Motivator 5: Changing Teacher Behaviors:

Educators must be motivated to change their own behaviors in order to increase student motivation.
Response to Intervention

Teacher as Classroom Intervention ‘First Responder’

It is a simple fact . . . that students do not fix themselves; the teacher is the catalyst in accomplishing student gains. Instructors must therefore alter their own instructional or behavior-management [strategies] before student behaviors can change or learning can improve.

Mindset—and Why It Matters in the Classroom…

“Many teachers see evidence for a fixed mindset every year. The students who start out at the top of their class end up at the top, and the students who start out at the bottom end up there. Research shows that when teachers believe in fixed intelligence, this is exactly what happens. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy. However, when teachers hold a growth mindset, many students who start out lower in the class blossom during the year and join the higher achievers.” p. 10 [Emphasis added]

RTI-B: Teachers Lack Intervention Training

“...researchers suggest that many teachers lack knowledge about RTI and others do not understand the core concepts of RTI well enough to carry them out effectively over time. Reviews of the research have also indicated that teachers lack knowledge and training in mental health and are not well equipped to carry out behavioral interventions.” p. 975

RTI-B: Teachers Have a Powerful Role to Play

“...[However], teachers may also be very effective in the implementation of both RTI and evidence-based mental health practices if teacher efficacy is increased, they are thoroughly trained, and are provided the appropriate supports and supervision by administration and mental health professionals to carry-out and sustain the interventions.” p. 975

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

There are several reasons why teachers may continue to react to student misbehavior with punitive responses—including removal from the classroom—rather than adopting actions that reinforce learning and a positive classroom environment.
6 Reasons Why Teachers May Be ‘Reluctant’ to Move from Punishment to Positive Behavior Management Strategies

1. Teachers lack the skills to use positive behavior strategies (Bear 2013). Instructors lack the training to refocus their management strategies in a positive direction.

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

2. Teachers hang on to their current disciplinary procedures as familiar, comfortable (Thaler & 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.

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

3. Teachers are pulled into confrontational situations because students control the interactions (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.

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

4. Teachers are (negatively) reinforced by use of punishment (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.

5. Teachers use punishment because they see that it works—*for most* (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.

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

6. Teachers see ‘zero tolerance’ of misbehavior as an important teaching tool (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).

Activity: Why the Teacher Reluctance?

- Discuss the reasons shared here for why teachers may be reluctant to move from punitive to positive behavior intervention strategies.
- Select 1-2 reasons that you believe might be MOST prevalent in your school.
- For each reason selected, come up with positive ideas to address that roadblock.

6 Reasons for ‘Reluctance’ in Moving from Punishment to Positive Strategies

1. Teachers lack the skills to use positive behavior strategies

2. Teachers hang on to their current disciplinary procedures as familiar, comfortable

3. Teachers are pulled into confrontational situations because students control the interactions.

4. Teachers are (negatively) reinforced by the use of punishment.

5. Teachers use punishment because they see that it works—for most.

6. Teachers see ‘zero tolerance’ of misbehavior as a teaching tool.
Finding the Spark: Highlights

At this session, we:

- defined ‘motivation’ in RTI-friendly terms (as ‘active, accurate academic engagement’) and analyzed the self-reinforcing cycle of ‘learned helplessness’.
- reviewed how to use growth-mindset statements as a classroom motivating tool.
- investigated motivating classroom ‘nudge’ techniques.
- sampled process-oriented interventions to teach students independent skills, such as work planning.
- highlighted ideas to establish stronger student connections.
- looked at reasons for ‘teacher reluctance’ and big ideas in behavior management that can help to bring them on board.