

Classroom Strategies

Behavior Recommendations and Strategies

RECOMMENDATION 2

Teach skills by providing examples, practice, and feedback.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Teach and reinforce new skills to increase appropriate behavior and preserve a positive classroom climate.

This document provides a summary of Recommendations from the WWC practice guide *Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom* (Epstein et al., 2008), *Supporting and Responding to Students' Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Needs: Evidence-Based Practices for Educators* (Center on PBIS, 2025), and *Supporting and Responding to Behavior: Evidence-Based Classroom Strategies for Teachers* (Center on PBIS, 2015).

Content Area	Level of Evidence	Grades
Behavior	 Strong	K 1 st 2 nd 3 rd 4 th 5 th

RECOMMENDATION 2

Teach skills by providing examples, practice, and feedback.

Positive student behavior is associated with consistent, preventative classroom management and engaging instruction. Teachers can reduce inappropriate behavior by implementing clearly defined classroom rules and differentiated instructional strategies. In doing so, teachers may alter the factors that trigger the problematic behavior. As needs arise, it is recommended that teachers reinforce or reteach classroom expectations, adapt the classroom environment, and/or adjust instruction to encourage engagement.

Classroom management practices that have been found to reduce problematic behavior include:

- Establishing a positive and organized environment by teaching procedures and reinforcing rules.
- Reinforcing appropriate behavior.
- Presenting new materials through modeling and practice.
- Matching instructional materials, activities, and pace to the range of student abilities.
- Encouraging peer collaboration as an instructional strategy.

Strategies

1. Revisit, re-practice, and reinforce classroom behavioral expectations.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Explicitly teach behaviors, expectations, procedures, and routines and revisit these regularly.
- Include visual reminders of the expectations, especially for younger students.
- Implement a contingency system (rewards, tokens, etc.), individual or team-based, for motivation.

If initially using artificial rewards, gradually shift to more natural consequences such as increased time for a preferred activity. Behavioral expectations and procedures need to be explicitly taught and practiced, not only at the beginning of the school year, but also revisited throughout. Students benefit from seeing visual examples of what to do in specific settings and situations in the classroom.

Teachers should plan to revisit the expectations at key times (following breaks or disruptions) and on an as-needed basis. In addition to explicit teaching and revisiting, expectations should be reinforced daily through modeling and building/maintaining positive relationships.

Example

Since returning from winter break, Mr. Boyle's fifth-grade students have become increasingly distracted and off-task during independent work time. Mr. Boyle decides to revisit and reteach the expectations when working independently, including posting a visual reminder on a poster in the classroom. Following the reteaching, Mr. Boyle intentionally increases his recognition and praise for students adhering to the expectations. Additionally, table points (which earn a group of students the opportunity for lunch in the classroom and to choose their next desk location) are awarded more frequently in the days immediately following the reteaching.

2. Modify the classroom environment to encourage instructional momentum.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Review lesson plans and the daily agenda to consider pacing, rigor, student choice, and transitions.
- Reconsider the arrangement of the classroom, specifically the ease of movement and access to instructional materials.

To ensure the classroom environment is not contributing to unwanted behavior, the teacher should examine the structure of lessons as well as the physical layout of the classroom. It is recommended that teachers ask themselves a series of questions to reflect on how their pacing, level of rigor, learning activities, and transition times may be impacting student behaviors.

Questions to Reflect on the Structure of Lessons:

- Do I schedule the most academically demanding activities during the times of day when most students' engagement is high?
- Is my teaching strategy appropriate for the lesson?
- Is the length and pacing of my lesson suited to my students' developmental abilities?
- Do I offer my students choices in how they participate in learning activities?
- Do I manage transitions quickly and efficiently?

In addition to these reflective questions, teachers should also review the seating arrangements in the classroom and how students access the materials they need during instruction. The physical layout of a classroom may create congestion or blind spots in the room. These high-traffic or unsupervised areas can contribute to off-task behavior. Teachers should define specific places in the room for collecting instructional materials (shelves, bins, baskets, etc.).

In some classrooms, it may also be helpful to define the use of the seating areas (i.e., carpet area for whole-class time, small table for group time). Assigned seating may also be needed to allow the teacher to control the proximity of students who need the greatest amount of support.

Example

After noticing that her seventh-grade Civics students consistently argued and became agitated when getting started with independent work, Mrs. Roy examined her classroom environment. She found that the problematic behavior always began at the time when students were collecting textbooks from the shelf to use as they worked independently. Mrs. Roy realized that the seventh-grade textbooks were stored on a bottom shelf in an area of the classroom that also had several desks. When students needed textbooks, a mass of students gathered in the small space, which inevitably led to bickering and irritation. Mrs. Roy developed a new system for the textbooks. On days when students would need the books, she would ask the first three students in the room to place a textbook on each desk as the others entered the room. At the end of the class, she would ask a few students to do the same in returning the books. This kept the area clear of congestion and allowed for more efficient transitions.

3. Adapt or vary instructional strategies to increase opportunities for academic success and engagement.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Provide instruction at a brisk pace, supported by modeling and guided practice with new material.
- Increase the opportunities for students to respond to questions successfully.
- Differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students by varying the materials, processes, and assessment strategies.
- Incorporate peer tutoring into instructional practices and routines in the classroom.

If challenging behaviors consistently arise during academic activities, teachers should vary their instructional pace and questioning techniques, and differentiate their practices to increase engagement and accommodate learner needs. Begin by identifying the specific frustration or challenge for the student(s) and what conditions may prompt or reinforce that behavior. If students have too much time between tasks or are rushed to complete a task, they may respond with behaviors to fill the idle time or with frustration. Teachers should adjust the pace of their instruction and questioning to provide frequent opportunities for students to respond correctly to build confidence and engagement.

Materials and processes used during instruction should be differentiated for students to access the content in a variety of ways. This can include the use of novels, magazines, newspapers, videos, and images to share content. Teachers can also vary the grouping structures within a lesson as well as offer several ways for students to demonstrate their understanding. Peer tutoring is also an effective strategy to improve engagement in the classroom. If implemented with clear expectations and structures, peer tutoring can deepen academic understanding and foster cooperative work habits.

Example

During the writing block in her fourth-grade classroom, Ms. Smith noticed several students consistently off-task and easily frustrated with peers. The expectation was that all students would work independently on their writing assignments as Ms. Smith provided individual support. However, she soon realized that this task was challenging to many students, and without having direct support from her, they were unsure of what to do on their own. Ms. Smith decided to implement a new structure during the writing block. Students were assigned writing partners (peer tutors) and explicitly taught how to help one another with revising and editing. Once students had access to and learned how to use revising and editing tools, Ms. Smith allowed the writing partners to meet daily during writing time as needed. The students thrived on choice, so the option to meet and receive feedback from a peer was motivating and provided enough support to keep students progressing on their assignments until Ms. Smith could meet with them.

4. Learn about your students and establish positive connections among students, families, and educators.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Introduce yourself to families.
- Learn more about students through surveys.
- Help students learn about themselves and each other.
- Maintain open communication with families.

Collaboration between teachers and families, particularly culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse families, can have positive outcomes. Through positive relationships, open communication, and shared decision making, equity is promoted, and any challenges to engaging families in their child's learning experiences can be addressed. It is important to engage students and families in authentic ways and to validate and affirm their histories and cultural identities on a regular basis.

Example

At the beginning of the school year, Ms. Hernandez introduces herself to her students and shares a glimpse of herself and her life inside and outside the classroom. She also has students share about themselves by engaging them in a get-to-know-me activity in which they draw themselves and people, hobbies, and cultural attributes that are important to them. After class, Ms. Hernandez sends students home with a link and QR code families can access in which she introduces herself and welcomes families. She sets the stage for a year of open communication, collaboration, and unified decision making. Throughout the year, Ms. Hernandez continues to engage students in activities that validate and affirm their histories and cultures and that help students get to know themselves and their peers as whole individuals. Students, families, and members of the community receive frequent surveys from the teacher focused on learning preferences, meeting their needs, and getting to know each other.

Ms. Hernandez provides an open line of communication between her, her students, and the community throughout the year by establishing regular opportunities for connection, including flexible conference hours, regular meeting opportunities, cultural celebrations, varied communication platforms, etc.

5. Consider your students' learning history when selecting relevant curriculum, planning effective instruction, and considering differentiation.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Consider students' interests and backgrounds while planning for instruction.
- Teach and celebrate diversity.
- Differentiate instruction based on your students' needs and preferences.

A positive school culture affirms and validates students' identities, cultures, and histories. It is essential to engage in technical changes (practices or instruction) and adaptive changes (values, beliefs, and mindsets) as necessary to achieve equitable outcomes for all students. Classroom curriculum, instructional materials, and activities should be relevant and celebrate the diversity of students and their families through awareness of their race/ethnicity, family composition, languages, cultural traditions, genders, physical strengths and needs, SES, and local history. Differentiating instruction based on students' varied needs is also an essential element of an effective learning environment where all students' interests and backgrounds are acknowledged.

Example

As Mr. Tovar transitions from science to math, he plays part of a song to signal to his students that it is time to clean up and begin preparing for the next lesson. Every week, Mr. Tovar alternates the song he uses during transitions from a collection of student-selected, age-appropriate songs. Mr. Tovar begins the math lesson as part of a unit on fractions by asking students to take out the recipe he asked them to bring to class today.

Each student takes out a recipe they were asked to write over the weekend with the help of their families or caregivers that includes at least three fractions and a step-by-step guide for preparing a traditional cultural dish. Students are asked to share the recipe with their shoulder partner and, together, identify the three fractions and discuss whether the dish is familiar to them or not. As a whole group, Mr. Tovar asks students to share the name of their dish as he writes it on the whiteboard, affirming and validating the diverse cultural backgrounds that make up the class. He continues with the lesson by asking students to write down their fractions on a white sheet of paper, as they will be creating equivalent fractions. Mr. Tovar pre-planned differentiated tasks based on the academic and cultural backgrounds of students and grouped them accordingly. He asks students to create a poster in which they write down their fractions, draw a visual that represents their fraction, and select whether they want to record a video, create a song, or write a poem on creating equivalent fractions and where they see them in their daily lives.

6. Greet and connect with each student and create opportunities to foster positive relationships among students, educators, and families.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Greet and welcome each student as they enter the classroom.
- Include opportunities for peer-to-peer interactions and connections.
- Create a classroom environment that incorporates students' ideas and preferences or allows students to co-design the space.

Teachers can foster positive relationships with students and families through simple, yet intentional actions. Welcoming each student by name and casually socializing as they enter the classroom helps establish a positive tone for the day or class period and makes students feel valued and recognized. This interaction can improve student engagement and create a sense of belonging. Teachers can support positive interactions between students by intentionally planning time for students to work in partners or groups and strategically using whole class discussions to build connections and share perspectives. Another opportunity for teachers to connect with students and families is through the classroom design. The classroom space should represent the students who spend time in it. Teachers should allow students to share their ideas about the learning environment (i.e., the layout of the furniture, the posters on the walls, and the placement of tools). Incorporating students in the design of the classroom promotes student engagement and ownership.

Example

Elementary — Each morning, Ms. Shek greets her first-grade students at the classroom door as they enter school for the day. She is sure to individually acknowledge and welcome each student, often asking a question about their family or an activity they are in outside of school. Students know the routine of entering the classroom and stopping by the carpet area before heading to their seats. Ms. Shek has a daily question posted on the easel.

The question is usually an opinion, not an academic question, but may be connected to the content the students are studying. Each student writes their name and response on the chart paper and then heads to their seat. When Ms. Shek is ready to begin the morning meeting, she gathers the students together on the carpet near the easel and provides time for students to share their ideas about the prompt. This routine allows students to share something about themselves, hear from one another, and practice social skills as they interact. The students make connections with peers and their teacher.

Secondary — Mr. Stevens stands in the hallway at his classroom door to greet each of his students as they enter his ninth-grade science course. Although he is short on time between classes, he does this consistently, so it has become routine for his students. As students filter in, Mr. Stevens has the opportunity to briefly check in with each one through a greeting and frequently a handshake the class created in the first week of school (the choice is the student's). This brief interaction provides Mr. Stevens with a pulse on the current attitudes and needs of his students. As short as this practice is, it is enough to help Mr. Stevens provide the energy and choices his students may need that day to engage with the content of the course.

7. Provide reminders or prompts to encourage skill use and actively monitor and supervise (move, scan, and interact) students' use of social, emotional, behavioral, and academic skills.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Remind students, through both verbal and non-verbal interactions, about expected social-emotional-behavioral skills needed during the lesson/work time.
- Teach, model, and practice techniques and skills to self-manage daily activities.
- Review assignment guidelines and criteria before students begin working and monitor students' work to adjust instruction as needed.
- Actively monitor (move, scan, listen, prompt) during student work time and provide feedback on contextually appropriate social-emotional-behavioral skills.

Appropriate social-emotional-behavioral skills need to be taught, practiced, and monitored just as academic skills. Teachers should begin by clearly communicating expectations for behavior and social interactions, using both verbal cues and nonverbal signals to reinforce these guidelines. Before independent work begins, teachers review assignment criteria to ensure clarity, and they continue to monitor progress, adapting their instruction as needed. Throughout work periods, teachers actively monitor by moving around the classroom, observing student behavior, listening to discussions, and offering prompts. This active monitoring allows them to provide timely feedback on both academic progress and the appropriate use of social-emotional skills in context. These strategies create a structured, supportive learning environment that promotes both academic success and social skill development.

Example

Ms. Johnson introduces a group project on short story writing to her eighth-grade ELA class. She displays the project guidelines on the board and reviews them aloud. She emphasizes respectful communication within groups and time management and shows examples of well-organized work to set clear expectations. As students begin working in their groups, Ms. Johnson moves around the room listening to group interactions and pausing to prompt or remind groups of specific skills such as listening to all ideas, engaging all group members, and keeping one another on task. When she notices that several groups are struggling to come to a consensus with ideas and arguing more than writing, she pauses the whole class and gathers them together for a reminder about collaborative problem-solving techniques they have previously practiced. After this reminder, Ms. Johnson sends the students back into their groups to continue working.

Potential Roadblocks



I just don't have time to rethink my classroom practices.

Suggested Approach. It is recommended that teachers try one strategic change at a time. This helps the teacher feel less overwhelmed by the time it may take and it also ensures that teachers can identify specifically what is working and what is not. After implementing one change in one setting, teachers can initiate an additional adaptation to their practice or expand the implemented change to an additional setting. By trying one change at a time, students are also more likely to adapt efficiently to the new routines.



Making changes now to my schedule or classroom routines will just make things worse.

Suggested Approach. Although changes in routines can sometimes be disruptive, if done with purpose and intentionality, such changes can offer improved engagement and instruction. Teachers can prepare students for changes in routines by discussing the challenges and the reason for the new routine. Teachers can set clear expectations for the new routines and then provide time for students to repeatedly practice meeting those expectations.



Teachers may be hesitant to contact and connect with families.

Suggested Approach. Teachers can proactively interact with families by prioritizing authentic connections over delivering a message. This means rather than waiting for a challenge or concern that the teacher feels is necessary to communicate, the teacher can instead reach out to families to learn more about them or share positive updates. Families will have different preferences in how they communicate with teachers, so it is important to share information in multiple formats and ask families about their delivery preferences for information regarding their individual student.



Teachers may inadvertently create an exclusive learning environment.

Suggested Approach. To avoid creating a classroom environment that feels exclusive to some students, teachers can use classroom materials, activities, and content that represents the experiences of multiple groups. Such resources will create opportunities for teachers and students to celebrate diversity and embrace multiple perspectives.



Teachers may unintentionally diminish student engagement.

Suggested Approach. Teachers often think about how to make their instruction engaging, yet sometimes it is the learning environment that may impact engagement. To ensure the classroom encourages participation and collaboration, teachers can leverage opportunities to foster joy and student interactions. Teachers can be attentive to students as they enter the classroom rather than focusing on administrative tasks, such as checking email or grading papers. Teachers should also consider how the design of the classroom reflects the preferences of the students, not just those of the teacher.



Teachers have little time to provide behavior reminders after correcting a student(s).

Suggested Approach. In the hurried pace of the classroom, teachers often feel pressed for time and, therefore, want to move students from one activity to the next quickly. Teachers can build and increase student efficiency within activities by spending a few moments before the lesson providing behavior reminders. Teachers can plan these reminders into their lesson plans to ensure the topic does not get skipped in an effort to move the class quickly.

Content Area	Level of Evidence	Grades
Behavior	 Strong	K 1 st 2 nd 3 rd 4 th 5 th

RECOMMENDATION 3

Teach and reinforce new skills to increase appropriate behavior and preserve a positive classroom climate.

Reducing problem behavior in the classroom can be achieved by teaching students socially and behaviorally appropriate skills. When students know how, when, and where to use the new skills, students' attention will be focused on these new skills rather than on disruptive or aggressive behaviors. Teaching, modeling, and reinforcing new appropriate behaviors and skills can lead to a positive classroom climate and academic engagement.

Strategies

1. Identify where the student needs explicit instruction for appropriate behavior.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Assess whether the students can demonstrate appropriate, desired behavior in other contexts or situations.
- Initiate a self-monitoring strategy for the student(s).

Teachers often assume students have the skills and knowledge to exhibit a particular positive behavior, yet this is not always the case. It is, therefore, important to assess whether the student has the prerequisite skills to engage in appropriate behavior by observing if the student is successful at the desired positive behavior in different contexts, such as with peers. Self-monitoring is another way to assess a student's ability to perform academic or social skills effectively.

Example

Ms. Lopez has asked students to read a book quietly for 15 minutes. She notices Tom is distracted, not reading, and trying to get his peers' attention. Ms. Lopez addresses the behavior and decides to observe Tom in different contexts to see if he can engage in activities independently. She also asks Tom to assess his own social and academic behaviors by keeping a checklist of questions for him to answer – Did I get started on time? Am I following directions? Am I working quietly on my assignment? Did I ask for help the right way? Did I turn in my completed work? Tom's self-monitoring and Ms. Lopez' assessment will allow her to see to what extent Tom can successfully meet the expectations during silent reading time.

2. Teach skills by providing examples, practice, and feedback.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Explicitly teach students new skills that are appropriate but bring similar outcomes to what the student is seeking.
- Use instructional strategies to help students apply the new behavioral skill effectively.

Teachers can help students acquire new skills to behave appropriately and in socially acceptable ways by teaching them when and how to:

- gain the teacher's attention,
- work in group settings,
- self-manage social behavior, and
- develop emotional awareness, responsibility, and self-regulation.

To teach these behavioral skills, teachers should use instructional strategies like those used when effectively teaching academic skills. These may include:

- explaining the appropriate behavior,
- breaking down the skill,
- modeling the skill,
- offering opportunities for guided and independent practice,
- cueing the student to use the skill,
- providing feedback,
- scaffolding the skill, and
- reinforcing the desired skill and behavior.

Example

While returning their devices from the computer cart, students were disorderly as they waited for their turn. Even though the teacher reminded them of behavioral expectations, they continued expressing frustration as they waited. Following this task, the teacher explained why turn-taking is important by providing several examples of the benefits of this practice. Students shared their own examples of times when turn-taking was helpful. The teacher discussed appropriate ways to ask for a turn and how to wait patiently and engage in other activities in the meantime. To practice positive behavior, students role-played different ways to politely ask for a turn and wait patiently. Through positive reinforcement, the teacher continued to prompt students to engage in this practice for the next month.

3. Manage consequences so that reinforcers are provided for appropriate behavior and withheld for inappropriate behavior.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Increase the frequency of recognition and praise for appropriate behavior.
- Monitor the amount and consistency of praise.
- Try to make inappropriate behaviors ineffective for the student by systematically withholding or preventing access to reinforcing consequences.
- Maintain a positive and problem-solving approach.

Positive relationships between teachers and students lead to an increase in students' social skills, emotional regulation, motivation, engagement, and abidance to classroom expectations. Recognizing positive student behavior is one way to foster such positive interactions. Students' academic and behavioral outcomes can improve when positive statements by teachers exceed corrective statements. It is important for teachers to monitor the frequency of acknowledgment of appropriate behaviors and follow these guidelines if using rewards:

- use small rewards,
- give rewards immediately after the positive behavior,
- reward the behavior, not the student, and
- use varied rewards and be mindful that they are reinforcing students' behavior.

Preventing reinforcing consequences when students misbehave will make the problem behaviors ineffective for the student. When misbehavior is serious, however, teachers should respond promptly with appropriate consequences. A positive and problem-solving approach is recommended. To do so:

- provide instructions in a calm voice,
- provide positive options and a time frame to respond,
- address disengaged students promptly, fairly, and privately,
- use the misbehavior as a teachable moment, and
- align the severity of the consequence with the behavior.

Example

Due to inappropriate language use on the playground, Hector received discipline referrals. Hector's teacher observed his behavior and decided to help him by reinforcing appropriate behavior and building a closer relationship with him. He also helped him acquire social skills and self-control, as his misbehavior was a result of these deficiencies.

Classmates were asked to ignore his inappropriate behavior and praise his positive behavior. Hector then began monitoring his own behavior and checked in with his teacher about his progress. When improvements were noticed inside and outside of the classroom, Hector's teacher sent a note home about his accomplishments.

4. Check In/Check Out.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Adult mentors meet with students each morning to encourage them, review the previous day's performance, remind students of behavioral goals, and provide daily progress reports (DPR).
- Students give the DPR to the teacher at the start of each day/period. At the end of each day/period, the teacher provides feedback and a rating using DPRs.
- Students meet with their mentor at the end of the day to determine if the daily goals were met and to receive reinforcement.
- Students take DPRs home to their families for acknowledgment and signatures.

The Check In/Check Out (CICO) intervention, also known as Behavioral Education Program (BEP), is for students at risk of developing severe behavioral problems. With the support of an adult mentor and teachers, students set and review goals daily to help manage and improve their behavior. Through frequent check-ins, students receive constant feedback and reinforcement to encourage positive behavior and self-reflection. This strategy has proven to be efficient, practical, and effective for setting expectations and following through with them.

Example

Before school starts, Samantha meets with her mentor, Mr. Rios, who greets her joyfully. Mr. Rios asks Samantha to share how her day went yesterday. Samantha shares that it went well and that she met her behavioral goals for the day. They then review her behavioral goals for today, which are focused on maintaining those positive behaviors and avoiding negative behaviors she demonstrated previously. Mr. Rios encourages Samantha by telling her she is doing a great job and to continue being in charge of her behavior. Samantha goes to her first-period class and hands her DPRs to Ms. Salas. At the end of class, they meet, and Ms. Salas tells Samantha she did well but to remember to always raise her hand during whole group activities to give everyone an equal opportunity to share their thoughts. Ms. Salas rates her behavior using the DPRs.

Samantha follows the same process in all her classes by handing her DPRs to her teachers and meeting at the end of class to receive feedback and ratings. At the end of the day, Samantha visits Mr. Rios for a few minutes to receive reinforcement and to discuss if the daily point goals were met. Samantha is excited to hear she met her goals even though there is room for improvement. She takes home a copy of her DPRs, shares the news with her parents, and asks them to sign it.

5. Check, Connect, and Expect.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- A trained coach provides support for 20–25 students each morning for a few minutes to review daily goals and give them their daily progress report (DPR) with clearly defined behavioral expectations.
- Each teacher provides a rating for each expectation on the DPR.
- Students meet with the coach at the end of the day to review their DPR score and to set goals for the following day.
- Students take their DPR home to receive feedback and signature.
- Students graduate from the program if they meet their goals for an 8-week period.
- The coach provides 15-minute problem-solving and social-skills instruction to students who are having difficulty meeting goals.

The Check, Connect, and Expect (CCE) intervention is for students who are at risk for school failure, as it is focused on preventing them from developing emotional and behavioral disabilities. A trained paraprofessional, also known as a coach, meets with students identified as needing behavioral support to provide reinforcement. Students are given a behavioral report card, which they hand to all their teachers for feedback. The coach meets with the student or students to provide behavioral support as needed. For CCE to be effective, it is necessary to have a well-trained coach, a focus on positive interactions, data-based and behavior-focused monitoring, direct instruction on problem-solving and social skills, positive reinforcement from coach and teachers, and parent involvement through report cards.

Example

Before school starts, Terry meets with her coach, Mr. Sanders, who greets her joyfully. Mr. Sanders asks Terry to share how her day went yesterday. Terry shares that it didn't go as planned and that she did not meet her behavioral goals for the day. Mr. Sanders provides 15 minutes of instruction on problem solving, which is what Terry seems to be struggling with. They then review her behavioral goals for today, which are focused on trying the problem-solving skills Mr. Sanders just emphasized during the mini-lesson. Mr. Sanders encourages Terry by telling her she is very capable of meeting her goals if she stays positive and avoids conflict with peers. Terry goes to her first-period class and hands her DPRs to Mr. Jacobs. During class, Terry focuses on following the strategies Mr. Sanders provided that morning. At the end of class, Mr. Jacobs tells Terry she did well and met her goals. He rates her behavior using the DPRs. Terry follows the same process in all her classes by handing her DPRs to her teachers and meeting at the end of class to receive feedback and ratings. At the end of the day, she visits Mr. Sanders for a few minutes to receive reinforcement and to discuss if the daily point goals were met. Terry is excited to hear she met her goals by trying the problem-solving approaches she learned that morning. Mr. Sanders encourages her to keep focusing on those skills and to try to avoid conflict as much as possible. Terry takes home a copy of her DPRs, shares the news with her parents, and asks them to sign it.

6. Prevent-Teach-Reinforce.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Form teams (primary teachers, a behavioral consultant, and others—administrators, families, counselors) and agree on responsibilities.
- As a team, define social, behavioral, and academic goals for the student that include targets for reduction, instruction, and ways to measure progress daily.
- Each team member participates in a 20-question checklist focused on problem behavior—antecedent variables, function and replacement variables, and consequence variables.
- Results of the assessment are synthesized and a behavior intervention plan (BIP) is developed using strategies that support PTR components. Training is provided to the primary teacher by a behavioral consultant on the implementation of strategies.
- Daily measurement data is used by team members to check the effectiveness of the intervention plan and modify as needed.

Prevent-Teach-Reinforce (PTR) is a tertiary, individualized intervention focused on providing intensive support for students who have exhibited frequent challenging behaviors. A team of teachers follows the PTR step-by-step process to develop positive interventions to assist the student in developing and practicing positive behaviors. The problem behavior is assessed by the core team, and they develop individualized BIPs to 1) prevent – manipulate behavior antecedents, 2) teach – teach replacement behavior, and 3) reinforce – develop consequences to improve behavior.

Example

Sally has been demonstrating negative behavior towards classmates repeatedly throughout the school year. She gets very frustrated and seems unable to control her use of words and aggressive behavior during class. She has been reported to administrators several times, and even though several methods have been used to help her reduce and eliminate the behavior, they have not been effective. For this reason, the administrator decides to initiate the PTR process to more intensively support Sally in replacing her negative behavior with more positive options. A team consisting of Sally's primary teachers, the behavioral consultant, the school counselor, and the school principal meet to define social, behavioral, and academic goals to target the aggressive behavior and teach her pro-social options to cope with her frustration. The team decides to have the primary teacher, Ms. Sanders, monitor and assess Sally's behavior daily. Ms. Sanders receives training from the behavioral specialist on strategies to prevent, teach, and reinforce.

The menu of strategies is included in a BIP. After each school day, Ms. Sanders jots down notes on Sally's behavior that day and shares findings with the team. Some strategies have worked, and others have not. The team decides to include more strategies related to the ones that have worked and to remove those that are not positively affecting Sally's behavior. They continue with the PTR intervention until Sally's behavior improves significantly and is no longer disruptive.

7. Provide specific feedback contingent on students' social, emotional, behavioral, and academic skills; give at least five positive praise statements for each 1 corrective statement.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Provide specific praise for social skills, academic skills, and contextually appropriate behavior.
- Give specific corrections when students make an error (academic or social-emotional-behavioral).
- Teach and provide practice for students to give feedback to peers.

Feedback provided to students should be specific, precise, and timely. Teachers should offer targeted praise when students demonstrate proficiency in social interactions, academic tasks, or appropriate behavior. When errors occur, specific corrections and quick redirections should be given privately and calmly. By doing so, teachers provide opportunities for students to understand their mistakes and practice more appropriate solutions. Additionally, teachers should explicitly instruct students on how to give feedback to one another and provide time for students to practice those skills. It is suggested that teachers provide students with five or more statements of praise for each corrected error (the $\geq 5:1$ ratio).

Example

In Ms. Rodriguez's 11th-grade English class, students are engaged in peer review for their analytical essays. As Ms. Rodriguez circulates the room, she notices Alex providing thoughtful feedback to his partner. She offers specific praise: "Alex, I'm impressed by how you're referencing the rubric while giving feedback. You're pointing out both strengths and areas for improvement in Jenna's essay. This shows excellent critical analysis and communication skills."

Later, Ms. Rodriguez overhears Chris misinterpreting a key symbol in the novel. She provides a specific correction: "Chris, while the green light does symbolize hope, I think it's more specific than that. Let's revisit that passage together to clarify."

Before the peer review began, Ms. Rodriguez had taken time to teach effective feedback strategies. She modeled how to give constructive criticism and had students practice. For instance, she guides Sophia in giving feedback to her partner: "Try saying something like, 'Your thesis is clear, but it could be stronger if you included how this theme develops throughout the novel.'"

8. Consider implementing a continuum of strategies to acknowledge/encourage social, emotional, behavioral skills and respond to social, emotional, behavioral errors.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Implement group contingency rewards as motivation for collaboration and teamwork.
- Implement a token economy system, allowing students to earn points or “money” toward rewards.
- Consider using non-contingent reinforcement (NCR) such as intentional breaks in instruction and attention to students.
- Use differentiated reinforcement to address specific behaviors with individual students.
- Teach self-management strategies to students, promoting goal setting and celebration when goals are met.

Implementing a continuum of strategies is an effective method of supporting social, emotional, and behavioral growth and maintaining a positive classroom culture. The continuum should include group contingency, token economy, non-contingent reinforcement, differentiated reinforcement, and self-management.

A description and example of each of these methods is included in the table below. By consistently implementing multiple strategies, teachers can provide layered support for students within a classroom. Teachers should teach, model, and provide positive reinforcement of the behaviors they seek to replicate. Celebrations of positive behaviors are a key component of the continuum of strategies. Any redirection or corrections of inappropriate behaviors should be provided privately and instructionally.

Example

Strategy	Description	Example
Group Contingency	The teacher rewards a group of students for appropriate behavior or social skills.	“If we generate five examples of ‘Synthesis’ in 5 minutes, you can sit where you like for the last 20 minutes of class.”
Token Economy	Students earn tokens (or class money or points) for positive behavior and the tokens can be exchanged for a reward.	“Thanks for working quietly on math for 10 minutes—very responsible! You earned a point!”
Non-Contingent Reinforcement (NCR)	The teacher rewards students independent of a specific behavior being present. This is often used to break up challenging tasks and acknowledge the work, effort, and time students are contributing.	Knowing the class will be sitting and working independently for 90 minutes on the upcoming state assessment, Mr. Chu plans an additional 15-minute recess for the students immediately following the assessment.

Strategy	Description	Example
Differentiated Reinforcement (DR)	The teacher gives or withholds reinforcement depending on whether the behavior is desirable or undesirable.	During a whole-group activity, James calls out (without raising hand). The teacher ignores the call out, models a hand raise, and immediately gives attention (calls on and praises) when James raises his hand.
Self-Management (SM)	Teach students to set goals, self-monitor SEB skills, and celebrate when goals are met.	After a whole-class lesson on self-management, Ms. Brown models how to set a goal for a social-emotional-behavioral skill. At the end of each school day for a week, Ms. Brown asks students to record their success toward their individual goals. When students reach their goals, the whole class celebrates and encourages setting a new goal.

Source: Center on PBIS (2025).

9. Make the problem behavior irrelevant with anticipation and reminders.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- Give reminders (both verbal and visual) about what is expected before that behavior is expected.
- Teach, practice, and emphasize self-management.

Teachers can anticipate common challenges for students within the school day (i.e., transitions, after lunch, final few minutes of class). By providing reminders about appropriate behaviors and expectations before these anticipated challenges, teachers can avoid many problem behaviors and increase positive behavior. The reminders given by teachers should be:

- **Preventative:** Reminders are given before the activity starts.
- **Understandable:** Instructions use age-appropriate language and visual aids.
- **Observable:** Expectations involve visible or audible actions.
- **Specific:** Clear examples are provided for each expectation.
- **Explicit:** Directions are stated clearly and directly.

Students should be taught how to self-manage their behavior and provided with opportunities to practice and document that self-management. Teachers can use individual goals and charts or journaling to promote self-management with individual students needing additional support.

Example

Ms. Marsh is preparing her fifth-grade class for group work. She begins by giving verbal reminders. "Class, in two minutes we'll transition to our science groups. Let's review our expectations: Use your indoor voice. This means speaking at a volume where only your group members can hear you. Stay on task. Keep your eyes and attention on your group members or materials. Respect others' ideas. Nod when others speak and use phrases like 'I agree' or 'I have a different thought' to respond."

Ms. Marsh also provides visual reminders which she displays on a chart paper with simple icons such as a whisper/mouth icon for 'use indoor voices', eyes on a book icon for 'stay focused on the assignment', and a handshake and lightbulb icon for 'respect others' ideas'. Before sending the students into their groups, Ms. Marsh spends a few minutes re-teaching self-management strategies. Mrs. Chen guides a brief discussion: "Let's practice self-management. When I say 'go,' silently count to 10 while taking deep breaths. Then, write one specific goal for yourself during this group session, such as 'I will ask at least two questions' or 'I will ensure everyone in my group speaks once before I speak again.'" After the practice, she adds: "Remember, you're in charge of your own behavior. If you feel distracted, take a deep breath and refocus. If you're struggling, give me our silent signal for help."

10. Use brief, contingent, and specific error corrections to respond to problem behaviors.

Instructional strategies from the examples:

- In a private setting (if possible) and with a calm tone, state the observed behavior and name specifically what the student should do in the future.
- Disengage after the redirection or error correction, avoiding a power struggle.

When teachers provide error corrections that are direct, immediate, and end with the student displaying the correct response, they are highly effective in decreasing undesired behaviors and increasing future success. Teachers should address unwanted behaviors as soon as possible and with specific information about replacing the observed behavior with a positive alternative. Corrections should be brief and direct to avoid confusion, disengagement by the student, or a power struggle.

Example

Ms. Jones notices that Alex, one of her 10th-grade math students, is out of his seat repeatedly and avoiding his assignment. She responds, "Please stop walking around the room and return to your seat to finish your work." This correction is brief, direct, and names the appropriate behavior Ms. Jones is seeking. However, Alex initially responds by denying the behavior. To avoid a power struggle, Ms. Jones restates the desired behavior, "Please return to your seat to finish your work" and then resumes working with the small group of students in front of her. Keeping a calm and respectful tone, without blame, and moving her focus immediately back into her work helps Ms. Jones to avoid a power struggle and Alex to avoid dwelling on the unwanted behavior.

Potential Roadblocks



Teaching appropriate behavior is beyond my responsibilities as a teacher.

Suggested Approach. Teachers are pivotal in the acquisition of school-based social skills and behaviors. It is recommended that teachers integrate these skills into their existing curriculum. Identifying the social skills necessary to meet curriculum goals and planning to support students to acquire and practice these skills during lessons is important. For instance, if small group work is a pedagogical approach for a lesson, the teacher can communicate and model the skills necessary to engage in the small group activity. Social skills can enhance student learning when seen as part of the curriculum.



Too much praise and attention is harmful to students.

Suggested Approach. Positive reinforcement can result in appropriate classroom behaviors and academic achievement when it is tied to student competence. It is recommended for teachers to provide behavior-specific praise, encourage achievement, provide honest feedback, and remove extrinsic rewards gradually as students master positive behaviors. Over time, fewer extrinsic rewards will be needed, since students become more intrinsically motivated as their behavior and academic achievement improves.



I forget or run out of time to complete my student's daily progress report (DPR).

Suggested Approach. Strategies such as CICO and CCE require consistency from teachers to be successful. To avoid forgetting or running out of time to complete the DPR, teachers should intentionally plan for that time. Teachers with a student participating in CICO or CCE should create a routine of spending a minute or two with the student as they enter the class and as they exit. This time should be held sacred and accounted for in planning to keep the strategy consistent.



Teachers often provide praise that is vague and not actionable for students.

Suggested Approach. Teachers can avoid being too vague when giving praise by including specific examples of what the student did successfully. This allows students to replicate the positive behavior in the future and helps other students mimic the behavior. Teachers can use sentence frames such as “I appreciate the way you...” or “I can tell Michael is ready because he...” to get in the practice of being specific. Teachers should avoid remarks such as “great job!”, “Nice work!”, and “Super!” because students will be unclear about what exactly they did well.



Teachers implement a public system for making corrections.

Suggested Approach. To avoid escalating behaviors, embarrassing students, or getting involved in power struggles, teachers should make corrections as privately as possible and with a calm tone. Teachers should avoid public systems, such as clip charts, to correct unwanted behaviors.



Teachers provide students with a list of “no” behaviors.

Suggested Approach. Rather than telling students all the things they should not be doing, teachers can state for students what the positive behaviors look like and sound like in the classroom, and then reinforce those behaviors when they are in place.



Teachers engage in a full discussion with the student about a concerning behavior.

Suggested Approach. Teachers can avoid a power struggle by keeping their corrections brief and direct. If teachers feel there is a deeper discussion that is needed, it can be scheduled for a later time when emotions are calmed, and possibly with additional support staff and family involved.

References

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