

Behavioral “Best Practices”

Lorien Quirk, M.Ed., BCBA
Behaviorist Program Manager

1. Establishing instructional control
 - a. Always get a student’s attention before giving an instruction
 - i. Say his/her name, establish eye contact, position body to enhance effectiveness of instruction
 - b. Distinguish between giving a direction and giving a choice
 - i. “Do you want to come sit down?”--CHOICE
 - ii. “Sit down.”—DIRECTION
 - c. When there is not a choice in the matter, present it as a direction
 - d. If there is a choice in the matter, present it as a choice between 2 things, not as an open-ended question
 - e. Give only ONE direction at a time
 - i. Do not give another direction until the previous one has been completed (or approximated)
 - ii. Be attentive to other staff members’ directions so they do not overlap
 - iii. Prioritize your directions so they make sense to the student
 - f. Directions should be clear and brief (3-4 words)
 - g. Always follow through after giving a direction
 - i. Prompt a response
 - ii. Give feedback (positive reinforcement) after compliance
2. Ignore/redirect minor inappropriate behavior
 - a. Ignore the behavior completely if it does not hurt anyone and if the student re-engages afterwards
 - b. Redirect to the task at hand without acknowledging the inappropriate behavior
 - c. DO NOT reprimand
 - d. Rephrase the statement, always in the positive
 - i. Instead of, “Stop it! No!” say, “Hands down.”
 - e. If giving a verbal direction, use a calm, neutral tone of voice with minimal eye contact and facial expression
3. Transitions
 - a. Use classroom visual structures to support smooth, quick transitions
 - i. Timers
 - ii. Visual schedules
 - iii. Reinforcement systems
 - b. Teach response to natural cues
 - i. Whole class directions
 - ii. Bells
 - iii. Signals
 - c. Use tools consistently so expectation is clear each time there is a transition
4. Organization
 - a. Teacher as manager must model use of all strategies and provide feedback to staff on implementation
 - i. Ensure that all staff always know what is expected of them
 - b. It should always be clear to students and staff which staff members are responsible for which students at each time throughout the day
 - c. Only the person responsible for a student should work with his/her inappropriate behavior
 - d. This person should be giving directions to the student and following through with compliance

- e. Exceptions: if a direction was given by a different staff member it is up to them if they want to continue until compliance (it is preferable for the same staff to stay with the student until compliance)
- 5. Managing noncompliance
 - a. The standard way to work with a student who is “noncompliant” is to send the message, “I will not give you attention until you do what I say,” by doing the following:
 - i. Stay in close enough proximity to the student for him/her to know you are addressing them
 - ii. Avoid excessive eye contact and facial expressions
 - iii. Repeat ONE demand (direction) that is brief and clear in a calm, neutral tone of voice
 - 1. related to the activity (“Pick up the pencil”) or
 - 2. for safety (“Sit down”)
 - iv. Count to 15 in your head and repeat the SAME direction in the same manner until some form of compliance (consider accepting an approximation or modifying the completion requirement)
 - v. Maintain safety of yourself (evasion) and others if necessary
 - b. Other things to try (in line with not giving attention and not allowing escape from the direction):
 - i. Show visual schedule PECS
 - ii. Show token economy
 - iii. Show “First _____ then _____” card
 - iv. Offer a choice between the demand and another less-preferred activity (“Pick up the pencil or do the flashcards”)
 - c. Behavioral momentum: build compliance by engaging the student in preferred/Previously mastered tasks/demands at a rapid pace and give the ultimate demand after several successful trials in this manner
- 6. Reinforcement
 - a. PRAISE PRAISE PRAISE
 - b. Use the 4 to 1 rule: 4 positives for every corrective interaction with students
 - c. Use token economies to establish class-wide systems of rewards
 - d. Use a positive tone of voice when giving reinforcement
 - i. Verbal descriptive praise: state the behavior that is being reinforced, i.e., “Great job sitting in your chair!”
 - e. Use student interests to drive reinforcer-choice
 - i. Observation in natural setting
- 7. Staff behavior
 - a. OUR behavior affects student behavior
 - b. Use self-control (take breaths, count to 10, take a break)
 - c. Avoid power struggles with students (this tends to be inappropriate attention-seeking behavior that should NOT be reinforced with any attention from us)
 - i. You maintain control of the situation by DISengaging (see protocol for managing noncompliance)
 - d. Mind your tone of voice—our students imitate and pick up on every message we send, verbal and nonverbal.
 - e. Be patient: always give the student an opportunity, however brief, to respond independently
 - f. STAY POSITIVE