

Teachers' Desk Reference: Practical Information for Pennsylvania's Teachers

Classroom Management

The daily responsibilities and duties of a teacher are numerous and challenging. By utilizing effective teaching principles and classroom management strategies when designing and delivering instruction, a large number of supervision problems can be prevented. Below is a list of practical classroom strategies, tips, and basic procedures that teachers can use to make favorable modifications in their students' behavior.

Behavior

Behavior is defined as anything a child does, good or bad...anything! In education, we often use character traits when defining a student's behavior. A behavior should be defined so that it is very specific, making it observable and measurable. Below are examples of typical character traits that have been rewritten as observable and measurable behaviors.

| Character Trait | Behavior |
|-----------------------|---|
| Is cooperative | Waits in line for a turn to shoot baskets |
| Works hard | Completes homework on time |
| Bullies others | Pushes children to the ground |
| Shows low self-esteem | Says, "I'm stupid," and hits head |

Behavioral Events

Each behavioral event, referred to as a three-term contingency, is made up of three parts:

- Antecedent - anything that happens before a behavior
- Behavior - any observable and measurable act of an individual
- Consequence - anything that happens after a behavior

Antecedent \implies Behavior \implies Consequence

| Antecedent | Behavior | Consequence |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| Teacher asks a question. | Student answers correctly. | Teacher praises student for correct answer. |
| Teacher distributes test papers. | Student yells, "I'm not doing this stupid test!" | Teacher sends student to the principal. |
| Emma gives Juan a marker. | Juan says, "Thank you." | Emma smiles at Juan. |
| The bell for passing classes rings. | Tyler stays in his seat. | Tyler is late for the next class. |

Consequences

Consequences are what happen when rules are broken or followed. Students do things because they know other things will follow. Depending upon the type of consequence that follows, students will produce some behaviors and avoid or escape other behaviors. Things to consider:

- Consequences that give rewards increase a behavior (reinforcement).
- Consequences that give punishments decrease a behavior (punishment).
- Consequences that give neither rewards nor punishments may extinguish a behavior.

Be careful when applying consequences to misbehavior intending to punish (decrease the future rate of) that behavior. These are “intended punishers.” The only way to determine if the consequences are actually punishers is to measure the future rate of the behavior. If the behavior decreases, then the consequence was a punishment. However, if the behavior maintains or increases, then the “intended punisher” consequence must have been a reinforcement.

The same principle works for “intended reinforcers.” A teacher may apply a consequence to a desirable behavior intending to reinforce (maintain or increase) that behavior, but the only way to determine if that consequence was a reinforcer is to measure the future rate of the behavior. If the behavior maintains or increases, then the consequence was reinforcement. However, if the behavior decreases, then the “intended reinforcer” may actually have been a punishment.

Reinforcement

Tips for using reinforcement:

- You can't predict whether something will be a reinforcer for a behavior until you try it and observe its effect on the behavior.
- What may be a reinforcer for one student may not be reinforcing to other students.
- To be effective, a reinforcer must occur during or immediately following the behavior to be strengthened.
- To strengthen a new behavior, reinforce it frequently.
- Be aware that teacher comments like, “That’s inappropriate” or “Stop that” may actually strengthen a negative behavior.

Selecting Potential Reinforcers

- Consider the age, interests, and preferences of the student whose behaviors you would like to strengthen.
- List potential reinforcers after considering the student’s age, interests, and preferences.
- Consider the behavior you would like to strengthen through reinforcement to be sure the reinforcer is strong enough to do the job.
- Ask the student for input.

| Types of Reinforcers | Examples |
|----------------------|---|
| Material Reinforcers | Toys, food, pencils, or other tangible items |
| Activity Reinforcers | Extra recess, extra classroom jobs, kickball game, special assembly, or field trip |
| Social Reinforcers | Smile, verbal praise, applause, saying “thank you” or other ways to give attention, approval, or recognition |
| Token Reinforcers | Any tangible item that can be exchanged for material, activity, or social reinforcers at a later time <i>A token/coupon representing money is often used in schools where students earn “tokens” for following rules or exhibiting expected behaviors. The student can spend the earned tokens at the school store or to pay for entrance to a dance, for example.</i> |

Classroom Reinforcers (Group and Individual)

| | Social | Activity | Tangible/Edible | |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| Elementary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive comments, such as: "Good work," "Thanks for being on time," "I like the way you waited," "Wonderful!" • Pat on the back • Complimentary note home to parents • Outstanding students list • High five • Display of work • Applause from classmates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have extra art time • Feed class pets • Sit next to classmate of choice • Have a party • Have extra time on computer • Play classroom game • Have extra gym time • Watch a video • Eat lunch with teacher • Be first in line • Play with puzzles • Peer tutor • Watch a film or TV • Have leisure reading • Build a model • Listen to radio • Play with clay • Earn classroom jobs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pencils • Pens • Ribbons • Stickers • Stars • Balloons • Treasure chest of items • Crayons • Erasers • Puzzles • Books • Coloring books • Magic markers • Colored chalk • Comic books • Silly putty • Yo Yo | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit • Popcorn • Cereal • Nuts • Pretzels • Raisins • Juice |
| Junior/ Senior High School | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smiles • Handshakes • Victory sign • Thumbs up • Pat on back • Complimentary phone call to student or parents • Private compliment • Honor roll • Complimentary note • Increase course grade | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have extra free time • Play checkers, chess, or card game • Listen to private radio or watch a video • Have classroom party • Have day with no homework • Go on a field trip • Have extra gym time • Have extra lunch time • Work on computer • Teach another student • Have a class outside • Talk to another student | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posters • Sports equipment • Music tapes • Magazines • Paperback book • Ticket to show • Demo CD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pizza • Dried fruit • Nuts • Pretzels • Chips • Juice • Soft Drinks |

Classroom Expectations

- Limit the number of expectations; too many expectations are difficult for students to remember and for teachers to enforce.
- Include expectations that can be generalized throughout the classroom (avoid identifying procedures as rules).
- Expectations should be defined. Students and teachers may have very different definitions of "respectful." Definition of the expectation should tell the students exactly what behavior is expected of students (e.g., "Raise your hand and wait to be called on before speaking").
- As you teach expectations and as you reinforce them later, you may want to connect expectations to the values of respect, responsibility, etc., but the expectation should be stated in a concrete way.

- Expectations should state what you want the students to do, not what you do not want them to do. When expectations are stated as “Do not ...,” students may not be able to identify what the appropriate behavior is, only the inappropriate behavior.
- Explicitly teach the behaviors necessary to follow expectations. Teach expectations as explicitly as you teach academic concepts; using the design of Modeling–Guided Practice–Independent Practice. Design complete lesson plans for each expectation and instruct the students in how to follow the expectation. Provide practice and review following the initial lesson.
- Reinforce expectations. In addition to punishing consequences for when students do not follow expectations, teachers must provide reinforcing consequences for when students do meet expectations. Reinforcers may be tangible/edible, social, or activity-based.

Routines

Teaching students how to perform basic school skills prevents behavior problems and saves instructional time. Research shows that effective and ineffective teachers respond to misbehaviors in the same ways. The main difference between effective and ineffective teachers is that effective teachers do much more to prevent problems.

An effective teacher will:

- Teach students how to work quietly.
- Give specific steps for how to do the work.

- Provide a time limit before asking students to do the work by actively instructing students through the classroom routine.
- Guide students to perform the routine accurately.
- Provide feedback on how the students are performing.

Once the students learn what to do and when to do it, the teacher can easily signal them to begin a routine and monitor them as they work through the routine.

(Adapted from: Witt, LaFleur, Naquin, & Gilbertson, Teaching Effective Classroom Routines, 1999.)

Example Routines

- Entering the classroom - Transitioning from class to class/subject to subject
- Requesting assistance - Restroom breaks
- Sharpening pencils - Lining up
- Recording homework assignments - Walking through hallway
- Organizing desks/lockers/work space/etc. - Free time/activity time behavior
- Making up missed work - Cafeteria routines
- Breaking into small learning groups - Routines for helping substitute teacher
- Taking attendance - Passing in papers

Example Expectations (provided by Bill Jensen)*

| Type of Expectation | Example |
|----------------------------|---|
| A Compliance Rule | Follow teacher directions the first time the teacher says them. |
| A Talking Rule | Raise your hand and wait to be called on before speaking during instructional time. |
| A Preparation Rule | Have materials ready for class. |
| An In-Class Behavior Rule | Keep hands and feet to yourself. |
| An On-Time Rule | Be in class and prepared when the bell rings. |
| A Transition Behavior Rule | Walk down the hall with hands and feet to yourself. |

* *The Tough Kid New Teacher Kit: Practical Classroom Management & Survival Strategies for the New Teacher.* Authors: Ginger Rhodes, William Jensen, and Daniel Morgan. Sopris West Educational Services, 4093 Specialty Place, Longmont, CO 80504.

Scheduling

The daily schedule can have a great effect on a school's climate. At the elementary level, discipline problems can result from the way small-group instruction is scheduled. Many teachers divide their students for reading and mathematics groups. These small groups meet separately with the teacher while other students complete worksheets or work in learning centers. All too often, teachers must interrupt small-group instruction to address discipline problems. In middle and high schools, traditional schedules also create situations that may contribute to the number of discipline problems. Below are a few ideas to cut down on possible management issues that occur due to scheduling.

- Post a daily schedule and discuss any changes each morning. This allows students to see what is planned for the day.
- Start the day with a highly reinforcing activity. Students will be more motivated to arrive at school on time if the first activity is one that is reinforcing to them.
- Alternate activities throughout the day.
 - ◇ Provide highly preferred, nonpreferred, highly preferred, nonpreferred, highly preferred, nonpreferred, etc., activities.
 - ◇ Students will always either be involved in a highly preferred activity or be working toward a highly preferred activity.
 - ◇ This avoids long strings of unmotivating activities that are more likely to elicit problem behaviors.
- Plan and teach carefully for transitions.
- Provide varying learning time since some students need more time to learn/work than others.
- Schedule recess time next to another class change such as lunch or special classes to reduce time lost to movement.

Environment

- Give student a seat up front, close to the teacher.
- Give student extra work space.
- Seat student away from distractions (e.g., the door, noisy heaters/air conditioning units, high-traffic areas).
- Reduce noise level during tasks requiring concentration.
- Seat student among well-focused students.
- Use study carrels or privacy boards during seatwork and test-taking.
- Display models of completed projects for student reference.

Organization

- Write assignments on board, as well as present orally.
- Assist student with recording of assignments (student buddy, aide, or teacher).
- Clarify assignments to students at end of class/day.
- Provide students with handouts that are already three-hole punched.
- Provide assistance with organizing materials.
- Color-code books, notebooks, and/or materials.
- Tape "Things to Do" list to student's desk.
- Break down long assignments into smaller chunks/increments.
- Limit amount of materials/clutter on student's desk.

To help you determine if you are implementing effective instructional practices in your classroom, complete the *Instructional Practices for an Effective Classroom* checklist below.

Read each item on the checklist and consider the degree to which you implement it in your classroom. For each item, circle the number that corresponds to your overall implementation of that item.

- 1 = Not observed: You do not implement this item in your classroom.
- 2 = Inconsistent: You implement this item sometimes, with some content areas or students.
- 3 = Established: You implement this item consistently across all areas of the curriculum and across students.

Add the numbers circled in each column and place the sum in the box at the bottom of the column. Add the sums of the three columns to calculate your total points.

Instructional Practices for an Effective Classroom

| Not Observed | Inconsistent | Established | Criteria |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | Classroom rules are clearly displayed. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | A system is in place for praising and acknowledging students' academic and behavioral accomplishments. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | Routines are clearly defined and posted in the classroom. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | A process is in place for quick recording of both academic and behavioral data. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | Classroom organization and structure allow for smooth transitions between groups, classes, and activities. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | Procedures are in place for dealing with severe/dangerous behaviors. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | Instruction is explicit, interesting, varied, age appropriate, and individually appropriate. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | The teacher ensures that prerequisite skills are mastered before continuing. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | The teacher assures predictability and provides transitional warnings. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | Instruction is provided in a variety of formats: one-to-one, small group, and large group. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | The pacing of instruction maintains student attention. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | Instructional materials are designed to meet varying student performance levels. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | Time is provided for corrective feedback and error correction. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | Independent activities are designed to provide instructionally relevant practice. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | A process is in place to assess the effectiveness of instruction. |
| | | | TOTAL POINTS |

Checklist adapted from Darch, C. B. and Kameenui, E. J. (2004). Instructional Classroom Management. Canada: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Interpreting Results

- 36-45 points is indicative of a classroom with strong evidence of strategies characteristic of effective classrooms
- 22-35 points is indicative of a classroom moving toward effective instructional practices
- 21 or fewer points is indicative of a classroom that requires more emphasis on effective instructional practices

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Josh Shapiro, Governor

