Structuring Classroom Experiences for Success

Proactive Management Strategies

Reviewing and restating expectations

Understanding the problem
In the ideal, students are transfixed with anticipation and fascination with learning and never, ever, get off task or misbehave during a lesson (yeah, right!). In reality, some students often get off task and behave in less than desirable ways as a lesson unfolds. Many teachers make the mistake of immediately attempting to correct the behavior by administering some form of negative consequence. Usually teachers use a stern, unfriendly voice tone to correct the behavior and if this doesn’t work, they resort to applying stronger, more negative consequences such as using a more hostile voice tone and/or taking points away. Thus, we sometimes react to undesirable negative behavior by displaying

A key to the solution
Periodically reviewing or restating expectations for behavior before problems develop often prevents problems from developing.

Reviewing and restating expectations for learning and behavior is essential throughout an instructional activity. When teachers take the time to do this, they promote the ongoing development of students’ self-esteem, social skills, and academic learning. This process also encourages a continued instructional focus that promotes self-awareness and responsibility.

Reviewing and restating expectations for learning and behavior establishes cooperative learning procedures. It helps to organize instructional activities to promote students’ understanding of content and social behavior. This growth-oriented approach creates positive classroom circumstances that dynamically induce self-actualization.
undesirable, negative behavior ourselves. This creates a more hostile “me versus you” learning environment where power and control become the focus rather than cooperation and contribution.

When teachers fail to review expectations for learning and behavior during instruction, students can become distracted and disengaged. When this occurs, teachers are placed in a reactive position that can further disrupt the instructional activity. This creates a vicious cycle that defeats the lesson’s cognitive and social tasks that were originally designed to promote growth.

**Management Tips**

**Step 1** Do not wait for problems to develop. Instead, periodically restate in specific, positive ways what you expect students to do.

> For example …
> *As we begin the experiment, remember that you need to work quietly with a partner. I expect you to stay in your chairs and talk only about the experiment. If you have a question, raise your arm and wait for me to come to you.*

**Step 2** When students behave inappropriately, restate the excitations for positive behavior in very explicit ways. As needed, briefly discuss with the class the positive, authentic consequences for meeting the expectations of behavior.

**Jazzing It Up**

1. Involve students in generating ideas for appropriate behaviors (e.g., expectations) during instructional activities. Conduct a similar exercise in which they identify “crazy-making” and “incompatible” behaviors. Stimulate their thinking by asking them to brainstorm regarding the natural rewards and consequences they will experience by meeting or failing to meet the appropriate behaviors. Have students design creative and colorful displays using graphics. This helps students to experience a sense of ownership and investment, which in turn maximizes their success.

The expectations/rewards/consequences paradigm should include three to five statements per category. They should be positively stated and visual cues should correspond to the print. An example is the Ready, Aim, Fire strategy.
2. Teach reciprocity. Typically, teachers praise students. This leads to unbalanced interactions that leave teachers feeling depleted. To create more equitable interactions, teach students how to return compliments. For example, if the teacher offers the student a thumbs up for actively listening, staying focused, and participating, then teach the student to reciprocate with a thumbs up to the teacher. Teaching students to share compliments with you is an important part of encouraging positive social development in meaningful and naturally occurring ways.

3. Promote behavioral literacy. Teach students how to recognize and acknowledge positive behaviors that promote cooperation in themselves and each another. Consider using a daily compliment box to encourage students to acknowledge cooperative peer behaviors. At the end of the day or a specific class period, the teacher and students can read the “kudos” together or individual compliments can be distributed to students as they leave class or school.

4. Teach students how to use self-talk to meet the behavioral and instructional expectations. For example, I am slacking today. I need to use my Ready, Aim, Fire strategy. This will help me to get caught up and feel better about myself.

5. Ask yourself if your expectations pass the “RRA” test. That is, are they Reasonable, Realistic, and Age-appropriate? Talking with colleagues can be helpful in creating and maintaining a balanced perspective regarding your expectations.

6. Be prepared to be consistent and maintain a sense of humor! Remember to be cautious of the “once and done” trap. The key to success is consistent and continual revisiting of the behavioral expectations during the instructional activity. In doing so, the positive classroom climate is not only created but - more importantly - it is maintained over time!!!
What’s Next?

Additional tactics you can use to make positive or desired student behavior(s) happen include

- Warmly providing assistance
- Using an appropriate instructional pace
- Using proximity
- Using redirection
- Providing encouragement
- Maintaining format flexibility
- Conducting smooth-sailing transitions