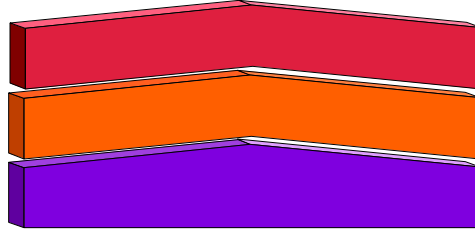


Structuring Classroom Experiences for Success

Proactive Management Strategies



Using classwide management systems

Understanding the problem

While one of your primary goals as a teacher is maximizing student learning, this is rarely students' primary goal. Aside from survival needs such as food, clothing, and shelter, all students in the intermediate and secondary grades share the same primary goal – to gain a sense of belonging. Critical elements of feeling like you belong include having a *sense of value* – that is, that others value and need you and you value yourself and are making a contribution. Another critical element is having a *sense of control or empowerment*. That is, having some sense of control over your own destiny, even in small ways such as choosing among several options of activities. A third critical element is having a *sense of competence*, or at least developing competence. Students whose classrooms do not reflect environments conducive to all three of these dimensions (value, empowerment, competence) do not feel successful. As a result, a degree of problematic behavior will *always* occur.

Proactive management strategies focuses on at creating positive, structured classrooms aimed at student success where motivation to learn is authentic. By using an array of these proactive management strategies, almost (not all!) all undesirable behaviors can be prevented. Many of the proactive management strategies are actually ways of teaching subject-matter, skills, and strategies. Use of effective teaching techniques is THE MOST POWERFUL MANAGEMENT TOOL in your arsenal.

Proactive management strategies are employed before behavior problems occur, and thus are preventive measures. In some instances, these strategies alone are not sufficient to prevent behavior

problems from occurring. Some students bring to your class a history of inappropriate behaviors learned or conditioned in them far before you met them. Some students have serious social and emotional issues, and some misbehave because they are trying to signal you that something is terribly wrong in their lives - either at school or in their community, or both.

Proactive management strategies are similar to wellness programs. Many people exercise, take vitamins, and monitor their diets to maintain an optimum level of health and to prevent illness. However, despite our best preventative efforts, we get sick. We respond to our illnesses with medications and lifestyle changes. This is analogous to reactive behavioral support. At times, our most proactive strategies will fail and we will have to react to students' undesirable behaviors. The key to successful proactive and reactive interventions is *strategic planning*.

A key to the solution

An effective and efficient approach to management is to simultaneously provide proactive and reactive support to students via the use of a *classwide management system*. Classwide systems can facilitate win-win interactions between teacher and the students. They are proactive because they prevent undesirable student behavior through the use of clearly stated behavioral expectations and shared rewards. They are reactive in that they provide a structured approach to delivering consequences that are immediate and naturally occurring. Combined, proactive and reactive strategies offer structured approaches to monitoring large-group behavior that also provide continual feedback to students.

Many teachers reject classwide systems because they equate them with token economies (e.g., providing students with tokens or points that can be exchanged for extrinsic rewards such as candy, prizes, popcorn parties, etc.). A large-group approach to behavior management does *not* need to include a token system. Instead, these systems can be engineered to avoid these elements.

An important advantage of classwide systems is their flexibility. First, these systems can be created and customized by teachers to meet their needs. Second, they can be used for brief or extended periods of time. Third, they are responsive to environmental changes and can be easily adapted and modified.

The danger of unplanned proactive behavioral management is that many undesirable student behaviors that could be prevented are not. Teachers are then put in the position of having to react to increased levels of challenging behaviors. Also, unplanned reactive support tends to be

emotion laden. Emotional responses to students' challenging behaviors often results in lose-lose interactions, leaving both teacher and the students feeling frustrated and defeated.

Management Tips

Step 1 Determine your expectations for student behavior. To review the steps to completing this process, see [Communicating Expectations](#)

Step 2 Identify rewards and consequences to intertwine with behavioral expectations. To review the steps for completing this process, see [Communicating Expectations](#).

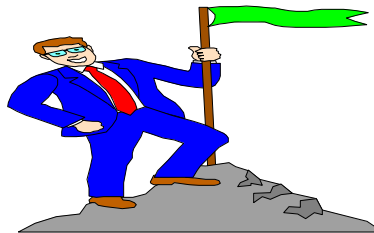
Step 3 Decide how frequently student behavior needs to be monitored. In classrooms where there are high rates of disruptive behavior a smaller increment of time is recommended (e.g., 15 minutes), whereas in classrooms with lower rates of disruptive behavior a longer time interval is appropriate (e.g., 45 minutes).

Step 4 Design a system for monitoring students' behavior. The focus should be on monitoring desirable student behavior to create a positive classroom climate. The system should be flexible and user friendly for both the teacher and the students. You will also need to decide whether or not to incorporate an exchange element into your system.

GOAL CARD (for grades 6-8) READY, AIM, FIRE!!!

8:00 AM☺ _____ TOTAL: _____
8:15 AM☺ _____
8:30 AM☺ _____
8:45 AM☺ _____

MR. ROCK'S 1ST PERIOD GEOLOGY CLASS – Your behavior will be monitored every 15 minutes. When you hear the tone, if you have been focusing, listening, and participating you will earn a plus (+) for that interval on your goal card. If you have not, nothing will be recorded in that time slot.

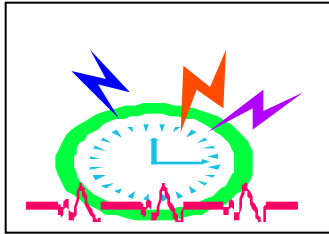


Demonstrate rock-solid behavior and you are way cool!!!

Note: This card can be laminated and recording can be completed using a water-soluble marker.

For example, students may be able to accumulate daily points to earn weekly or monthly preferred activities. Exchange components can help to increase the effectiveness of the management system, although they are not required. An example of a classwide management approach is the goal card system. This system could be used to monitor students' behavior during a class period.

Step 5 Develop a method for monitoring time intervals. Whether visual, auditory, or a combination of the two, it is used to cue the teacher and the students that it is time to monitor behavior.

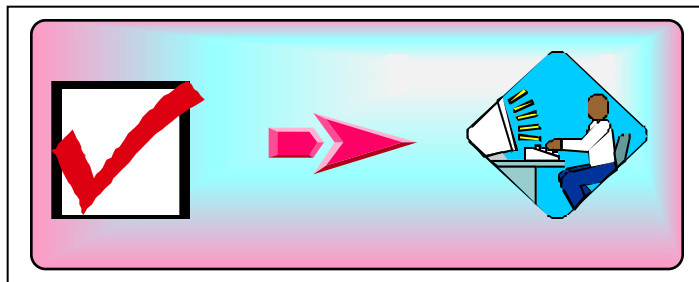


Examples of monitoring methods include: a tape recording with beeps at designated intervals, a kitchen timer, or a color-coded activity schedule.

Step 6 Brainstorm a descriptive theme for the classwide management system. The theme should be creative, simple, and catchy so it will motivate students and generate enthusiasm. For example, a theme for the goal card system could be "AIM For Success". Recruit students to create colorful displays using graphics and photographs that reflect students who are AIMING for success academically and behaviorally. This creates a powerful and encouraging atmosphere that reinforces the classwide management system and promotes positive student behaviors.

Jazzing It Up

1. Ensure that the classwide system that you design includes opportunities for students to earn short- and long-term rewards and consequences. Students need continuous feedback to improve their performance. In the previous example, the plus earned or not earned at the predetermined time intervals (10 minutes) is the more immediate



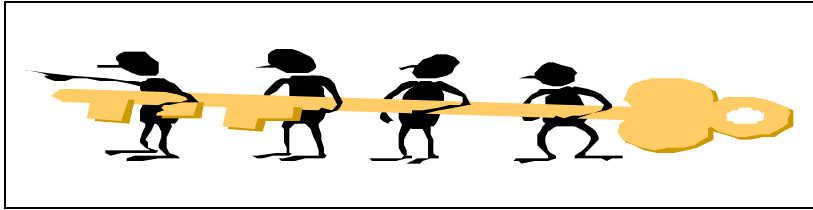
reward or consequence. The total tally of pluses earned or not earned at the end of the class period reflects longer-term rewards and consequences. The system may also be designed to include weekly or monthly rewards and consequences, whereby the students could accumulate daily pluses to earn weekly or monthly preferred activities.

2. Develop a classwide system that is easily transferred from teacher monitoring to student monitoring. After the students have learned the system and demonstrated that they can reliably record their behavior, it is time to transfer monitoring responsibilities to them. This shifts the locus of control from the extrinsic to the intrinsic source .
3. Consider how easy your classwide system is for students to duplicate. Unfortunately, some students will attempt to counterfeit it. To avoid this, use teacher-made laminated materials that are difficult to duplicate. This initial investment of time and energy will prove beneficial over time!
4. Involve students in developing of the system to create a sense of ownership and community. Students can make valuable contributions to the design of the classwide system in a number of ways. For example, you could hold a “theme” contest. First, you describe the system to the students and then divide students into teams to brainstorm themes for it. All teams submit their themes and students can vote to determine which one that will be adopted by the class.



5. The consequences included in the classwide system should be immediate and naturally occurring. Delayed or excessively punitive consequences will only sabotage the effectiveness of the classwide system. To increase the effectiveness of the system, you need to be consistent and implement consequences in a hierarchical manner. For example, the immediate consequence may be that the student receives three verbal warnings from the teacher prior to not earning a plus for the specified time period of his or her goal card. The warning needs to be positively stated to redirect the student or the class to the desired behavior. For example, *You need to stay focused to earn a plus on your goal card.* The longer-term consequences include not earning pluses for specified time periods on the goal card on a daily basis and thus, not being able to earn weekly or monthly preferred activities.
6. Incorporate a parent-teacher and/or teacher-teacher communication component(s) into the classwide management system. This helps to ensure consistency and promote unified approaches to proactively and reactively manage students' behavior. The communication system could be a pocket-sized notebook for recording anecdotal comments or a computer-generated paper where the teacher and student circle forced-choice descriptions that reflect the student's behavior. This does not have to be implemented for every student in the class, only for those who need it.

7. Individualize the system by using goal setting for specific students who engage in high rates of undesirable behaviors. Student-teacher conferences can be used to guide students in this process. The focus of the goal setting should be



to increase desirable student behavior. For example, if the problem behavior involves the student being out of his or

her seat without permission, then the goal would be to increase in seat behavior. The student can be taught to use self-talk and self-monitoring (see Rewards for a detailed explanation of how to do this) to increase the desired behavior. Students are more likely to be successful when we teach them what we want them to do, rather than what we do not.

8. Be prepared for undesirable student behavior to increase before it decreases.

Many teachers develop outstanding classwide management systems only to abandon them prematurely when they don't see results right away. Remember that it takes approximately 21 days (4 school weeks) before you will begin to see positive changes in students' behaviors.

What's Next?

Planning for proactive support is one approach to making the positive or desired student behavior(s) happen. Planning for reactive support is an approach to deal with challenging behavior after it has occurred. Several alternative proactive strategies include

- Communicating clear expectations
- Engaging students actively
- Ensuring smooth sailing transitions
- Using social and other natural rewards
- Making decisions based on a least-to-most intrusive rule