Universal Positive Behavior Support for the Classroom

Lori Newcomer
University of Missouri

To date, over 7,000 schools are implementing schoolwide systems of positive behavior support (SWPBS). At the universal/primary tier, these schools create a foundation of support to prevent problem behavior and academic failure for all students. This preventive approach can decrease the frequency of problem behaviors and reduce the development of more serious problems with students at risk. For those students who do not respond to the universal supports, secondary and tertiary interventions extend the continuum of supports available to improve social and academic outcomes. A crucial setting for primary systems of support is the classroom; however, primary supports at the classroom level often receive the least amount of attention and present the greatest inconsistencies in implementation. If schools are to maximize efforts at the primary level, universal systems of support in the classroom must be addressed.

Effective, evidence based management strategies are the foundation of primary interventions in the classroom setting. Because there is a significant relationship between student behavior in the classroom and the surrounding environment (Kern & Clemons, 2007; Kern, Gallagher, Starosta, Hickman & George, 2006; Newcomer & Lewis, 2004; Thomas, Becker, & Armstrong, 1968), proactive classroom management strategies focus on creating an environment structured to (a) identify, teach and encourage the behaviors that will lead to student success, (b) prevent problem behaviors and (c) facilitate academic success. This preventive approach includes an integration of both proactive behavior management and instructional practices. In a recent literature review of evidence-based practices in classroom management, Simonsen et al (2008) identified five critical features of effective classroom management: (a) maximize structure; (b) post, teach, review, monitor, and reinforce expectations; (c) actively engage students in observable ways; (d) use a continuum of strategies for responding to appropriate behaviors; and (e) use a continuum of strategies to respond to inappropriate behaviors. A

comprehensive management plan therefore addresses not only behavior management, but also instructional management and environmental management. In this article, we will review effective practices in behavior, instructional, and environmental management and provide suggestions for implementation within the framework of SWPBS universal supports.

Behavior Management

Effective behavior management begins with overt procedures and routines designed to teach and promote positive expectations, inhibit or discourage rule violating behavior and create a culture of competence in which communication and procedures are effective and efficient. A well-designed behavior management plan focuses on preventing rather than responding to problem behavior. Critical features of behavior management include (a) strategies to teach, review, monitor, and reinforce expectations; (b) a continuum of strategies for responding to appropriate behaviors; and (c) a continuum of strategies to respond to inappropriate behaviors. The following section presents a discussion on each of these features.

Teach, review, monitor and reinforce expectations.

Teaching and reinforcing expectations is achieved by establishing clear rules and routines, using precorrects and reinforcement procedures.

Rules. Rules are the foundation of effective classroom management. The extent to which students know the rules and how to follow the rules is positively correlated with appropriate behavior (Rosenberg, 1986). Rules for the classroom should reflect and support schoolwide expectations, yet tailored to promote behavior specific to the classroom setting. Before establishing a set of classroom rules, one must first determine which student behaviors are conducive to a positive learning environment as well as anticipate any problem behaviors that disrupt the environment. The rules are designed to clearly communicate the desired behaviors to the students and identify replacement behaviors for existing problems. Effective rules have the following characteristics:

- *They are stated in positive terms.* Effective rules identify the appropriate behavior and are specific enough to eliminate any confusion or ambiguity regarding the meaning.
- *They are observable and measurable.* When rules refer to behaviors that can be seen and measured in terms of accurate performance, there is no question as to whether or not a rule has been followed.
- *They are simple and age appropriate.* Wording is brief and is easily understood by the target population.
- *They are kept to a minimum.* Five classroom rules are sufficient for most settings. A good package of rules will address compliance, movement around the classroom, talking, work completion, and readiness.

Rules communicate desired behaviors; therefore it is useful to consider the distinction between rules and expectations. An expectation is defined as a "confident or strong hope that something will happen" whereas a rule is "an authoritative principle set forth to guide behavior" (expectation, 2008; rule, 2008). Expectations are generally stated standards of conduct and often convey the characteristics that lead to success both in and out of school (i.e. to be responsible, respectful and to do their best). Clearly stated rules, on the other hand, identify, define, and *operationalize* concepts of acceptable behavior specific to the classroom setting that are necessary to maintain order and a well-functioning environment. Figure 1 illustrates how one teacher aligned her classroom rules with the schoolwide expectations.

	Schoolwide Expectations		
	Be Respectful	Be Responsible	Be Cooperative
Classroom Rules	Raise your hand and wait for permission to speak or leave your seat	Bring paper, pencil and books to class	Do what your teacher asks immediately
	Keep hands, feet and objects to yourself	Start work immediately, work during work times	
		Turn completed assignments in on time	

Figure 1: Classroom rules matrix

Note that the rules listed in figure 1 are observable, measurable, specific and leave no question as to their meaning. With instruction, reinforcement and consistent observance and reinforcement of rules, the teacher can shape student behavior and create a stable, predictable environment in which students know how to succeed. Students who raise their hand to seek permission and keep their hands to themselves are respectful in their behavior. When students bring their materials to class, complete their work, and turn it in on time they are following the rules that shape responsible behavior. The table below lists examples and nonexamples of effective classroom rules (see Table 1). Even though the nonexamples indicate the characteristics we strive to instill in students "with strong hope" they will demonstrate these characteristics, they are vague, un-measurable and subject to interpretation. In contrast, the examples are explicit, unambiguous, and indisputable statements of appropriate behavior for the classroom.

Classroom Rules	
Examples	Nonexamples
• Turn in completed assignments on time. • Walk at all times in the classroom. • Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself. • Raise your hand and wait for permission to speak. • Do what your teacher asks immediately. • Be in your seat when the bell rings. • Keep your hands, feet and objects to yourself. • Be on task during work times.	• Be responsible. • Be a good citizen. • Respect authority. • Pay attention. • Be ready to learn. • Do your best. • Be kind to others. • Be polite. • Be safe.

Table 1. Classroom rule examples and nonexamples

Routines and Procedures. Although a critical component of effective classroom management, rules alone are not adequate to establish a proactive and efficient learning environment. Well defined routines and procedures help students master the steps necessary to accomplish tasks. The sequence of behaviors students must engage in to complete specific tasks and procedures is usually too complex to address with classroom rules. Behavioral expectations for these procedures are addressed more efficiently with consistent routines.

Routines are easily designed by listing the activities and transitions that occur throughout the day and completing a task analysis for each activity. The task analysis is translated into classroom routines and procedures that can be taught. It is beneficial to establish routines for transitions and frequently occurring activities (see Table 2).

Examples of Procedures
• Lining up • Turning in assignments • Class discussions • Sharpening pencils • Getting a drink • Entering the classroom • Leaving the classroom • Managing classroom equipment • Going to the restroom • Upkeep of student desks • Cooperative group work • Centers work

Table 2. Examples of procedures

As with the classroom rules, the routines should also align with the schoolwide expectations (see Figure 2). Establishing procedures and routines in this way allows for a consistent and orderly environment, helps students to manage transitions efficiently and to self-monitor their behavior.

	Small Group Activity	Independent Seat Work	Transitions
Respectful	• Listen to others • Accept each other's answers and opinions	• Raise hand before talking • Work quietly	• Hands to self • Move quietly • Keep space between you and others in line
Responsible	• Follow directions • Stay on task • Stay with your group • Use time wisely	• Stay on task • Manage time wisely • Remain in seat unless you have permission to be up	• Put materials away • Get required materials ready • Follow directions
Cooperative	• Do your share of the work • Everyone participates	• Wait quietly if the teacher is assisting a classmate	• Leave the area clean and orderly • Help your neighbor

Figure 2. Classroom routines matrix

***Teaching expectations*.** Rules and routines are taught with the same instructional procedures used to teach academics:

1. Present the rule or routine. Post in prominent positions in the classroom at student eye level. Use enlarged photos of students to illustrate what the behavior looks like.
2. Discuss why the rule or routine is important.
3. Elicit and demonstrate examples and nonexamples of the desired behavior.
4. Provide opportunities for practice with feedback.
5. Explain what will happen when the rule or routine is followed and what will happen if not followed.

Once taught, provide frequent and consistent acknowledgement for compliance. Students are more likely to adhere to rules and routines when they are acknowledged for their appropriate behavior. Acknowledgement can range from simple verbal praise (e.g. "Everyone worked quietly during the work time, you were all very responsible") to contingent reinforcement systems. Just as it is important to consistently acknowledge students for appropriate behavior, it is equally important that rules be consistently enforced. Inconsistency sends a confusing and mixed message to students.

***Precorrection*.** Precorrection strategies are most effective when appropriate behaviors have already been established and taught (e.g. rules and routines). Two objectives are emphasized with precorrections strategies: (a) elimination or reduction of the problem behavior and (b) establishment of an expected behavior to replace the problem behavior. Whereas correction procedures are consequent manipulations designed to stop or decrease the likelihood of problem behavior after it occurs, precorrection procedures are antecedent manipulations designed to prevent the occurrence of predictable problems and to prompt desired behavior (Colvin, Sugai & Patching, 1993). To implement a precorrection strategy, the teacher identifies the context (e.g., activity, transition, setting) in which the problem the behavior predictably occurs and teaches the desired replacement behavior (e.g. the appropriate rule or routine). Behavior rehearsals are conducted to provide students with opportunities to practice and frequent and overt prompts about the expected behavior are provided as students enter

into the problem context (Colvin, 2004). The following example demonstrates the use of a precorrection strategy: When she directed her students to line up to go to lunch, Mrs. Sheridan's class would jump from their seats and rush to the door leaving the room messy and bumping and crowding each other as they formed the line. It would sometimes take her as long as five minutes before the students were quiet and ready to go to lunch. To remedy this, Mrs. Sheridan developed and taught the following routine to students: (1) Clear your desk top and put all items away. (2) Push your chair under the table and stand behind your chair. (3) When your table is called, walk to the door and form a line. (4) Stand in line so that there is space for another person in front of you and behind you. (5) Last person out the door turns off the light and closes the door. The routine was taught to the class, with several opportunities to practice. Prior to each transition, Mrs. Sheridan would call on one or two students and ask them to demonstrate the procedure. She also praised the students individually and as a group each time they followed the procedure. After the students learned the routine, Mrs. Sheridan continued to prompt the students to remind them of the expected behaviors, "Remember to put things away and push in your chair, then wait to be called to the line." With a clear procedure for lining up and frequent and overt precorrects, the problem behaviors associated with lining up were soon eliminated. Precorrection strategies work well for an entire class or for individual students who continue to make behavior errors.

A continuum of responses for appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.

A continuum of planned responses is needed to recognize or to correct student behavior. These responses are the consequences that follow student behavior and are designed either to increase or decrease its occurrence, depending on the desired outcome. Consequences, both positive and negative, should be clear, specific, logical, and arranged in a hierarchy. Positive consequences are based on reinforcement procedures designed to acknowledge and promote rule and procedural compliance. Negative consequences are designed to reduce the occurrence of noncompliance.

Positive Consequences. Positive consequences are based on principles of reinforcement. Reinforcement is any procedure that maintains or increases behavior as the result of consequences experienced following a behavior. Consider the following examples: You wear a new outfit to work and receive a lot of compliments; you wear the outfit more often. A group of girls stop to talk to your teenage son when he takes the dog for a walk in the park; your son walks the dog more frequently. After saving 10% of each paycheck, you have enough money to take your family on a summer vacation; you and your spouse decide to continue the practice. As demonstrated by these examples, reinforcement is a naturally occurring behavioral process that can increase the rate, intensity, duration, or form of a behavior. Effective teachers use reinforcement as a powerful tool to teach, shape and encourage appropriate behavior. The goal of any reinforcement system is not to manage or control behavior, but to help students improve behavior and move students to intrinsic motivation and reinforcement.

Reinforcers can be social reinforcers (e.g. praise, recognition), activity reinforcers (e.g. special privileges, jobs, computer time), material reinforcers (e.g. tangible items), and token reinforcers (i.e., items exchanged for other reinforcers). Rosenfeld (2008) recommends teachers plan reinforcers in terms of free and frequent, intermittent, and strong and long term. *Free and frequent* reinforcers are typically social reinforcers (e.g. praise, thumbs up, smiles, rubber stamps on papers). When delivered contingently and frequently, students tend to exhibit higher levels of appropriate behavior (Thomas, Becker & Armstrong, 1968). A praise to reprimand ratio of 3:1 (Shores, Gunter, & Jack, 1993) or 4:1 or higher (Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004) is recommended. *Intermittent* reinforcers are those reinforcers presented contingent on appropriate behavior on a less frequent basis (e.g. phone call home, special privileges, computer time). The strong and long term reinforcers give recognition for long term efforts (e.g. honor roll, field trip, special recognition award). Of the three categories, the free and frequent reinforcers are the most powerful tools to shape and encourage appropriate behavior.

Negative Consequences. The purpose of a negative consequence is to decrease the occurrence of problem behavior and to teach the desired replacement behaviors. Similar to positive consequences, negative consequences should be connected to the classroom rules. A hierarchy of consequences should be planned from the least intrusive (e.g. error correction with rule reminder) to the most intrusive (e.g. office referral). Options include rule reminders, changing seats, time-out in class, time-out out of class, phone call home, lunch detention, office referral. It is important to keep in mind, however, that negative consequences alone are not an effective strategy. They must be encased within a comprehensive management package that is based on the proactive practices of reinforcement, positive student teacher interactions, and effective surface management strategies such as active supervision.

Reinforcement-based strategies to decrease behaviors. Differential reinforcement procedures are an effective way to reduce problem behaviors by reinforcing the absence of the behavior or targeted alternatives. Differential reinforcement of incompatible behaviors (DRI) is a procedure in which behaviors that are incompatible with the problem behavior (e.g. classroom rule related behaviors) are reinforced. For example, in a classroom that has frequent talking among students at inappropriate times the teacher would reinforce students for periods of time when they are not talking and on-task. The absence of talking is reinforced, not a specific replacement behavior. A teacher may also choose to implement differential reinforcement of low rates of behavior (DRL). In a middle school where arriving late to class is a problem, a teacher may use DRL; reinforcing students for being in class and in their seat at a predetermined criterion for number of tardies. For example, during the first week, reinforcement can occur if there are no more than 5 tardies during the week. Once the 5 tardy criteria is met, the teacher can reduce to criteria for reinforcement to no more than 2 tardies during the week. Each time the class meets the criterion, it is lowered until tardies are eliminated.

When carefully designed and implemented with consistency, behavior management procedures can prevent many problem behaviors from occurring. However, strengthening academic performance is an important feature to consider to eliminate discipline problems. The next section will address important strategies for instructional management.

Instructional Management

Instruction may be the most critical antecedent for appropriate student behavior; the relationship between instruction and behavior, as well as academic performance and behavior has been clearly established (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura & Zimbardo, 2000; Sutherland & Wehby, 2001). This implies that by using engaging, structured instructional methods teachers can improve student task engagement and reduce the occurrence of problem behaviors. Increasing the opportunities to respond (OTR) is an effective way to increase student engagement in instruction. In OTR, instructional stimuli are presented as verbal questions, prompts, cues or directives. Student responses to those stimuli are written, oral, or some sort of motor response. When presented with new material, student response rate should range from 4 to 6 responses per minute, with a minimum of 80% accuracy. When the objective of the lesson is to increase fluency with material, response per minute should range from 8 to 12 responses per minute, with at least 90% accuracy (Gunter & Sutherland, 2005). The following is a review of strategies that teachers can use to increase student opportunities to respond, engagement and time on task.

Peer Tutoring. Peer tutoring provides high levels of student engagement and allows student to work in pairs to practice basic skills, using a highly structured format with specific procedures for taking turns, presenting information, recording responses and providing feedback (Delquardri, Greenwoood, Whorton, Carta, & Hall, 1986). Peer tutoring models promote high levels of on-task behavior and, therefore reduced levels of off-task behavior. Peer tutoring models include Class-wide Peer Tutoring (CWPT) (Delquadri, Greenwood, Stretton, & Hall, 1983) and Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS)

(Fuchs, Fuchs,& Burish, 2000). The highly structured and systematic nature of peer tutoring increases time on task and reduces levels of off-task behavior.

Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI). CAI can provide high levels of response opportunities and immediate feedback, as well as enhance student motivation for learning (Jerome & Barbetta, 2005; Silver-Pacuilla & Fleishman, 2006).

Choral Responding. Choral responding is an instructional technique in which the teacher gives an instructional prompt or signal to which students generate a reply and respond in unison. Choral responding can be used during large group instruction to increase student participation and to increase opportunities to practice skills throughout a lesson. A high rate of soliciting student responses using choral responding is associated with higher rates of on-task behaviors and decreased problem behaviors (Englemann & Carnine, 1991).

Response Cards. Similar to choral responding, response cards are cards, signs or items simultaneously help up by all students to display their response to a question or problem presented by the teacher (Heward, 2006). Using response cards during review and guided practice, students have increased responding when compared to teachers calling on individual students.

Direct Instruction (DI). DI is an instructional approach that attempts to control all the variables that influence student performance (Adams & Carnine, 2005). The lesson uses a small group teaching format that follows a precisely formatted script. The lessons are designed to keep students actively engaged, making 10 to 15 oral responses per minute. Student errors are immediately recognized and provide opportunities for reteaching. Following the group exercises, students complete workbook activities that are coordinated with the group lesson to provide additional practice

Environmental Management

The physical arrangement of the classroom can impact student academic and behavioral performance and should be structured to support instructional and behavioral expectations. The

arrangement of desks, learning centers, computers, materials and storage areas should be aligned to support the schedule of daily activities and to facilitate smooth transitions. The room should be arranged to reduce congestion; especially at critical transition areas (e.g. entry, storage areas, centers). The classroom arrangement should be free of clutter, with materials neatly stored and easily accessible. Furniture and equipment should be appropriately sized for the students and arranged to allow teachers to have easy access to every student and so that all students have easy access to materials. Finally, areas should be arranged to facilitate specific activities (e.g. reading, learning centers, listening centers) with special attention to independent work areas to ensure minimal distractions.

Putting It All Together

Darch and Kame'enui (2004) recommend teachers develop a 180-day plan for classroom management that consists of 3 phases across the course of the school year. During phase one, (the first 3 months in the fall) the focus is teaching and reinforcing rules and routines. During phase two (typically the winter months), the focus shifts to quality instruction, instructional management, efficient scheduling and reinforcement to move students to mastery of behavioral and academic skills. During phase 3 (the spring months) teachers reteach and use precorrects as needed.

In combination, the universal classroom management practices discussed can prevent the occurrence of disruptions and other problem behaviors in the classroom and create a proactive environment to promote both academic and behavioral competence. Because these practices function to prevent problem behaviors through an instructional approach, they are positive and proactive. As a comprehensive package, behavior, instructional, and environmental management contribute to the development of an effective, efficient classroom environment.

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