

Supporting Positive Behaviour in Alberta Schools



A classroom approach

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The primary audience for this document is:

Teachers	✓
Administrators	✓
Behavioural consultants	✓
Other school staff	✓



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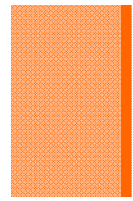
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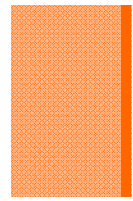
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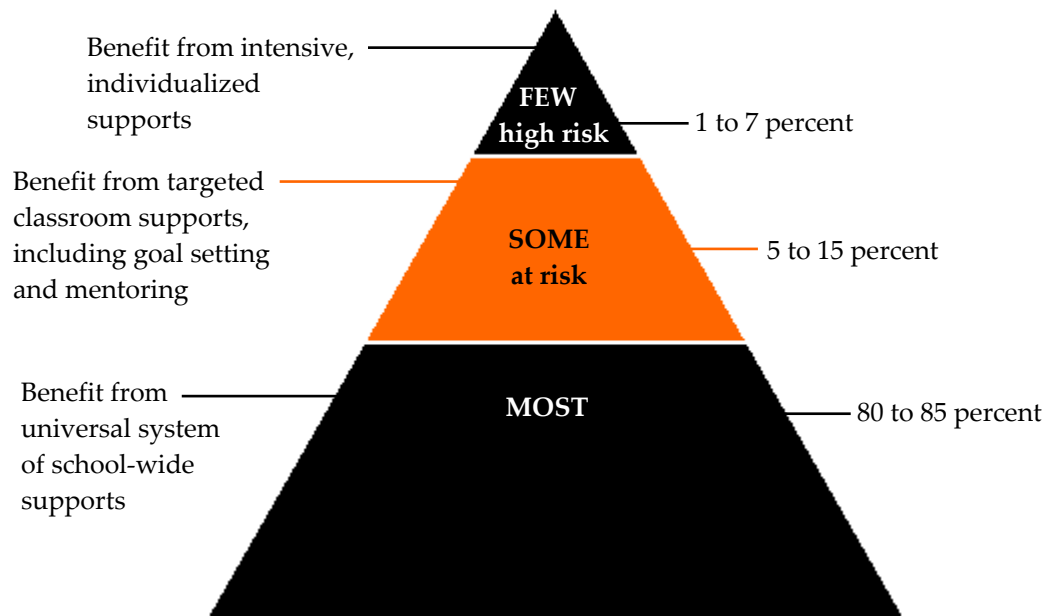
Introduction

Drawing on current research and best practices, this second part of the three-part resource, *Supporting Positive Behaviour in Alberta Schools*, provides information and strategies for systematically teaching, supporting and reinforcing positive behaviour in the classroom.

This proactive approach to classroom management is designed to provide teachers with effective strategies to improve behavioural outcomes in their classrooms. The goal of this approach is to facilitate academic achievement and healthy social development of students in a safe, supportive learning environment.

Behaviour issues in the classroom can interfere with learning, instruction and the overall climate of the classroom. Effective classroom management creates and maintains a predictable learning environment in which students and teachers enjoy positive relationships, students are ready to learn and teachers are able to teach.

The following pyramid model illustrates the behavioural issues in a typical student population. Studies show that 80 to 85 percent of students generally meet the school's behavioural expectations. Another 5 to 15 percent chronically do not meet expectations and are at risk of developing severe behaviour disabilities. One to 7 percent have behaviour disabilities severe enough that they cannot meet behavioural expectations without intensive, individualized interventions.



Three-tiered model of positive behaviour support

The three tiers of this model represent a continuum of increasingly intense interventions that correspond to the responsiveness of students.

- All students will benefit from a **universal system** of interventions, and for 80 to 85 percent these supports are sufficient to maintain positive behaviour.
- More **targeted interventions**, such as social skills instruction and behavioural management, will benefit the 5 to 15 percent of students who are at risk of developing serious behaviour problems.
- **Intensive, individualized supports** will benefit the 1 to 7 percent of students who do not respond to universal and/or targeted interventions.

This three-part resource, *Supporting Positive Behaviour in Alberta Schools* is organized around this model. The three sections deal with:

- a **universal** school-wide approach
- a **targeted** classroom management approach
- an **intensive**, individualized approach.

This second part of the resource focuses on the classroom approach. Teachers may also wish to refer to the other two parts of the resource to create a more comprehensive approach to supporting positive behaviour.

Understanding key elements

Research identifies ten key elements of effective classroom management that support positive behaviour. These elements are interrelated and overlapping, and may have differing degrees of importance, depending on the needs, strengths and priorities of a particular classroom.

- 1 **Positive relationships** between teachers and individual students, among all students in the classroom, and between teachers and parents
- 2 **Classroom organization**, including the physical environment and structures and routines that foster learning and encourage positive behaviour throughout the school day
- 3 **Differentiated instruction** that considers the individual learning needs of students and creates learning situations that match students' current abilities, learning preferences and specific needs, but also stretches their abilities and encourages them to try new ways of learning
- 4 **Classroom behavioural expectations** that are clearly articulated, aligned with school-wide expectations and consistent throughout the school day
- 5 **Social skills instruction** that demonstrates and directly teaches specific classroom behavioural expectations
- 6 **Positive reinforcement** for individual students and groups of students who demonstrate positive behaviours
- 7 **Fair and predictable consequences** for individual students who demonstrate negative behaviours that adversely affect them, others and/or the classroom environment
- 8 **Administrative and collegial support** that creates a team approach to positive behaviour supports throughout the school and in each classroom
- 9 **Gathering data to understand student behaviour**, and using observation and analysis to identify students' strengths and needs, identify the areas for improved classroom management and measure progress over time
- 10 **Targeted supports for students at-risk**, for the small percentage of students who are at risk of developing increasingly challenging behaviours

Positive relationships

“The quality of the teacher–student relationship is the single most important factor to consider when rethinking classroom management.”

– Patricia Sequeira Belvel and Maya Marcia Jordan,
Rethinking Classroom Management

Positive relationships are the foundation of any classroom-based approach to positive behaviour supports. They are the key to a safe and caring classroom climate that invites and supports positive behaviour and skilled problem solving. Relationships between teachers and students, among students, and between teachers and parents are all important contributors to the classroom environment.

Teacher–student relationships

The teacher–student relationship, which is extremely important, takes time and trust to build. Both parties must believe they are being treated with dignity and respect, and there must be a balance between the teacher’s role as classroom leader and his or her expression of interest in each student.

Students trust and respect teachers who establish clear behavioural expectations and meaningful goals for learning and behaviour, and who follow up consistently. Students know that their teacher cares about them and their individual needs when:

- learning goals are flexible enough to accommodate differences between and among students
- the teacher makes an effort to understand each student’s individual interests, strengths, needs, learning preferences and personality.

Sample strategies to win over students

- *Meet students at the door at the beginning of every day.*
Teachers can use this strategy to informally engage students individually, ask how they are doing, gauge their emotional state, have a brief conversation and/or just generally make them feel welcome.
- *Demonstrate a personal interest in students.*
Take time in class and in the hallways or on the playground to talk with students about their lives outside of school.

- *Use students' names positively.*
Students of any age generally respond positively when a teacher smiles at them and acknowledges them by name, especially in the hallway or on the playground. This simple action lets students know they matter and are valued as individuals within the school community.
- *Smile, use humour and show enthusiasm.*
Being able to see the lighter side and injecting humour into the day goes a long way toward bringing students on side and diffusing potentially negative interactions. Let students know when you are particularly enjoying the teaching role.

Noncontingent positive reinforcement¹

Stephen Covey (1989) describes noncontingent positive reinforcement as deposits in another person's emotional bank account. Many students, and particularly those with behaviour disabilities, have emotional bank accounts that are close to empty. To help these students feel more connected, teachers need to help them build their emotional bank accounts.

Noncontingent positive reinforcement is unconditional and independent. That is, students do not have to demonstrate specific behaviours in order to earn it.

Noncontingent positive reinforcement can be as simple as smiling at a student at the beginning of class, asking a student who enjoys attention to write key words on the board during a class discussion, or sharing a snack or favourite story as a wrap-up to the week. Ensure that noncontingent reinforcement is appropriate for the student's age, interests and personal preferences.

Noncontingent reinforcement is an essential component of the teacher–student relationship. It forms the foundation for trust and security, and provides bonding and connections that teachers and students need. It helps students learn that demonstrating respect and caring is a natural aspect of human interaction.

Noncontingent reinforcement:

- sets the stage for intrinsic motivation
- forms a foundation of trust
- fosters a sense of security
- creates a comfortable climate
- creates a positive association with the teacher

1. Adapted from Patricia Sequeira Belvel and Maya Marcia Jordan, *Rethinking Classroom Management: Strategies for Prevention, Intervention, and Problem Solving*, pp. 38, 41, copyright 2003 by Corwin Press, Inc. Adapted by permission of Corwin Press, Inc.

- increases the probability of cooperation
- models positive actions for students to emulate.

Proximity

Teachers who move around the classroom and teach from various areas and near different students:

- send the message that they are actively involved and aware of all behaviour in the room
- build a sense of connection with students and communicate that the teacher is interested and available
- provide equal access to the teacher for all students
- have more opportunities to prevent negative behaviour and/or quickly deal with problems.

Effective communication²

A number of variables affect how students perceive and respond to a teacher's communication. To effectively communicate expectations and requests to students:

- use polite requests rather than questions; for example, "Please start your work"
- move close to students when giving directions—the optimal distance is approximately one metre
- look students in the eye (considering cultural differences and not insisting on eye contact if it makes the student uncomfortable)
- use a quiet voice
- give students at least 10 seconds to respond before repeating a request or adding a new request
- ask only twice, and then follow through with a correction; the more often a request is made, the less the likelihood of gaining cooperation
- make only one request at a time
- remain calm and unemotional
- make more start requests ("do") than stop requests ("don't"). If the majority of requests are not start requests, consider clarifying behavioural expectations and using stronger prompts
- verbally reinforce students when they demonstrate cooperation. This will increase cooperation in the future.

2. Adapted with permission from Sopris West Educational Services. *The Tough Kid Book: Practical Classroom Management Strategies*, by Ginger Rhode, William R. Jenson and H. Kenton Reavis © 1998, p. 61.

Verbal limits³

When students are not meeting classroom behavioural expectations or following agreed-upon procedures, describe the appropriate behaviour with a neutral body posture and tone of voice, and without using students' names. Verbal limit setting has four basic forms.

1. **Prompt with questioning intonation:** "Everyone has their math book open?" Say this declaratively, as a prompt, not a question. If you ask a question ("Will you open your books?"), you may receive an answer you don't want.
2. **Hint:** "Everything should be off your desks." This statement includes everyone in the room.
3. **"Excuse me":** For example, to respectfully break habits of interrupting, you could say, "Hold on for a minute, Mel. We can't hear you because someone else is speaking."
4. **I-message:** Saying "I need" or "I want" is stronger and more assertive than the other verbal limit-setting techniques. For example, "I need everyone to sit down."

Student–student relationships

Building and fostering relationships among students creates a feeling of community, which can make a difference in the behaviour and learning of each and every student in the class. Students need to learn to:

- recognize the strengths and skills that each individual brings to the classroom
- look for opportunities to build on those skills and support each other in areas of need
- respect and show appreciation for each other, which includes listening to one another and disagreeing in appropriate ways.

Sample strategies to build positive student–student relationships

- *Use flexible grouping.*
Create regular opportunities for students to learn with and from all of the students in the class, rather than just their best friends or the students they feel most comfortable with. This approach fosters a climate of acceptance and openness to the varied strengths, interests and challenges among students in the class. Ensure students have opportunities to work independently, with different partners, in small groups and in larger groups throughout the school day.

3. Adapted from Patricia Sequeira Belvel and Maya Marcia Jordan, *Rethinking Classroom Management: Strategies for Prevention, Intervention, and Problem Solving*, p. 174, copyright 2003 by Corwin Press, Inc. Adapted by permission of Corwin Press, Inc.

- *Teach skills for cooperative learning.*
Most students with behaviour and social difficulties find cooperative group work challenging. They need specific instruction about roles, responsibilities and the expected outcomes of group tasks.
 - Teach specific roles such as recorder, timer, reporter.
 - Modify individual students' roles and responsibilities to accommodate their needs and strengths.
 - Directly teach specific formats for different tasks such as how to brainstorm a list of ideas or how to interview a partner.
 - Provide visual or written organizers for each task.
 - Use timers and clocks when there are specific time requirements.
 - Initially assign cooperative work that involves brief and preferred tasks, and then gradually move into longer times and more complex tasks.
- *Teach a vocabulary of appreciation.*
Explicitly discuss, demonstrate and model how to give positive feedback to other students and how to graciously accept compliments and positive comments.

School bonding

Most students become emotionally attached and committed to their school and classroom. To be engaged members of the school community, students need to see the school, both the physical building and the community of people inside, as safe and welcoming. They also want to feel pride in their school and to play a role in making the school a positive place. They want to be active and valued members of the school community.

Fostering a relationship between students and their learning is also a critical element of successful school bonding. Students need to see value in what they are being asked to learn. They need to feel they have a connection to their learning and some control over the learning process. Teachers should provide flexible and meaningful learning goals that encourage students to take ownership of their learning.

Staff can promote school bonding by having students work with each other across grades. For example, they can organize cross-age activities such as buddy reading, and plan school-wide special events, assemblies and annual celebrations.

Sample strategies to increase school bonding

- *Create classroom jobs.*
At the beginning of the year, brainstorm a list of classroom jobs such as taking attendance, handing out papers, feeding the class pet and tidying the

reading corner. Assign jobs randomly or ask students to apply for the jobs they want. Create a simple job application, including the name of the job, why the student wants the job and the skills he or she brings to it. Students can also indicate two other jobs they are interested in. Consider rotating responsibilities every week, month or term so that students can try a variety of jobs throughout the year.

- *Display samples of student work.*
Display drawings, writing exercises or completed assignments in a prominent place in the classroom. Rotate the displays frequently and ensure that at some point during the month each student has at least one piece of well-done work completed and displayed.



Visit the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) Web site at www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/special/aisi/pdfs/FINAL_School_Climate.pdf for a research brief on school climate.

Teacher–parent relationships

When teachers and parents communicate regularly and work collaboratively, they are more likely to develop a degree of trust. Then, if a behavioural concern arises, they are more inclined to respect and support each other.

Parents are important members of the learning team. Look for ways to involve them in supporting positive classroom behaviour.

Sample strategies to build positive parent–teacher relationships

- *Involve parents and students in learning conferences.*
Many schools are replacing parent–teacher interviews with a conference format that more actively involves both students and parents. In the conference format:
 - the student can contribute to the discussion, and the parent can listen and ask questions and give feedback
 - participants are encouraged to focus on things that are going well, celebrate the student’s learning strengths and set new goals together.
- *Share good news with parents.*
When communicating with parents about their children’s behaviour, include information about what is going well and the positive things the student shows an interest in.



Visit the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) Web site at www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/special/aisi/pdfs/FINAL_Parental_Involvement.pdf for a research brief on parental involvement.

Classroom organization

“... smooth well-running classrooms where time, space and materials are used effectively maximize the opportunities students have to engage ...”

– Carolyn Evertson and Catherine Randolph,
Classroom Management in the Learning-centered Classroom

Structure classroom space

The physical arrangement of the furniture, supplies and resources in a classroom is a critical factor in promoting positive behaviour. In a well-designed classroom, the teacher can see all of the students and they can all see the teacher. The students can also see presentations and displays such as agendas, behavioural expectations, strategy posters and information on the board. Everyone can move about freely. High-traffic areas run smoothly without congestion.

Also, materials are easily accessible and stored in an orderly way. Organizing materials so they are easy to identify and easy to access can go a long way towards lowering frustrations, avoiding misunderstandings and making the best use of instructional time.

A well-designed classroom:

- is strategically planned for teacher and student movement
- supports classroom procedures for individual and group instruction
- facilitates the teacher’s efforts to make contact with individual students while also “working the crowd”
- considers the individual needs of students and fosters a sense of security
- minimizes distractions and encourages increased time on task
- makes students feel they have equal access to the teacher
- reduces frustrations for both students and teacher.

Sample strategies for organizing materials

- Ensure that students have their names prominently displayed on all personal supplies.
- Organize desks or lockers with labels and designated places for certain items.

- Establish a regular time for all students to clean and organize their desks and lockers. Some students may benefit from a visual “map” or picture of an organized desk or locker.
- Encourage students to use folders and binders with different colours or labels to separate work or materials for each class and/or subject.
- Encourage students to use pocket folders with new work on one side and graded work and class notes on the other.
- Teach students to ask themselves before each transition, “Do I have everything I need?”
- Be prepared to supply extra copies of misplaced handouts or materials.

Plan for movement

When students are able to move around the room naturally and purposefully, they feel less anxious, more alert and in some cases more relaxed. Students who can move around during class are better able to learn. Students have varying needs for movement but most will become restless or uncomfortable if seated for more than 20 minutes at a time. Even a 60-second movement break at regular intervals can help them refocus.

Sample strategies for creating opportunities for movement

- *Use active responses as part of instructional activities.*
For example, students may turn and talk with a partner, stand up to indicate agreement or move to different parts of the room to use materials. Allow students to work at different stations such as at a large table, the board, an easel or chart paper on a wall.
- *Look for nondistracting ways for students to move while working at their desks.*
For example, replace a student’s chair with a large ball. Students may bounce gently at their desks while working. Small inflatable seat cushions can also allow students to move without distracting others. Some students may find it helpful to stand while working at their desks. Others may work better sitting at a counter or on a stool.
- *Provide individual students with fidget toys.*
For example, they can keep a squeeze ball, eraser or wooden beads in their pockets to use quietly as needed.
- *Provide stretch or movement breaks as needed, or make them part of the classroom routine.*
Arrange an area in the classroom where students can move around without distracting others. Give students the option of going to this area when they need a stretch break.

- *Ask students who find it difficult to sit for long periods to do regular errands.*
For example, these students could pass out papers or put materials away. Older students might find it more comfortable and/or age-appropriate to deliver materials to the office or the library.
- *Establish an “I need a break” card system.*
If an individual student often needs a break, consider setting up a system of printed signal cards. This strategy requires teamwork and planning. For example:
 1. Individual students keep a specific number of file cards at their desks that say, “I need a break.”
 2. The student places a card on his or her desk to signal the teacher.
 3. The teacher acknowledges the request and, if the time is appropriate, exchanges the request card for a card that says something like, “Lee needs a five-minute break.”
 4. The student carries this card to the office or library and gives it to an adult such as the school secretary or librarian.
 5. The student spends the next five minutes engaging in a prearranged relaxing activity such as working on a puzzle or looking at a favourite book.
 6. When the time is up, the supervising adult thanks the student for the visit, comments on positive behaviour and gives the student a card to return to the classroom teacher. The card might say something like, “I enjoyed having Lee come to the office for a five-minute break.”

Students could receive a set number of “I need a break” cards at the beginning of the school day (e.g., one to four) and be responsible for planning when they will use them.

- *Ensure that students go out at recess and participate in daily physical activities.*
Students need physical activity to expend excess energy and restlessness. If a student has difficulty handling the stimulation of leaving the room with the whole group, consider delaying his or her exit until a minute or two after the other students have left.
- *Have some students rehearse before recess or other activities.*
If individual students find it difficult to manage recess or other less-structured activities, have them take a few minutes to rehearse. For example, just before recess the student can talk through these types of planning questions with a teacher, teacher assistant or a peer.
 1. Who are you going to play with at recess?

2. What kind of activity are you going to do?
3. If you have difficulty, what will you do?

Consider seating assignments

Seating students in strategic areas can increase the opportunities to reinforce positive behaviour and prevent or manage problem behaviours in a low-key way.

- Some students benefit from sitting close to the teacher, including those who:
 - need additional teacher prompts to overcome distractions
 - tend to withdraw from learning and social interaction
 - are struggling with aggression (these students also need some degree of separation from other students).
- Students who are overly dependent on adult approval or who tend to manipulate adults may benefit from working among students who are more self-directed. These other students can serve as positive role models.

Also consider the dynamics between students. Which students should be separated? Which students will benefit from sitting together because they share the same first language or can inspire confidence in one another?

Establish routines

Routines are prescribed lists of steps for particular actions or tasks, with a clear beginning and end. Students who have learned to follow predictable classroom routines are more independent and socially competent, and they have an increased sense of personal security. As a result, these students are more successful learners and have a reduced need for constant adult assistance.

Whenever possible, teach routines to a whole class rather than to just one student. However, individual students may also need extra teaching and guided assistance.

Teach routines directly, at the level of students' understanding, and provide visual reminders and reinforcement until all students have mastered them. Monitor behaviour regularly and look for ways to adjust and/or create routines that encourage and support positive behaviour and reduce problem behaviour.

Routines should be:

- useful to the student
- well-defined

- at the student's ability level
- visually presented as well as directly taught
- reinforced during teaching
- generalized to other environments whenever possible
- communicated to other school staff to ensure consistent expectations.

Examples of essential classroom routines include:

- managing personal and classroom materials
- attention cues and expectations for listening
- recording, completing and handing in homework
- effectively using time during individual work periods
- distributing and collecting assignments
- library use and borrowing classroom materials
- transitions within the classroom and between classes
- entering and exiting the school and classroom
- bathroom routines
- waiting for help or to take turns
- lunch
- asking for help or to leave the room
- using computer equipment
- making a phone call home
- setting up and using gym equipment, and changing clothing for gym class
- cooperative or partner work.

By actively monitoring student behaviour, teachers can determine the times when routines would be helpful. For example:

- If students take a long time to settle down after the lunch break, the teacher could have them come in, take out a book and read silently for five to ten minutes. This routine helps students to refocus and prepare for the next learning activity.
- If students are often restless during the last few minutes of the school day, the teacher could plan predictable and focused activities during this time, such as reading aloud to the students or having them write in their learning logs.

Signal to begin

Teachers typically use a signal to gain attention at the beginning of a class, activity or transition. The most effective signals are limited to one or two unambiguous cues such as a chime or clapping sequence. They can be visual (holding a sign or other prop) or aural. The most reliable signals do not depend on the classroom context (e.g., flicking the lights on and off), so they can be used outside the classroom as well.

Follow the signal to begin with a pause to scan the room to see who is focused. Consider asking students to respond to the signal by raising their hands, looking toward the teacher or making a verbal commitment such as “I’m listening.” Use a low-key method of gaining the attention of students who are not yet focused, and then offer a positive reinforcement such as a smile and/or thank you in response to quiet and visible attention.

Transitions between activities

Routines are needed when students are changing activities or settings; for example, moving from one activity to another, one location to another or one subject to another. An elementary or junior high classroom can have more than 30 transitions a day.

Sample strategies for transitions between activities

- *Build a preview of the day into the regular classroom routine.*
Students find it helpful to know the planned sequence of activities and expectations about time.
- *Use auditory cues.*
Use bells or egg timers to signal when to take a break or return to work.
- *Embed cues in the instructional routine.*
For example, five minutes before the dismissal bell, say “You have five more minutes before class ends so take out your agendas and write down your homework assignment.”
- *Work with individual students to establish specific parameters for transitions, and provide consistent and friendly reminders.*
For example, when students are leaving the classroom to go to the gymnasium, review:
 - how they will walk (quietly and at what pace)
 - with whom (by themselves or with an assigned partner, in the middle of the line or at the end of the line)
 - where (on right side of the hall).Students can practise this routine ahead of time.

- *Provide individual students with additional support during activity transitions.*
When moving from one location to another, give individual students a purpose to help them focus on something positive while moving. For example, ask a student to carry the teacher’s clipboard to the gym or library books to the library.
- *Review behavioural expectations for a special presentation or visit by a guest speaker.*
Large gatherings and performances can be challenging situations for some students. Brainstorm what being a good audience member looks like and sounds like shortly before these situations.

Sample strategies for teaching students how to wait for help

- *Encourage students to continue with easier parts of tasks while waiting.*
For example, they could underline, highlight or rephrase directions before beginning a task.
- *Teach students to jot down key words or questions.*
This strategy will help students remember what they want to say as they wait for their turn. Sticky notes can be great tools for marking the spot in a book or writing down key words.
- *Give students substitute verbal or motor responses to make while waiting.*
For example, students may look at a book, colour or use worry beads.

Using momentum

Before asking students to do something they are less likely to want to do, first ask them to do several time-limited tasks they like. For example, before asking them to complete a written assignment or attempt a challenging math equation, have them solve a riddle on the board, share three ideas with a partner or make a pattern with math blocks.

Build momentum by starting the school day or a particular lesson with motivating activities such as reading a story. Whenever possible, also end a learning session with an activity students enjoy.

Response to particular behaviours

When certain behaviours repeatedly interfere with instruction, develop responses that minimize or circumvent the behaviour. Rather than trying to change students’ behaviour, change your own behaviour.

For example, persistent calling out during classroom instruction can be frustrating for both the teacher and students who want to participate in discussion. Although calling out can have a place in the classroom (for example, during brainstorming activities), it can interfere with instruction, disrupt group discussion and allow a

small number of students to dominate and discourage less assertive students from participating. To minimize call-outs, be clear about when and how students should respond. For example, let them know that they will have time to think about their response and then be asked to discuss their answer with a partner.

Other creative ways to minimize call-outs include tossing a small ball to individual students who then respond, or randomly selecting a card from a box containing cards with all the students' names. These strategies encourage students to pay attention to the question and think about their response since they might be called upon. If individual students are uncomfortable with this approach, tell them in advance which question they will be asked and provide some "think time" so they can formulate a response.

Differentiated instruction

“There is nothing so unequal as the equal treatment of students of unequal ability.”

– Plato, *The Republic*

Individual students come to the classroom with varying interests, experiences, developmental maturity, background knowledge and abilities. Therefore, teachers are constantly challenged to make learning activities flexible enough to engage each and every student. Accommodating these differences does not mean attempting to offer a different course to each student, but students do need choices as well as varying instructional and assessment methods.

Many students with challenging behaviour also have difficulty with academic work. Their behaviour interferes with successful learning, and in many cases they also have difficulty with work habits and attitudes toward learning. To be successful and engaged learners, many of these students will need positive learning experiences that are personalized to their own learning preferences, interests and needs.

In *Brain-based Learning with Class*, Politano and Paquin (2000) describe an effective approach for accommodating student differences that they call “shared experience, individual response.” Instruction begins with a whole-group activity and then students choose from a variety of activities designed to process their thinking and represent their learning. Students can work together on the same concept but in ways that best suit their learning strengths and developmental stages. Younger students need more variety in instruction and fewer choices for responses while older students need less variety in instruction and more choices for responses.

Plan for differentiation

Planning for the diverse learning needs of students involves making informed decisions about content, materials and resources, instructional strategies, and assessment and evaluation procedures.

Learning environment

- What steps will I take to create a supportive learning environment?
- What classroom management procedures do I need to introduce?

Grouping

- What learning activities are best done individually, in pairs, in small groups or by the whole class?
- How will I determine the pairings and groupings?
- What transitions will ensure a smooth flow from one activity to the next?

Learning activities

- How will I provide lesson overviews?
- Which graphic organizers will I use?
- What strategies will I use to activate, clarify and extend prior knowledge?
- How will students make connections between what they know and what they will be learning?
- What key words and concepts are essential?
- Which strategies will introduce and reinforce these words and concepts?
- What are the critical questions students need to think about?
- How will students apply their learning?
- What extension activities will reinforce and extend learning?
- Do these learning activities offer a variety of ways to demonstrate learning?
- How will I reinforce instructions; e.g., key words on board, printed instructions, labelled diagrams on board?
- How will students use handouts and other materials?
- Does this learning activity allow for a frequent change of pace?
- Are there opportunities for discussion, writing, drawing and viewing?
- What alternative activities can I use if students need a change of pace or need to refocus their attention?

Use a problem-solving approach

Some students misbehave because the instruction is too difficult or the learning activities and/or materials do not engage them. Effective teachers adapt instruction using a problem-solving approach that involves:

- identifying the issue (what is causing the problem for the student)
- generating alternative solutions
- trying one or two solutions at a time to see if there is a difference in learning.

Trying and testing simple instructional adaptations can increase success and participation for students who are not sufficiently engaged or not learning.

Increase student engagement

Students are more likely to concentrate and make an effort when their schoolwork is personally meaningful and engaging. Students tend to respond positively to clarity, structure, predictability and positive reinforcement. They also need clear and concise directions and ongoing monitoring to encourage them to complete assignments and activities.

Sample strategies for structuring activities and assignments

- *Break long tasks into shorter, easier-to-manage steps.*
Students vary in their ability to attend, process and remember concepts and texts.

To keep activities and assignments brief:

- cut the assignment pages into small segments and give out one at a time
 - fold under part of the page or cover it partially to block or mask some parts of the assignment; encourage the student to use a “window” to show one problem or piece of information at a time.
- *Introduce students to general information before working on specific information.*
Some students need to see the big picture first; for them, all details carry the same degree of importance. Some students also need explicit instruction about how to identify the overarching idea and supporting details.
- *Design learning activities that require a high response rate from students.*
For example:
 - ask students to fill in a study guide or partial outline of information as the class proceeds
 - in large group instruction, provide individual white boards, chalkboards or cards for students’ responses
 - vary questioning to accommodate responses from the whole class, partners and individuals
 - structure partner activities so that students can read aloud to each other, question together, confirm understanding and encourage each other to remain on task.
- *Incorporate students’ interests into assignments.*
Encourage students to make individual choices—of topics for their activities, the order in which they complete tasks and the materials they use.

- *Incorporate attention-getting devices into assignments.*
For example:
 - vary the texture, shape and colour of materials
 - provide students with a variety of coloured pens, pencils and markers
 - turn tasks into activities or games; for example, playing *Jeopardy* when reviewing material for a test.
- *Have students demonstrate their understanding of learning outcomes in a variety of ways.*
For example, when assessing students' knowledge of factual information, allow them to choose to give an oral presentation, do an audio or videotaped project, prepare a news report or present a dramatization.

Teach for task completion

Some students need explicit instruction and support in order to work more independently and complete tasks.

Sample strategies for teaching task completion

- *Break learning tasks into manageable chunks.*
Set short time limits for completing each portion of the task. An egg timer or stopwatch may help motivate some students (although some might find the timer more stimulating than the task). Older students can use less obvious timers such as their watch. When possible, involve students in setting the timeframe to help them develop a sense of the amount of time particular kinds of tasks will likely take.
- *Give feedback on assignments as soon as possible.*
For example, ask students to signal when they've completed a certain number of questions so you can quickly scan their work and let them know if they are on track.

Adapt instruction

To adapt instruction to better meet student needs, consider adjusting:

- the level of participation
- the difficulty of tasks
- the size of tasks
- the way instruction is delivered
- the amount of support provided
- the time allotted for completion.

When choosing adaptations for individual students, consider these types of questions.

- Will this adaptation enhance the student's level of class participation?
- Is this adaptation the least intrusive (i.e., least interfering or restrictive) option?
- Will this adaptation give the student a variety of options, or will the same adaptation be used for all or most activities (e.g., always do fewer tasks or work at a different level of difficulty)?
- How does this adaptation ensure an appropriate level of difficulty and challenge for the student?
- How can the student use this adaptation in other classes or activities?
- How will this adaptation lead to more independent effort?



Visit the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) Web site at http://education.alberta.ca/apps/aisi/literature/pdfs/FINAL_Differentiated_Instruction.pdf for a research brief on differentiated instruction.

“Clearly stated expectations convey to students what teachers want. In addition, they tend to guide student behaviour and strengthen teacher monitoring.”

– Jeff Sprague and Annemieke Golly, *Best Behavior: Building Positive Behavior Support in Schools*

Teaching classroom behavioural expectations begins on the first day of the school year. These expectations, framed in positive language, apply to all activities at all times.

Three to five classroom behavioural expectations are sufficient at any grade level. They should be posted in a conspicuous place in the classroom and reviewed regularly. Specific expectations may vary slightly from class to class but should align with school-wide expectations.

Clear classroom behavioural expectations:

- provide students with a sense of security
- contribute to a positive climate
- increase academic learning time
- reduce classroom stress
- enable students to monitor themselves
- enable teachers to facilitate and support positive behaviour
- support good communication with parents and other school staff, including substitute teachers.

Although *rules* and *expectations* are often viewed as interchangeable terms, *expectation* has a more positive connotation. The implication is that expectations are tools for helping as opposed to enforcing, and involve commitment rather than compliance. Expectations tell students, “We believe this is how you can be.”

Respond consistently to students who meet behavioural expectations and be flexible when students do not meet them, keeping in mind their individual needs and the context of the behaviour. Most students who do not meet expectations benefit from feedback and opportunities to correct their behaviour. For example, “We walk, not run, in this classroom. Return to your desk, please, and walk quietly to the coat rack.”

Some students who do not meet expectations have not yet learned the skills they need to do so. They need additional coaching and practice. For example, “Inside voices are quiet so they don’t interfere with other people’s learning. Please turn to your desk partner and practise what a ‘quiet voice’ sounds and feels like. I’ll do it first, you listen and then you try it.”

A few students may challenge the classroom expectations. These students require individualized approaches that may or may not include negative consequences.

Example of expectations for an elementary classroom

In this classroom:

1. We follow the teacher’s directions.
2. We stay in our work areas.
3. We keep hands and feet to ourselves.
4. We speak kindly to others.

Teach expectations

Take time during the first weeks of school to frequently review classroom expectations and ensure that students understand them. For example, create a triple T-chart, identify one of the expectations and brainstorm with students what meeting that expectation looks like, sounds like and feels like.

Listening while others are speaking

Looks like	Sounds like	Feels like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eyes are on the speaker • mouths are closed • hands are still 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only one voice talking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the speaker feels like what he or she is saying is important • both the speaker and the audience are respected

Younger students can learn about behavioural expectations by drawing pictures of appropriate behaviour, presenting them to the class and then posting the pictures as friendly reminders.

Develop activity procedures⁴

Activity procedures are detailed written statements of what will occur each time a certain type of activity takes place in the classroom. For example, the social skills used in cooperative groups are quite different from those used to listen to a guest speaker.

Teaching specific activity procedures:

- maintains consistent positive behaviour
- provides students with a sense of security
- reminds the teacher and students about what to do
- provides a focus for setting limits
- prompts self-direction and less dependence on the teacher
- increases the time available for learning.

Consider these types of questions when developing activity procedures.

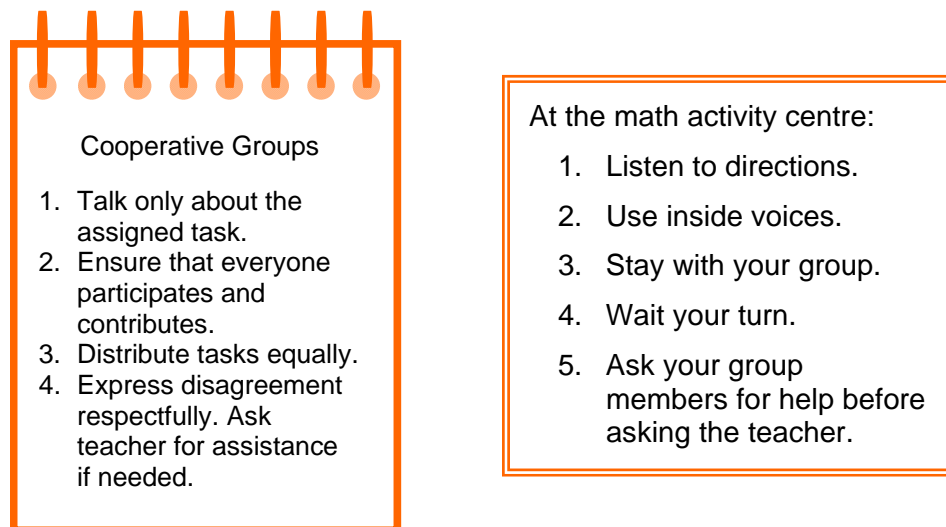
1. How will students work?
 - whole groups
 - small groups
 - partners
 - individually
2. How will they communicate?
 - show of hands
 - in writing
 - talk with partner
 - one at a time in group
3. How will they ask for help?
 - raise hand
 - use signal card
 - ask other students
4. Where will they work?
 - at their desk
 - at partner's desk
 - at table
 - moving around
5. How long will they have?

4. Adapted from Patricia Sequeira Belvel and Maya Marcia Jordan, *Rethinking Classroom Management: Strategies for Prevention, Intervention, and Problem Solving*, pp. 112, 113, copyright 2003 by Corwin Press, Inc. Adapted by permission of Corwin Press, Inc.

6. What materials will they use? Where are materials stored? How will they be distributed and cleaned up?
7. What should they do when they are finished?
 - begin the next task
 - read silently
 - select an activity
 - visit quietly with partner

Create cueing systems

Use visual cues to reinforce activity procedures for different classroom contexts. The examples below show a flip chart⁵ that lists expectations for certain tasks in a senior high classroom and a list of expectations for working at a math activity centre in an elementary classroom.



Establish general cues that can be used across the subject areas. For example, a set of three coloured cards can be posted on the board and can be moved around to indicate expectations for a certain activity. A red card could signal “No talking,” a blue card could indicate it is time to “Talk to partner or group about activity” and a green card could stand for “Free talking” during such activities as art or indoor recess.

5. Adapted from *Discipline in the Secondary Classroom: A Positive Approach to Behavior Management* (2nd edition) (p. 122) by Randall S. Sprick; copyright © 2006, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reprinted with permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Social skills instruction

“... the very profession of teaching calls on us to try to produce not merely good learners but good people.”

– Alfie Kohn,
“Caring Kids: The Role of the School”

Social skills are essential to the effective functioning of any group or community. All students, including those with behaviour disabilities, benefit from social skills instruction and ongoing reinforcement of their performance of social skills.

Current research indicates that:

- there is a strong correlation between social adjustment and acceptance or rejection by peers
- social skills are a predictor of future academic and social adjustment
- without intervention, social skill deficits increase with age.

In a safe and caring classroom, students can interact comfortably with peers, and learn and practise social skills. Students come to school with varying backgrounds and experiences. Many are uncertain about what the social expectations really are, and they need direct assistance to identify and learn social skills. Students who have behaviour disabilities (or who are at risk of developing such difficulties) have a particular need for targeted social skills instruction and ongoing coaching to help them connect with peers and feel that they belong to the school and classroom community.

Social skills are also an integral part of learner outcomes across the subject areas. For example, a general outcome of Alberta’s English language arts program of studies is that students will respect, support and collaborate with each other. The new social studies program provides many opportunities for students to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that will help them become engaged and responsible citizens. The program emphasizes the importance of diversity and respect for differences, and creates opportunities for students to engage in problem solving and conflict resolution.

McGinnis and Goldstein (1997) outline specific skills for each of five major skill groups.

Skills for classroom learning

- listening
- asking for help
- saying thank you
- bringing materials to class
- following instructions
- completing assignments
- contributing to discussions
- offering to help an adult
- asking a question
- ignoring distractions
- making corrections
- deciding what to do
- setting a goal

Skills for making friends

- introducing yourself
- beginning a conversation
- ending a conversation
- joining in
- playing a game
- asking a favour
- offering to help a classmate
- giving a compliment
- suggesting an activity
- sharing
- apologizing

Skills for dealing with feelings

- knowing your feelings
- expressing your feelings
- recognizing one another's feelings
- showing understanding of another's feelings
- expressing concern for another
- dealing with your anger
- dealing with another's anger
- expressing affection
- dealing with fear
- rewarding yourself

Alternatives to aggression

- using self-control
- asking permission
- responding to teasing
- avoiding trouble
- staying out of fights
- solving problems
- accepting consequences
- dealing with an accusation
- negotiating

Skills for dealing with stress

- dealing with boredom
- deciding what caused a problem
- making a complaint
- answering a complaint
- dealing with losing
- showing sportsmanship
- dealing with being left out
- dealing with embarrassment
- reacting to failure
- accepting no
- relaxing
- dealing with group pressure
- dealing with wanting something that belongs to another person
- making a decision
- being honest

Social skills are best taught one at a time in the environment in which they will be used.

Demonstrate skills

Work with students to identify the steps involved in demonstrating a skill. For example, ask students who are learning about taking turns, “How would we know if two students are taking turns at an activity? What kinds of behaviour would we see and hear?” Record a specific, step-by-step description of the skill on chart paper and post it in the classroom for students to refer to.

Discuss the skill before demonstrating it. Be sure each step is identified and that the steps are presented in the correct sequence, and are clear and unambiguous. Help students to observe the cognitive process involved in carrying out the skill. For example, “I really want to go first but I’ll let John take his turn this time, and I’ll go first in the next game.” Demonstrate at least two different scenarios using the same skill, always ensuring that the scenarios have positive outcomes.

Practise with role-play

In role-play, students practise a skill by acting out situations, without costumes or scripts. Set the context for role-play and allow students to choose their roles. Give them a minimal amount of planning time to discuss the situation, choose different alternatives or reactions and plan a basic scenario. At the conclusion, ask students to discuss how they felt and what they learned. The most important part of role-play is the reflection and discussion that follows.

As students participate in role-play, they are able to:

- practise communication and social skills in a safe, nonthreatening environment
- consider different perspectives and develop empathy by seeing how their decisions might affect others
- solve social problems and explore new ideas.

Sample strategies for using role-play in social skills instruction

- Always have students role-play the positive side of a skill or situation.
- While it may be helpful to discuss negative situations, it is best not to role-play them. The negative role could be inadvertently reinforced if peers find that acting out negative behaviour is funny or entertaining.
- Provide a specific situation.
- Limit the time students have to develop and practise (5 to 10 minutes is usually sufficient).
- Limit the use of costumes and props.
- Provide tips for participating in role-play (see box).
- Provide tips for observing role-play (see box).
- During the role-play, observe how students handle the situations represented and consider the following types of questions.
 - Are concepts expressed accurately, in language and action?
 - Are any students confused or uncertain about the purpose of the role-play, the situation or their roles?
- Provide feedback as soon as possible after completion.
- To extend learning from role-play, consider the following types of questions.
 - What issues were clarified?
 - What misconceptions might have been presented?
 - What questions did the role-play raise?
 - What new information is needed?

- How does this role-play link with future tasks that extend or broaden the topic?

- Face the audience, and speak loudly and clearly.
- Use body language to communicate your message instead of relying on props or costumes.
- Focus on your role-play partners and the message you want to communicate.
- Assess your participation by asking yourself these questions.
 - How am I demonstrating that I understand this role?
 - Are we showing all important aspects of the situation?
 - Are we showing all of the ideas from our planning session?
 - Am I using new skills or concepts correctly?

- Demonstrate good listening by being quiet and attentive.
- Laugh at appropriate moments.
- Do not laugh at the role-play participants.
- Show support by clapping and using positive words of encouragement when the role-play is finished.
- Reflect on the social skill that is being role-played.
- Consider how you might use this skill in your own life.

Teach self-monitoring

To help students transfer the social skills they are learning to their daily lives, have them regularly practise using those skills and then monitor how well they do. For example, select a social skill that a student is doing well with, ask him or her to practise the skill in a specific situation at home or in school and then have the student complete a self-reflection rating scale.

Alternatively, let the student know when he or she will be placed in a situation that requires a specific social skill. Set up the situation and afterwards sit down with the student to discuss and evaluate how well the student did.

As students become more proficient at using a variety of social skills, prompt them to self-monitor throughout the day. Students can self-monitor their use of a target skill at natural breaks in the day, such as recess and lunch. Students who don't give themselves positive ratings should also state the reasons why.

Students can also self-monitor their use of the social skills they are learning in other contexts; for example, on the bus, at soccer practice or at home. Consider setting up a display area where students can post a sheet that records a situation that called on them to use a social skill in, the steps they followed and how successful they were. Provide space for students to record why things went well, or what they might do to be even more effective the next time.

Teach problem-solving approaches

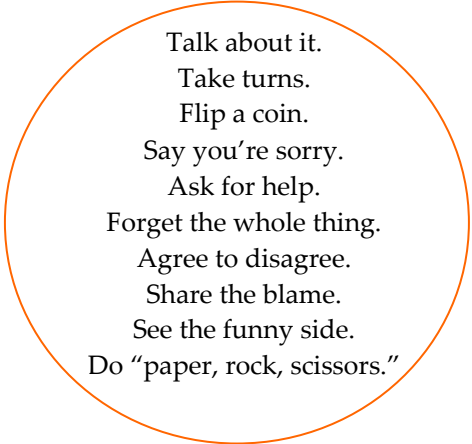
Problems that arise in the classroom can provide opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own behaviour. When students try to solve their problems themselves, they develop confidence and acquire valuable skills that they can use throughout their lives.

Solution Wheel

The Solution Wheel is a strategy that encourages students to take responsibility for their behaviour and find solutions.

Have the class generate a list of solutions that can be used in any number of different conflicts; for example, apologizing, talking it through, taking time to calm down, using an "I" message or choosing something else to do. Once the list is generated, star all suggestions that are respectful and helpful, and work together to select suggestions that everyone can agree on. Students can draw a symbol or picture to represent each solution. Record each of the solutions on the circle and add the symbols. Post the wheel in a visible spot in the classroom.

When a problem arises, ask students to try at least two solutions from the wheel before asking an adult to help solve the problem. Tell school staff, including other teachers, support staff and lunchroom supervisors, about the Solution Wheel so they can remind students to use it when a problem arises.



- Talk about it.
- Take turns.
- Flip a coin.
- Say you're sorry.
- Ask for help.
- Forget the whole thing.
- Agree to disagree.
- Share the blame.
- See the funny side.
- Do "paper, rock, scissors."

Real-life situations

Prompt personal problem solving through questioning, modelling, providing helpful language and reinforcing students' efforts. Use real-life social situations in the classroom to teach social skills through a series of guided questions. For example:

- What do we need to do first?
- What do we need to get before we can start?
- What would happen if you _____?
- Who could we ask?
- Where should we go to _____?
- What would be better, _____ or _____?
- Where did we find _____ last week?
- Where do you need to look for _____?
- Who would be best to help with _____?
- Why would _____ be better than _____?

Problem-solving cards

Use problem-solving cards to help students find new solutions to specific social situations that are causing difficulties in the classroom. Start with easy-to-solve situations. Ask students to answer questions such as:

- What is the difficulty?
- Why could this be a problem?
- What are some possible choices or solutions?
- What are the pros and cons of the choices?
- What might be best and why?
- How could you _____?

Positive reinforcement

“The single most dynamic influence on the brain’s chemistry may be positive feedback, which is essential for the development of a good self-concept ...”

– Robert Sylwester, Emeritus Professor of Education,
University of Oregon

We all need positive reinforcement. Whether or not we are consciously aware of it, reinforcement is the reason we continue to do many things.

Providing students with something they value in order to increase a desired behaviour can be as simple as offering a smile or as complex as setting up a token system. Personal recognition lets students know that teachers are interested in them and how they behave, and are concerned about supporting them in making positive changes in their behaviour and learning. Positive reinforcement also helps to build positive relationships by modelling appropriate ways of interacting with others.

Choose effective reinforcers

Effective positive reinforcement:

- is age-appropriate
- is at the student’s level of functioning
- has administrative and parental support
- is genuine.

Even extravagant rewards cannot motivate students to demonstrate skills they have not learned or do not understand.

Positive reinforcement works best when given immediately after the desired behaviour, or as soon as possible. If the desired behaviour increases as a result, then the reinforcement was positive. If not, then reinforcement did not occur. Many teachers set up a monitoring system to measure whether desired behaviours are increasing.

Watch for unintended consequences. For example, if students engage in negative behaviour to get attention and the teacher’s response provides that attention, the negative behaviour will likely increase.

Specific reinforcers that work for one student or one group of students may not work for another. Finding appropriate reinforcers requires careful attention and an understanding of individual student needs. Be alert for students' interests. Typical reinforcers include extra recess time, extra computer time, caring for a class pet or using special art supplies. Ask students, parents, last year's teachers and other staff what might be an effective reinforcer for a particular student.

Have students complete a checklist of reinforcers to identify the rewards they would like to earn, or create a reinforcement sampler from which students can choose. A sampler menu containing a variety of reinforcers also keeps students motivated.

Always give the reinforcer after the desired behaviour, never before. If the desired behaviour does not occur and the reinforcer has already been given, the result can be conflict and oppositional behaviour.

Effective reinforcers:

- are provided immediately after the behaviour has occurred
- are provided frequently
- are paired with a clear verbal description of the behaviour
- are delivered with enthusiasm
- are varied enough to maintain interest
- are delivered continuously at first, and then more intermittently later on
- can happen on a fixed schedule; e.g., every time a behaviour is observed, or on a variable schedule; e.g., every third time a behaviour is observed
- fade out over time; that is, begin combining material rewards or privileges with social reinforcement and eventually replace material rewards and privileges with social reinforcement such as praise.

Social reinforcement

A smile, comment and/or compliment can go a long way toward increasing or maintaining positive student behaviour. Many students need significant amounts of social reinforcement and positive attention.

Walking around the classroom gives the teacher opportunities to socially reinforce positive behaviour (and to anticipate and proactively handle problems). Being at the door to greet students as they arrive and spending at least half the class time walking among students as they work is perhaps the easiest and most proactive approach a teacher can take to reinforce positive classroom behaviour.

Tangible reinforcement

Many inexpensive, tangible reinforcers are available, including puzzle books, portable board games, sidewalk chalk, playing cards and squishy balls.

Build anticipation

Many reinforcement strategies build motivation (and possibly excitement) around an expected behaviour. When students know what reinforcement they can expect if they demonstrate a particular behaviour, the desired behaviour is likely to occur more quickly and more often.

Anticipation strategies come before the behaviour occurs and serve to increase or maintain that behaviour.

- Tell students what types of behaviour you are looking for.
- Tell them what will happen if they demonstrate this behaviour.
- When they demonstrate the behaviour, give them immediate positive feedback and the reinforcer.

Develop self-management skills

Once a student is doing a consistently good job of demonstrating appropriate behaviour with teacher support, it is time to develop the student's self-management skills. In this process, the teacher initially provides direction and then gradually turns the lead over to the student.

Explain exactly what behaviour the student will monitor and how progress will be assessed; for example, by counting and recording the incidents of positive behaviour. Students may find examples helpful, and they will likely require some guided practice. One method of monitoring is to have students put a plus mark on a chart each time they demonstrate a desired behaviour. They can start monitoring for short periods such as 15-minute intervals and gradually increase the monitoring time to 30 and then 60 minutes, or to one class period.

Randomly check the student's accuracy and build in rewards for accurate counting and recording. For example, at the outset try giving bonus rewards when the teacher's record matches the student's.

Give students ample opportunities to practise self-management, and continually provide positive, corrective feedback.

Self-reinforcement can also be part of an increasingly independent behaviour support program. For example, after comparing their behaviour results with the teacher's, students could give themselves one extra minute of computer time for each "cooperates with others" behaviour recorded.

Self-management skills make students less dependent on the teacher and better able to actively improve their own performance, both in the classroom and in other parts of their lives.

“The best discipline plans strive to limit the need for punishments and negative consequences by having a preventive emphasis.”

– Mark Boynton and Christine Boynton, *The Educator's Guide to Preventing and Solving Discipline Problems*

Negative consequences are necessary when other approaches to problem behaviour are unsuccessful. However, they are not effective when overused.

Establish consequences to inappropriate behaviours ahead of time; for example:

- owing time at recess, lunch or after school to make up for time lost in class
- loss of free choice or other classroom privileges
- moving the student's desk away from peers.

The most effective consequences are:

- immediate (but not disruptive or intensive)
- reasonable (and not embarrassing or frustrating)
- well-planned (but flexible)
- practical and easy to implement.

Since the goal is to reduce the incidence of a specific problem behaviour, teachers have to monitor the effectiveness of negative consequences, and adapt and change them as needed.

Focus on the behaviour

Disapprove of the behaviour, not the student. Use words and/or actions that focus on the problem behaviour. This approach tells the student that the adult believes he or she is capable of behaving in positive ways. It also reduces power struggles that can create a negative atmosphere in the classroom.

Begin with low-key responses

Feedback

Both verbal and nonverbal feedback are effective responses to problem behaviour. For example, say the student's name out loud with an accompanying gesture such as fingers over lips. Or use just one or two words such as, "Jordan, chair" when a student is rocking back on two chair legs.

Actions, not words

When possible, use actions rather than words. For example, if two students are whispering during a lesson, stop talking and wait patiently for them to stop. Then continue the lesson without a reprimand. If a student is bouncing a ball in the gym while instructions are being given, simply walk over and collect the ball until the instructions are finished. Return the ball when the activity starts. Talking less and acting more can often bring about positive classroom change without paying an excessive amount of attention to problem behaviour. Taking action also communicates that learning and teaching are important and need to be the focus.

Proximity

Send a quiet and effective message about behavioural expectations by moving around the classroom while teaching and stopping for a moment near specific students. Standing near a student who is engaged in disruptive and/or attention-seeking behaviour is often enough to end the behaviour. This technique communicates, even without eye contact, that the teacher knows what is happening in the classroom and expects positive behaviour.

Hurdle helping

Offer encouragement, support and assistance to prevent students from becoming frustrated with learning activities. This kind of help can take many forms, from enlisting a peer for support to supplying additional information and hints that will help the student complete the learning task successfully.

Eye contact

Eye contact lets students know the teacher is aware of what they are doing. Eye contact with a smile that says "thank you" will often stop problem behaviour and allow learning to continue without disruption.

Students' names

Using students' names intentionally and positively lets them know they are not anonymous. (This is particularly important at the secondary level.)

To deal with low-level problem behaviour, try including a student's name with the information or instructions being delivered. This technique gets the student's attention and lets him or her know that the teacher has noticed the behaviour.

Be aware that a name can be spoken in any number of ways, with different intonations that communicate different messages.

Gestures

Simple hand or face movements can communicate a message. For example, a nod of the head means "yes," and a smile can communicate "thank you." A teacher of younger students might hold up four fingers to tell a student to keep four chair legs on the floor.

A brief touch on a student's desk or chair is a low-key way of communicating about the need to stop inappropriate behaviour. It is not always necessary to make eye contact, and the touch can be light and quick enough that other students are not likely to notice it.

Gestures can be effectively combined with proximity, eye contact and using the student's name.

Redirecting

Sometimes simply redirecting a student from one area or activity to another area or activity will stop a problem behaviour. Redirecting can be done to:

- create a diversion (e.g., "Time for a break, go and get a drink of water")
- introduce a more appropriate replacement behaviour (e.g., "Please take your library book to the reading corner. You can talk with your friend about it there")
- remove the context that is triggering a problem behaviour (e.g., "Time to put away the math blocks").

Pausing and waiting

A pause can effectively draw students' attention back to the task at hand. If after four or five seconds the pause has not helped the students refocus, try other strategies.

Planned ignoring

Ignoring students who engage in attention-seeking behaviour but are not interfering with teaching or learning usually causes the behaviour to stop. Carry on as if nothing has happened and avoid any indication of annoyance or frustration, which would give the student the attention he or she is seeking.

Planned ignoring behaviour is challenging, as the inappropriate behaviour often increases before it decreases. Methods of planned ignoring include breaking eye contact, moving to another area of the classroom and engaging in another activity. Use this strategy for minor inappropriate behaviours that do not compromise the safety or well-being of others.

In some cases, it may be necessary to coach other students on how to support this strategy by either removing themselves as an audience or following the teacher's cue to ignore a certain behaviour.

Increase the level of the response

If a problem behaviour continues after a teacher has tried one or two low-key responses, an increased level of response may be required.

The following steps can be used to intervene when a student is misbehaving, with minimal disruption to the class.

1. Pause.
2. Slowly turn towards the student. Stand close, make eye contact and use a quiet voice.
3. Make a verbal request to stop. Use statements rather than questions. Frame the request positively; for example, "Back to work, please." Use a neutral tone and avoid lecturing. Generally use less than 10 words, but provide clear direction, kindly and firmly.
4. Make one detailed request at a time.
5. Asking twice is sufficient.
6. Remain unemotional.
7. Give the student time to respond. Counting to 10 is a good wait time.
8. Say "thank you" to verbally reinforce cooperation.

Making an agreement

Judah's habit of tapping his pencil on his desk while working is annoying both the teacher and the students who sit around him. Rather than lecture him about his behaviour, Judah's teacher talks with him one day before school and they agree on a single word, "pencil," and a silent signal that the teacher will use when Judah begins to tap his pencil. When he sees the signal, or his teacher walks by and quietly says "pencil," Judah is reminded to stop tapping his pencil.

Offer limited choices

Providing reasonable and positive choices puts the responsibility for positive behaviour back on the student. For example, “You can work quietly as a group or you can choose to work independently at your desks.”

Good choices:

- are related to the problem behaviour
- are not seen as punishment
- are not delivered as ultimatums
- are offered in a positive or neutral tone
- allow for consistent follow-through.

Providing limited choices:

- can make difficult problems easier for students to solve
- respects students’ abilities to make decisions and gives them a sense of ownership
- helps students learn what appropriate choices are.

When offering choices:

1. Stop, pause and turn to or approach the student.
2. If possible, move to a private area where other students cannot hear the conversation.
3. Provide the student with a choice or ask him or her to make a choice. “Decide, please.”
4. Wait for a verbal or nonverbal answer. It may be a response that allows the student to save face.
5. Say “thank you.”

For example, “You must complete this math assignment, but you can choose to do the even-numbered questions or the odd-numbered ones.” Or, “You cannot push people down and take away their toys. But you can choose to apologize now or sit out until you cool off and then apologize.”

Make the choices reasonable, appropriate and acceptable. For example, young students might have a choice between only two alternatives. “You can visit the math centre or the writing centre. Which would you prefer?” Older students can handle a broader array of choices and are better able to deal with the consequences of their decisions. For example, “Your research project is due in two weeks. What format would you like to use for it?”

Appropriate choices make sense in the context of the problem and do not cause harm.

Don't offer an option that is not viable. For example, "You can do your writing assignment now or you can do it at recess," is only acceptable if a staff member is available to supervise the student who chooses to stay in at recess.

Some students may require thinking time before deciding which choice to make. How much time is appropriate depends on the situation and the choices offered.

Implied choices come into play if a negative behaviour occurs again, either by the same student or group, or by another student or group of students who are aware of the choices. For example, a pair of students is asked to choose whether to work quietly together or independently at their desks. They work quietly for a period of time and then become noisy. They are in effect choosing to work quietly at their desks. Similarly, another pair of students is aware of the available choices, so they know they are choosing to work independently if they become noisy while working together.

Ask questions

Behaviour is more effectively changed when an adult intervenes by asking questions rather than lecturing. Sometimes asking questions encourages students to make judgements, consider consequences, and be accountable for their actions and words. Ultimately, question asking teaches students to think for themselves and to turn mistakes into learning opportunities.

For example, ask:

- "What do you think the problem is?"
- "Is what you are doing working? Why or why not?"
- "What would happen if ...?"
- "How will you remember to ...?"

Take time to talk

An informal chat outside of instructional time can lead to an informal agreement. Like a number of other strategies, the informal chat shifts responsibility for the problem behaviour to the student. The adult and student discuss and develop a positive plan of action; both individuals share in the responsibility for implementing the plan. The chat can also help the adult and student to re-establish a positive relationship.

To conduct an informal chat:⁶

- greet the student and create a positive atmosphere. Sit somewhere other than at the teacher's desk, which can be seen as having positional power
- define the problem to ensure a shared understanding
- work with the student to generate alternatives
- jointly agree on an alternative to try and when to begin
- review what has been agreed upon. Ask the student to restate the agreement in his or her own words
- end the chat with a comment or gesture that communicates a positive tone.

Create a thinking space

Sports teams ask for time out to bring players off the field and allow them to catch their breath, discuss a new strategy or plan and regroup. Some students who misbehave need a time out, that is, a short break from class activities before rejoining the group. The goal is for the student to regain emotional control.

Consider setting up a safe space in the room where individual students can go to calm down, think about their choices and, if needed, make a plan before rejoining the group. The thinking space can be a desk and chair in a private corner that is out of the direct view of other students but that the teacher can see. When possible, avoid using screens and other barriers that isolate students, as they not only interfere with supervision but also may be humiliating and/or distressful for some students.

Set up a classroom exchange

Sending a student to a thinking space in a nearby classroom can be particularly effective when a peer audience in the student's classroom is reinforcing the problem behaviour.

Look for logical consequences

Consequences should be logically connected to the problem behaviour. For example, if students argue over a book, the book is removed and neither student gets to use it for that day. If the connection between the problem behaviour and the consequence isn't obvious, the consequence probably isn't logical or appropriate. Note, however, that every behaviour does not have a logical consequence, and consequences cannot solve every problem.

6. Adapted with permission from Barrie Bennett and Peter Smilanich, *Classroom Management: A Thinking and Caring Approach* (Toronto, ON: Bookation Inc., 1994), p. 291.

The following guidelines can help to ensure that students understand the consequences and that consequences are not actually “disguised punishment.”

- Plan consequences in advance.
- Choose consequences that are helpful, not hurtful.
- Focus on the future, not the past.
- Involve students in identifying and choosing logical consequences, and let them decide what consequences will be most helpful.
- Help students make the opportunity–responsibility–consequence connection by asking “what” and “how” questions.

Defuse power struggles

Some students who engage in power struggles are intelligent and have well-developed language skills but tend to act in their own interest and have a capacity to manipulate others and generate anger easily. Other students engage in power struggles because they have limited skills for getting what they want or handling frustration. Power struggles can also be triggered by a lack of sleep, hunger or tensions at home.

Power struggles often involve distracting the person in power by raising irrelevant side issues or asking why. Respond to such tactics not by arguing but rather by focusing on a solution to the problem, or by giving a firm direction or choice.

Recognize a power struggle for what it is and then, if possible, ignore the student’s attempt to engage in one. If this approach does not work:

1. Stop teaching and pause.
2. Turn slowly to face the student.
3. Make eye contact.
4. Take one or more slow deep breaths.
5. Do or say something to shift the locus of control to the student. For example:
 - a. Describe the situation to the student and explain that you are not going to engage in an argument. For example, “We have only fifteen minutes left for groups to complete their plan. I need to help the last two groups now. I can’t spend the time arguing with you.”
 - b. Give the student a choice. For example, “You can go back and work with your group or finish the plan on your own at that table. Please choose one now.”
6. Pause and allow the student to save face—perhaps by making a comment or taking an action.

7. Bring closure by saying “Thank you” or “I appreciate it.”

A conflict requires at least two people—school staff can avoid power struggles with students by choosing not to take part in that struggle. Staff need to develop disengaging tactics for handling conflict situations in a calm, professional manner.

Sample strategies for disengaging from power struggles

- *Use a stress-reduction technique before responding to a remark or behaviour.*
Take a deep breath and release slowly. This technique can not only ground you but gives you an additional moment to plan an appropriate response.
- *Use a neutral, business-like voice.*
Since people tend to interpret their emotional states from their own behavioural cues, people who speak calmly (no matter how they feel) are more likely to believe that they are calm, even in stressful situations.
- *Keep responses brief.*
Short responses prevent inadvertently rewarding defiant behaviour with too much adult attention.

Some power struggles are a result of students not being able to control their own frustration and/or anger. In some situations, it may be helpful to use well-timed, supportive techniques that “interrupt” the escalation of student anger and redirect students to activities that will create opportunities to calm down, such as reading a book or working on the computer.

Occasionally, it may be necessary to briefly remove a student from the classroom if he or she is becoming argumentative or defiant. For example, asking a student to work at a table outside the classroom for a few minutes could prevent a student’s behaviour from escalating into a full-fledged confrontation.

Use office referrals

It is sometimes appropriate to ask a student to leave the classroom and go to the office. For this strategy to be effective, all staff in the school must understand the school-wide agreement on:

- reasons for sending students to the office
- how this will be done (e.g., teachers phone the office to let the secretary know)
- what will happen when a student arrives at the office (e.g., the student is asked to sit quietly and wait for the teacher to come within 15–20 minutes to help resolve the problem, or the student is asked to complete a problem-solving sheet in a quiet, supervised area)

- the roles and responsibilities of school staff (including classroom teacher, school secretary, administrator)
- follow-up procedures (e.g., the student completes behaviour reflection sheet or the administrator phones the parents).



See *Tool 1: Behaviour Reflection* for a sample tool for students to record reflections on their behaviour.

Use contracts

A formal contract can be used to require a student to either demonstrate positive behaviour or face a negative consequence such as the loss of privileges (e.g., participating in lunchroom programs or extracurricular activities).

A formal contract includes a statement of the acceptable behaviours (and if necessary, an explicit statement of what is unacceptable) and outlines the rewards (e.g., retaining privileges, being allowed to stay in school) and consequences for engaging in negative behaviours. All parties review the contract and sign it. The “parties” may include (but are not limited to) the administrator, the teacher, the student, parents and any other members of the student’s learning team such as school counsellors or family liaison workers.

Ideally, a formal contract:

- is easy for all those involved to understand
- clearly and concisely identifies acceptable behaviours, unacceptable behaviours, the cueing signals the teacher will use to indicate unacceptable behaviour and the consequences if the student chooses to engage in unacceptable behaviour
- is sensitive to the needs of the student
- identifies positive reinforcement and negative consequences
- clearly identifies who will monitor whether the contract is being followed and who will implement rewards and consequences
- is clearly communicated to parents (when possible, parents are also involved in structuring and implementing the contract terms).

“... the biggest day-to-day repository of constructive power to improve schools is in the hearts, minds and hands of the people who work in them.”

– Kenneth A. Sirotnik,
“Evaluation in the Ecology of Schooling”

Administrative support

When dealing with classroom behavioural issues, teachers need to be able to access the expertise and support of the entire school staff, and especially the school administrator.

Establishing positive working relationships with each teacher in the school can help administrators make responsive and effective administrative decisions that will enhance the capacity and quality of teaching and learning in the classroom.

The role of the principal is to support the teacher’s authority, not replace it. Open communication, knowledge of best practices in classroom management, and respect for diverse teaching styles are key to an administrator’s ability to effectively support teachers in the development and maintenance of strong classroom management practices. When teachers align their classroom management practices with the school-wide approach to positive behaviour supports, the effectiveness of both the in-class and school-wide supports and interventions for students with problem behaviours is enhanced.

School administrators are also in a position to support effective classroom management practices by:

- facilitating schedules to encourage and accommodate collaborative planning and problem solving
- following through on agreed-upon office referral protocols so that individual problem behaviour is dealt with fairly, consistently and in a timely manner
- communicating with teachers about classroom management practices and issues formally and informally
- offering both formal and informal encouragement and positive reinforcement to school staff who demonstrate strong and consistent classroom management

- being available and willing to help individual teachers identify issues and develop solutions for classroom behaviour problems, on an as-needed basis
- making targeted professional development opportunities available for all school staff.



For information on school-based professional development workshops, visit The Alberta Teachers' Association Web site at www.teachers.ab.ca/Professional+Development/Workshops+Courses+and+Presentations/Workshops+Seminars+Courses/Positive+School+Climate/Classroom+Management—What+Works.htm.

Collegial support

The support of other teachers and school staff can also contribute to the success of a teacher's classroom management planning and follow-through. Colleagues can offer encouragement and advice, and can also collaborate on specific strategies such as providing a safe place for a student from another classroom who requires a short time away from his or her own classroom.

Teachers benefit from regular problem-solving meetings where they can share ideas and solutions. A 30-minute Behaviour Intervention Meeting format provides an innovative and time-effective strategy for providing this kind of support.



Tool 2 is a template for a 30-minute Behaviour Intervention Meeting.

Problem behaviour Students talking is interfering with teacher's instruction and peers participating in classroom discussion

Students involved Approximately 16/22 students in Grade 8 social studies classroom

Meeting participants

Facilitator Language arts teacher, Grade 7/8

Recorder Librarian

Others Counsellor, assistant principal

Step 1: Identify the problem behaviour (5 minutes)

1. Have the classroom teacher(s) describe the problem behaviour.
 - Students talking to other students while the teacher is talking to the class. This is compromising instruction and preventing any kind of meaningful group discussion.
2. Clarify the problem as a group. Identify when, how often, how long, etc. It may be necessary to narrow the scope of the problem.
 - Planned class discussions were abandoned after less than five minutes every class this month.
 - Estimate asking students to "Be quiet" at least 10 times per 60-minute class.

Step 2: Identify desired behaviour (5 minutes)

Existing behaviours to maintain and/or increase:

- Talking with peers in class during group work or times when the teacher invites students to talk together

New behaviours to teach and reinforce:

- Demonstrating turn-taking behaviour by using talking stick
- Maintaining quiet and demonstrating attentive listening during teacher instruction and when individual students are addressing the class
- Talking with peers while teacher is quietly talking with one student or a small group of students

Existing behaviours to decrease and/or eliminate:

- Talking with peers while the teacher is instructing or addressing the class
- Talking with peers while another student is talking to the class or asking a question
- Talking with peers during daily announcements on PA system

Step 3 (5 minutes)

Identify positive reinforcements for new related positive behaviour.

- Explicit opportunities to socialize in class

Identify negative consequences for the unacceptable behaviour.

- Teacher proximity, nonverbal cue

Step 4 (5 minutes)

Identify proactive strategies that would help students learn to behave in a more positive and acceptable manner.

- Visual cue indicating when students must be silent and when they may talk with peers
- Structured times to visit peers
- Set short times for instruction. "I will be teaching for 10 minutes. It is important to listen for these 10 minutes"
- Using proximity when individual students begin to talk with a peer
- Teaching students expectations for when the teacher is instructing; introduce through mini lesson, post them, reinforce them
- Using a "talking stick" during group discussions to clearly identify speaker

Step 5 (5 minutes)

Identify at least two ways to determine if the plan is working and student behaviour is improving.

- Colleague observes in classroom to determine high frequency times and duration of student talk during instruction
- Colleague does a second observation three weeks later to see if student talk has decreased during this time and if use of proactive strategies (e.g., use of talking stick) has increased

Step 6 (4 minutes)

Identify actions that other staff members can do to assist and support the teacher and students.

- *One colleague visits class two times to observe and record data*
- *All teachers explicitly teach and reinforce “what to do when the teacher is instructing” over the next month*

Step 7 (1 minute)

Set a date for a follow-up meeting to evaluate and revise the plan.

Date and time of next meeting *21 days from today's meeting*

Gathering data to understand student behaviour

“Always assume that a motivation for a particular behaviour is positive but expressed in a negative way.”

– Richard L. Curwin and Allen N. Mendler,
Discipline with Dignity

To effectively support students, school staff must understand the reasons why students behave as they do. This understanding helps them devise plans to support students as they develop new and more positive behaviours.

In many instances, students engage in negative behaviour to obtain something they want or to avoid something they don't want. Each behaviour serves a function, but the functions are different for different students. For example, one student may hit others in order to be left alone, another student hits to get possession of an object (such as a soccer ball) or to gain power, and a third student hits to get attention.

Collecting data about the functions of problem behaviours and the frequency of these behaviours provides classroom teachers with the information they need to:

- decide which behaviour supports and strategies will be most effective in their classroom
- measure the success of the supports they choose.

A common method of identifying the functions of behaviour is ABC Recording.

A for Antecedent

Record anything that came before the identified behaviour.

- **Who** was involved in the situation? For example, “The teacher asked Bill to do the work,” “Another student (Sally) stood in front of Bill in the line,” “The teacher stepped out of the room just before Bill stood up on his desk and yelled.”
- **What** happened just before the challenging behaviour? This can include:
 - *tasks*, such as having to stand in line, participate in a group activity, do a specific worksheet, write a test
 - *consequences and reactions to other behaviours*, such as receiving additional attention or a reprimand

- *social interactions*, such as playing an active game, talking with another person or being involved in a conflict with another student
 - *transitions*, such as changing from one task to another or dealing with changes in the regular routine
 - *home and community-related factors*, such as changes in the family dynamics (e.g., death, divorce, a new person living in the home, a sibling leaving home), conflict within the family or changes in extracurricular activities (e.g., no longer being able to use the computer or being cut from the community soccer team)
 - *health factors*, such as illness or effects of medication.
- **When** did the behaviour occur? Include the time and date.
 - **Where** did the behaviour occur and what was the environment like? For example, the student was at circle; in his or her seat; in the hall, bathroom, gym or outside. What was the noise level, activity, structure, proximity to others?

B for Behaviour

Record the specific behaviour that occurred in a way that provides accurate and useful information. Include the student's words and actions. Use specific descriptions. Instead of saying the student was "emotional," report specific actions such as crying or screaming. Instead of saying a student was "verbally or physically aggressive," report in detail what was said or done.

Report on the intensity and duration of the behaviour. For example, "Sally screamed very loudly (8 on a scale from 1 to 10) for 12 minutes," "Bill hit Sam so hard that he left a bruise."

C for Consequences

Describe the consequences (what happened to the student following the negative behaviour).

Consequences provided by school staff can include attention, praise and tangible rewards, or reprimands, saying no, requiring the student to repeat the task or sending the student for timeout. Record as well cases where there were no consequences; that is, school staff said or did nothing in response to the behaviour.

Consequences can also include what others said or did. For example, another student may have moved out of the way, given the student the object he or she was asking for or yelled at the student. It is useful to know about the emotional reactions of other students and adults in the area; for example, laughter, crying or showing fear.

Another type of consequence has to do with tasks and activities. For example, “The student avoided doing the activity requested of him or her, got to choose to do another activity or was required to do a specific task.”



See *Tool 3: ABC Chart* for a sample tool for recording data from behaviour observations.

After you have collected and analyzed all the data, choose a specific behaviour to focus on and make it into a goal. This goal identifies the target that will be accepted as evidence of success. Then create an action plan that states:

- three or more steps toward achieving the goal
- the resources required, including people, time and material items such as reinforcers
- checkpoints for monitoring progress.

Explain the plan to students and their parents and, if possible, engage students by asking them to help plan how the goal can be achieved.

As the individual goal-setting plan is being implemented, monitor frequently to determine the effectiveness of the intervention and identify opportunities to celebrate successes. For example, if a class goal is to increase the number of students arriving on time, remind students by drawing a clock with the start time on the board. Keep records of arrival times and celebrate when the goal is reached. As students internalize the behaviour, increase the time lines from a day to a week to a month, with corresponding celebrations.

If the goal is not reached, discuss the reasons why. For more information on individual goal-setting plans, see pages 61 to 67.



For more information on other strategies for gathering data, see *Supporting Positive Behaviour in Alberta Schools: An intensive individualized approach*, pages 73 to 78.

Targeted supports for students at-risk

“While most students in schools will respond positively to well-organized classrooms, clear behaviour expectations, and rich, positive reinforcement, we also need to add specialized supports for those who do not improve with the school-wide program alone.”

– Jeff Sprague and Annemieke Golly, *Best Behavior: Building Positive Behavior Support in Schools*

Targeted supports are needed for the 5 to 15 percent of students who chronically do not meet expectations and are at risk of developing increasingly challenging behaviour. These students will benefit from targeted interventions designed to increase specific positive behaviours and/or reduce specific negative behaviours.

The types of targeted interventions that these students often respond to include:

- individual or small group social skills coaching
- adapted instruction that facilitates individual success
- mentoring relationships that create feelings of connectedness and caring, and offer positive role modelling.

Another type of intervention that is often successful with this group of students is goal setting. Setting goals and developing action plans helps students begin to:

- identify and reduce or eliminate specific behaviours that interfere with their learning and/or social relationships
- identify and learn new replacement behaviours that will make a positive difference in their learning and relationships.

This can be done through a targeted goal-setting process that takes place over several weeks or several months, depending on the needs of the individual student.

Individual goal setting

To begin the process, clearly describe the specific behaviours that need to be increased or decreased to achieve success and the new behaviours the student needs

to learn to replace inappropriate behaviours. Prioritize these behaviours. Consider factors such as:

- What current behaviours are interfering most with learning?
- What behaviours would be the easiest to change?
- What new behaviours would make the most difference to the student's learning?

Make a plan that addresses a manageable number of goals, one at a time.

A goal-setting plan helps to identify, monitor and improve a student's classroom behaviour and provides a way for parents and school staff to communicate regularly. This approach can be highly motivating to students if parents select the right reinforcement to use at home after the child reaches his or her daily goals.

Use the following six steps to develop and implement an individual goal-setting process.

1. Select the area for improvement

Involve all school staff who work with the student, as well as the student and his or her parents. Identify the behaviours that are likely to have long-term negative consequences if there is no change, and the key behaviour changes that would improve the student's learning and social relationships. For example:

- academic work (e.g., task completion and accuracy)
- peer relations (particularly decreasing aggression and other negative interactions)
- independence (e.g., following class routines, working independently, managing transitions)
- relationships with adults (e.g., cooperating with requests, accepting consequences, disagreeing in an appropriate way, asking for help).

As much as possible, involve students in identifying the areas they need to work on. Ask them questions such as, "What kinds of things would you have to do to have a better day in school?" "What kinds of behaviours get in the way of having a good day?" or "What could you do instead?"

2. Define the goals

Identify specific academic or social behaviours that need to be changed to help the student be more successful in the classroom. These new positive behaviours, or "goal behaviours" must be observable and measurable by the teacher and the student. They must be clearly defined in a way that students, parents and school staff all understand. Depending on the age and ability of

the student, consider between two and five goal behaviours. As much as possible, use student-friendly language and state the goals in positive terms.

Goal behaviours might include:

- moving from one activity to another cooperatively
- using a polite voice when speaking to classmates
- keeping hands and feet away from other students
- having books and supplies ready
- completing assignments on time
- starting to work right away
- playing a game of soccer without incident.

3. Decide on criteria for goals

Review recent classroom observations and records to determine how often a student is demonstrating the problem behaviour. Use this information to determine which behaviours need to be included and to prepare the initial criteria for determining success.

Set reasonable criteria for defining success; that is, one that students can achieve between 75 and 90 percent of the time. To encourage improvement, set initial criteria at a rate slightly better than what the student is doing now. For example, if a student currently interrupts an average of 10 times per class, the initial criteria might be “interrupts fewer than five times per class,” and a few weeks later the goal might be “interrupts fewer than two times per class.” Set criteria to be met for each part of the day, not the whole day. Keep the scoring manageable but within reach of the student’s current ability. Reinforcements can be awarded on a graduated scale (partial rewards for partial success).

Provide frequent feedback by evaluating goal behaviours at several intervals throughout the day. Only include goals that are significant to the student’s improvement. An example of a daily checklist developed for a student in Grade 2 can be found on the next page.

A checklist format is preferable to anecdotal notes because it focuses on specific behaviours, has a less-subjective tone and reduces the opportunity to make random comments that may be misconstrued or may place unnecessary emphasis on problem behaviours that, within the big picture, are insignificant.

My School Day

Date: February 4, 200X

	Polite voice		Hands and feet to myself		Following teacher's requests	
	Me	My teacher	Me	My teacher	Me	My teacher
Language Arts 9:00 to 10:30	3	4	4	4	3	1
Math 10:45 to 12:00	3	4	4	4	3	4
Science Phys Ed 1:00 to 2:15	3	4	4	4	3	3
Social Studies Wrap-up 2:30 to 3:30	3	2	4	4	3	2

4-great!

3-okay

2-needs work

1-not acceptable

What went well today

You took turns in math group and shared the materials.

What we need to work on

You need to choose free reading book in three minutes.

Following teacher's requests at the end of activities.

Encouraging words from parents

4. Discuss the daily goal-setting checklist with students and parents

Explain that the daily checklist helps everyone to focus on the goal behaviours and that the ultimate goal is for the student to have a happier and more successful school day.

As much as possible, involve the student in setting the goals and developing the criteria. Use language that is meaningful to the student. A self-monitoring component encourages students to reflect on their own behaviour more thoughtfully and more accurately. Some students have a limited or skewed perception of how their behaviour appears to others and need structured situations that help them learn how to more accurately gauge others' perceptions.

Sending the checklist back and forth between home and school each day can be challenging for some students. Look for strategies to make this routine easier on everyone, including parents and school staff. A student is more likely to take a checklist home if it contains positive comments.

If the student is having difficulty remembering to take the checklist home or to school, or seems to be resisting, use alternative strategies. For example:

- Designate a special plastic labelled envelope for this purpose and attach it to the student's homework agenda.
- Add the daily checklist to a list of items the student checks off before leaving school at the end of each day.
- Fax or e-mail the completed checklist directly to the student's home.

5. Establish a system of reinforcement

Encourage parents to reward their child for positive performance as reflected in the daily checklist. Natural rewards are more effective than objects or activities that are artificially added, and short-term rewards that students receive on the same day or within a week of the positive behaviour are preferable. For example, a parent might make a child's access to television or computer games, which was previously "free," contingent on receiving a positive daily checklist. Rewards need to be motivating for the child, but not so elaborate or expensive that they cause stress for either the child or parent. The focus should not be on the reward, but on changing behaviour.

Another effective technique is to establish a menu of reinforcements that the child can choose from.

For example, the at-home reinforcement menu could include:

- computer games for X minutes

- choosing family television show or video
- television time for X minutes
- video games for X minutes
- listening to music for X minutes
- a special snack
- talking on the phone to a friend or relative
- participating in a special activity with a parent (e.g., hot chocolate, conversations, playing a board game, going on a bike ride)
- other rewards suggested by the child.

If a student is not responding to reinforcements at home, the school may have to become involved. This can be particularly effective for younger children, who need more immediate reinforcement.

An at-school menu of rewards could include (if these things are not already part of the regular classroom routine):

- free time for X minutes
- visiting with a friend
- listening to recorded music or stories
- using felt markers or other art supplies
- choosing a book for the teacher to read to the class
- caring for the class pet
- using specific computer software programs
- choosing stickers
- choosing a seat
- playing cards or board games
- taking digital pictures
- drawing a prize from a grab bag
- other rewards suggested by the student.

The menu of reinforcements might need to be changed regularly to maintain the student's interest and motivation.

6. Monitor and modify interventions

When completing the daily checklist, describe positive behaviour and note improvements and benefits. Respond matter-of-factly to missed targets with an encouraging statement about what can happen the next day.

Keep daily records of how often the student meets each goal. Gradually increase appropriate behaviour by increasing the criteria once the student consistently meets the goal. If the student regularly fails to meet the goal, make it easier for a week or two. Building on success is easier than building on failure.

Once the student has met the criterion for a goal at an acceptable level and you are confident the student is able to consistently demonstrate it, announce that the goal behaviour has been achieved. Simply tell students that they are now doing so well that they don't need that goal anymore. Periodic review may be necessary for some students.

If necessary, move on to another goal. If the student is doing so well that daily checklists are unnecessary, move to a weekly checklist and reinforcement system. Work with students to determine what is meaningful and motivating to them.

If this individual goal-setting approach is not working after several weeks, meet with the student's parents to discuss possible new strategies, which may include a more intensive behavioural intervention. For additional information on intensive interventions, including functional behavioural analysis and individual behaviour support plans, see *Supporting Positive Behaviour in Alberta Schools: An intensive, individualized approach*.

For more information



To better understand how students' disabilities can affect their learning and behaviour, refer to the following Alberta Education resources.

- *Teaching Students with Emotional Disorders and/or Mental Illnesses* (2000)
- *Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders* (2003) (free PDF version available at <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/special/resources/fasd.aspx>)
- *Teaching Students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD): Building Strengths, Creating Hope* (2004) (free PDF version available at <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/special/resources/fasd.aspx>)
- *Focusing on Success: Teaching Students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder* (2006) (free PDF version available at <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/special/resources/adhd.aspx>)

- *Essential Components of Educational Programming for Students with Behaviour Disabilities* (2006) (free PDF version available at <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/special/programming/components.aspx>)
- *Essential Components of Educational Programming for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders* (2006) (free PDF version available at <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/special/programming/components.aspx>).

Sample tools

- 1 Behaviour Reflection
- 2 30-minute Behaviour Intervention Meeting
- 3 ABC Chart

Behaviour Reflection

Name _____

Date _____ Time _____

Location _____ Staff member _____

1. What was your behaviour? _____

2. What did you want? (Check at least one.)

- I wanted attention from others.
- I wanted to be in control of the situation.
- I wanted to challenge the teacher's authority.
- I wanted to avoid doing my work.
- I wanted to be sent home.
- I wanted to cause problems because I am miserable inside.
- I wanted to cause others problems because they don't like me.
- I wanted revenge.
- I wanted _____

3. Did you get what you wanted? Yes No

Explain. _____

4. How could you handle this type of situation more positively next time?

5. What do you need to do to fix your current problem? _____

Staff member	Time started
Parent contacted <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Time ended
Other	No. of minutes

Adapted with permission from Randall Sprick, Marilyn Sprick and Mickey Garrison, *Interventions: Collaborative Planning for Students at Risk* (Eugene, OR: Pacific Northwest Publishing, 1993–1997), Intervention B: Managing Severely Disruptive Behavior. Source: Geoff Colvin and George Sugai, *Managing Escalating Behavior* (Eugene, OR: Behavior Associates, 1989).

30-minute Behaviour Intervention Meeting

Problem behaviour _____

Students involved _____

Meeting participants

Facilitator _____

Recorder _____

Others _____

Step 1: Identify the problem behaviour (5 minutes)

1. Have the classroom teacher(s) describe the problem behaviour.

2. Clarify the problem as a group. Identify when, how often, how long, etc. It may be necessary to narrow the scope of the problem.

Step 2: Identify desired behaviour (5 minutes)

Existing behaviours to maintain and/or increase:

New behaviours to teach and reinforce:

Existing behaviours to decrease and/or eliminate:

Step 3 (5 minutes)

Identify positive reinforcements for new related positive behaviour.

Identify negative consequences for the unacceptable behaviour.

Step 4 (5 minutes)

Identify proactive strategies that would help students learn to behave in a more positive and acceptable manner.

Step 5 (5 minutes)

Identify at least two ways to determine if the plan is working and student behaviour is improving.

Step 6 (4 minutes)

Identify actions that other staff members can do to assist and support the teacher and students.

Step 7 (1 minute)

Set a date for a follow-up meeting to evaluate and revise the plan.

Date and time of next meeting _____

For more detailed information on this process, see *Interventions: Collaborative Planning for Students at Risk* (1993–1997) by Randall Sprick, Marilyn Sprick and Mickey Garrison (Longmont, CO: Sopris West).

ABC Chart

Student: _____ Room/Class: _____

	Antecedent Conditions or context in which the problem behaviours occur	Behaviour Responses or actions of concern exhibited by the student	Consequences Events and behaviours that follow the occurrence of the problem behaviour
	Time, class, subject, person, activity, demand, task	Describe in objective terms how the student behaved	What did staff do in response?
Date			
Time			
Staff			
Date			
Time			
Staff			
Date			
Time			
Staff			
Date			
Time			
Staff			

Reproduced with permission from Karen Bain and Brenda Sautner, *BOATS: Behaviour, Observation, Assessment and Teaching Strategies*, 2nd edition (Edmonton, AB: Special Education Council, The Alberta Teachers' Association, 2007), p. 86.

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