

Response Strategies for Classroom Behaviors

This document is intended for use in the Behavior Interventions in the Classroom training and provides a variety of response strategies that can be easily applied in the classroom.

1. Re-Direct

This strategy employs a very brief, clearly and privately stated verbal reminder of the expected behavior. A re-direct includes a specific restatement of the school-wide, non-classroom or classroom rule/procedure. A redirect emphasizes the “what” of the behavior instead of the “why.”

Example

“Jason, please begin your writing assignment.” (After he begins) “Nice job being responsible and beginning your assignment, Jason.”

2. Re-Teach

- Builds on the re-direct by specifically instructing the student(s) exactly what should be done.
- Might be needed when you see a student is continuing to perform a social learning error and/or re-directs have not been effective.
- Review the expected rule or procedure with the student.
- Tell and show them what it looks like and sounds like and give student an immediate opportunity to practice.
- Reinforce the student for following the classroom rules and procedures by providing specific positive feedback.

Example

Jason has not started the independent assignment. You re-teach by saying: “Jason, you need to be responsible by being on-task (the class rule). This means your desk is clear of everything but your book and notebook and you begin working right away, continue working, and raise your hand if you need help (tell and show). Let me see you practice being on-task (practice).” (Pause for his reply and while Jason gets out book & notebook and starts work). “Thank you for being responsible. It looks like you are ready to be on-task. Raise your hand if you need help.” (specific positive feedback).

3. Proximity

Proximity is the strategic placement/movement by the teacher to encourage positive behavior. Having the teacher near helps the student to control impulses. Praise the student when he/she follows the expected classroom rules and procedure.

Proximity is a strategy many of us may have used when we want to get someone back to doing what is expected. We physically stand by the student for a few seconds until they get back to work, not saying a word. Praise the student when they follow the expected classroom rules and procedure.

This is a great strategy because we can keep on teaching while we use this strategy. Where we may fall short is remembering to praise the student when they are back to following the classroom rules.

Example

When Alan is off task or talking, the teacher continues to teach the group while, at the same time, moving toward Alan or even standing next to him for a moment. Once Alan brings his behavior in line, brief specific positive feedback will help to maintain the desired behavior. "Thanks, Alan, for showing respect with your attention."

4. Provide Choice

A statement of two alternatives – one the teacher thinks will be the preferred or desired behavior and one the teacher thinks may be a less preferred, but not aversive, option. Providing choice can often interrupt the misbehavior and get the student back to following expectations.

The teacher presents two options, both of which the teacher can accept. The teacher offers one option to the student that the teacher thinks will be preferred or the teacher can state the expected rule. The second option is one the teacher thinks may be a less preferred option for the student. The goal is to get the student to follow the classroom rules.

Examples

- "Betty, you can get on-task and begin your work now or you can do it when we have our special activity."
- "Lynn, you can work quietly here at your seat or you can work quietly in the student office. Which would you prefer?"
- "Percy, you can put your cell phone in your pocket for the remainder of the hour or on my desk. Which one will help you be a responsible learner?"

Non-Examples

- "Betty, you can get to work or go to the timeout seat."
- "Samson, you can keep your hands to yourself or go to the office."
- "Percy, you can put your cell phone away, or you can get a detention."

5. Ignore, Praise, Attend

This strategy uses the power of praise and positive feedback. The teacher praises an appropriately behaving student in the proximity of the student who is not following the class rules or procedures. The praise serves as a prompt to the student who is not following the classroom rules. When the student exhibits the desired behavior, attention and praise are then provided.

Again, this is a strategy many teachers use and it can be very effective to get students displaying inappropriate behavior “back on track.” Since this strategy is based on the power of teacher praise, it typically works best for students who are motivated by teacher attention. The “power” in this strategy is being sure to completely ignore the student who is misbehaving UNTIL they exhibit the desired behavior. This is the step that is often missed. If we do not praise the student when he/she exhibits the classroom rules and procedures, they will often escalate and perform a behavior that is more disruptive to the learning environment.

Example

James is off-task during independent work time. The teacher briefly ignores James, and specifically praises a student nearby who is on task: “Good work, LeBron. You are working away on your assignment.” When James begins to get back to work, the teacher then, immediately, praises him: “Thanks, James for being on task. You’ll be sure to get your work done.”

6. Signal/Nonverbal Cue

Nonverbal techniques such as sustained eye contact, hand gestures, a handclap, finger snap, clearing one’s throat, etc. suggesting that the teacher is aware of the behavior and prepared to intervene if it continues can be effective. Praise the student when he/she is following the classroom rules or procedure.

Using a signal or nonverbal cue is another common way we often communicate with students that you are aware students are not following the classroom rules and that you expect them to comply. What we want to think about is the “tone” with which these signals are given. For example, a finger snap can be done respectfully or in a more threatening manner. Again, if we think about how we would signal an academic error, we would use a private, respectful “tone,” wouldn’t we? The same should be true with our signal about social behavior.

Examples

- When Sarah begins to talk to her neighbor, the teacher glances in her direction and holds the look until she is again quiet and attending. The teacher then praises Sarah for her attention.
- The group of students is getting restless. The teacher uses her hand signal to regain their attention, then praises the group and reminds them of the expectations for independent work time.

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