RTI Toolkit: A Practical Guide for Schools

Schools That Really Care: Building an RTI System to Address Social & Emotional Needs

Session 1: RTI and Behavior: The Big Picture/ Tier 1: Teaching Schoolwide Behavioral Expectations/ Tier 1: Best Practices in Classwide Behavior Management

Jim Wright, Presenter

28 September 2015

The Guidance and Child Study Center
Putnam-Northern Westchester BOCES
Yorktown Heights, NY

Email: jimw13159@gmail.com
Workshop Materials: http://www.interventioncentral.org/rti_behavior
RTI for Behavior and Social-Emotional Concerns (RTI-B):
School / District Needs Assessment

School/District: ________________________________  Date: __________________________

Directions:
• Appoint a recorder.
• Review the list of issues in behaviors and social-emotional functioning that appears below.
• For each issue, discuss whether it presents a significant challenge in your school or district.
• If YES, write down specifics about how this issue impacts your educational setting.

1. **Disruptive Classroom Behaviors.** Problem behaviors in the classroom commonly interfere with effective instruction.

   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________

2. **Bullying.** Bullying and related hidden ('covert') student behaviors create an emotionally unsafe atmosphere for a substantial number of learners.

   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________

3. **Motivation.** Limited student motivation interferes significantly with academic performance and learning.

   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________

4. **'High-Amplitude' Behaviors.** A small number of students with more severe behaviors ties up a large share of school support and intervention resources.

   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________
5. **Variability of Behavior-Management Skills.** Teachers and other educators (e.g., paraprofessionals) vary in their knowledge of--and/or willingness to implement--positive behavior management practices.

6. **Inconsistency in Supporting Students with Intensive Needs.** For students with more significant challenging behaviors, there are disconnects across staff, problem-solving groups, and time. These disconnects result in lack of coordination, communication, and consistent delivery of behavior-support services.

7. **Differing Philosophies about Behavior Management.** Staff are divided between ‘reactive/punitive’ and ‘pro-active/positive’ viewpoints about how to manage student misbehavior.

8. **No Decision Rules for Behavioral 'Non-Responders'.** The district has no formal guidelines for judging when a general-education student on a behavior-intervention plan is a ‘non-responder’ and may require special education services.

9. **No Data on Behavioral Interventions.** Staff lack an understanding of how to set goals and what data to collect when monitoring student progress on behavioral interventions.

10. **Vague Descriptions of Student Problems.** Educators find it difficult to define a student's primary behavior problem in clear and specific terms: "If you can't name the problem, you can't fix it."

*Concluding Activity:* Based on your discussion, CIRCLE the TOP 2-3 items from this list that you feel MOST impact your school or district.
## Tier 1: Classwide Management

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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Verified? (Y/N)</th>
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<td><strong>Teaching Culturally Responsive Behavioral Expectations.</strong> Students have been explicitly taught classroom behavioral expectations. Those positive behaviors are acknowledged and reinforced on an ongoing basis (Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, &amp; Lathrop, 2007). Behavioral expectations are selected and framed in a manner that acknowledges the diversity of cultures within the school community and recognizes the need for students to be active rather than passive learners (Bal, Thorius, &amp; Kozleski, 2012).</td>
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| **Training the Class in Basic Classroom Routines.** The teacher has established routines to deal with common classroom activities (Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, & Lathrop, 2007; Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). Examples of classroom routines include:  
  - 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. |                |                                                                     |
| **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). |                |                                                                     |

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

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<td><strong>Ensuring Instructional Match.</strong> Lesson content is appropriately matched to students’ abilities (Burns, VanDerHeyden, &amp; Boice, 2008).</td>
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### Providing Explicit Instruction
When teaching new material, the teacher delivers instruction in a manner that maximizes student understanding: starting with (1) modeling and demonstration, moving to (2) supervised practice with performance feedback, and concluding with (3) opportunities for independent practice with feedback (Rosenshine, 2008).

### Promoting Active Engagement
The teacher inserts activities at key points throughout the lesson to ensure that learners are engaged in ‘active accurate responding’ (Skinner, Pappas & Davis, 2005) at rates sufficient to hold attention and optimize learning.

### Providing a Brisk Rate of Instruction
The teacher presents an organized lesson, with instruction moving briskly. There are no significant periods of ‘dead time’ (e.g., drawn-out transitions between activities) when misbehavior can start (Carnine, 1976; Gettinger & Ball, 2008).

### Offering Choice Opportunities
The teacher provides the class with appropriate opportunities for choice when completing in-class academic tasks (Jolivette, Wehby, Canale, & Massey, 2001). Offering choice options can increase academic motivation and focus while reducing problem behaviors.

### Managing the Classroom
The teacher uses active, positive techniques to manage the classroom—to include:

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<td>Scanning the Class Frequently</td>
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<td>The teacher ‘scans’ the classroom frequently—during whole-group instruction, cooperative learning activities, and independent seatwork. The teacher strategically and proactively recognizes positive behaviors while redirecting students who are off-task (Sprick, Borgmeier, &amp; Nolet, 2002).</td>
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<td><strong>Employing Effective Verbal Commands</strong></td>
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<td>The teacher delivers clear directives to students that are (1) spoken calmly, (2) brief, (3) stated when possible as DO statements rather than as DON'T statements, (4) framed in clear, simple language, and (5) delivered one directive at a time and appropriately paced to avoid confusing or overloading students (Kern &amp; Clemens, 2007; Matheson &amp; Shriver, 2005). These directives are positive or neutral in tone, avoiding sarcasm or hostility and over-lengthy explanations that can distract or confuse students.</td>
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<td><strong>Providing Active Supervision</strong></td>
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<td>The teacher frequently moves through the classroom—strategically recognizing positive behaviors while redirecting students who are off-task (De Pry &amp; Sugai, 2002). As needed, the instructor gives behavioral reminders or prompts, teaches or reteaches expected behaviors, and praises examples of appropriate student behavior.</td>
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<td><strong>Shaping Behavior Through Praise</strong></td>
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<td>To increase desired behaviors, the</td>
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A teacher praises students when they engage in those targeted behaviors (Kern & Clemens, 2007). Effective teacher praise consists of two elements: (1) a description of noteworthy student academic performance or general behavior, and (2) a signal of teacher approval (Brophy, 1981; Burnett, 2001). The teacher uses praise at a rate sufficient to motivate and guide students toward the behavioral goal and maintains an average of 4 praise statements for every disciplinary statement (Villeda et al. 2014).

**Establishing a Range of 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; temporarily suspend classroom privileges; send the student to another classroom for a brief reflection period) that can be used before the teacher considers administrative removal of any learner from the classroom (Sprick, Borgmeier, & Nolet, 2002).

### References


Identifying the Big Ideas That Guide Effective Behavior Management

Teachers skilled in classroom management are able to respond appropriately to just about any behavior that a student brings through the classroom door. While having a toolkit of specific behavioral strategies is important, the real secret of educators who maintain smoothly running classrooms with minimal behavioral disruptions is that they are able to view problem student behaviors through the lens of these 'big ideas' in behavior management:

- **Check for academic problems.** The correlation between classroom misbehavior and deficient academic skills is high (Witt, Daly, & Noell, 2000). Teachers should, therefore, routinely assess a student's academic skills as a first step when attempting to explain why a particular behavior is occurring. And it logically follows that, when poor academics appear to drive problem behaviors, the intervention that the teacher selects should address the student's academic deficit.

- **Identify the underlying function of the behavior.** Problem behaviors occur for a reason. Such behaviors serve a function for the student (Witt, Daly, & Noell, 2000). The most commonly observed behavioral functions in classrooms are escape/avoidance and peer or adult attention (Packenham, Shute, & Reid, 2004). When an educator can identify the probable function sustaining a particular set of behaviors, the teacher has confidence that interventions selected to match the function will be correctly targeted and therefore likely to be effective. For example, if a teacher decides that a student's call-outs in class are sustained by the function of adult attention, that instructor may respond by shifting the flow of that attention--e.g., interacting minimally with the student during call-outs but boosting adult attention during times when the student shows appropriate behavior.

- **Eliminate behavioral triggers.** Problem behaviors are often set off by events or conditions within the instructional setting (Kern, Choutka, & Sokol, 2002). Sitting next to a distracting classmate or being handed an academic task that is too difficult to complete are two examples of events that might trigger student misbehavior. When the instructor is able to identify and eliminate triggers of negative conduct, such actions tend to work quickly and--by preventing class disruptions--result in more time available for instruction (Kern & Clemens, 2007).

- **Redefine the behavioral goal as a replacement behavior.** When a student displays challenging behaviors, it can be easy to fall into the trap of simply wishing that those misbehaviors would go away. The point of a behavioral intervention, however, should be to expand the student's repertoire of pro-social, pro-academic behaviors--rather than just extinguishing aberrant behaviors. By selecting a positive behavioral goal that is an appropriate replacement for the student's original problem behavior, the teacher reframes the student concern in a manner that allows for more effective intervention planning (Batsche, Castillo, Dixon, & Forde, 2008). For example, an instructor who is concerned that a student is talking with peers about non-instructional topics during independent seatwork might select as a replacement behavior that the student will engage in "active, accurate academic responding".

- **Focus on factors within the school's control.** Teachers recognize that students often face significant factors outside of the school setting--e.g., limited parental support--that can place them at heightened risk for academic failure and problem behaviors. However, focusing solely on those student risks beyond the school's ability to change can be counter-productive, sapping resolve and undermining intervention efforts. Instead, schools can best counteract the influence of negative outside factors and promote student resilience by providing supports within the educational setting such as skills instruction, tutoring, mentoring, and use of positive behavior management strategies (Hosp, 2008).

- **Be flexible in responding to misbehavior.** Teachers have greater success in managing the full spectrum of student misbehaviors when they respond flexibly--evaluating each individual case and applying strategies that logically address the likely cause(s) of that student's problem conduct (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). An instructor may choose to respond to a non-compliant student with a warning and additional disciplinary
consequences, for example, if evidence suggests that the misbehavior stems from his seeking peer attention and approval. However, that same teacher may respond to non-compliance with a behavioral conference and use of defusing strategies if the misbehavior appears to have been triggered by a negative peer comment.

References


6 Reasons Why Teachers May Be ‘Reluctant’ to Move from Punishment to Positive Behavior Management Strategies

**Directions:** Read through each of the possible reasons listed below for why a teacher may be ‘reluctant’ to move from punitive to positive behavior management strategies. Select the 1-2 reasons that you believe MOST apply to your school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teachers lack the skills to use positive behavior strategies</td>
<td>Bear (2013). Instructors lack the training to refocus their management strategies in a positive direction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Teachers hang on to their current disciplinary procedures as familiar, comfortable</td>
<td>Thaler &amp; Sunstein, 2009. Whenever people (including teachers) are asked to change important aspects of their professional behavior, there is a tendency to cling to known and comfortable routines—even when we get mediocre results. This reluctance to give up the familiar and embrace change is universal--and is known as the 'status quo' bias.</td>
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<td>3. Teachers are pulled into confrontational situations because students control the interactions</td>
<td>Conroy et al., 2009. Teachers may have good intentions to adopt positive practices. However, when students are defiant or non-compliant, these educators find themselves 'pulled' into a confrontation. So the student actually controls the interaction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Teachers are (negatively) reinforced by use of punishment</td>
<td>Maag, 2012. When teachers send students with challenging behaviors to the office, this can be 'negatively reinforcing' to the instructor--thus increasing the likelihood that the teacher will use the strategy repeatedly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Teachers use punishment because they see that it works—for most</td>
<td>Maag, 2001. In a typical student population, sending a student to the principal's office is quite effective for the 95% who show few behavior problems. The same disciplinary response is ineffective with about 5% of students, who either don't care or wish to escape the classroom. The teacher, however, may assume that these recalcitrant students simply need more of the same punishment for it to be effective--so problem interactions intensify.</td>
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<td>6. Teachers see ‘zero tolerance’ of misbehavior as an important teaching tool</td>
<td>Skiba et al., 2006. The teacher believes that having the student experience punitive consequences such as class removal or suspension will teach important life lessons about consequences in the ‘real world’ (Skiba et al., 2006).</td>
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Homework Options for 29 October 2015

Here are several optional homework assignments that your team can work on before the next workshop to help you to better understand and move forward with the RTI-B model at your school or district. Feel free to do any or all of the assignments. You are also welcome to create a unique homework assignment of your own. **Be sure to bring evidence of your homework to the next workshop to share with other teams.**

- **RTI-B: Needs Assessment.** Take the informal *School / District Needs Assessment* discussed at this session back to your school. Convene a group of your choosing who have a good grasp of the needs of your building. Conduct the needs assessment exercise with this group --(1) record their concerns for each assessment item and (2) have the group 'vote' on which item(s) are their top 2-3 concerns.

  Bring the results of your needs assessment to the next session.

- **RTI-B: 'Critical Elements' Checklist: Tier 1: Classwide Management.** Try out the checklist back at your school. Observe 1 or more classrooms and have follow-up conversations with their teachers. For each item, determine how well you can verify that this essential Tier 1 Classwide Management element is present through direct observation, interview, and/or looking at documents such as lesson plans or examples of student work.

  Record your discussion and bring to the next session.

- **RTI-B & Teacher Reluctance.** Convene your building or district team responsible for designing and implementing the RTI-B process. Review the 6 reasons discussed today that teachers may hesitate to move from a punitive to a positive behavior-management approach in the classroom. Discuss each potential reason for reluctance. For any that appear to have a significant impact in your setting, generate proactive ideas to help teachers to overcome these 'motivation blockers'.

  Bring notes from this discussion to the next session.