

Learning-Inhibiting Problems Experienced by Middle School Teachers: Implications for Staff Development

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(ABSTRACT)

This study sought to determine if there were statistically significant differences between years of teaching experience and education relative to learning-inhibiting problems in the classroom. These differences were measured by responses on surveys, classroom observations, review of summative teacher appraisal instruments and focus group interviews.

A population of 271 middle school teachers of language art, social studies, mathematics and science were selected from one urban school district. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was the statistical analysis procedure utilized to analyze the data.

Thirteen null hypotheses were tested at the .05 alpha level. The research failed to reject 12 null hypotheses of no statistically significant difference between years of teaching experience (0-5, 6-12, 13-20, 21+) and education (middle school trained, middle school untrained) and learning-inhibiting problems (chronic talking, refusing request, tardiness, inattentiveness, talking back to teachers) experienced by middle school teachers in the classroom. The only null hypothesis rejected was that no statistically significant difference existed between 0-5 years of teaching experience and the non-instructional strategy (consultation with an administrator) used to prevent learning-inhibiting problems in the classroom. The results of the data analysis revealed that teachers in the 0-5 range of teaching experience preferred consultation with administrators as the strategy for preventing disruptive behavior in the classroom.

Upon classroom observation, there was no statistically significant difference between years of teaching experience and the ability to manage a classroom. It was observed that teachers who circulated throughout the classroom while directing instruction and using questioning techniques were better able to manage the classroom and have fewer disruptions than teachers who stood in front of the class or who were seated and directed instruction.

Focus group members indicated that many disruptive behaviors can be addressed through appropriate instructional planning and delivery. Therefore, staff development should address a variety of instructional strategies that would prevent and eliminate specific learning-inhibiting problems as chronic talking, tardiness, inattentiveness, refusing request of teachers, and talking back to teachers in the classroom.