

How To: Identify Critical Elements of Strong Core Classroom Behavior Management

Students in classrooms are always engaged in behavior of some sort: listening to the teacher, completing independent work, talking to a friend, looking out the window. The constant unfolding of a student's behaviors can be thought of metaphorically as a 'behavior stream' (Schoenfeld & Farmer, 1970). The teacher's task is to channel this stream of students' behaviors toward productive academic engagement--resulting in both an improved behavioral climate and better school outcomes. In the well-managed classroom, the teacher dedicates as much time as possible to instruction, arranges instructional activities to fully engage the student learner, and uses proactive strategies to manage behaviors (Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008).

Below is a checklist containing six elements that are critical to strong core classroom behavior management. Teachers can use this checklist proactively to ensure that these elements are in place. School administrators and consultants will find that the checklist serves as a helpful framework when they provide guidance to instructors on how to strengthen classroom behavior management.

Checklist: Critical Elements of Strong Core Classroom Behavior Management		
Adequately Documented?	Behavior Element	Why this element matters...
<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<p>Components of Effective Instruction. The teacher's lesson and instructional activities include these components (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Instructional match.</i> Students are placed in work that provides them with an appropriate level of challenge (not too easy and not too difficult). <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Explicit instruction.</i> The teacher delivers instruction using modeling, demonstration, supervised student practice, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Active student engagement.</i> There are sufficient opportunities during the lesson for students to be actively engaged and 'show what they know'. <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Timely performance feedback.</i> Students receive feedback about their performance on independent seatwork, as well as whole-group and small-group activities. 	<p><i>If components of effective instruction are missing from the classroom, it is difficult to identify whether a student's misbehavior is caused by academic or other factors.</i></p>
<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<p>Explicit Teaching of 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).</p>	<p><i>Unless classroom behavioral expectations have been taught, there is uncertainty whether a particular student's misbehaviors occur by choice or because of lack of knowledge of expected</i></p>

		<i>behaviors.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<p>Students Trained 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Engaging students in meaningful academic activities at the start of class (e.g., using bell-ringer activities) <input type="checkbox"/> Assigning and collecting homework and classwork <input type="checkbox"/> Transitioning students efficiently between activities <input type="checkbox"/> Independent seatwork and cooperative learning groups <input type="checkbox"/> Students leaving and reentering the classroom <input type="checkbox"/> Dismissing students at the end of the period 	<p><i>Classroom routines prevent 'dead time' when students can get off-task and behavioral problems can arise. When routines are absent, it can be unclear whether student misbehavior is simply a manifestation of a lack of classroom order.</i></p>
<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<p>Positive Classroom Rules Posted. 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).</p>	<p><i>Because classroom rules are a clear and positive reminder to students of behavioral expectations, missing rules can be one explanation for student misbehavior.</i></p>
<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<p>Effective Teacher Directives. 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; Walker & Walker, 1991). These directives are positive or neutral in tone, avoiding sarcasm or hostility and over-lengthy explanations that can distract or confuse students.</p>	<p><i>Because teacher directives are a prime means of managing classrooms, poorly delivered teacher directives can be an explanation for student misbehavior.</i></p>
<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<p>Continuum of In-Class Consequences for Misbehavior. The teacher has developed 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). These strategies are used flexibly, matched to the behavioral situation and needs of the student (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003).</p>	<p><i>If the teacher lacks a range of options for classroom discipline or fails to be flexible in methods for managing misbehavior, this lack of teacher capacity can translate into more student misbehaviors and a greater number of office referrals.</i></p>

References

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