



Indicator: All teachers conduct an occasional “behavior check.” (4447)

Explanation: The evidence review confirms that all teachers revisit behavioral expectations throughout the instructional day. Doing so generally takes a couple of minutes and cues students to tune in to instruction. Behavior checks refocus and reinforce student attention. In addition, consistent positive respect for and adherence to those established and taught rules and procedures strengthen the likelihood that students will adopt and internalize the same classroom philosophies the teacher is trying to instill. All teachers must maintain a consistent and heightened awareness of all student behaviors and interactions. This teacher “withitness” allows the teacher to instill within students the norms and expectations within the classroom. Teacher “withitness” protects the optimum learning culture that teachers develop through the masterful organization and management of whole class, small group, and individual instruction.

Questions: What processes do all teachers employ to ensure they revisit behavioral expectations throughout the instructional day? Do all teachers employ visual displays to teach those rules and procedures to students? Do all teachers show fidelity to enforcing those classroom rules and procedures? How will the Leadership Team determine that all teachers chunk lesson material, skills and knowledge to support high student engagement? How will the Leadership Team ascertain teacher “withitness”? Do all teachers actively circulate to all student work areas? Do all teachers establish, teach, and adhere to expected norms and classroom behaviors? Are all teachers consistently aware and cognizant of all student behaviors and interactions? Do all teachers monitor and respond to disruptions immediately?

Why Behavior Management is So Important

Redding (2006) writes that the “single most powerful factor affecting school learning is classroom management -- the way the teacher organizes and manages the complex variables of curriculum, time, space, and interaction with students” (p. 106). Teachers must plan all of these variables in advance to create a positive culture within the classroom and avoid having to approach behavior in a reactive way (Redding, 2006; Pas, et al., 2014). Doing so allows for the teacher to “situate the learner as part of the instructional system rather than as the primary source of the problem” (Reinke, 2008, p. 316).

Students will respond to the climate that has been established as well as the behaviors of the teacher; if these are negative, students may become less compliant, and valuable instructional time can be lost in constant correction of behaviors. Reinke (2008) argues that establishing management systems for the entire class is truly an act of efficiency — if all students are clearly taught what is expected of them, far less time will be wasted correcting individual behaviors. Similarly, Pas, et al. (2014) found that classes with more consistent positive behaviors had many more opportunities for students to participate, more recognition for positive behaviors, and fewer negative reactions on the part of the teacher.

How Teachers Can Establish a Positive Behavioral Climate in the Classroom

Much of what can be done to improve student behavior and establish a positive classroom climate is proactive (Reinke, 2008; Pas, et al., 2014). This often requires careful planning on the part of the teacher in the following areas: physical layout of the classroom, expectations for behavior and how they are communicated, daily classroom routines and explicit teaching of them, and instructional strategies and methods of grouping students (Redding, 2006; Reinke, 2008). It is also critical to have established methods of addressing student behaviors—both positive and negative – as they arise (Simonsen, et al., 2009).

A teacher can do much to prevent undesirable classroom behaviors by strategically designing the structures listed above. Especially when done with input from students, these basic classroom elements can create order and reduce opportunities for misbehavior (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). Teachers must also think about their own behaviors and the persona they project to students; Marzano and Marzano (2003) discuss the importance of a teacher’s body language, tone of voice, as well as both the consistency and equity in addressing student behaviors. If a teacher can find an assertive middle ground between being passive and aggressive and do it fairly, he or she is more likely to command respect and compliance and prevent excessive misbehavior.

What Teachers Can Do to Continually Monitor Behaviors in the Classroom

While the majority of students will respond appropriately to an established classroom system of rules and expectations, some students may continue to struggle or demonstrate negative and distracting behaviors. Teachers must consistently reinforce their expectations and routines with students and respond appropriately to those who do and do not comply. Redding (2006) writes that:

Consistent reinforcement is key -- Rules and procedures are posted in the classroom, and students are reminded of them and learn to operate according to them. The effective teacher “teaches” classroom procedures in a positive way rather than relying solely on correction of violations (p. 106).

McIntosh, et al. (2004) and Simonsen, et al. (2008) discuss the idea of “active supervision,” in which a teacher scans the room to monitor behavior, moves around the room to provide proximity and assistance to students who may need it, and interacts with students during a transition or activity. Active supervision, they argue, is a pre-emptive strategy to consistently monitor student behaviors and prevent misbehavior. Marzano and Marzano (2003) echo this argument, emphasizing that even simple actions such as making eye contact with students, standing in strategic places around the room where misbehaviors may occur, and leveraging the relationships a teacher has with students can all help in keeping students on task.

Simonsen, et al. (2004) recommend using a “continuum of strategies” for addressing both positive and negative behaviors (p. 353). Some students may benefit from reminders in advance of a transition or activity where behavior is important, what McIntosh, et al. (2004) call a “precorrection.” They also suggest that teachers revisit behavioral expectations in mini lessons when students have been out of school for longer than a weekend, such as after a long break. Reviewing rules and procedures can also be helpful when negative behaviors are on the rise or when new students enter the class.

Just as adults need feedback on their work and performance, students do as well. After rules and procedures have been explicitly taught, teachers must provide ongoing feedback to students on how they are meeting the expectations of the classroom, especially in regards to key behaviors (Reinke, 2008; McIntosh, et al., 2014). This feedback can be done in a variety of ways, such as providing praise or rewarding students with a small prize or incentive. While negative consequences are necessary at times, providing more positive reinforcement will help all students – those who receive the positive feedback and those who see it – better understand what is expected of them and how they can continue to get positive attention from the teacher (Simonsen, et al., 20014; McIntosh, et al., 2008; Pas, et al., 2014).

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