off the chart.”

The trend of positive feelings can be described as the feelings of pride, joy, or accomplishment that students expressed towards the use of the clip chart. Falling under the overarching umbrella of this theme are the level 1 codes feeling happy and proud, and good colors. Together, these make up the theme of positive feelings. Positive feelings also appeared in the data analyzed from the teacher interview. Based on the teacher interview, Mrs. Smith has found that in her experience, teachers tend to have a far more positive attitude towards the clip chart behavior management system. She believes this is because it is a user-friendly tool for
teachers to easily track student behavior throughout the school day. Mrs. Smith holds the belief that students reflect positive feelings towards the clip chart as well when they are exhibiting positive behavior that they are then rewarded for. Students reflected the most positive feelings towards the clip chart when they expressed pride in themselves for having their positive behavior on display for other students to see. The fact that other students were aware of their “good color” and knew that they would receive tickets at the end of the day as a reward served as positive motivation for some students. This was expressed as one of the only things students actually liked about the clip chart system in their classroom.

**Pride**

Pride is a theme that began to emerge in the data when students expressed that they feel proud and accomplished when they move their clip up the chart, and that other students can see their behavior accomplishments displayed on the wall. Pride also began to emerge when students expressed that other students in the class were talking about the color that their own clip was on throughout the school day. Students claimed that they talked about their clip chart color at lunch, at recess, and even in their specials classes such as during music, PE and art. Students explained that other kids would even make fun of them, taunting them by telling them that their color was better than the one they were on. The level 1 code that fell under the theme of pride is the concept of bragging. Students expressed that it appeared that other students enjoyed and had fun bragging about their color.

If students are finding pride in their clip chart color and are then bragging and even teasing other students, this shows that some students like the clip chart because they rarely find themselves getting in trouble, and are then holding that fact over other students. This also indicates that students have a negative perception towards the clip chart if they are consistently
teased for their color. Students expressed that they still felt proud of their clip chart color even when other students could not see it displayed on the wall. They also expressed that bragging and teasing still took place.

**Embarrassment and Humiliation**

The next major theme identified through the coding process was the theme of embarrassment and humiliation as a result of the color clip chart behavior management system. This is the theme that I believed would be most likely to occur in the data. This is also the reason that the color clip chart behavior management system has become such a controversial topic among educators and parents, and the reason that the clip chart has received such a negative reputation.

This theme appeared in student interviews, as well as in the short answer responses taken from the student pre- and post-surveys. Students feel embarrassed when they are called out for their negative behavior, told to move their clip down the chart, and have their clip color displayed on the wall for the entire class to see. Students feel embarrassed and humiliated because the negative attention of their classmates is called to them in the process of moving their clip down the chart. Students stated that other students made fun of them based on what color their clip was on throughout the day, or talk about their own color being higher than theirs on the chart, causing students to feel less than, dumb, and like a “bad kid.”

If students are experiencing embarrassment and humiliation, they are experiencing negative feelings towards the clip chart, towards their classmates, and towards their teacher. This means that their overall perception of the clip chart is negative due to the fact that they are embarrassed in their school classroom environment. If they are embarrassed, they do not feel safe to make mistakes in their classroom environment.
Some students expressed that they are still embarrassed when using the hidden clip chart, simply because there is not a great way to have them move their clip without other students realizing what is happening, even though the other students cannot see the clips. Other students shared that they loved the idea of the hidden clip chart because they don’t feel embarrassment anymore because the rest of the class cannot see their clip color displayed.

**Consequences, Motivation and Rewards**

The last emerging theme from the data includes the concepts of consequences, motivation, and rewards. There are many things that motivate students, including punishments at home, punishments at school, moving their clip down the chart, moving their clip up the chart, rewards and encouragement. These motivators can be described as the different levels of consequences that students experience for misbehavior, incentives and rewards that are used to encourage students to maintain positive behavior, such as stickers, tickets, and rewards offered by their parents at home.

This theme came about when students shared in their interviews that the things they disliked the most about the clip chart system was that when they move their clip down, they get in trouble. Students dislike consequences at school, and they especially dislike consequences at home. Students also expressed that sometimes they actually feel motivated by the embarrassment that occurs when they have to move their clip down. They do not like the feeling of being humiliated, therefore they are motivated to have good behavior in order to avoid the embarrassment of moving their clip down.

Students explained that even though they really dislike the consequences that come with both the public and the hidden clip chart, neither really motivate them very much to have
positive behavior. They have negative perceptions because they associate the clip chart with embarrassment, and the embarrassment is the cause of most of the motivation that is occurring.

**Vignettes**

After surveying all 22 students in our second-grade class at the beginning of the study, I wanted to gain further insight through student interviews. Using the student surveys, I selected three students to interview, choosing one student who clearly dislikes the clip chart system, one student who appeared to be indifferent towards the clip chart, and one student who really liked using the clip chart in the classroom. Each student was interviewed once before the implementation of the hidden clip chart, and once after the implementation of the hidden clip chart.

**Jake.** The first student selected for the interview process was Jake, because he communicated a strong dislike for the clip chart. Jake is a student who was moving his clip constantly throughout the day. On his survey, Jake expressed that moving his clip made him very sad and mad, associating the clip chart and moving his clip only with moving down the chart, seen in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Jake’s short answers taken from the survey.](image-url)
This survey just so happened to take place on a day where Jake was asked to move his clip down multiple times. Jake had a tendency to get very upset, and showed a lot of attitude in the event he was told to move his clip down. He talked back, stomped his feet, huffed and puffed, and even smacked his lips at both myself and Mrs. Smith. Each of these reactions appeared to be a response to him feeling mad, sad, and embarrassed.

In the pre-interview with Jake, when asked how the clip chart made him feel, Jake responded by saying “well kinda good and kinda bad… like when I get in trouble, it makes me feel bad and nervous, and shy, and confused.” When asked why the clip chart made him feel mad, Jake explained that his anger is directed at the clip chart when he gets on red. “Who are you mad at when you get on red?” “The clip chart!” “Oh, you’re not mad at a person?” “No.” “Do you ever get mad at yourself for being on red?” “Hmm yes.” Jake clearly expresses anger when discussing the clip chart, yet his anger is not directed at the teacher or even at other students, it is mainly directed towards the chart itself, as well as occasionally towards himself.

Jake also explained that students made fun of him based on his color on the chart: “They say haha Jake you’re on red! Haha! You’re gonna get in trouble! Haha!” making him feel embarrassed. This appeared to be a problem before and after implementation of the hidden chart. When asked the same question in Jake’s post-interview, he claimed that kids were still commenting on each other’s colors, “They say oh I’m on green, you’re on yellow! I’m on pink, you’re only on purple!” He expressed that this made him feel sad, frustrated, and confused, “why they’re talking about [his] clip when it’s none of their business.” Overall, Jake showed negative feelings towards the public clip chart, and the hidden clip chart. His perceptions of the clip chart did not change after the implementation of the hidden chart. He concluded that if he had to choose between having a public clip chart or a hidden clip chart, he would go for the hidden clip chart.
chart, but he still does not like it. When asked which one he thought was better, he claimed that “None of them are good!” and that neither one worked or motivated him.

**Lexi.** Lexi was selected to interview based on her survey results and classroom observations because her feelings towards the clip chart used in our classroom appeared to be indifferent, as seen in Figure 2. Lexi conveyed both positive and negative feelings towards the clip chart, depending on how her classroom behavior was reflected on the chart. In the pre-interview, Lexi stated that “The only thing I really like about [the clip chart] is the good colors. That’s the only thing.” She then explained that the good colors included green, blue, purple, and pink, and that she liked these colors because “if I get above green I get rewarded.” When asked what she did not like about the clip chart, Lexi said, “I don’t like that like every time, even if I got on yellow, I still have to get in a lot of trouble [at home].”

**Figure 2.** Lexi’s short answers taken from the survey.

Lexi was also asked if she believed that the clip chart worked. She responded with, “I don’t really think it works because it just kind of, I know it like kind of motivates kids to not do
it because they’re gonna get embarrassed because of it, but I just don’t really think it works.”

Lexi explained that she sometimes felt embarrassment when she had to move her clip down on the chart. In her post-interview, she stated that the embarrassment is really the only aspect of the clip chart that she finds to be motivating, “I feel like, if I get embarrassed, it motivates me, but I don’t really get embarrassed, that’s why, I’m just like this,” she then rolled her eyes. She believed that kids don’t like to feel embarrassment, therefore the thought of being embarrassed was the only thing that kept some students from misbehaving.

Lexi thought that the hidden clip chart was better than the public clip chart, “because then no one gets as embarrassed if you had to clip down.” She liked the fact that the only people who could see their clip was each individual student and the teachers. However, Lexi expressed that she would get frustrated that she could not look up on the wall throughout the day to see her color: “I don’t like that whenever it’s hidden, I kind of don’t know my color. Then I’m wondering like, what’s my color!” Lexi believed that a lot of students would agree with her because they liked to know what their color was during the school day. When asked if she would choose to use a clip chart if she were a teacher, either a public chart or a hidden chart, Lexi exclaimed, “No! Because it’s just going to embarrass kids and make them want to do it more.” After implementation of the hidden clip chart, Lexi’s perceptions of the clip chart were still negative, although she agreed that the hidden clip chart was better.

**Jane.** Jane was selected to interview because she was a student who had never had to move her clip down on the chart prior to the implementation of the hidden clip chart. On Jane’s survey, she wrote that she felt very happy knowing that other students could see what color her clip was on, as seen in Figure 3. This led me to believe that Jane had positive feelings towards the clip chart used in our classroom.
Jane had a sense of pride associated with the clip chart in our classroom, stating that she liked the clip chart and that the clip chart made her feel good “because I’ve never clipped down.” Although she had never clipped down, she believed that it would make her sad if she had to and that it would be really embarrassing. For Jane, the clip chart was motivating because students were rewarded with tickets for their clip being on green or above at the end of the day, and she liked that she could get prizes with her tickets.

After implementing the hidden clip chart, Jane’s perceptions had only slightly shifted. She still liked the clip chart, and liked that other students’ feelings would not be hurt if their colors were kept private. When asked what she liked about it during the post-interview, she said she liked “that it’s hidden so that nobody else will see it. You could actually hide it in the room!” She also expressed that one thing she did not like about the hidden clip chart was that “I wish it could be in like something else besides a binder.” A binder was difficult for students to easily find their personal chart to be able to move their clip. Jane thought something besides a binder would be easier “because you don’t have to flip through the pages.” Jane also stated that if she were a teacher, she would not choose to use a clip chart, because how the clip chart made
students feel depended on what color they were on, and she would rather just give everyone a big star in their folder for good behavior and have them walk laps at recess for misbehavior. Jane’s overall perception of the clip chart after implementation still leaned towards the positive side; she claimed that she liked the clip chart, but preferred that something else be used.

**Student Perceptions**

The data shows that students appear to lean towards a negative perception of the color clip chart behavior management system. Findings suggested that students who typically had good behavior preferred that the clip chart be displayed on the wall, and they had a sense of pride in their color being visible to other students. On the other hand, students who typically misbehaved did not prefer that the clip chart be displayed on the wall; they experienced embarrassment and humiliation, yet this did not motivate them to have better behavior.

After implementing a hidden clip chart, student perceptions did shift, and some students appeared to like the hidden clip chart more than the public clip chart. Based on the student surveys given before implementing the hidden clip chart, 10 out of 22 students, or 45.5%, liked that the clip chart was public, as seen in Figure 4. After implementing the hidden clip chart, 15 out of 22 students, or 68.2%, preferred that the clip chart be hidden, seen in Figure 5.
Figure 4. Percentages of students who liked the public clip chart and students who disliked the public clip chart, taken from student pre-surveys.

Figure 5. Percentages of students who liked the hidden clip chart and students who disliked the hidden clip chart, taken from student post-surveys.

Implications for Teachers
It is clear that many students liked the idea of having a hidden behavior management system; however, the data reflects that a hidden clip chart may not be the most practical. Students who are often getting in trouble begin to associate moving their clip down with being a “bad kid,” being “dumb,” and believing that other students are going to make fun of them, thus bringing about a sense of shame and humiliation. Many students appeared to be indifferent to the clip chart either way. These are the students who either rarely or had never been asked to move their clip up or down, and usually stayed on green most of the time. Students who preferred the clip chart, public or hidden, found a sense of pride in knowing that their color was on display, and wanted other kids to know that they were doing a good job.

From the data, I learned that my personal bias rang true for many students: they did experience embarrassment and humiliation when a public clip chart was used in the classroom. Bragging and embarrassment seemed to be the biggest problems that students had with the clip chart system. Overall, students expressed that they have a strong dislike for the clip chart, and were intrigued by the idea of changing behavior management to a different method. However, when used correctly, many students also found comfort in the consistency of the clip chart. They liked knowing what consequences they had for each color on the chart, and they liked the rewards that came with moving up on the chart.

Prior to conducting the study, I noticed that very little research on student perceptions of the clip chart had taken place. Based on the findings of the study, it was clear that students had opinions regarding the clip chart, whether negative or positive. As teachers, we are advocates for our students, and it is incredibly important that we give them a voice in our classrooms. While teachers must set the tone, environment, and rules for a positive learning experience, students know what motivates them and what encourages them to maintain positive behavior. Teachers
and students alike need a behavior management system that is user-friendly, effective, and motivating.

For teachers, I recommend moving away from a public clip chart behavior management method. In many classrooms, the clip chart can definitely be misused. Expectations aren’t clearly set, causing confusion and inconsistency, and students are motivated solely by fear of embarrassment. In this study, students expressed their need for consistency in a behavior management system, and a hope for a system that does not cause them shame and humiliation. Thus, arises the question, what methods for behavior management are user-friendly, consistent, and steer away from public humiliation? I did not find the hidden clip chart in this study to be successful, while students did enjoy that it was hidden, the replacement was not user-friendly.

Students offered their own solutions, such as continuing the use of a clip chart on the wall, but having it hidden inside a cabinet to discourage wandering eyes of students throughout the day. Other ideas included the implementation of a miniature clip chart, such as creating the chart on a paint stick that could be kept behind the teacher’s desk, as well as be carried around with the teacher. In my own classroom, I will continue to experiment with behavior management systems to find one that my students and myself are comfortable with. Further research is needed regarding the clip chart behavior management system in order to continue to understand the impact of the public and hidden clip charts used in early elementary school classrooms, and student perceptions of each.
References


Appendix A

Clip Chart Pre-Survey

1. How do you feel about the clip chart?

Very Happy  A Little Happy  A Little Upset  Very Upset

2. Do you like the clip chart?

Very Happy  A Little Happy  A Little Upset  Very Upset

3. How do you feel when you have to move your clip down?

Very Happy  A Little Happy  A Little Upset  Very Upset

4. How do you feel when you get to move your clip up?

Very Happy  A Little Happy  A Little Upset  Very Upset

5. How does it make you feel knowing that anyone in the classroom can see what color you are on?

Very Happy  A Little Happy  A Little Upset  Very Upset
6. How would you feel if you and your teacher were the only ones who could see your color on the clip chart?

Very Happy  A Little Happy  A Little Upset  Very Upset

7. How would you feel if we tried a different method for managing behavior?

Very Happy  A Little Happy  A Little Upset  Very Upset

8. Write your response to the following sentence stem:
When I have to move my clip, I feel…

9. Write your response to the following sentence stem:
When other kids can see my color, I feel…
Clip Chart Post-Survey

1. How do you feel about the hidden clip chart?

Very Happy                      A Little Happy                      A Little Upset                      Very Upset

2. Do you like the hidden clip chart?

Very Happy                      A Little Happy                      A Little Upset                      Very Upset

3. How do you feel when you have to move your clip down?

Very Happy                      A Little Happy                      A Little Upset                      Very Upset

4. How do you feel when you get to move your clip up?

Very Happy                      A Little Happy                      A Little Upset                      Very Upset

5. How does it make you feel knowing that you and the teacher are the only ones in the classroom who can see what color you are on?

Very Happy                      A Little Happy                      A Little Upset                      Very Upset
6. How do you feel when you stay on green all day?

Very Happy  A Little Happy  A Little Upset  Very Upset

7. How would you feel if we tried a different method for managing behavior?

Very Happy  A Little Happy  A Little Upset  Very Upset

8. Write your response to the following sentence stem:

When I have to move my clip, I feel…

9. Write your response to the following sentence stem:

When other kids can see my color, I feel…
Appendix B

Student Pre-Interview Protocol

1. What do you think about the clip chart in our classroom?
2. What do you like about the clip chart? Why?
3. What do you not like about the clip chart? Why?
4. How does the clip chart make you feel? Why?
5. Does the clip chart motivate you to have good behavior? Why/Why not?
6. Do kids talk about what color other kids are on? Tell me about that?
7. How would you feel if we took away the clip chart on the wall, and replaced it with a clip chart that only you, me, and *Mrs. Smith saw? 
8. How do you think this kind of hidden clip chart would help your behavior?
9. If you were a teacher, how would you manage student behavior?
10. How do you think the clip chart makes other students feel?

Student Post-Interview Protocol

1. What do you think about the hidden clip chart in our classroom?
2. What do you like about the hidden clip chart? Why?
3. What do you not like about the hidden clip chart? Why?
4. How does the hidden clip chart make you feel? Why?
5. Does the hidden clip chart motivate you to have good behavior? Why/Why not?
6. Do kids talk about what color their clips are on throughout the day? What about the color that other students’ clips are on?
7. Do you think the hidden clip chart is better than the clip chart on the wall? Why/Why not?
8. If you were a teacher, would you use a clip chart? A Public clip chart or a hidden clip chart? Why/Why not?
9. How do you think the hidden clip chart makes other students feel?

Teacher Interview Protocol

1. What do you like about the clip chart?
2. How many years have you been using the clip chart?
3. What kind of feedback from parents have you received about the clip chart?
4. What do you think your students like about the clip chart?
5. What do you think your students dislike about the clip chart?
6. If you were measured on the same type of performance system as a teacher, how do you think you would feel?
7. How do you think your students would feel if we used a hidden clip chart instead?
8. Have you had any negative experiences with using the clip chart? Tell me about that?
9. Have you had any positive experiences with using the clip chart? Tell me about that?
10. What are your overall feelings towards the clip chart?
11. Are you open to changing your classroom behavior management system? Why/Why not?
Appendix C

Off the Chart!

- Outstanding
- Great Job
- Good Day
- Ready to Learn
- Think About It
- Teacher’s Choice
- Parent Contact
Appendix D

Hidden Clip Chart

- The Clip Chart Binder will stay with Ms. Poole (or Mrs. Smith if needed)

- If you are asked to move your clip in the classroom while you are at your desk, you will come see Ms. Poole right away and we will move your clip together.

- If you are told to clip down in the hallway, Ms. Poole will move your clip down in the classroom and remind you once we are back in the room.

- You are responsible for remembering if you were told to clip up in the hallway. Once we are back in the classroom, raise your hand to ask Ms. Poole to clip up.

- If you are asked to clip down during a lesson, you will go see Ms. Poole to move your clip directly after the lesson.

- At the end of the day, if you do not remember what color you are on, you may stop at Ms. Poole’s table to check with her on your way to pack up your things.

- You will still color your color in your blue folder at the end of the day, and receive tickets for colors just as we have been doing all year.

- If you are off the chart, your clip will stay in the binder, and you will still get a sticker at the end of the day.

- If you are on yellow, orange, or red, you will still walk laps at recess.
## Appendix E

### Codebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Name</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative Feelings</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>The feelings of negativity students express towards the clip chart behavior management system.</td>
<td>“Horrible. It makes me feel dumb, and like I’m bad.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling sad and angry</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Students who feel sad and angry when they have to move their clip down.</td>
<td>The clip chart makes students feel “Frustrated? confused. And mad, angry.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointment</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Students who feel disappointment in themselves for displaying poor behavior.</td>
<td>“Because I’m doing bad choices.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling like a bad kid</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Students who feel as though clipping down on the clip chart means they are a bad kid.</td>
<td>“Because whenever I get embarrassed I just don’t like it because I feel like I haven’t really, like I’m not a good kid because I get in trouble.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad colors</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Colors such as yellow, orange, and red on the clip chart that carry a negative connotation.</td>
<td>“Red because it’s from the devil! Devil color. It’s the devil.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Feelings</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>The positive feelings of pride, joy, or accomplishment that students express towards the clip chart behavior management system.</td>
<td>“I like them both though. So, I can only see my color, and so I can only see above what I’m on. Like when the clip chart was on the wall, I would do the top highest to lowest. I just like seeing the colors.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling happy and proud</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Students who feel happy and proud of</td>
<td>“But if they’re on a good color, they’re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Quote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good colors</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Colors such as green, blue, purple, and pink on the clip chart that carry a positive connotation.</td>
<td>“Good colors are good. Blue, purple, pink, green.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>The sense of pride students feel and the act of bragging about their color on the clip chart.</td>
<td>“They act like they’re on the best color and then like the other person is on the worst color.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bragging</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>The act of students expressing pride in their clip chart color and making fun of other students based on their clip chart color.</td>
<td>“They just say ‘haha I’m a better color than you!’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassment and Humiliation</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>Feelings of embarrassment and humiliation students feel due to being made fun of or called out based on their clip chart color.</td>
<td>“They say haha *Jake you’re on red! Haha! You’re gonna get in trouble! Haha!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences, Motivation and Rewards</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>The consequences or punishments students face for their display or misbehavior. What encourages students to have good behavior.</td>
<td>“Because then I get in real bad trouble.” “They don’t want their clip moved down, so they do want to do everything they can to not get in trouble. It really depends on the kiddo.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishments at home</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Consequences students experience at home for their behavior at school.</td>
<td>“Because I get in trouble every single time at home when I get in trouble at school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishments at school</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Consequences students experience at school for their behavior at school.</td>
<td>“You don’t have to walk laps or get in trouble.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clipping down</td>
<td>When students have to move their clip down the clip chart to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yellow, orange, or red.</td>
<td>“Like whenever I clip down I feel bad.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clipping up</td>
<td>When students move their clip up the clip chart to any color</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>above red.</td>
<td>“I feel happy when I clip up.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards and</td>
<td>Incentives such as tickets and stickers that encourage students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encouragement</td>
<td>to have good behavior.</td>
<td>“Because I get tickets!”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“If I get above green I get rewarded.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden clip chart</td>
<td>The clip chart behavior management system that is taken off the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wall and transferred to personal clip charts for each student.</td>
<td>“I would go for the hidden clip chart, but I still don’t like it.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is kept in a binder and is visible only to each student and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>their teacher.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public clip chart</td>
<td>The clip chart behavior management system that hangs on the wall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and is visible to all students.</td>
<td>“Would you use a clip chart on the wall?” “None of them are better! They’re both bad!”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F

Pre-Survey Results

1. How do you feel about the clip chart?
   
   Very Happy – 9
   A Little Happy – 11
   A Little Upset – 1
   Very Upset – 1

2. Do you like the clip chart?

   Very Happy – 8
   A Little Happy – 9
   A Little Upset – 4
   Very Upset – 1

3. How do you feel when you have to move your clip down?

   Very Happy – 0
   A Little Happy – 0
   A Little Upset – 4
   Very Upset – 18

4. How do you feel when you get to move your clip up?

   Very Happy – 22
   A Little Happy – 0
   A Little Upset – 0
   Very Upset – 0

5. How does it make you feel knowing that anyone in the classroom can see what color you are on?

   Very Happy – 6
   A Little Happy – 4
   A Little Upset – 7
   Very Upset – 5

6. How would you feel if you and your teacher were the only ones who could see your color on the clip chart?

   Very Happy – 13
7. How do you feel when you stay on green all day?

Very Happy – 10
A Little Happy – 10
A Little Upset – 2
Very Upset – 0

8. How would you feel if we tried a different method for managing behavior?

Very Happy – 6
A Little Happy – 7
A Little Upset – 6
Very Upset – 3
Post-Survey Results

1. How do you feel about the hidden clip chart?
   
   Very Happy – 5
   A Little Happy – 8
   A Little Upset – 4
   Very Upset – 4

2. Do you like the hidden clip chart?
   
   Very Happy – 5
   A Little Happy – 9
   A Little Upset – 4
   Very Upset – 3

3. How do you feel when you have to move your clip down?
   
   Very Happy – 0
   A Little Happy – 0
   A Little Upset – 6
   Very Upset – 15

4. How do you feel when you get to move your clip up?
   
   Very Happy – 16
   A Little Happy – 5
   A Little Upset – 0
   Very Upset – 0

5. How does it make you feel knowing that you and the teacher are the only ones in the classroom can see what color you are on?
   
   Very Happy – 9
   A Little Happy – 6
   A Little Upset – 4
   Very Upset – 2

6. How do you feel when you stay on green all day?
   
   Very Happy – 8
   A Little Happy – 10
   A Little Upset – 2
   Very Upset – 0
7. How would you feel if we tried a different method for managing behavior?

Very Happy – 11
A Little Happy – 5
A Little Upset – 4
Very Upset – 1