

Educator Perceptions of Student Choice in the Classroom: A Mixed Methods Study

By

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

Students with challenging behavior underperform compared to their peers without challenging behavior, and up to one third of school-age children engage in problem behavior in the classroom that impacts their educational progress (Epstein et al., 2008). These students are at-risk for negative outcomes in numerous areas, including the academic, behavioral, and social domains. Problem behavior has a negative relation with academic performance (Kremer et al., 2016; Malecki & Elliot, 2002) and can lead to strained relationships between teachers and students (Ladd & Burgess, 1999; Henricsson & Rydell, 2004). If problem behavior is not intervened upon, these issues can persist and even increase over time (Kremer et al., 2016). Long-term consequences for high levels of problem behavior can include lower grade point averages and higher rates of school drop-out (Lucio et al., 2012; Wang & Fredricks, 2014).

Proactive classroom management strategies have been shown to improve both behavioral and academic outcomes for these students (Benner et al., 2013; Office of Special Education Programs [OSEP], 2015; Sugai & Horner, 2002). These antecedent strategies, provided through simple and effective behavioral interventions and supports, are necessary to decrease problem behavior and increase appropriate classroom behavior. To effectively intervene on problem behavior in the classroom, teachers often use a multi-tiered framework to determine the level of support that students require and provide support in the most effective way possible.

### **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support**

Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) are a framework to provide schools and teachers with a continuum of supports to provide to students with both academic and behavior

difficulties (Sugai & Horner, 2009). MTSS combine the use of response to intervention (RTI) for academic intervention and school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports (SW-PBIS) for behavioral intervention (Sugai & Horner, 2009; McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). When MTSS are used to address problem behavior in the classroom, it can help to decrease problem behavior and increase prosocial behavior (Bradshaw et al., 2012). Within the MTSS framework, there are three distinct tiers of academic and behavioral support; Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3. In Tier 1, universal supports are provided to all students. In Tier 2, students who do not respond to the universal supports provided are provided additional support and intervention. Tier 2 supports are often provided as manualized programs that provide teachers with a standard protocol to intervene the same way across all students receiving Tier 2 support. In Tier 3, only those students who do not respond at the Tier 1 and Tier 2 levels are provided with intensive, individualized supports. Tier 3 supports require additional time and school resources to intervene on the most severe problem behavior. It is important for schools to provide evidence-based Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports with adequate fidelity, so that Tier 3 supports are reserved for only those students who truly require the most intensive supports.

Teachers often spend a significant amount of time intervening on problem behavior when they could otherwise use that valuable time to provide high quality instruction (Scott et al., 2012). Providing teachers with effective antecedent strategies to prevent problem behavior can decrease the amount of time that teachers spend intervening on problem behavior (Maag, 2001). At the Tier 1 and Tier 2 levels of behavioral support, there are several antecedent strategies that can be utilized to increase students' ability to engage in the classroom environment. One such strategy is providing students with choice in the classroom.



## **Student Choice**

Providing opportunities for student choice is one antecedent behavior management strategy that can be incorporated easily within the MTSS framework to improve student behavior in the classroom (Landrum & Sweigart, 2014; Kern et al., 2016). Student choice is, as the name implies, when a teacher allows students to choose from options provided to them by the teacher. Student choice can be used within all three tiers of the MTSS framework and for a variety of different types of students. Choice can be used not only when academic demands are presented to students, but also as a behavior-management technique. There are many different types of student choice for teachers to incorporate, which makes it an intervention that is easily adapted for specific classrooms or specific students.

### ***Types of Student Choice***

One of the most appealing features of student choice is the variety of student choice intervention types. Four main types of student choice have been previously evaluated for their effectiveness in classrooms: (1) choice within activity; (2) choice between activity; (3) choice across activity; and (4) choice of reinforcement.

The first type of student choice is within-activity, which provides students with a choice of *how* they wish to complete an activity (Cole & Levinson, 2002; Schulman, 2016). For example, students may be given a choice of which partner to work with, choice to work independently or with an adult, choice of materials, or choice of seating. Providing students with a choice of how they want to complete an activity may increase the probability that a student completes the task. This type of choice may also make the task more highly preferred so that the student engages in the task rather than engaging in problem behavior.

The second type of student choice is between-activity, which provides students with a choice of which activity they want to complete (Vaughn & Horner, 1997; Powell & Nelson,

1997). For example, the teacher provides the student with a menu of two or more options and the student chooses one single activity to complete. Often, students are able to move on to a more highly-preferred activity or receive a break after they complete the single activity they pick. This type of choice allows students to complete a lower-probability task and then have access to a higher-probability task. This type of choice is especially effective for students with escape-maintained behavior, as students are required to expend effort on one single task, rather than multiple (Kern et al., 2001).

The third type of student choice is across-activity, in which students get to choose the order in which they want to complete activities (Rispoli et al., 2013; Ennis et al., 2020). For example, teachers provide two or more activities that must be completed, and the student chooses the order of completion. With this type of choice, students are required to complete all tasks provided, but they have autonomy in choosing the order. This allows students to complete more preferred activities first, which may increase their motivation to complete multiple tasks (Burgos-DeStephanis, 2017). This type of choice may be appealing to teachers because students still complete multiple required tasks but have more autonomy.

The final type of student choice is choice of reinforcement. With this type of choice, students are able to choose the reinforcement they wish to earn upon completion of a task or set of tasks (Skarbetz & Kostewicz, 2015; Aldosari, 2017). For example, the teacher may provide the student with the choice to earn drawing time or computer time when the student completes an activity. This type of choice allows students to access preferred reinforcers and may increase their motivation to complete tasks because they know at the outset what they will earn upon completion (Mechling et al., 2006).

Teachers may select among choice interventions based on their individual preferences, specific classroom characteristics, and specific student characteristics. Student choice

interventions can also be implemented with individual students, small groups, or an entire classroom of students. Additionally, student choice can be implemented for students with and without disabilities and at various ages and grade levels.

### ***Effectiveness of Student Choice***

Many studies have evaluated the effectiveness of these different types of student choice to both increase appropriate behavior and decrease problem behavior in the classroom (Shogren et al., 2004; Royer et al., 2017). There are several mechanisms by which student choice may lead to these outcomes. First, choice can increase intrinsic motivation in students and allow students to have a sense of autonomy in the classroom (Beymer & Thompson, 2015; Deci & Ryan, 1985). In general, students do not have much autonomy during the school day, as most of their day is controlled by adults in the school building. Providing student choice can increase students' capacity to display autonomy in their school day, both inside and outside the classroom. Student autonomy can be especially important for students with disabilities, who are provided even less autonomy in school than their peers without disabilities (Shelvin & Klein, 1984).

Second, providing choice can increase self-determination in students, which is important for future success (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Wehmeyer, 1992). As adults, individuals must make many choices throughout their day to be successful. Providing students with opportunities to practice choice-making in the school environment is necessary for them to learn these skills for the future. Finally, providing students with choice may increase their effort on school tasks and their overall performance on those tasks (Patall et al., 2008; Reutebuch et al., 2015).

### ***Considerations for Use of Student Choice***

There are several considerations to keep in mind when selecting student choice as a behavioral intervention in the classroom. First, the choices provided need to be both meaningful and personally relevant to the student (Evans & Boucher, 2015). If students are provided with a choice of reinforcer, but none of the options actually reinforce the student's behavior, this is likely an inappropriate intervention strategy. Although choice can be used with many different types of students, teachers must be thoughtful in how choice is implemented in the classroom. Second, students need to feel that they actually have autonomy to make their own choice and that the choices are not contrived. This allows students to enhance their competence in making choices (Katz & Assor, 2006). Additionally, students need to be presented with choices that are neither too difficult nor too easy. It is ideal if choices are of intermediate difficulty so that students can make choices efficiently and do not become frustrated with the choice-making process. (Katz & Assor, 2006). Finally, choices need to be appropriate for the classroom environment, taking the individual differences of students into account (Katz & Assor, 2006; Parker et al., 2017).

As a behavioral intervention, different types of choice have been studied broadly. There is some consensus that choice is an effective intervention to increase appropriate classroom behavior, but mixed results for the effect of choice interventions to decrease disruptive behavior. Choice interventions have been reviewed for a number of more specific student populations and settings, as well as more broadly for all students in a particular setting. In the next section, several previous reviews of student choice are described.

### ***Previous Reviews of Student Choice***

Several previous reviews and meta-analyses have examined the research base for

student choice and its overall effectiveness (Lancioni et al., 1996; Kern et al., 1998; Shogren et al., 2004; Reutenbach et al., 2015; Royer et al., 2019; Wilkinson et al., 2022). Lancioni and colleagues (1996) conducted a review of choice intervention literature for people with severe and profound disabilities. This review included both choice of activity and choice of reinforcer interventions. Authors included people of all ages in their review, with studies ranging from school-age participants to adults with disabilities. Lancioni et al. (1996) reported three major takeaways. First, people with severe and profound disabilities can make choices and are capable of expressing preferences through their choice making. Second, choice making was a relatively new concept for participants and many people with severe and profound disabilities have not had adequate practice making choices. Therefore, additional supports, such as assistive technology, may be necessary to improve choice-making behavior. Third, the authors noted that additional studies were required to assess the beneficial effects of choice on participant behavior.

The next review was published by Kern and colleagues in 1998 and focused exclusively on antecedent choice interventions, including across- and within-activity choice. Like Lancioni et al. (1996), Kern et al. (1998) focused on people of all ages, both with and without disabilities, and included choice interventions during three different types of activities. These activities included vocational/domestic work, academic work, and work in leisure or social settings. Authors found that antecedent choice interventions improved behavior for nearly all included participants (Kern et al., 1998).

Shogren et al. (2004) published the next review of choice interventions and were the first to include a meta-analysis of effects of single case design research studies. Specifically, this review examined the effectiveness of choice of activity and choice of task sequence interventions to decrease problem behavior for people with disabilities. This review included

participants of all ages, including school-age children as well as adults. Thirteen studies were identified for review and authors utilized percentage nonoverlapping data (PND) and percentage zero data (PZD) metrics for the meta-analysis. The reported mean PND score was 65.7% and the overall mean PZD score was 42.3%, with ranges from 0% - 100%. Results showed that providing choice to people with disabilities significantly reduced occurrences of problem behavior.

The next review was completed by Reutenbach et al. (2015) and evaluated the use of choice interventions for students with autism spectrum disorder. Authors evaluated the quality of each study using the What Works Clearinghouse standards and synthesized outcomes across studies. Results indicated that student choice improved work completion, increased on-task behavior, decreased disruptive behavior, and improved interest for students with autism spectrum disorder.

Royer et al. (2017) completed a systematic literature review evaluating the evidence base for instructional choice interventions in Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade educational settings. Authors focused extensively on study quality and used the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) standards to assess quality for each included study and determine if student choice could be classified as an evidence-based practice (EBP). Only 46% of studies evaluated met the 80% minimum quality criterion and were included in the analysis of EBP. Overall, results showed that instructional choice interventions increased academic behavior and decreased disruptive behavior, but authors deemed that there was insufficient evidence to identify student choice as an EBP.

Most recently, Wilkinson et al. (2022) completed a systematic review and meta-analysis of single case studies evaluating instructional choice interventions. Authors included single case design studies, both published and unpublished, that evaluated an instructional choice

intervention for students in Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade settings. Using recently developed meta-analytic methods (i.e., log response ratios; Pustejovsky, 2018), authors found that instructional choice significantly increased appropriate classroom behaviors, including engagement and on-task behavior but did not have a significant impact on inappropriate classroom behavior, such as disruptive behavior and off-task behavior. Overall, these previous reviews of student choice show that this intervention continues to be evaluated and that the evidence base shows promising outcomes for student with challenging behavior.

### **Teacher Use of Student Choice**

Although there have been a number of empirical studies evaluating the use of student choice and examinations of the overall literature base, little information is available about the degree to which this intervention is currently being used in classrooms. While surveys have been conducted to examine the use of other widely-used classroom management techniques (e.g., Moore et al., 2017), this same examination has not been completed for student choice. Given the effectiveness of choice-based interventions and the preventative nature of antecedent-based supports, more information is needed to understand both the frequency and type of choice-based interventions that teachers currently use in their classrooms. There are a number of questions that accompany this broader examination of the prevalence of student choice. For example, are teachers planful when they use choice, or do they provide choice extemporaneously when a student is having difficulty in the classroom? Do teachers provide training for students on how to make choices, or are students expected to know how to make choices? Have teachers been trained to use choice as a management tool? Answers to these questions would provide information about how to effectively develop choice interventions for maximum student success.

Though there is little information on the prevalence of choice interventions, there has been some examination into teachers' perceptions of student choice. Flowerday and Shaw (2000) conducted a qualitative interview study that investigated teachers' beliefs about student choice. The authors used phenomenological methods to interview 36 teachers about student choice in their classrooms. These interviews gathered information about what, when, where, and to whom teachers provided student choice. Authors also asked teachers to elaborate on the effectiveness of choice interventions provided in their classrooms. Results of the qualitative analysis showed that teachers did provide a number of different types of choice to their students. It was reported that teachers varied their use of choice based on a number of student factors, including age, ability level, prior knowledge, and a number of classroom factors, including difficulty of content, classroom management style, and teacher efficacy with respect to classroom management.

Teachers also reported three themes or rationales related to using student choice in their classroom. These themes included affective, behavioral, and cognitive rationales for improving student performance. For the affective theme, teachers articulated that using choice improved attitude and affective engagement in the classroom. For the behavioral theme, teachers discussed that student choice improved appropriate student behavior in the classroom, including on-task behavior, participation, and demonstration of effort. For the cognitive theme, teachers discussed that they felt that students learned more when choices were provided in the classroom. Although Flowerday and Shaw (2000) provided insights into teachers' use of student choice, there has been no updated information on teachers' perceptions or use of student choice since their original study. With the current educational landscape and an emphasis on proactive supports for students, updated information on teachers' perceptions and use of student choice is necessary.



## **Rationale**

The current study extends the literature base on student choice in two distinct ways. First, a survey was created to examine educators' current use of student choice interventions and their general perceptions around using student choice in their classrooms. These perceptions include both the effectiveness and the feasibility of using any choice interventions in the classroom. Second, follow-up interviews were completed to gather information about educators' specific use of different types of choice interventions, what types of students are most commonly provided these choice interventions, and the effectiveness of these interventions in different classrooms. These interviews also gained insight into the future use of choice interventions and what factors might make choice interventions more or less desirable in certain classroom settings and with certain types of students.

The primary objective in conducting the current study was to understand educators' current use of student choice and their perceptions around using student choice in their classrooms. A secondary objective is to improve the quality of student choice interventions by soliciting information from educators on the feasibility and desirability of these types of interventions. The following research questions aligned with these objectives. The first three research questions were answered through the survey, while the last two exploratory research questions were answered through semi-structured interviews with individual teachers. This study will answer the following research questions:

- 1) To what extent do teachers currently use different types of student choice in their classrooms?
- 2) To what extent do teachers find student choice to be an effective intervention in their classrooms?

- 3) To what extent do teachers find student choice to be a feasible intervention in their classroom?
- 4) What advantages and disadvantages do teachers identify with the use of student choice interventions?
- 5) What facilitators and barriers do teachers describe that impact their use of student choice?

## CHAPTER II

### Method

#### Participants

Survey participants included teachers employed in public schools across the State of Tennessee. To be included in the study, teachers confirmed their current status as a teacher. The sample included general education and special education teachers, as well as some specialist teachers, such as librarians, teachers of English Language Learners, counselors, behavior specialists, intervention teachers, and blended pre-kindergarten teachers. Eligibility was determined based on self-report. For the interview portion of the study, all survey participants had the option to provide their contact information in addition to their survey to be considered for an interview. A subgroup of survey respondents was selected for the semi-structured interviews based on survey responses.

#### *Characteristics of Survey Participants*

A total of 181 Tennessee teachers from 38 districts completed the survey portion of the study. See Table 1 for detailed demographic information about the survey respondents. A majority of respondents were female ( $n = 154$ , 85.1%), which is representative of the current United States teaching force (Taie & Goldring, 2020). A majority of the respondents were general education teachers ( $n = 129$ , 71.2%), followed by special education teachers ( $n = 37$ , 20.4%). A much smaller portion of the total sample was made up of school counselors ( $n = 4$ , 2.2%), librarians ( $n = 3$ , 1.7%), academic intervention teachers ( $n = 3$ , 1.7%), behavior specialists, ( $n = 1$ , 0.6%), English Language Learner (ELL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers ( $n = 2$ , 1.1%), and blended pre-K teachers ( $n = 2$ , 1.1%).

The sample was spread across grade levels, with a majority of respondents working in high school ( $n = 39$ , 21.5%), middle school ( $n = 37$ , 20.4%), and elementary school ( $n = 82$ , 45.3%) settings. A small portion of respondents taught in a pre-K setting ( $n = 12$ , 6.6%), a K-8 or K-12 school ( $n = 8$ , 4.4%), or in an alternative school ( $n = 3$ , 1.7%). When asked to describe their current level of education, a majority indicated having received a master's degree ( $n = 111$ , 61.3%). The remaining respondents indicated either having their bachelor's degree ( $n = 63$ , 34.8%) or their doctoral degree ( $n = 7$ , 3.9%).

**Table 1**

*Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants*

Characteristic	Number of Participants	Percentage of Total Sample
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	27	14.9%
Female	154	85.1%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
Black or African American	3	1.7%
Hispanic or Latinx	1	0.5%
White	175	96.7%
More than one Race/Ethnicity	2	1.1%
<b>Primary Role</b>		
General education teacher	129	71.2%
Special education teacher	37	20.4%
School counselor	4	2.2%
Librarian	3	1.7%
Intervention teacher	3	1.7%
Behavior specialist	1	0.6%
ELL/ESL teacher	2	1.1%
Blended pre-k teacher	2	1.1%
<b>Current Teaching Level</b>		
Pre-K	12	6.6%
Elementary School	82	45.3%
Middle School	37	20.4%
High School	39	21.5%
K-8 or K-12 School	8	4.4%
Alternative School	3	1.7%
<b>Highest Level of Education</b>		
Bachelor's degree	63	34.8%
Master's degree	111	61.3%

Doctoral degree	7	3.9%
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Note: K = Kindergarten; ELL = English Language Learner; ESL = English as a Second Language.

***Characteristics of Interview Participants***

A total of 17 participants from the survey portion of the study also participated in the interview portion of the study. See Table 2 for detailed demographic information on the interview participants. Most interviewees were female ( $n = 14$ , 82.4%) and all interview participants identified as White. Slightly over half of the interviewees were general education teachers ( $n = 9$ , 52.9%) and the rest were special education teachers ( $n = 8$ , 47.1%). The interviewee sample was spread across grade levels, with the largest portion teaching in elementary schools ( $n = 10$ , 58.8%), followed by high schools ( $n = 5$ , 29.4%) and then middle schools ( $n = 2$ , 11.8%). A majority of the interviewees had their master’s degree ( $n = 10$ , 58.8%) or their bachelor’s degree ( $n = 7$ , 41.1%).

**Table 2**

*Demographic Characteristics of Interview Participants*

Characteristic	Number of Participants	Percentage of Total Sample
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	3	17.6%
Female	14	82.4%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
Black or African American	0	0%
Hispanic or Latinx	0	0%
White	17	100%
More than one Race/Ethnicity	0	0%
<b>Primary Role</b>		
General education teacher	9	52.9%
Special education teacher	8	47.1%
<b>Current Teaching Level</b>		
Pre-K	0	0%
Elementary School	10	58.8%
Middle School	2	11.8%
High School	5	29.4%

K-8 or K-12 School	0	0%
Alternative School	0	0%
<b>Highest Level of Education</b>		
Bachelor’s degree	7	41.1%
Master’s degree	10	58.8%
Doctoral degree	0	0%

*Note.* K = Kindergarten; ELL = English Language Learner; ESL = English as a Second Language.

**Recruitment**

Participants were recruited using a list of teachers and administrators provided by a state-wide center focused on tiered behavior support. This list had the emails of a total of 1144 teachers and administrators. An informational email about the study was sent to the entire list. See Appendix A for a copy of the email script sent to teachers and administrators. Within the recruitment email, teachers were asked to participate in the study and administrators were asked to distribute the email to teachers at their school or in their district for participation.

To recruit teachers for the interview portion of the study, information was provided at the end of the survey regarding the interview. Those teachers who wanted to be considered for an interview had the option to provide their contact information along with their survey. A subset of survey participants who provided their contact information for a follow-up interview were included in the interview portion of the study. These participants were contacted via email to set up an interview. Participation in the interview was optional and participants were able to opt out of the interview at any time. Overall, 67.4% of the survey participants indicated that they were willing to be contacted about participating in a follow-up interview. Of those 122 participants who expressed interest in an interview, 40 participants were emailed to schedule interviews. A total of 17 interviews were able to be scheduled and completed. Interviews were conducted from May to July, 2022.

### ***Participation Incentives***

For the survey portion of the study, all participants who completed all survey questions were entered into a drawing to win a \$100 gift card. Five teachers who completed the survey were randomly selected to receive a gift card. Teachers were required to enter their contact information after completion of the survey in order to be entered to win a gift card, but this information was not linked to the teacher's survey responses and was solicited in a separate form from the survey answers. All participants who completed an interview received a separate \$50 gift card for their participation.

### **Mixed Methods Design**

A mixed-methods design was used for this study. Within this mixed-methods design, information was gathered from both a quantitative strand, as well as a qualitative strand (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). More specifically, an explanatory sequential design was employed (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). First, we collected and analyzed quantitative data. We used descriptive design to interpret the quantitative survey data and understand the extent to which teachers are currently using student choice. Then, we collected and analyzed qualitative data. We used qualitative design to further analyze and interpret semi-structured interview data.

### **Data Collection**

The study included two major forms of data collection. First, participants filled out a survey about their use of student choice. This survey took approximately 5 to 20 minutes for participants to complete and was completed at the participant's convenience. Second, those teachers that opted into and were selected for the interview portion of the study completed a

semi-structured interview with the lead author. Interviews were scheduled at a time that did not interfere with the teacher's daily teaching responsibilities and were offered before school, after school, or during the teacher's planning periods.

### ***Survey of School Staff***

Survey data was collected and managed using the Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap) tool hosted at Vanderbilt University (Harris et al., 2009; Harris et al., 2019). REDCap is a secure, web-based software platform design to support data capture for research studies, providing (a) an intuitive interface for validated data capture; (b) audit trails for tracking data manipulation and export procedures; (c) automated export procedures for seamless data downloads to common statistical packages; and( d) procedures for data integration and interoperability with external sources. The survey took varying amounts of time to complete, depending on the participant's responses (i.e., the greater number of choice interventions that the participant used, the greater number of follow-up questions they were asked).

The survey was comprised of three major sections. See Appendix B for a copy of the survey from REDCap. Please note that some questions used branching logic, where sub-questions only populated if a participant answered previous questions in a certain way. For example, if a teacher indicated that they do not use a certain type of student choice, specific questions about that type of choice intervention did not populate. In the first section, participants provided their demographic information. This included gender, race/Ethnicity, highest degree obtained, teacher certification area (i.e., general education, special education, ELL/ESL, or other), current grade levels supported, and types of students supported.

In the second section of the survey, participant provided information about the different



types of choice they use in their classroom. The types of choice included across-activity, between-activity, within-activity, and choice of reinforcer. Each type of choice intervention was described for participants within the survey. Participants also had the opportunity to fill in other types of choice not described that they provide in their classrooms. If the participant indicated that they use at least one type of choice in their classroom, additional questions populated. These additional questions included the student grouping typically used to provide choice (class-wide, small-group, or individual), whether providing choice is pre-planned or given in the moment, and if providing choice was associated with a student's individualized behavior intervention plan.

The next portion of the survey asked participants to answer questions about where they learned to use choice and how they vary their use of choice depending on the students they work with. Participants were also asked to rate the reasons why they use choice in their classroom, rank the benefits of using choice, and rank the ways that student choice improves performance.

In the final section of the survey, participants answered questions about the perceived effectiveness and feasibility of using choice interventions in the classroom. After all portions of the survey were complete, participants had the option to provide their contact information to be considered for the interview portion of the study.

### ***Interviews of School Staff***

The second part of the study included interviews of selected participants who opted in to the interview portion of the study. Participants for the interview portion of the study were selected based on ideal or outlying responses on the survey. The purpose of selecting both ideal and outlying responses was to obtain perspectives from teachers who use student choice and

also from those teachers who may not use student choice or do not see choice as an effective intervention. Interviews were conducted via Zoom, a secure web application that allows for video and audio conferencing.

A semi-structured interview protocol was used for each individual interview. This type of protocol allows for theoretically-grounded questions as well as open-ended questions (Galletta, 2013). The semi-structured nature of the interview also allows for the interviewer to personalize the questions asked, based on both the participant's survey results and their answers to questions during the interview (Kallio et al., 2016). As this portion of the study was more exploratory in nature, a semi-structured interview protocol was most appropriate.

The protocol for the interviews in this study was comprised of four major sections. In the first section, participants were asked about their use of different types of choice within the classroom. Questions in this section were personalized based on the participant's survey results. For example, if a participant indicated on their survey that they do not use a certain type of choice, that type was not discussed in detail during the interview. The second section of the interview focused on the participant's background in using choice interventions. This included questions about their philosophy on using different types of choice, advantages and disadvantages of using choice, as well as their training to use choice interventions. In the third section of the interview, participants answered questions about using choice interventions in their classroom in the future. This included questions about the social validity of these types of interventions, specific settings or students they might use a choice intervention with, and how choice interventions can be adapted to fit classroom environments. The final section of the interview was a time for wrapping up the discussion, so that the participant could provide any additional information on their use of student choice that was not covered in earlier sections of the interview. See Appendix C for a copy of the semi-structured interview protocol.

### ***Field Notes***

Following each interview, the interviewer completed field notes via a reflection guide. The reflection guide was adapted from Biggs et al. (2016). The interviewer summarized the main themes from the interview and wrote down any notes about the interview. These notes included information about the context of the interview, affect of the participant, and a personal reflection on how the interview impacted the interviewer. The reflection guide also provided an opportunity for the interviewer to make suggestions for future interviews and write down any follow-up questions for the participant. See Appendix D for a copy of the reflection guide template.

### **Data Analysis**

#### ***Quantitative Analysis***

The survey data was analyzed using quantitative analysis. First, demographic information of included participants was summarized. Next, descriptive statistics (i.e., means, standard deviations, percentages) were used to summarize data on the types of choice participants use in their classroom and the characteristics surrounding their use of choice. Chi-square tests of independence were conducted to determine if there were associations between the type of teacher (general education versus special education) and the types of choice used. Finally, non-parametric tests (i.e., Mann-Whitney U) were conducted to determine if teacher factors, such as type of teacher (general education versus special education; elementary versus secondary; urban versus rural; trained in teacher preparation program to provide choices versus not trained), related to responses about the effectiveness and feasibility of student choice interventions.

### ***Qualitative Analysis***

A constant comparative method was used to analyze qualitative data gathered from the semi-structured interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). In the constant comparative method, excerpts from the interviews are organized and coded according to attributes or themes, and existing codes are continuously compared to previously developed codes (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). To complete this process, each interview was transcribed, followed by structural coding, open coding, and synthesizing open codes into inclusive themes. Methods for each of these steps are described below.

### ***Transcription***

The first step in the qualitative data analysis was transcription of each one-on-one interview. The Zoom recording software was programmed to automatically transcribe the audio from each interview. The transcripts generated by Zoom were edited while a research team member listened to the full audio recording to make the transcript match the audio recording. Edits to the generated transcript included making corrections, additions, and deletions as necessary. This also included removing fillers, stutters, and adding punctuation to the transcript when appropriate. Additionally, any identifying information within the transcript was deidentified for privacy purposes. Transcripts were formatted with timestamps for each speaking event for both the interviewer and the interviewee. Once each transcript was edited in full, the recording was reviewed an additional time to make sure that the transcript accurately reflected the full interview.

### ***Structural Coding***

The next step in the qualitative data analysis was structural coding of major themes

from the interviews. First, coders (i.e., master's and doctoral students in special education) reviewed a subset of transcripts to identify structural codes that identify themes from the interviews. The coders met to share ideas about these structural codes and to develop a full set of structural codes. Next, transcripts were imported into Dedoose (SocioCultural Research Consultants, 2022), a data analysis software used for qualitative research. Once transcripts were imported into Dedoose, excerpts from each interview were coded using the structural codes developed.

### ***Open Coding***

The third step in the qualitative data analysis process was open coding, where excerpts are analyzed by structural code. During this step of analysis, excerpts within each structural code were reviewed, and a list of open codes was generated based on themes that were identified across excerpts. The unit of analysis at this level was at both the paragraph and the sentence level. During open coding, coders began to create a codebook with the open codes that emerged. After an initial set of open codes were created, the coders met to share the open codes identified and to condense these codes into distinct categories. The codebook was refined to include descriptions, examples, and definitions for each of the open codes. After the codebooks for open codes was refined, these open codes were applied to all transcripts.

### ***Synthesizing Themes***

The final step in the qualitative data analysis was synthesizing themes across all transcripts. During this stage of analysis, coders identified themes and drew connections across open codes that relate to similar phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Relations between the open codes were evaluated and summarized during this stage of coding. In order to identify

these themes and categories across open codes, patterns were noted in the responses provided across different participants in their individual interviews.

### ***Trustworthiness***

Several strategies were used throughout the qualitative analysis to increase the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings. First, triangulation across participants was used to find consistency from numerous data sources (i.e., interviews from multiple participants). Second, coders worked collaboratively during the coding process to avoid bias of one individual coder. Third, an audit trail was kept for all data collection procedures, interviews conducted, and data analysis decisions made. Finally, researchers acknowledge their positionality and experiences and how this might impact their interpretation of the qualitative results.

## CHAPTER III

### Results

Results from the survey portion of the study are presented first. These results address the first three research questions about educators' current use of choice and their ratings of the effectiveness and feasibility of providing choice. Results from the interview portion of the study are presented second. These results address the final two exploratory research questions about factors that may impact educators' use of choice, either positively or negatively.

#### **Research Question 1: To what extent do teachers currently use different types of student choice in their classrooms?**

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the different types of choice that they provide in their classroom. These types of choice included across-activity choice, between-activity choice, within-activity choice, and consequence choice. The frequency distributions of the choice categories are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Frequency Distributions of Types of Choice*

Type of Choice	Frequency	Percent of total ( <i>n</i> = 181)
Across-activity choice	157	86.7%
Between-activity choice	144	79.6%
Within-activity choice	170	93.9%
Consequence choice	142	78.5%

Across the four types of choice, the highest percentage of respondents ( $n = 170$ , 93.9%) indicated that they provide students with a choice of how they wish to complete activities (i.e., within-activity choice). Nearly all ( $n = 157$ , 86.7%) survey respondents indicated that they provide students with a choice of the order in which they complete activities in their classroom (i.e., across-activity choice). Likewise, most ( $n = 144$ , 79.6%) respondents indicated that they provide students with a choice of the activity the student wants to complete (i.e., between-activity choice). When asked if they use choice of consequence, or reinforcement, in their classroom, the smallest percentage ( $n = 142$ , 78.5%) of respondents indicated that they provide this type of choice.

Over half of the participants (55.8%) indicated that they use all four types of choice conceptualized on the survey. Nearly a third (28.1%) of participants indicated that they use only three of the four types of choice, while 14.9% of participants indicated that they use only two of the four different types of choice. Only two participants (1.1%) indicated that they only use one type of choice in their classroom and zero participants indicated that they do not use any type of choice in their classrooms.

When considering the student grouping that teachers most often provide choice to, 76.2% of respondents indicated using choice as a class-wide strategy. A total of 70.1% of participants indicated using choice as a small-group strategy, and 75.7% indicated using choice as an individual strategy. Just over half (51.4%) of participants indicated that they use student choice with all three types of student groupings.

Additional questions about the characteristics surrounding teachers' use of choice were analyzed next. More teachers indicated using choice as a pre-planned strategy ( $n = 112$ , 61.9%), compared to those that indicated using it extemporaneously ( $n = 69$ , 38.1%). When



asked why they use student choice, 90 teachers (49.7%) indicated that they most often use choice to improve student behavior, while 91 (50.3%) indicated that they most often use it to support academic performance. Nearly two thirds ( $n = 110$ , 60.1%) of participants indicated that they have provided choice as a part of a student's behavior intervention plan at some point. A total of 100 (55.2%) survey respondents indicated that they were taught in their teacher preparation program to provide choices. Respondents indicated that they also learned how to provide choices through professional development, college coursework, observing others in the field, and personal experience in the field.

In the next analysis, chi-square tests of independence were conducted to see if there was a significant association between teacher role (general education versus special education) and the types of choice utilized. Teachers who did not self-identify as either a general education teacher or special education teacher were excluded from this analysis. The first type of choice analyzed was across-activity choice. The chi-square test of independence showed that there was no significant association between teacher role and use of across-activity choice  $\chi^2 (1, N = 166) = .005, p = .946$ . The next type of choice analyzed was between-activity choice. The chi-square test of independence showed that there was no significant association between teacher role and use of between-activity choice  $\chi^2 (1, N = 166) = .401, p = .526$ . The third type of choice analyzed was within-activity choice. The chi-square test of independence showed that there was no significant association between teacher role and use of within-activity choice  $\chi^2 (1, N = 166) = .115, p = .735$ .

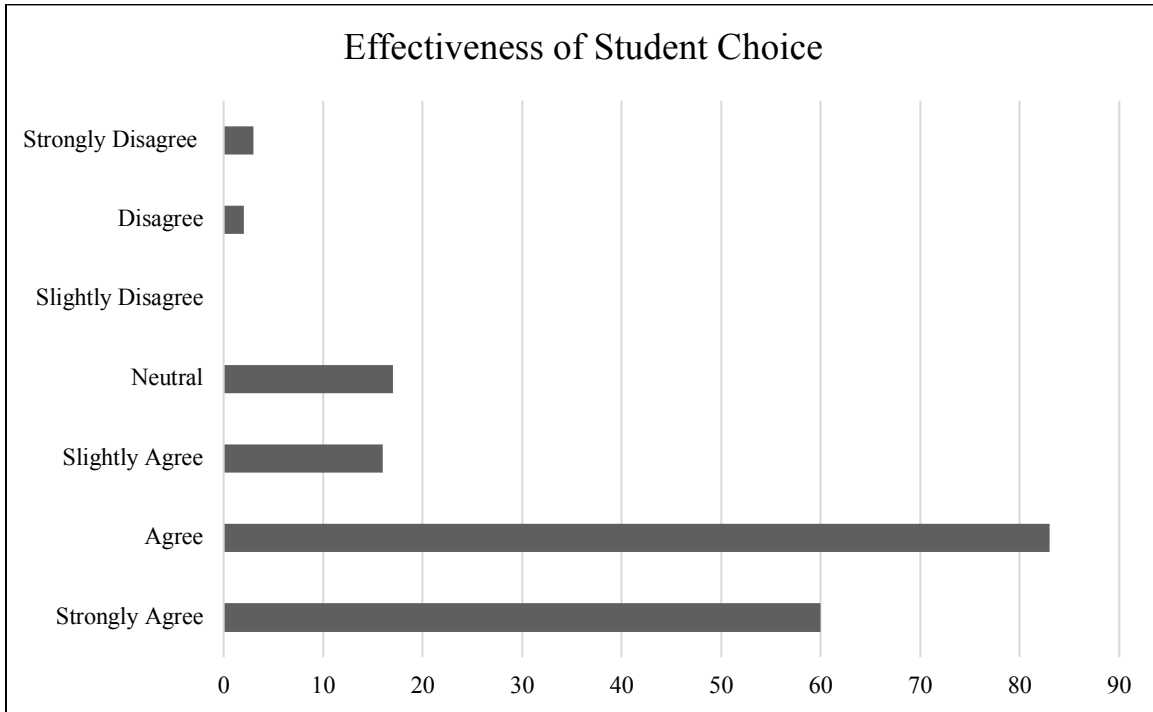
The final type of choice analyzed was consequence choice. The chi-square test of independence showed that there was a significant association between teacher role and use of consequence choice  $\chi^2 (1, N = 166) = 5.895, p = .015$ . Special education teachers were more likely to indicate their use of consequence choice than general education teachers.

**Research Question 2: To what extent do teachers find student choice to be an effective intervention in their classrooms?**

Survey respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of student choice in their classroom on a 7-point Likert scale (*1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree*). Figure 1 shows the distribution of ratings for the effectiveness of student choice. The mean response agreement that choice is an effective strategy was 5.57 (SD = 1.23). As is evident in Figure 1, nearly one third (33.1%) of respondents reported that they strongly agreed that student choice is an effective strategy in their classroom. Nearly half (45.9%) indicated that they agree that student choice is an effective strategy in their classroom. Less than 3% of respondents indicated that they slightly disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed that choice is an effective intervention in their classroom. Only five survey participants indicated that they disagreed ( $n = 2$ ) or strongly disagreed ( $n = 3$ ) that choice is an effective intervention in their classroom.

**Figure 1**

*Distribution of Student Choice Effectiveness Ratings*



Additional non-parametric analyses were conducted to determine if certain teacher characteristics were associated with significantly different ratings for the effectiveness of student choice. The first analysis was conducted to evaluate whether general education teachers rated the effectiveness of student choice differently than special education teachers. The mean rating for special education teachers was 6.03 ( $SD = 1.07$ ), while the mean rating for general education teachers was 5.38 ( $SD = 1.24$ ). A Mann-Whitney U test indicated that this difference was statistically significant,  $U(N_{\text{general education}}=129, N_{\text{special education}} = 37) = 1665, p = .002$ . Special education teachers, on average, rated choice as more effective than general education teachers.

In the next analysis, we evaluated whether elementary teachers rated the effectiveness

of choice differently than secondary teachers (i.e., middle and high school teachers). No significant difference was found between elementary teachers' ratings and secondary teachers' ratings of effectiveness;  $U(N_{\text{elementary}}=82, N_{\text{secondary}} = 82) = 3080, p = .893$ . When evaluating if teachers in a rural setting rated the effectiveness of choice differently than those in urban/suburban setting, no significant difference was found;  $U(N_{\text{rural}}=68, N_{\text{urban/suburban}} = 113) = 3386, p = .151$ . A significant difference was found between ratings by those teachers who indicated they were trained in their teacher preparation program to provide choice, versus those who indicated they were not trained;  $U(N_{\text{trained}}=100, N_{\text{untrained}} = 81) = 3183, p = .008$ .

**Research Question 3: To what extent do teachers find student choice to be a feasible intervention in their classroom?**

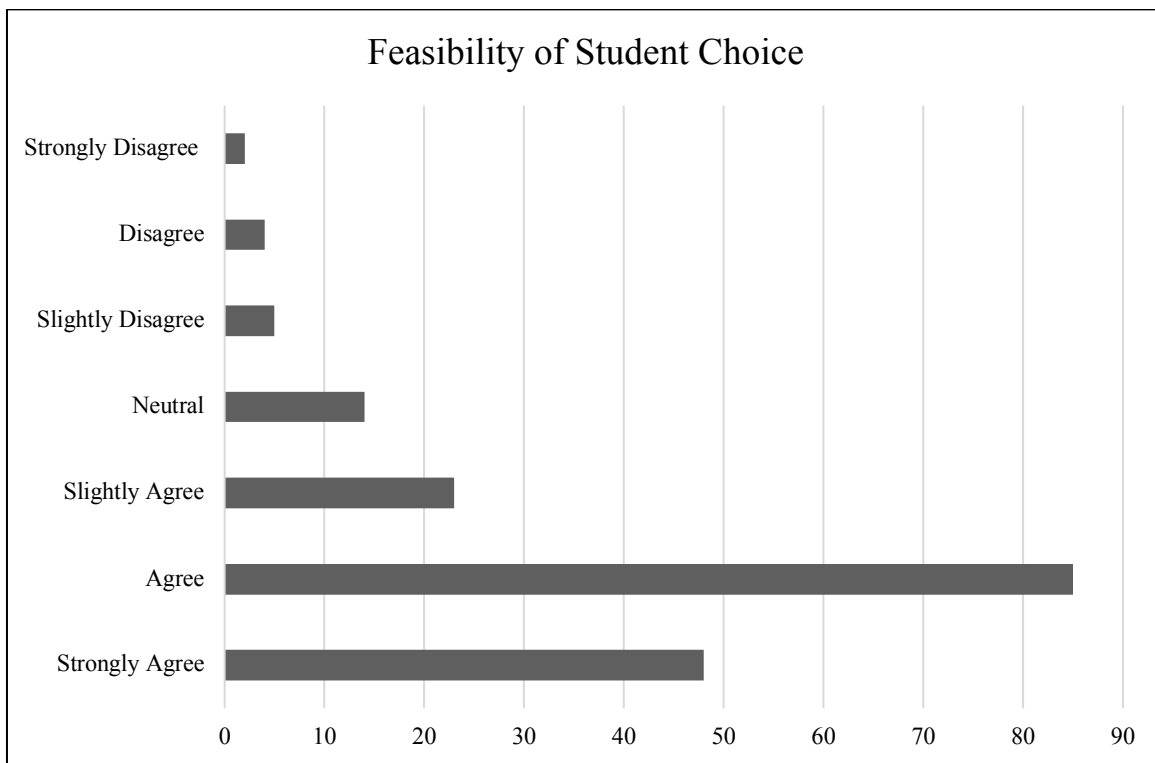
Survey respondents were asked to rate the feasibility of using student choice as a strategy in their classroom on a 7-point Likert type scale ( $1 = \text{strongly disagree}, 2 = \text{disagree}, 3 = \text{slightly disagree}, 4 = \text{neutral}, 5 = \text{slightly agree}, 6 = \text{agree}, 7 = \text{strongly agree}$ ). Figure 2 shows how respondents rated their agreement that using choice is feasible. The mean response agreement with the statement that choice is a feasible strategy was 5.41 (SD = 1.27). A slightly larger number of respondents indicated that they slightly disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed that choice is a feasible strategy in their classroom, when compared to the effectiveness.

An additional analysis was conducted to determine if general education and special education teachers rated the feasibility of student choice differently. The mean rating for special education teachers was 5.84 (SD = 1.24) and the mean rating for general education teachers was 5.26 (SD = 1.30). A Mann-Whitney U test indicated that this difference was statistically significant,  $U(N_{\text{general education}}=129, N_{\text{special education}} = 37) = 1626, p = .0015$ . On

average, special education teachers rated choice as more feasible than general education teachers. The same analysis was completed to compare elementary versus secondary teachers, rural versus urban/suburban teachers, and teachers who were trained in their teacher preparation program to provide choice versus those who were not trained. No significant differences were found for any of these additional teacher factors.

**Figure 2**

*Distribution of Student Choice Feasibility Ratings*



### **Qualitative Results**

#### **Research Question 4: What advantages and disadvantages do teachers identify for the use of student choice interventions?**

When reflecting on the advantages of choice, six themes emerged from the interviews:

- (a) increased motivation;
- (b) decreased problem behavior;
- (c) increased ownership and

accountability; (d) improved engagement; (e) opportunity for individualization; and (f) teaching of a life skill.

### ***Increased Motivation***

Eight teachers (47.1%) indicated that they believed that providing student choice increases motivation in their students. One teacher, when asked about her philosophy around using choice, shared that:

I do feel like when I can give kids an option, I feel like they are more motivated and like I guess empowered. Maybe because they feel like they have a say? And I do feel like [choice] kind of inspires them to work a little harder or get their work done.

Whereas, you know, typically I say, “Okay, we do this, and then we do this.” So when

I’m able to offer a choice, I think that it kind of boosts their morale a little. (11)

Another teacher described that “Everybody, if they have a choice, will be more motivated because you made that choice” (1). Some teachers expressed that this increased motivation can lead to other positive outcomes, such as one teacher who said, “I have less behavior issues and I have more motivation” (10).

### ***Decreased Problem Behavior***

In total, nine teachers (52.9%) expressed that providing students with choice can help to decrease problem behavior or even prevent problem behavior from occurring. One teacher reported that choice is an effective classroom management tool:

And it just became a new tool of classroom management that you're using with the kids.

They really don't catch on to it.. You're not sitting there, “Raise your hand to speak”, you know, be polite classroom management stuff. You're literally letting them choose

what to do, what they want to do, but still have the intended learning outcome at the end. And they don't even realize what's going on. (17)

Another teacher indicated that: “[choice] helps get things complete and avoid the disruption” (15). One elementary special education teacher described that providing choice can allow for problem behavior to cease so that learning can occur: “And sometimes just giving them that control and that choice and that validity helps them get to a place where they can learn again” (4).

### ***Increased Ownership***

Nine teachers (52.9%) acknowledged that providing choices leads to increases in student ownership of their own learning. One elementary special education teacher emphasized this increase in ownership: “I mean [choice] gets the buy-in from the students. It allows them to show ownership and control over what they're doing” (15). This teacher also indicated how important this ownership is for students: “It's important for the students to feel like they're a part of the educational process and responsible for their learning. And giving them choice allows them to feel that” (15). Another elementary general education teacher indicated that this increased ownership can lead to other positive outcomes in the classroom: “I think using choice is important because it gives our kids more ownership of what they're doing. It keeps them more engaged and it kind of gives them a little bit of freedom” (3).

### ***Improved Engagement***

Eleven teachers (64.7%) expressed that providing student choice can lead to improvements in engagement within the classroom setting. One high school special education teacher stated: “It makes students more engaged, and obviously that's a productive thing for

students to be” (8). Similarly, one elementary special education teacher said:

I think [choice] makes it easier to accomplish tasks, because it allows [students] to do what they would like to do. So, it gives them the opportunity to just go ahead and do what they feel like they're best at or what they want to do. And then, I feel like they do better work because it's something they want to do. (14)

Many of these teachers indicated that this is especially true for students who have more difficulty with academic tasks. One elementary special education teacher shared that: “[Choice] gives you some engagement and it gets them into that zone of proximal development where you're just hitting a ceiling and able to get them up to the next level that way” (4).

### ***Opportunity for Individualization***

Eight teachers (47.1%) described how choice allows them the opportunity to individualize instruction or differentiate based on student needs. One high school special education teacher emphasized that choice allows for differentiation for all students:

I’ve always been one of these people who believes that every student can learn. They're going to learn in different ways and at different rates and whatever, but my job is to facilitate that. Whatever I can do to facilitate that is my job. All kids are different. Their needs are different. Even in a very heterogeneous classroom, everybody is so incredibly different. I just consider using choice as just a basic, really. (8)

Another elementary general education teacher described how choice can provide for individualization within her larger class:

Most of the time in reading we’ll [provide choice] because the kids are in a different place. And so it allows me to differentiate a little bit, you know? Help the ones that need more help. And then it gives the other kids that are on track more ownership of



what they're doing. (3)

Teachers underscored that this opportunity for individualization helps students to be more engaged because they are learning at their individual level and can access the curriculum. As one elementary special education teacher described: “Give them options on how to give us that knowledge...to make sure there is learning and understanding there” (14).

### ***Teaching of a Life Skill***

Nine teachers (52.9%) discussed that providing choice to their students was important because making choices is a life skill that students will need in the future. One high school special education teacher described how important it is for her students to know how to make choices: “They're getting ready, to some degree, to be all on their own. They've got to be able to make some decisions. And starting small just sets it up for from the bigger things later” (10).

Another elementary school teacher emphasized providing choice is important with the end goal of employment in mind: “This is just like a job...we work with the end goal of getting a paycheck” (15). In addition to thinking about future employment and skills required, some teachers also described that students need to learn how their choices can change the outcome in certain situations. One elementary special education teacher emphasized: “I really want my kids to know that everything that they do and every choice that they make impacts them - good and bad” (9).

### **Disadvantages**

Teachers also reflected on the disadvantages of providing student choice in their interviews, and four themes emerged surrounding these disadvantages: (a) logistics; (b) inequality; (c) inappropriate responses; and (d) difficulty making choices.

### ***Logistics***

Five teachers (29.4%) described something logistical that makes it difficult to provide choices. These logistical factors included extra effort on the part of the teacher and extra planning required to provide choice. One teacher described how providing choice requires more planning and how this can be a burden to teachers: “I guess the most unappealing thing about [choice] is, it does require more planning up front...So it can be time consuming” (8). One high school general education teacher emphasized that providing across-activity choice in her classroom is difficult because of the extra preparation required to provide students with options:

I think, maybe overall just making sure that the two options that they were choosing between would both be... or the three options... however many options you're giving... that they would all be equitable in the amount of work that it would take to complete them and also in the amount of understanding that would result from that. So that sounds like a lot more work on my part. (2)

Another teacher emphasized that planning required to provide choice might detract teachers from providing choice, leading to those teachers providing only one option: “And a lot of teachers don't want to put that effort into it. It's like, I've told you to do this, you're going to do it, that's the end” (15).

### ***Inequality***

Six teachers (35.3%) described how providing choice to their students can lead to inequality across students. One elementary special education teacher described when they provide consequence choice that other students may feel it is unfair that one student only has to

work for a set period of time before earning a break:

When you step back and you look at what they're doing versus all the other students, I think it's hard sometimes. Because they're seeing that after 20 minutes of work, they're going to go get to do something or they're getting to leave the room. And I do, I think it is hard on those other students and I hate that for them. (9)

Several teachers discussed the unintended outcomes for other students in the class who are not provided the same choices: "I have noticed sometimes a student gets upset that they don't have what the other person has" (13). Another teacher added:

Then also if the other kids are feeling like it's unfair, I don't want the other kids to ever feel like I'm choosing favorites or I'm letting one person get away with this. Because they are very smart and they realize like hey this person is getting away with this, I can do it, too. (3)

To avoid this inequality, one teacher described providing choice in private: "I tried to make it not obvious to the rest of the kids because they will think it's not fair" (3).

### ***Inappropriate Responses***

Eight teachers (47.1%) indicated that a disadvantage of using student choice is that students have inappropriate responses, including increased problem behavior, when they are given choices. One elementary general education teacher described the unintended consequences of providing choice to her class: "If you give them too much freedom, it turns into chaos" (3). One high school special education teacher also described that their students often change their choices during class: "I mean kids will change your mind about what they want to be in middle the class, you know? Like we're halfway down this rabbit hole, and now you change your mind?" (17). Another elementary general education teacher indicated that

they cannot always provide choice of partners, because the students have difficulty getting work done in their pairs:

If it's an activity that I let them do with a partner, sometimes I do choice, but a lot of times I try to limit that because you've got the buddies that will always work together and then, when they work they don't get a whole lot done. (11)

### ***Difficulty Making Choices***

The final theme surrounding the disadvantages of choice was that many students have difficulty making choices. Ten teachers (58.8%) discussed this disadvantage. Many teachers described that they have to teach their students how to make choices and that this is a skill that they have to continuously work on. One high school special education teacher emphasized that some students require more time and guidance to make choices:

At which point we kind of had to hound them, to stay on them. Okay, pick your choice... so, we kind of had to be more guided with students in this scenario, rather than just kind of let them just go and do what they wanted. (17)

Other teachers described the difficulty of providing choices and having students pick a choice that is not ideal. One elementary school special educator described the difficulty of releasing responsibility to students:

That's one of the hardest parts, but I like to give them that time and let them make their own choices, but that is when it's unappealing is when you know what choice they should be making and they're not making it. (9)

**Research Question 5: What facilitators and barriers to teachers describe toward their use of student choice?**

**Facilitators**

Teacher participants discussed a number of factors that make it easier to use choice and described how these factors enable them to use more choice in their classrooms. These facilitators included: (a) flexibility; (b) familiarity with students; and (c) support.

***Flexibility***

Six teachers (35.3%) mentioned that when there is more flexibility in the classroom, this facilitates their use of student choice. One high school general education teacher mentioned that they can incorporate choice into their classroom more readily after state testing is completed for the year and they have made it through the majority of the curriculum. This teacher said that choice is more feasible: “Where you're not tied down to feeling like you have got to cover this material. Then I think it would be a great thing to be able to incorporate more of” (2).

A special education teacher described that they have more flexibility to provide choice when they have a small group of students to work with: “In here we only have three to four students at a time. So it's nice that when they come in, they kind of get to...they're still learning 100%... but they get to breathe” (9). One elementary special education teacher hypothesized that they are able to use more choice in their classroom than colleagues might be able to because of the flexibility in their classroom: “[Elementary classrooms] are much more flexible than the upper [grades]” (14). This teacher continued to describe how the flexibility provided by that smaller class size allows them to individualize instruction:

Because just in the classroom we have so many children they're from different backgrounds, different cultures. It allows us to have that flexibility with that student based on their needs. And just based on their needs and sometimes their emotions for that day. So it allows us flexibility that we need to be successful, as teachers and educators. (14)

### ***Familiarity***

Seven teachers (41.2%) described that having a certain level of familiarity with their students facilitated the use of choice, or increased the effectiveness of choice in their classroom. One elementary general education teacher described how they make student choice more effective:

I think it's important to make sure that you know their strengths. As long as you know what they're good at, then being able to come up with a way to help with what they're not so good at yet. (5)

Similarly, another special education teacher said: "I usually give them choices. And I know my students fairly well. I know their interests, so I gear my choices towards what I know they like" (15). Some teachers described that this familiarity with students is necessary before any choices are provided in the classroom. One high school general education teacher discussed developing a familiarity with their students before providing choices: "I've tried to find things for each kid. You've got to know your kids to figure out how to motivate them. Then you create an option" (1). Another teacher discussed what might happen if you do not have this familiarity with students before providing choice:

I think you really have to have that foundation. For choice to work well in a classroom, I think I wouldn't just go into a class for the first time, or the first week, not knowing

the students and outright give them a bunch of choices. I could see chaos breaking loose in a situation like that where you have to you have to teach them about choice making first and you have to lay that foundation before you give them that you know varying degrees of autonomy in the classroom. (4)

### ***Support***

Eight teachers (47.1%) highlighted during their interview that having some kind of support facilitated their use of student choice. This support might have been from administration, from other staff, or from professional development or training. For example, one teacher said that their administration supports the use of choice: “In our teacher evaluation and rubric one of the things is that you give them choice. When I first started getting evaluated by our principal that's one thing that I was like, well that's easy” (3). The teacher said that this emphasis on choice encouraged them to use choice frequently in their classroom. Similarly, one high school teacher described that choice was a topic of professional development and that this encouraged them to use choice in their classroom: “One, is training like we talked about earlier...And not only does training give you the ideas and the support to do something, but it also lets you know that it's okay” (8). Another high school teacher described how support in their classroom, via additional staff, would help to facilitate the use of choice: “Having help making sure students are staying on task and being able to monitor within different things are happening at the same time (2).

### **Barriers**

Teachers also discussed a number of factors that exist when that make it more difficult to use choice in their classrooms, or that prevent teachers from using student choice. These

barriers to using choice included the following: (a) use of resources; (b) student factors; (c) administrative expectations; and (d) teacher ability.

### ***Use of Resources***

Seven teachers (41.2%) discussed that a barrier to their use of choice is the extra resources required to effectively provide choice. These extra resources included time, materials, and funding. One elementary special education teacher described the need for pre-made materials in order to provide appropriate choices: “I feel like I just need visuals. And it would be nice to have them already ready” (13). A high school special education teacher emphasized the need to pre-plan for choices and make sure that choices are authentic for students. They said:

I think that there are times when it is less convenient for sure, and it takes a little more planning and preparation to have some things available so that they have some actual choices. [Students are] pretty savvy at picking up on whether it's really a choice or not, or if you're just trying to you know frame it as a choice. (10)

One middle school general education teacher discussed their inability to provide choice in some situations: “It all comes down to funding...but sometimes I wish there were things available for those students” (16).

### ***Student Factors***

Eleven teachers (64.7%) mentioned some kind of student factor that prohibited them from using choice in their classroom. One kindergarten teacher discussed how they have to narrow their use of choice, due to the age and maturity of her students:

I teach kindergarten....anytime they have a choice...I have to give those options very



detailed. And so usually if they have a choice of what order they do things, then it'll only be two things. Because if they have more than two and then now they just, they can't keep up with that many things. (3)

A high school teacher highlighted that their students have challenges to making choices, which discourages them from using choice in their classroom. They said:

I think the students, every year, it seems like it gets worse for me. And I think with honor students, maybe sometimes it's even worse because they're afraid to mess up. They're afraid they're not going to do exactly what you want them to do. They're afraid that they're not understanding what you're asking of them and they don't want their grade to suffer, and they want to please you. And so, for them, sometimes I feel like they have a harder time thinking for themselves on some things and making decisions. (2)

Other teachers described that the severity of a student's problem behavior might discourage them from using choice. One elementary general education teacher discussed that they cannot provide choices to particular students in their classroom:

I have one [student] right now, who it's just a struggle to get his impulse control under control. So he's very impulsive and choice didn't really work for him because, even when we were down to five minutes, it was just too far of a reach for him. (6)

### ***Administrative Expectations***

Fifteen teachers (88.2%) mentioned that administrative expectations impacted their ability to use choice in the classroom. The expectations described included those from the state level, district level, or building level. One high school teacher emphasized that they would like to provide more choice in their classroom but cannot because they have to teach the content

that will be covered on state testing:

You know I think in a perfect world, where teachers just taught their content, and they didn't worry about performance on a specific test, and where they were able to make decisions on a day to day basis, like, "We might need to spend three days on this because we're not getting it," rather than feeling like we've got to just rush through and cover everything, even if some people may not be at the level that they should be. I feel like in a perfect world choice would be great for my content. (2)

This teacher went on to say that they have to move quickly through material, which leaves little time for providing choice. "If I don't cover the material, I feel like they're at a disadvantage. And so I feel like I'm on a really strict timeline" (2). Another teacher similarly stated that at times they cannot provide choice to students: "If it's a test-wise and stuff, sometimes I cannot give that choice" (7). An elementary general education teacher also emphasize this lack of flexibility to use choice when expectations were put onto their class: "We do have to abide by certain rules when it comes to state testing or any kind of test that administrator gives us, and there are certain rules that we have to abide by" (5).

One teacher described that curriculum parameters might impact their ability to provide choice: "There are times when it's just like...I don't really have a lot of choice. You're gonna have reading intervention. I know you hate it, but let's just try to make the best of it" (10). Another teacher stressed that some curriculum needs to be provided to all students in the same way: "So if you're introducing new content that the whole class needs to learn they're probably going to get less choices" (1).

### ***Teacher Ability***

Eight teachers (47.1%) described that teacher ability can be a barrier to the use of

choice. Some teachers described deficits in their own abilities, while others described challenges that other teachers might have, which prevent those teachers from using choice. One elementary school special education teacher described why they feels that other teachers in their school do not provide choice: “It's hard for a lot of teachers to give the power to the students. I feel like they're afraid to give [choice]. Once they give that power to the students, they don't think they can get it back” (9). One high school special education teacher also described why they believes other teachers in their school do not use choice:

It probably doesn't come as natural to some people, especially teachers who are like content specialists, I think they have a tendency to be less inclined regarding choices than somebody who's been doing what I've been doing for a long time. (10)

This teacher also described that some teachers do not want to release control in their classroom by providing choice to students:

I think that the only resistance really is sometimes when you have educators that don't really...that are still in the mindset that the kids should do what they're supposed to do, because I tell them to do it. Finding ways to kind of break through that, especially when you get to the high school level, especially the teachers that have been doing it a really long time. And even though it may have worked for a period of time, you know populations change year to year, classroom makeup changes...and so having other people kind of come along with that would be helpful. (10)

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Discussion**

The primary purpose of this study was to learn more about how teachers currently utilize student choice in their classrooms and what factors may impact their use of choice. To learn more about teachers' current use of choice and their overall satisfaction with this strategy, a survey was conducted with teachers across the State of Tennessee. To learn more about the factors that may impact teachers' use of choice, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of survey participants. In the following section, results from the survey and the interview portion of the study will be highlighted. Finally, limitations of the current study and implications for future research and practice will be discussed.

### **Survey Findings**

Results indicated that all survey participants provide at least one type of student choice, and most teachers indicated the use of two or more different types of choice. A majority of teachers indicated that they use choice as a class-wide, small-group, and individual strategy, depending on the specific situation in which they are providing choice. Most teachers indicated that they most often pre-plan to use choice, rather than using choice extemporaneously. Results also highlighted that about half of the teachers surveyed use choice to address academic performance and approximately half use it primarily to improve student behavior. These results show that teachers are using choice in a variety of different ways, but with different techniques depending on the student or class they are working with.

The survey results were further analyzed to determine if there were any differences between certain subsets of respondents. Differences were only detected between general

education teachers and special education teachers on one type of choice used: consequence choice. Special education teachers were more likely to use consequence choice than general education teachers. This is noteworthy, as consequence choice is the type of choice most focused on student behavior, as opposed to other types of choice that are focused more on choice within academic tasks.

In general, survey respondents indicated that they find student choice to be both an effective and feasible intervention. Choice is a relatively simple antecedent strategy to use in any type of classroom, and these findings support that teachers find it to be an appropriate strategy. These results were again analyzed to see if there were any group differences. Findings from the survey showed that on average, special education teachers rated choice both as more effective and as more feasible than general education teachers. This finding leads to questions for future inquiry about why special education teachers may rate student choice differently than general education teachers and if further training or support may even out these ratings.

### **Interview Findings**

Information from individual interviews was analyzed qualitatively. Results were divided into two distinct categories. First, we identified the advantages and disadvantages of choice discussed by interviewees. Next, factors that serve as facilitators and barriers to using student choice were summarized into themes. These themes lead to a number of practical suggestions for supporting teachers' use of choice and increasing the feasibility of choice.

Six themes emerged about the advantages of using student choice. These themes generally point to ways that teachers believe choice may improve student performance in the classroom. These themes included increased motivation in students, decreased problem behavior, increased ownership and accountability, improved engagement, opportunities of

individualization, and teaching of a life skill. These themes mirrored findings from Flowerday & Shaw (2000), with affective, behavioral, and cognitive rationales for using choice.

Although teachers described many advantages to using choice, they also described several disadvantages. The four themes that emerged surrounding disadvantages included logistics (e.g., teacher planning and effort), inequality across students, inappropriate responses to choice-making opportunities, and student difficulty making choices.

Next, when asked what may improve or enhance student choice in classrooms, a number of factors that serve as facilitators and barriers developed. Three themes emerged surrounding factors that facilitate teachers' use of choice. These factors included flexibility, familiarity with students, and support. Teachers indicated that when they have more flexibility in their classroom and have more familiarity with their students, student choice is more effective and feasible. This may connect to the survey results, which showed that general education teachers rated choice as more effective and feasible than general education teachers. Special education teachers often have smaller class size and more individualized curriculum, which may lead to more flexibility and familiarity with their students.

Participants discussed a number of factors that may hinder teachers' use of choice. The themes included use of resources, student factors, administrative expectations, and teacher ability. By far, the most represented barrier to providing choice was administrative expectations. This included pressure from state-level, district-level, and building-level expectations. Many teachers indicated that administrative expectations prevent them from being able to use choice or prevent other teachers from using choice. These barriers to the use of choice that teachers described point to adjustments that are required to increase and improve the use of choice in schools. First, teachers should be provided support and training to provide choice and this support should be ongoing. Second, teachers should be provided with flexibility

so that they can conveniently and realistically provide choice.

### **Limitations**

The results of the current study should be considered with the following limitations in mind. First, the study had a relatively small sample of teachers from Tennessee and the sample as a whole was rather homogeneous. A majority of respondents were White women, which, although representative of the teaching force as a whole, does not provide as many unique perspectives. Additionally, though teachers from all grade levels were invited to complete interviews, a majority of the teachers who completed the interview process were elementary school teachers. Middle school teachers in particular were underrepresented in the interview sample. The authors attempted to collect perspectives from a varied sample of teachers, but further inquiry with a more heterogeneous sample is still necessary.

Second, both data collection methods in this study required self-report. On the survey, teachers self-reported their use of choice in their classroom. These self-reports may not accurately reflect their true practice in classroom and the amount of choice that they actually use. Additionally, teachers in the interview portion of the study self-reported factors that impact their use of choice and at times hypothesized why other teachers may or may not use choice in their classrooms.

A final limitation is the use of a listserv of emails for teachers and administrators that was provided by a state-wide center focused on tiered behavior support to recruit participants for the study. As a result of using this listserv, the sample might be skewed toward teachers who are more likely to use choice in their classroom or to have learned about using choice through the center. Due to this limitation, generalization of results to the population of teachers as a whole might be limited.

## **Implications and Directions for Future Research**

Despite the limitations of the current study, the results provide support for future research on student choice. This study provides information about the frequency with which teachers use different types of choice and the parameters under which they provide choice in classrooms, which sets the stage for further investigation. Future studies may be designed to evaluate the use of student choice and its impact on teacher and student behavior. A number of new questions related to the use of student choice have emerged including the following: How can we design student choice interventions to be straightforward and simple for teachers to implement? How can we provide teachers with the appropriate level of support to foster their use of choice? What type of professional development might help teachers to implement choice effectively and feasibly? Why do special education teachers rate choice as more effective and feasible than general education teachers?

These questions lend themselves to future observational studies that could be conducted. One might examine the relation between teachers' reported use of choice and the actual usage in the classroom. Another might examine

## **Conclusion**

The primary goal of the current study was to examine teachers' use of student choice and their perceptions surrounding this strategy. A secondary goal was to delve further into teachers' opinions about choice and to examine factors that might increase or decrease the use of this strategy. The results provide insight into current teachers' practice and opinions on student choice. Overall, findings suggest that teachers are using choice in their classrooms in a variety of different ways and generally rate choice as an effective and feasible intervention. As one teacher described, "Choice can be from, you know, as small as a pencil or pen to the type



of assignment they complete...I mean there's so many different aspects of student choice.” (15).  
Further research is still required to more deeply understand the landscape of student choice in classrooms and to determine the best ways to support teachers’ use of choice.

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## Appendix A

### Teacher Recruitment Email Script

Subject: Vanderbilt Study on Perceptions of Student Choice in the Classroom

Hello,

A research team in the Department of Special Education at Vanderbilt University is looking for teachers to participate in a study. The purpose of the study is to gather information about how Tennessee teachers support students in classrooms. Specifically, we're interested in learning more about teacher experiences providing student choice and perspectives related to using student choice.

Participation involves completing an online survey that will take approximately 10 minutes. Participants who complete the survey will be entered to win a \$100 gift card, which will be provided to 5 randomly selected participants in the survey.

Additionally, participants who complete the survey may choose to be considered for a one-on-one interview (conducted via Zoom) to gather further information about their use of student choice. This interview will be scheduled at a time convenient to the participant and will be no longer than 45 minutes. Participants chosen for the interview portion of the study are guaranteed to receive a separate \$50 gift card.

If you are a **teacher** that is interested in participating, please follow the link below to access the survey.

If you are an **administrator**, please feel free to forward this to teaching staff at your school who might be interested in participating.

<https://redcap.vanderbilt.edu/surveys/?s=WFNF3EA7AXJH3LNT>

If you have any further questions, please contact Eleanor Hancock ([eleanor.m.hancock@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:eleanor.m.hancock@vanderbilt.edu)) or Joseph Wehby ([joseph.wehby@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:joseph.wehby@vanderbilt.edu)).

Thank you for considering this opportunity!

## Appendix B

### Teacher Survey

Page 1

## Survey on Student Choice Interventions

Please complete all pages of the survey below.

Thank you!

---

Hello! Thanks for checking out our survey. We're so glad that you're here. We designed this survey to learn more about how Tennessee teachers support students in the classroom. By participating in this survey, you can use your experiences and perspectives in an important way to improve outcomes for students. This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. We will be giving away a \$100 gift card to five randomly selected participants who complete the survey. To be eligible to receive a gift card, you will need to provide your name and contact information at the end of the survey. This information will not be shared publicly in any way.

This survey is completely confidential. It will be impossible to identify individual professionals or schools when we talk or write about this research study. Participation in this survey is voluntary, and you may close out of the survey at any time. Completing this survey indicates your consent to participate in this study. Complete the survey all the way to the end to be eligible to enter the giveaway!

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Joseph Wehby, Ph.D., at joseph.wehby@vanderbilt.edu or at (615)322-8150. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, including questions, concerns, or complaints, or to offer input, you may contact the Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board Office at (615)322-2918 or toll-free at (866)244-8273. Thank you!

---

### Demographic Information

Are you currently employed as a teacher in the State of Tennessee?  Yes  No

Gender  Male  Female  Prefer to self-describe  Prefer not to say

If your gender was not listed and you prefer to self-describe, please self-describe. \_\_\_\_\_

Race/Ethnicity  Native American/Alaska Native  Asian  Black or African American  Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander  White (non-Hispanic)  Hispanic or Latino  Prefer to self describe  Prefer not to say

If race/ethnicity is not listed, please self-describe. \_\_\_\_\_

What is your highest degree obtained?  High School Diploma  Bachelor's Degree  Master's Degree  Doctoral Degree

What area(s) do you have teacher licensure and/or endorsement in? (Please select all that apply)  General Education  Special Education  ELL or ESL  Other

---

Please describe the other area of licensure and/or endorsement:

---



---

What is your current teaching role?

- General education teacher  
 Special education teacher  
 ELL or ESL teacher  
 Other

---

Please describe the other role you currently teach in.

---



---

Which best describes the school where you teach?

- Pre-K affiliated with an elementary school  
 Elementary school  
 Middle/junior high school  
 High school  
 Community-based classroom outside of the school for transition-age students  
 Not listed

---

If not listed, please describe the school where you teach.

---



---

What grade levels do you currently teach? (Please select all grade levels served)

- Pre-K  
 Kindergarten  
 1st Grade  
 2nd Grade  
 3rd Grade  
 4th Grade  
 5th Grade  
 6th Grade  
 7th Grade  
 8th Grade  
 9th Grade  
 10th Grade  
 11th Grade  
 12th Grade

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Please name the district in which you work:

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Which best describes the community in which your school is located?

- Rural  
 Suburban  
 Urban

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Please select the type(s) of students you support (select all that apply):

- Students without disabilities  
 Students with disabilities (receiving special education services)

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Please select the disability categories of the students you support (select all that apply):

- Students with emotional disturbance
- Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Students with developmental disabilities
- Students with intellectual disability
- Students with other health impairments (including ADD/ADHD)
- Students with learning disabilities
- Students with speech or language impairment
- Students with vision impairments, deafness, hearing impairments, or deaf-blindness
- Students with orthopedic impairments
- Students with traumatic brain injury
- Students with multiple disabilities
- Other

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Please specify other disability categories served:

\_\_\_\_\_

### Use of Choice in the Classroom

The next series of questions asks about your use of student choice as a strategy in your classroom. Broadly, student choice is a strategy in which you allow students to choose different options within your classroom. This could include providing choice to an individual student, small group, or whole class of students. This could also include pre-planned use of choice or providing choices as needed in the moment.

Do you ever provide students with a choice of the order in which they want to complete activities?  Yes  
 No

For example, we have activity A, B, and C and we let students choose the order in which they want to complete the three activities. Students must still complete all activities, but the order is chosen by the student.

Do you ever provide students with a choice of the activity that they want to complete?  Yes  
 No

For example, we give students the choice of activity A, B, and C and they choose one activity to complete. Students do not have to complete all activities, just the one that they select.

Do you ever provide students with a choice of how they want to complete an activity?  Yes  
 No

For example, this might include a choice of materials, choice of choice of peer partner, or choice of seating preference.

Do you ever provide students with a choice of the reinforcer (or reward) they want to earn upon completion of an activity?  Yes  
 No

Are there any other types of choice that you use in your classroom?  Yes  
 No

Please describe other types of choice you use in your classroom. \_\_\_\_\_

When providing student choice, which student grouping(s) do you use this strategy with? (please select all that apply)

Class-wide  
 Small group  
 Individual or one-on-one

In what capacity do you most often provide students with choice?  As a regularly pre-planned strategy  
 In the moment/as needed

Are you more likely to provide students with choice-making opportunities to support students' academic performance or their classroom behavior?  Academic performance  
 Classroom behavior

Has providing students with choice-making opportunities ever been associated with a student's individualized behavior intervention plan (BIP)?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Were you trained in your teacher preparation program to provide students with choices?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Where did you learn to provide students with choices? Please describe.	_____
Do you vary your use of choice based on the age of the students that you work with?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Please describe the age range of students with whom you are most likely to use this strategy.	_____
Do you vary your use of choice based on the ability level of the students you work with?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Which ability level do you use to vary your use of choice? (select all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Social ability <input type="checkbox"/> Academic ability <input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive ability
When considering a student's social ability, what ability level do you typically provide more choices?	<input type="radio"/> Higher social ability <input type="radio"/> Lower social ability
When considering a student's academic ability, what ability level do you typically provide more choices?	<input type="radio"/> Higher academic ability <input type="radio"/> Lower academic ability
When considering a student's cognitive ability, what ability level do you typically provide more choices?	<input type="radio"/> Higher cognitive ability <input type="radio"/> Lower cognitive ability
Do you vary your use of choice based on the content knowledge level of the students that you work with?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Which knowledge level of students do you typically provide more choices?	<input type="radio"/> Higher knowledge <input type="radio"/> Lower knowledge
Do you vary your use of choice based on the subject matter taught?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
During what subject(s) are you more likely to provide choice? Please describe.	_____

**Please rank the reasons to use choice in your classroom, from least important (1) to most important (6).**

	1 Least	2	3	4	5	6 Most
Increase student ownership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increase student empowerment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increase student control	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increase student interest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increase student motivation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increase student affect	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Please rank the areas that you feel choice improves student performance, from least (1) to most (5).**

	1 Least	2	3	4	5 Most
Engagement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effort	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cooperation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



**Please rank the benefits of using student choices, from least beneficial (1) to most beneficial (3).**

	1 Least	2	3 Most
Increases student processing skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increases student decision-making skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increases student self-regulation skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

Providing student choice is an effective strategy in my classroom.

Strongly Disagree  
 Disagree  
 Slightly Disagree  
 Neutral  
 Slightly Agree  
 Agree  
 Strongly Agree

To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

Providing student choice is a feasible strategy in my classroom.

Strongly Disagree  
 Disagree  
 Slightly Disagree  
 Neutral  
 Slightly Agree  
 Agree  
 Strongly Agree

**Survey Completion**

Thank you for completing this survey! As part of this research study, we are also conducting online interviews with a small group of survey participants. Interviews would occur through Zoom, at a time that works for you and your schedule! All participants who are selected for and complete an interview will receive a \$50 gift card that is separate from the giveaway of \$100 gift cards. To be eligible for an interview, please enter your name and contact information below. If you choose to enter your name and contact information here, we will link it to your survey responses to select individuals to participate in interviews. However, this information will not be shared publicly. All of your responses will be kept confidential. If you do not wish to be contacted to participate in an interview, you can select NO below.

Are you willing to be contacted about participating in a follow-up interview?

Yes  
 No

First and Last Name:  
 \*This is only if you are interested in the optional interview portion of the study

\_\_\_\_\_

Email Address:  
 \*This is only if you are interested in the optional interview portion of the study

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you so much for completing our survey! We appreciate your time and what you do for students every day! After you click submit, you will be taken to a different questionnaire where you can enter your name and contact information to be entered into a drawing to receive one of five \$100 gift cards. Please note, your contact information on this separate questionnaire will not be linked to your survey responses in any way.

## Appendix C

### Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

#### *Types of Choice Used*

*\*These questions will be personalized based on the participant's survey results. For example, if a teacher indicated that they do not use a certain type of choice, that type will not be discussed.*

- 1) On your survey, you indicated that you provide students with a choice of the order in which they want to complete activities.

*As a reminder, we call this type of choice "across-activity" choice because the student gets to choose which activity they want to complete. For example, we have activity A, B, and C and we let students choose the order in which they want to complete the three activities.*

*Students must still complete all activities, but the order is chosen by the student.*

- i) What does across-activity choice look like in your classroom?
- ii) What types of activities are you willing to let students choose the order in which they complete?
- iii) Does this type of choice apply to all students in the classroom, or do you provide choices to an individual student or small group of students?

- 2) On your survey, you indicated that you provide students with a choice of the activity that they want to complete.

*As a reminder, we call this type of choice "between activity" choice because the student gets to choose between different activities to be completed. For example, we give students the choice of activity A, B, and C and they choose one activity to complete. Students do not have to complete all activities, just the one that they select.*

- i) What does between activity choice look like in your classroom?
- ii) How do you provide these choices to students?
- iii) Are the activities provided somewhat equivalent?
- iv) Does this type of choice apply to all students in the classroom, or do you provide choices to an individual student or small group of students?

- 3) On your survey, you indicated that you provide students with a choice of how they want to complete an activity.

*As a reminder, we call this type of choice "within-activity", because within a single activity the student gets to choose how they want to complete the activity. This might include a choice of materials, choice of peer partner, or choice of seating preference.*

- i) When do you provide students with choices about how they complete an activity?
- ii) Are these choices explicit, or do students have some flexibility in the choices that they make?
- iii) Does this type of choice apply to all students in the classroom, or do you provide choices to an individual student or small group of students?

- 4) On your survey, you indicated that you provide students with a choice what type of reinforcer they want to earn upon completion of an activity.

*As a reminder, we call this type of choice "consequence choice", because the student has the ability to choose the consequence (or reinforcer) that they want to earn after completing an*

*activity.*

- i) When do you provide students with a choice of reinforcer they want to earn?
- ii) Are these choices explicit, or do students have some flexibility?
- iii) Does this type of choice apply to all students in the classroom, or do you provide choices to an individual student or small group of students?

### ***Background in using Choice***

- 1) How would you describe your overall philosophy on using choice in your classroom?
  - i) Are there certain types of choice you use more often?
  - ii) Are there certain students that you use choice with more often?
- 2) What makes choice an appealing intervention to use in your classroom?
  - i) What makes choice superior to other interventions you might use?
- 3) What makes choice an unappealing intervention to use in your classroom?
  - i) What makes choice inferior to other interventions you might use?
  - ii) When would you choose a different intervention over choice?
- 4) Do you provide specific instruction to students on how to make choices?
  - i) Do you ever find that students have difficulty making choices?
  - ii) Do you provide scaffolding before providing students with choices?
    - (1) What types of students might require more scaffolding or support in order to make choices?
- 5) In what ways did your training program (i.e., teacher prep program) prepare you to use choice in your classroom?
- 6) Do you pre-plan to use a choice intervention or do you provide choices “in-the-moment?”
  - i) When do you pre-plan to use choice?
  - ii) When do you use choice “in-the-moment”?

### ***Views on using choice in the classroom in the future:***

- 1) Do you think that using choice would be a socially valid intervention in your classroom?
  - i) For you as the teacher, do you think it would be socially valid?
  - ii) For your students, do you think it would be socially valid?
    - (a) Are there certain students that you might use this type of intervention with more frequently?
    - (b) What types of students would you not use this type of intervention with?
- 2) If you were going to use a choice intervention with a student in your classroom, what are some settings or times when you think this type of intervention would work?
- 3) What are some settings, subjects, or times when you think a choice intervention would not work well in your classroom?

- 4) How do you think we could improve or enhance choice interventions to make them more effective in classrooms?

***Wrap-Up***

- 1) Is there anything else that we didn't ask you about student choice that you would like to share?

## **Appendix D**

### **Reflection Guide**

#### **Post-Interview Reflection Notes**

Participant ID:

Interview Date:

Interviewer:

Interview Duration (min):

1. Identify key themes from the interview.
2. Describe the context of the interview. In what way(s) did this impact the quality of the interview?
3. Describe the affect of the person who was interviewed. In what ways did this change over the conversation?
4. Describe how the interview impacted you. Were things shared that surprised you and/or challenged your own experiences or expectations?
5. List any suggestions for future interviews or additional comments that may be important.
6. List any follow-up questions or topics you would like to address with this participant.

