Monitoring Student Behavior
Monitoring Student Behavior

According to Charlotte Danielson (2011), “Experienced teachers seem to have eyes in the back of their heads; they are attuned to what’s happening in the classroom and can move subtly to help students, when necessary, re-engage with the content being addressed in the lesson.”

To some degree, all schools function on the basis of routines and agreed-upon codes of behavior. Even small, alternative “free” schools rely on routines to some extent. Children and adults generally operate more productively as communities when they are supported by clearly stated expectations, understood parameters for behavior, and routines that reduce the constant need to make decisions. Considering an extreme example, the mission of the progressive Summerhill school includes the statement “Where you can play all day if you want to.” Even so, the Summerhill school community chooses to operate with set times and codes of behavior that are agreed upon by a democratic council of all students and teachers (A.S. Neill's Summerhill School, n.d.).

Effective teachers plan, practice, and refine classroom routines in order to establish a positive code of behavior for all students. Properly applied and practiced routines make schools safer, better organized, and promote an environment where students and adults feel comfortable and secure in their pursuit of the organizational goal of student learning. A firm stance is sometimes required from teachers when students break the code of conduct and are in need of redirection. According to Charlotte Danielson (2007), “Teachers who operate at the proficient and distinguished levels in Domain 2 show genuine concern for their students' needs and abilities both within and outside the classroom. Their students consider these teachers to be adults who believe in their learning potential, care about them personally, and are reliable sources of support for their learning.”

Many times, students are able to help each other to improve behavior. Peer review systems promote positive classroom climates by training students to look for praiseworthy behavioral aspects of students who may have previously exhibited negative behavior. Positive behavior is encouraged when students are motivated by a system of age-appropriate rewards. A teacher who is able to both earn respect and excite students will create a sound platform upon which to promote learning. Instances of challenging student behavior have root causes that effective teachers will attempt to identify. Documentation of negative behavior may help to identify specific triggers that initiate incidents. These documents can later be useful in devising specific behavioral plans to support the student's improvement. Many aspects of teaching are akin to performing on a stage. Teachers are able to learn presentation skills, such as voice modulation and tone, gestures, congruence of instructions, and body stance and location in the room. The inexperienced teacher is able to grow and improve by learning and practicing a range of techniques to manage student behavior and improve their own delivery.
Information Alignment

Materials presented in this eBook align with the following:

Module Questions

- How could expectations and standards for behavior have been more consistently reinforced and applied?
- What tools or strategies for student self-monitoring could have been implemented to promote and support productive student behaviors?
- What preventative measures—or verbal and nonverbal responses—would have contributed to a more efficient and respectful classroom environment?

Learning Outcomes

- Explore strategies for reinforcing established expectations and standards for behavior.
- Determine and apply effective, preventative, and appropriate methods of monitoring student behavior.
- Evaluate verbal and nonverbal responses intended to redirect behavior as well as prompt and acknowledge appropriate behavior.
- Identify strategies for encouraging student self-monitoring of behavior and support for productive peer behavior

Topic Focus

Strategies for reinforcing expectations and standards for behavior
- Developing, planning, and refining classroom routines
- Practicing and reinforcing routines
- Establishing appropriate consequences
- Maintaining anecdotal records on student behavior
- Recording triggers
- Recording effective supports

Utilizing behavior management strategies
- Reward systems to support positive behaviors
- Redirecting behavior through verbal and non-verbal prompts
- Exploring self-monitoring strategies for behavior management
- Investigating “Positive Peer Review” to support students helping students
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Strategies for reinforcing expectations and standards for behavior

Timely and age appropriate praise is a powerful tool for teachers to reinforce positive behavior in students. Praise and positive feedback should focus on the behavior, not on the person. For example, “It was mean of you to throw food at another student” focuses on the person and could devalue the student’s self-worth. Focusing on the behavior respects the student and doesn’t undermine his or her dignity (Danielson, 2011). The example above could be reworded as follows, to shift the focus from the person to the behavior: “Throwing food at another student is disrespectful and works against our code of no-tolerance bullying.”

Clearly-stated expectations for behavior and learning provide a strong platform upon which to encourage and reinforce positive behavior from students. Inevitably, not all student behavior is positive. Effective teachers are ready with measured responses, based upon a sound management plan, that includes codes of behavior to which students are held accountable. Routines are helpful to establish positive, time efficient methods of accomplishing small tasks that make the classroom function most effectively.

Developing, planning, and refining classroom routines

Many teachers recognize that most students respond positively to a structured environment. Daily routines may be packaged and presented in ways that encourage acceptance by students. A lesson is already off to a good start when when students arrive at the classroom prepared, having already visited the bathroom and water fountain and collected required materials from their student lockers. A savvy teacher uses any prompts necessary to achieve this level of organization, including verbal reminders, visual cues posted in the hallway, pair buddy reminders, or another technique to maximize learning time.

Linsin (2009a) promotes the development of routines that reduce minor frustrations, save time, remove distractions, and center attention on learning. Teachers who invest time and effort in devising and implementing effective routines are rewarded in the long term with saved time and a more controlled workload. Student morale is boosted when transitions between activities or between classrooms are achieved by responsible students, with minimal instructions from the teacher and without interminable verbal instructions, raised voices, or possible chaos.

Any repetitive, recurring, or predictable classroom actions or events may be enhanced with the addition of specific routines. Different teachers may be comfortable with more or less routines. All teachers should recognize that although routines may be viewed as controlling mechanisms, they also promote a secure and well-ordered environment in which the undemonstrative student is free to flourish and succeed. A few samples of routines are listed below.
Some teachers develop creative routines that add an element of enjoyment for students. Music may be one way to signify the start of a transition. For example, familiar TV theme tunes can signify that materials need to be put away quickly and students should be lined up before the music ends. Soon, students will recognize the first few bars of music and spring into action without the need for an instruction. Morning attendance may be accomplished by students sticking their own name card on a wall chart.

Savvy teachers recognize the effectiveness of building positive student behavior as a means to reduce the number of incidents of negative behavior. Teachers are part of the teacher-student behavioral equation and must therefore be prepared to change their own behavior in order to elicit the desired responses from students.

**Practicing and reinforcing routines**
The allocation of significant periods of time at the start of the school year, in order to introduce and establish classroom routines, may be regarded as a sound investment. Patsalides & Stannard-Gromisch (2012) advocate for the allocation of time when practicing routines. Willing students may be chosen to model the desired routine for the rest of the class. Patience should be shown for students who need extra practice, and praise should be given when the routine is successfully established. Hoffman-Kaser (n.d.) details how classroom routines may be established, beginning with a demonstration of the process by the teacher and volunteer students, and following up with quizzes to check for understanding. Learning routines should be planned systematically and enacted in authentic venues. The maintenance of routines throughout the year requires review and reteaching in order to underscore their importance.

Safety procedures deserve special attention. Telling or showing students the preferred route to the fire assembly point is insufficient. Only real practice will prepare them for a smooth and speedy evacuation when a crisis happens. Several situational rehearsals are needed during which students become familiarized with the route and behavior protocols of silence and orderly, purposeful movement. The same conditioning is needed for students of all ages. Jones (n.d.) makes a case for students to practice essential safety routines in science laboratories. For example, emergency eye wash procedures require the immediate assistance of peers if caustic liquids are to be washed out of the student's eye in time to prevent stem damage that could potentially cause permanent injury. Simply telling students about their responsibility is insufficient. A practice scenario that imitates the accident and response is needed if students are to become confident and react in a way that will make a significant difference in an emergency situation. Understandably, high school teachers may often feel pressured by time constraints as they struggle to cover all of the syllabus content demanded by the standards. However, cutting corners on important routines is not a responsible option.

**Establishing appropriate consequences**
Teachers should first determine the reasons behind a student's negative behavior before deciding upon a consequence. Taking the student aside for a conversation about the behavior is a good way to begin. The student may need a little time to check his or her emotions before a productive conversation can take place. Teachers who model a calm demeanor and focus on the behavior (rather than the student personally), may be able to find the root cause of the negative behavior and address it more quickly.

Just as students may need an opportunity to check their emotions before considering their behavior, teachers may need a moment to check emotions before responding as well. Teachers may experience a natural, adrenaline-fuelled temptation to respond to disrespectful behavior with anger or sarcasm. Unfortunately, in the end such responses are likely to generate disrespect for the teacher and encourage more disrespectful
behavior from students. Successful teachers realize that classroom effectiveness increases when they are first respected and secondly liked by
students. Linsin (2009b) urges teachers to respond to disrespectful students by "simply and dispassionately" following a classroom management
plan that includes a rule to deal with disrespectful behavior. Planned rules and consequences are much easier to administer than ad hoc
responses. Teacher should avoid spontaneous responses where follow-through is not practical. Some negative behaviors are deserving of an
immediate, unemotional response. Linsin (2009b) lists "disrespectful behavior, emotional outbursts, and bullying other students" as examples
of unacceptable behavior that may require immediate time-out and perhaps a letter home. Students observe how a teacher behaves in addition
to what is said. Since teachers are role models for the students, a teacher who behaves calmly and respectfully, even in the face of a challenging
situation, will encourage the same behavior in students.
Maintaining anecdotal records on student behavior

Anecdotal records provide a means to identify patterns in behavior and recognize change. Templates, designed for recording specific aspects of a student's behavior, enable a teacher, or support colleagues, to document accurately and consistently. Students may also be involved in the self-recording of data. Students who agree to systematically monitor their own behavior are able to correct themselves. Support strategies, once agreed upon, may be applied and evaluated, using appropriate recording formats, over a period of time.

Recording triggers

Negative triggers are stimuli that provoke inappropriate reactions in a student. The stimulus may reside in their home life or events outside of school, or could be something that is happening in the classroom. Some triggers incite an immediate reaction from the student, while others may act slowly until the student reaches a saturation point. Food intake, such as sugary drinks, artificial colorings, or carbohydrate excesses may give rise to elevated activity levels or lethargy. It may be possible to remove the stimulus for some triggers, such as name calling from peers or extended writing assignments where the student lacks the necessary skill development. Other triggers such as family problems originate from causes outside the teacher's control. Triggers may be divided into two categories, fast and slow. A few examples are shown below.

The trigger itself may reveal an issue that can be dealt with directly, such as bullying or inappropriate instructional tasks. In many cases it is the student's inappropriate response to the trigger that needs to be modified. The first step for the teacher is to identify the trigger. Better still, the student may be guided to recognize the trigger. Addison (2008) describes the use of ABC recording charts to document behavior. ABC stands for antecedent, behavior, and consequence. A sample, with prompt questions is shown below.
Used repeatedly, ABC charts may identify a pattern and establish the link between an antecedent and consequence event. Notes may be taken in a notebook or written up as emails and shared with administrators or parents when appropriate. Rappaport & Minahan (2012) emphasize that time invested by teachers to document incidents in the ABC format may lead to a behavioral solution for the student in question.

### Recording effective supports

Teachers or counseling support staff need to monitor the effectiveness of support interventions by periodically assessing student progress. Changes in circumstances or personnel may alter the success levels of a plan. A number of recording instruments are available. A behavior plan is often used as the starting point to monitor the effect of supporting strategies. Periodic review of plans, based upon recorded data, may result in modifications to interventional strategies. A sample behavior support planning form designed to be used by a teacher and support team is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedent events</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Where was the person and exactly what was he or she doing?</td>
<td>• Step by step description of exactly what the person did</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Was anyone else around, or had anyone just left?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Had a request been made of the person?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Had the person asked for, or did they want something to eat or drink?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Had the person asked for, or did they want a specific object or activity?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Had an activity just ended, or been cancelled?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where were you and what were you doing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How did the person’s mood appear (e.g., happy, sad, angry, withdrawn or distressed)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Did the person seem to be communicating anything through their behavior (e.g., I don’t want...; I want...)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Consequence events | |
|-------------------| |
| • Exactly how did you respond to the behavior? | |
| • How did the person respond to your reaction to the behavior? | |
| • Was there anyone else around who responded to, or showed a reaction to the behavior? | |
| • Did the person’s behavior result in them gaining anything they did not have before the behavior was exhibited? | |
Data collection tools provide evidence to check plans for their effectiveness at achieving desired behavior modifications. Fox & Duda (n.d.) describe how progress of behavior support plans may be periodically monitored and reviewed, using tools such as rating scales and check sheets. There are myriad resources available online with teacher-created charts and tools. One such site is Behavior Charts for Teachers, Classroom Management Printables where you will find charts for everything from behavior monitoring to Homework logs. Daily logs may provide an estimate of the child's performance, perhaps using a five-point scale to identify good days for the student. An example of a daily log is shown below.

Single examples of challenging behavior may be recorded using incident records. For example, when a student is involved in a fight, has a temper tantrum, uses profane language, or runs away. Incident records describe all the details of the event: when it occurred, who was involved, and what the consequences were. Incident reports do not record the context of the incident relative to a behavior plan. Behavior may also be monitored using the products of a student's work on school assignments. Artwork, writing samples, or a portfolio of photographs showcasing student work may provide data that may be used to review a behavior plan. Aware teachers realize that written records provide benchmarks to identify progress or deterioration in behavior. Trends in student behavior may be revealed by a review of data that represents a time period of weeks and months.
Utilizing behavior management strategies

Some teaching techniques and effective approaches to behavior management may come naturally to teachers or may be based upon their past experience. Even experienced teachers understand that many additional strategies may be learned and an array of tools and resources may be added to their classroom repertoire.

Reward systems to support positive behaviors

Reward systems are available for students to earn instant, daily, or weekly rewards for behavior or good work. Many variations of rewards systems for younger students are based upon the accumulation of credit by collecting, for example stickers, tokens, or fake money, or filling in grids and charts. Sometimes there is a small treat after the accumulation of enough credits. Younger middle student students may respond to some of the same reward systems used for elementary students. Generally, older students need to be rewarded with praise. Specific feedback on assignments that might allow them time for a favored activity, such as working on a computer, is especially good. Praise or positive feedback should always be directed to the behavior itself. Many templates and ideas for appropriate reward systems are freely available online. For example, Reward Ideas (n.d.) offers an extensive range of examples appropriate for elementary-aged students. An adept teacher recognizes that positive behavior is encouraged by rewards and takes the initiative accordingly.

Redirecting behavior through verbal and non-verbal prompts

The skillful use of non-verbal communication serves to avoid the potential for escalation of small incidents. Disruption to the flow of instruction may be minimized. Teacher energy may be preserved for core pedagogical interventions, such as question and answer sessions or constructive feedback. Variations in hand gestures, body postures, and voice tones can be threatening or affirming. It is important to be cognizant of non-verbal communication in order to improve instruction.

Teachers should be aware that the interpretation of meanings for gestures and eye contacts are not universally understood between different cultures. For example, people from some South East Asian cultures will avoid eye contact out of respect, not avoidance. According to Schonberg (2011), in Vietnamese culture the Vietnamese equivalent of the head shake to mean no is to rotate the outstretched open hand, palm up.

Miller (2008), states that the matching of verbal and non-verbal messages helps to “preserve relationships and gain compliance in the classroom.” and recommends that teachers should be trained in non-verbal message skills.

Teachers often make the mistake of trying to talk over the class when noise levels are elevated. A few seconds delay will usually result in a slight lull in sound levels. That is the moment to gain attention—with a voice level raised above that of the class. Once attention is established the teacher is able to drop the voice level considerably to a whispering volume. Typically, students are quiet in order to hear the message. All people have a range of different voices they use in appropriate circumstances. The tone, volume, and modulation of voice send their own messages in addition to the meaning of the words they carry. Miller (2008) notes two voice variations that are important for teachers. The credible voice, with minimal modulation, is used to hold students’ attention without inviting questions or comments. Congruency of posture is essential. The credible voice requires stillness of head, arms, and hands in order to be most effective. The approachable voice is highly modulated, with rhythm and melodic tones. Discussions are enhanced with the approachable voice when students are encouraged and welcomed to participate. Congruency in this case is achieved with head and arm movements and open, moving hands.

Visual cues may be used to emphasise verbal instructions. For example, students may be told to finish a task in five minutes and be given the visual cue of holding up a hand with five digits. The teacher may both point to and look at the display board while giving a verbal instruction to the same effect. Eye contact in response to negative interactions such as unwanted interruptions is likely to escalate the situation by inviting further response. A non-verbal visual instruction such as an appropriate hand gesture may be more effective than words as an intervention to make the lesson flow.

Exploring self-monitoring strategies for behavior management

According to Horner, R., Sugai, G., and Vincent, C. (2005) self-monitoring of behaviorally-challenged students is an effective strategy to both identify and realize positive social behavior. Students of all ages, from kindergarten to adulthood, and from a wide variety of levels of cognitive function, are able to gain independence from the use of behavioral self-monitoring. Horner et al. describe a five-step process to implement a system of behavioral self-monitoring.
Often, a teacher identifies several aspects of behavior that could be flagged for intervention. For example, a student may be known for disruptive comments and excessive hand raising. Horner et al. (2005) recommend that the teacher prioritizes just one aspect of behavior to tackle at one time. When planning the intervention, it may be more productive to specify the positive manifestation of the behavior. For example, the number of times a student appropriately raises their hand or the number of fifteen minute time intervals without a disruptive comment. Checklists and charts printed on paper or created by the student are commonly used formats to record behavior. The student is able to tick a box or write the time when an event occurs. Alternatively, a student could use a tablet computer, handheld digital device, or clicker. An example of a simple recording chart is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>9:30  9:55 11:10 1:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>9:15 10:45 10:55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some students are intrinsically enthused and motivated by the process of self-monitoring. Extra attention from the teacher and a choice of reinforcers serve to strengthen the process and encourage the student to succeed. Discussion between the teacher and student encourages clarification of the system and what it is hoped will be achieved. Specification of the appropriate aspects of behavior is an important component for success. To begin with, some practice sessions allow the student and teacher to check that they are in agreement about the interpretation and the records kept. Once the process and definitions are clear, the student is able to self-monitor without supervision. After an extended period of time it is expected that the student's behavior will be modified. After a phase in which the student makes accurate and reliable records of behavior, and the teacher makes occasional reminders if needed, the student becomes completely independent at self-monitoring and reinforcers such as rewards may be phased out.

Investigating “Positive Peer Review” to support students helping students

Positive peer review promotes a classroom culture where students are encouraged to observe and report good behavior and achievements from their classmates. Children seem to learn quickly, without encouragement from the teacher, how to report on examples of negative behavior by their peers. This is a phenomenon often referred to as tattling. The word tootling is used to describe the process by which students are trained.
to report upon prosocial behaviors. Students are rewarded by the teacher for acting as intermediaries and reporting instances of good behavior from peers who are struggling to make a positive impact. This way, teachers are presented with more opportunities to acknowledge the positive behaviors of students who need more encouragement. Students who favorably report on their peers are encouraged to change their opinions by recognizing the good side of those who are in danger of developing negative reputations. An added bonus can be an overall increase in the number of spontaneous interactions in the classroom. Webster (n.d.) explains, based upon the original work of Richard T. Boon & Vicky G. Spencer, a step by step process to introduce tootling.

1. Introduce and define positive peer reporting

- Students should understand that tootling is the opposite of tattling or telling tales and that rewards, in the form of tokens, points, or special activities will be extended to students who report examples of positive behavior.

2. Explain the procedure

- Each week, the target student is selected by drawing a name at random.
- Students are given a time during the day when they have the opportunity to report upon positive behavior for the target student.
- Tootles are recorded at any time on a card taped to each student’s desk.
- The reinforcements may be designed as individual or group awards for a cumulative number of tootles.
- Over a number of weeks, as students become more adept at using the process, the teacher may decide to intervene and focus the requirements for acceptable tootles.

3. Monitor the effects of the intervention

- The teacher may use a chart to gather data about the frequency of positive and negative interventions in the classroom.
- Special attention may be given to the peer status of students who are known to be socially challenged in the classroom.
Conclusion

According to Charlotte Danielson's criteria in The Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument (2011), the proficient teachers are aware that their primary function is to create a positive learning environment in which students flourish and make significant progress towards the stated instructional outcomes. In order to perform the pedagogical aspect of their role, the teacher has to establish, with student input to the process, acceptable codes of behavior for students. A classroom management plan and accompanying daily routines serve to create a safe environment for students and save the teacher's energy for learning related tasks. Many behavioral management techniques and strategies are available to teachers. Students who challenge the teacher and peers with inappropriate behavior are in need of support and redirection. Only after gaining control and respect in the classroom, with students willing to follow, can a teacher effectively deliver curriculum.
References


