



# Classroom Management: Intervention Pathways

Well-managed classrooms are built on a foundation that includes (1) teaching behavioral expectations to students; (2) providing strong instruction; (3) using proactive strategies to manage group behaviors; (4) building connections with students; and (5) responding flexibly and appropriately when individual behavior problems occur.

Teachers can use this checklist to build an 'intervention pathway' that promotes effective classroom management and ensures that they are using the right balance of behavior management practices with their students.

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## 1. Behavioral Expectations. Students receive explicit training and guidance in expected classroom behaviors--to include:

- Teaching Behavioral Expectations.** Students have been explicitly taught classroom behavioral expectations. Those positive behaviors are acknowledged and reinforced on an ongoing basis (Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, & Lathrop, 2007).
- Posting Positive Classroom Rules.** The classroom has a set of 3-8 rules or behavioral expectations posted. When possible, those rules are stated in positive terms as 'goal' behaviors (e.g. 'Students participate in learning activities without distracting others from learning'). The rules are frequently reviewed (Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008).
- Training Students in Basic Class Routines.** The teacher has clearly established routines to deal with common classroom activities (Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, & Lathrop, 2007; Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003; Sprick, Borgmeier, & Nolet, 2002). These routines include but are not limited to:
  - Engaging students in meaningful academic activities at the start of class (e.g., using bell-ringer activities)
  - Assigning and collecting homework and classwork
  - Transitioning students efficiently between activities
  - Independent seatwork and cooperative learning groups
  - Students leaving and reentering the classroom
  - Dismissing students at the end of the period

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## 2. Instruction That Motivates. Academic instruction holds student attention and promotes engagement--to include:

- Delivering Effective Instruction.** The teacher's lesson and instructional activities include these components (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008):
  - *Instructional match.* Students are placed in work that provides them with an appropriate level of challenge (not too easy and not too difficult).
  - *Explicit instruction.* The teacher delivers instruction using modeling, demonstration, supervised student practice, etc.
  - *High rate of student responding and engagement.* There are sufficient opportunities during the lesson for students to be actively engaged and 'show what they know'.



— *Timely performance feedback.* Students receive feedback about their performance on independent seatwork, as well as whole-group and small-group activities.

- Maintaining a Brisk Pace of Instruction.** The teacher presents an organized lesson, with instruction moving briskly. There are no significant periods of 'dead time' (e.g., during roll-taking or transitioning between activities) when student misbehavior can start (Carnine, 1976; Gettinger & Ball, 2008).
- Giving Clear Directions.** When delivering directions to the class, the teacher uses strategies that increase the likelihood that all students hear and clearly understand them (Ford, Olmi, Edwards, & Tingstrom, 2001). For large groups, such strategies might include using a general alerting cue (e.g., 'Eyes and ears on me') and ensuring group focus before giving directions. Multi-step directions are posted for later student review. For individual students, the teacher may make eye contact with the student before giving directions and ask the student to repeat those directions before starting the assignment.
- Offering Student Choice.** The teacher provides the class or individual students with appropriate choice-opportunities when completing in-class academic tasks (Jolivette, Wehby, Canale, & Massey, 2001). Offering choice options to students can increase academic motivation and focus while reducing problem behaviors. Examples include allowing students to choose (1) an assignment from among two or more alternative, equivalent offerings; (2) what books or other materials are to be used to complete an assignment; (3) who to work with on a collaborative task.

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### 3. Group Behavior Management. The teacher uses active, positive techniques to manage the classroom--to include:

- Employing Effective Verbal Commands.** The teacher delivers clear directives to students that (1) are delivered calmly, (2) are brief, (3) are stated when possible as DO statements rather than as DON'T statements, (4) use clear, simple language, and (5) are delivered one directive at a time and appropriately paced to avoid confusing or overloading students (Kern & Clemens, 2007; Matheson & Shriver, 2005). These directives are positive or neutral in tone, avoiding sarcasm or hostility and over-lengthy explanations that can distract or confuse students.
  - Providing Active Supervision.** The teacher frequently moves through the classroom--strategically recognizing positive behaviors while redirecting students who are off-task (De Pry & Sugai, 2002). As needed, the instructor gives behavioral reminders or prompts, teaches or reteaches expected behaviors, and praises examples of appropriate student behavior.
  - Using Group Prompts to Hold Attention.** The teacher gives brief reminders of expected behaviors at the 'point of performance'—the time when students will most benefit from them (DuPaul & Stoner, 2002). To prevent student call-outs, for example, a teacher may use a structured prompt such as: "When I ask this question, I will give the class 10 seconds to think of your best answer. Then I will call on one student."
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#### 4. Student Relationships. The teacher uses strategies to promote in students a sense of classroom connection and belonging--to include:

- Greeting Students at the Classroom Door.** A personalized greeting at the start of a class period can boost class levels of academic engagement (Allday & Pakurar, 2007). The teacher spends a few seconds greeting each student by name at the classroom door at the beginning of class.
- Shaping Behavior Through Praise.** To increase desired behavior, the teacher praises the student in clear, specific terms whenever the student engages in that behavior (Kern & Clemens, 2007). The teacher uses praise statements at a rate sufficient to motivate and guide the student toward the behavioral goal: (1) The teacher selects the specific desired behavior(s) to encourage through praise; (2) The teacher sets a goal for how frequently to deliver praise (e.g., to praise a student at least 3 times per class period for working on in-class assignments). (3) The teacher makes sure that any praise statements given are behavior-specific.
- Maintaining a High Rate of Positive Interactions** Teachers promote a positive relationship with any student by maintaining a ratio of at least three positive teacher-student interactions (e.g., greeting, positive conversation, high-five) for every negative (disciplinary) interaction (e.g., reprimand) (Sprick, Borgmeier, & Nolet, 2002).

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#### 5. Individual Behavior Management. The teacher uses flexible, positive techniques to manage behaviors of particular students--to include:

- Preparing a Range of Appropriate Classroom Consequences for Misbehavior.** The teacher has a continuum of classroom-based consequences for misbehavior (e.g., redirect the student; have a brief private conference with the student; remove classroom privileges; send the student to another classroom for a brief timeout) that are used before the teacher considers administrative removal of the student from the classroom (Sprick, Borgmeier, & Nolet, 2002).
- Giving Pre-Corrections as Behavioral Reminders.** The teacher heads off a problem behavior by proactively prompting or reminding the student to show appropriate behaviors (De Pry & Sugai, 2002). Just before a time, situation or setting when problem behaviors are most likely to occur, the teacher 'pre-corrects' by reminding the student of appropriate behavioral expectations.
- Emphasizing the Positive in Teacher Requests.** Whenever possible, the teacher states requests to individual students in positive terms (e.g., "I will be over to help you on the assignment just as soon as you return to your seat") rather than with a negative spin (e.g., "I won't help you with your assignment until you return to your seat."). When an instructor's request has a positive 'spin', that teacher is less likely to trigger a power struggle and more likely to gain student compliance (Braithwaite, 2001).
- Asking Open-Ended Questions.** The teacher asks neutral, open-ended questions to collect more information before responding to a student who is upset or appears confrontational (Lanceley, 1999). The teacher can pose 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', and 'how' questions to more fully understand the problem situation and identify



possible solutions (e.g., "What do you think made you angry when you were talking with Billy?"). Teachers should avoid asking 'why' questions because they can imply that the teacher is blaming the student.

- **Keeping Responses Calm and Brief.** The teacher responds to provocative or confrontational students in a 'neutral', business-like, calm voice and keeps responses brief (Sprick, Borgmeier, & Nolet, 2002; Walker & Walker, 1991). The teacher avoids getting 'hooked' into a discussion or argument with that student. Instead the teacher repeats the request calmly and—if necessary—imposes a pre-determined consequence for noncompliance.
  
- **Selecting Behavior Management Strategies Matched to Student Need.** The teacher is able flexibly to select different behavior management strategies for use with different students, demonstrating their understanding that one type of intervention strategy cannot be expected to work with all students. (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003).

References	
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