

Ideas for Positive Behaviour Management

It is important to recognise that there is no one solution or fixed approach to managing student behaviour. A simple maxim is:

*'When what you are doing isn't working, stop doing it
and do something else'.*

Effective teachers assess the nature and context of the behaviour they are observing, decide what it is they would wish to change and consider what would be the most appropriate 'tool', i.e. skill or strategy, to use to try to achieve the desired outcome. Any approach you apply to the situation will likely be more successful if you *believe* they will work and communicate that positive belief to the students.

Listed below are some strategies that you may want to consider and incorporate within your 'toolkit' of strategies and approaches.

Approach	Application
Expectation of Compliance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbal Language Expectation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Body Language Expectation 	<p>A way of demonstrating confidence and assertiveness throughout your interactions with students. Convey your positive expectation through your verbal and body language</p> <p>Use 'thank you' rather than 'please' after giving an instruction, e.g. <i>'John, return to your seat and continue with the task. Thanks'</i></p> <p>By finishing a discipline transaction with <i>'Thanks'</i> you are effectively saying <i>'I'm so sure that you will comply with my request that I'm happy to thank you in advance for doing so'</i>. By using <i>'Thanks'</i> you also trigger a greater sense of obligation to comply and indicate that there is closure to the situation</p> <p>After giving a positive verbal instruction, ending with <i>'Thanks'</i> it is important not to dwell on the discipline transaction and to convey that you have confidence that they will comply. Suggestions for 'moving on' beyond the discipline situation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> drop eye contact with the student turn away and engage with others move to another student who is on-task and give them positive praise

Deliberate Ignoring	<p>This is not the same as simply ignoring difficult behaviour. It's about your management decision. Things you need to consider when making decisions to ignore include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What things can be ignored and for how long • When they can be ignored • What you will do next if ignoring doesn't work <p>There are two types of ignoring</p> <p>Brutal: When you simply ignore what's going on and, ideally simultaneously, acknowledge students who are displaying positive behaviour</p> <p>Prefaced: When you give a brief instruction before ignoring, e.g. <i>'When you're in your seat and ready to start work, then I'll come over and help you'</i></p>
Give Advice Before Warnings	<p>A non-confrontational approach to help students correct their actions by giving them information about how the world works. Giving 'advice' in this way can act as a friendly warning, as well as an opportunity to take responsibility before you try resorting to more direct methods</p> <p>Example: <i>'John if you were in your seat, we would be ready to move on'</i> or <i>'John you'll be more able to do your essay if you pay attention to the information I'm giving in this session'</i></p>
K.I.S.S. (Keep it Short and Simple)	<p>It can be tempting to alleviate your frustrations when dealing with repeated problem behaviour to launch into 'monologue mode'. Try to avoid doing this and give short, simple directions to</p> <p>Focus on the key issue Identify the problem Resolve the problem</p> <p>Compare: <i>'John I can see that you're wandering around the room again. Can't you see that you're putting everyone else off their work? Besides, if you just got on with the task I've given you, then you'd be able to have it finished before the end of the session and not have to take it home to complete'</i></p> <p>With <i>'John, return to your seat. Thanks'</i></p>

<p>Simply Describe the Problem</p>	<p>Giving a short description without apportioning any blame is a powerful, non-confrontational way of treating misbehaviour as simply a mistake that be easily rectified. This is similar to K.I.S.S. but goes further by directly inviting the student(s) to solve the problem</p> <p>Examples: <i>'I notice the tables and chairs have been moved around a bit, I'd like your help to sort the room out again for the next group. Thanks'</i> or <i>'John, you seem to have some tools left lying around on the bench. What do you need to do with them?'</i></p>
<p>Use Positive Language</p>	<p>Use 'Do' rather than 'Don't' in your interactions with students. Telling young people what you want them to do will always be more effective than telling them what you want them to stop doing. This is because the human brain finds it easier to process positive messages than negative ones.</p> <p>Example: <i>'Hands up if you want to say something'</i> is more likely to be successful than <i>'Don't shout out'</i>.</p>
<p>Use 'Either ... Or' Choices</p>	<p>Be clear about the choices that your students have in your class or workplace. Give a clear choice of either complying or receiving the appropriate consequence. Either ... Or choices reduce the chances of the discipline transaction becoming confrontational.</p> <p>Example: <i>'John you can either choose to return to your seat or you will be choosing to go and explain the situation to Mrs Senior'</i></p>
<p>Use Only One Formal Warning</p>	<p>Do not use repeated formal warnings as it encourages young people to continue to push the boundaries. E.g. <i>'John this is your third and final warning'</i> is not effective!</p> <p>Example: John is constantly shouting across the room during an on-task phase of the session. Go over to John and preface your formal warning with a clear choice: <i>'John if you continue to shout out, then you'll be choosing a warning'</i> If John persists in his poor choice of behaviour, clarify his choice and expect compliance: <i>'John you've chosen a warning. Back to the task now. Thanks'</i> If John chooses to ignore the warning, move on to the next sanction appropriate to your setting <i>'John, if you shout out again, you'll be choosing to go and explain your behaviour to Mrs Senior. Back on to the task now. Thanks.'</i></p>

Allow for Compliance Time	<p>Unless necessary for safety reasons, do not insist on immediate compliance. Allowing a little 'compliance time' reduces confrontation and allows students to 'save face' in front of their peers. After a discipline transaction, consider turning your attention back to the on-task students until the student has complied with your instruction. Once they have made their good choice, make a point of reinforcing this, e.g. <i>'Thanks for choosing to sit down again, John'</i></p>
Dealing with Confrontation by Agreement	<p>When young people become confrontational and say things such as <i>'You can't make me'</i> many teachers and adults feel instantly disadvantaged and frequently give way to their own inner voice that says <i>'Oh, can't I? we'll just see about that!'</i>. Inevitably this fuels reciprocal confrontation.</p> <p>The reality is that you can't make them do anything. You can however use this fact to your advantage by agreeing with the student and expecting them to do what you ask anyway.</p> <p>Example: John has not responded to your formal warning and is still wandering around and chatting instead of getting on with the task. When you ask him to choose to sit down, John says <i>'You can't make me sit down'</i>. You calmly respond with <i>'You're right, John, I can't make you sit down and I'd like you to choose to return to your seat and get on with the task. Thanks.'</i></p>
Grandma's Rule 'When Then' Conditional Statements	<p>'Grandmas rule' may be familiar to most of us and it goes like this: <i>'When you have eaten your carrots Then you can have your pudding'</i></p> <p>Examples: <i>'John When you've returned to you seat, Then I'll come and help you'</i> <i>'John When I've listened to Janet's side of the story, Then I'll listen to what you have to say'</i> <i>'John When you get your books out, Then I'll answer your question'</i></p>

Explanatory 'I' Messages	<p>Using the personal pronoun 'I' adds significantly to the effectiveness of a discipline transaction. An 'I' message acknowledges that there is a problem and opens the way towards a solution without blame or conflict</p> <p>An effective 'I' statement has four parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A brief description of the behaviour • The effect of this behaviour • Your feelings • The new desired behaviour <p>Example: John is shouting out to get your attention whilst you are supporting another student.</p> <p>You temporarily break off from the other student saying 'I'm sorry, I just need a quick word with John'</p> <p>You turn to John and calmly say '<i>John when you shout out (behaviour) it stops me helping other students (effect) and I feel frustrated (your feelings). I'd like you to choose to wait without shouting until I'm finished with Janet and then I'll come and help you (new desired behaviour)</i></p>
5 - W Follow Up Routine	<p>The 5-W is a powerful framework that can be used when following up with students at the end of a session</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. '<i>What did you do?</i>' Ask them to describe the behaviour 2. '<i>What made you think that might be appropriate?</i>' Give them the chance to explain or say 'don't know'. 3. '<i>What rule did you break?</i>' Clarify the unacceptable behaviour against rules 4. '<i>What would be a better choice next time?</i>' Teaching the student to display more appropriate social behaviour in another situation 5. '<i>What can I do to help you?</i>' Consider alternative ways to support the student to make better choices another time
Use 'The Pause'	<p>You are more likely to achieve compliance from students if you deliberately allow them time to think about, understand and do the 'something different' that you expect.</p> <p>Adding a pause after you use the student's name before you give them the direction helps to gain and sustain their attention</p> <p>Example: '<i>John (1-2 second pause) back to your seat. Thanks</i>'</p>

Double 'What' Questions	<p>An effective element of positive behaviour management is to use refocusing questions. These challenge the student to actively accept responsibility without blaming. Questions which ask 'Why?' something happened is rarely helpful and will only elicit their view or perception of a situation. It is better to refocus by casually asking 'What?'</p> <p>Example: T. <i>John I notice you are out of your seat. What are you doing?</i> J. <i>'Nothing'</i> T. <i>'What should you be doing?'</i> J. <i>'Dunno'</i> T. <i>'You should be returning to your seat and finishing the task. Choose to get back to work now. Thanks'</i></p>
Repeating and Blocking	<p>For those students who begin to question or challenge it can be very effective simply to repeat your directions two or three times.</p> <p>Accompanying repetition with your open hand signifies a blocking action to emphasise that you are ending the situation.</p> <p>Example: T. <i>John, return to your seat and get back on with the task. Thanks'</i> J. <i>'But ... I'</i> T. <i>'Choose to return to your seat, John. Thanks'</i> J. <i>'I was only ...'</i> T. <i>'Back to your seat in your seat . Thanks'</i></p>
Rule of Three	<p>Many teachers get frustrated by having to repeat their instructions several times without any noticeable effect. If you continue to repeat over and over, then you are actually teaching the student that they don't have to take any notice of you!</p> <p>A useful rule of thumb is three repetitions of the direction. This should then be followed up with a consequential choice if the behaviour continues.</p> <p>Example: <i>'John, I've asked you twice to return to your seat. If you don't sit down you'll be choosing a warning'. Now choose to sit down again. Thanks'</i></p>

The 4 R's Framework	<p>This is a framework to help you to manage your class or workplace effectively. You will need to set a clear agenda for the students that guides and supports them to make appropriate choices about their behaviour.</p> <p>The 4 R's are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights - basic rights are safety, learning, fairness and respect • Responsibilities - emotional and social growth are enhanced through accountability • Rules - describe behaviours which protect rights • Routines - agreed actions that support smooth organisation <p>Rights and Responsibilities should be clearly linked. A simple message is <i>'As you have a right to be respected, you have a responsibility to behave respectfully to others too'</i></p>
Choices	<p>Effective teachers and adults allow young people to make choices about their behaviour.</p> <p>The concept of Choice is the single most important factor in moving away from unnecessary conflict and confrontation.</p> <p>Giving choices distinguishes less effective teachers, who struggle futilely to control the behaviour of challenging students, from effective teachers and adults who seek to influence and then manage the choices young people make about their behaviour.</p> <p>The benefits of Choice include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It brings empowerment • It emphasises personal accountability • It reduced conflict and tension • It is emotionally consistent with human needs • It provides a language for managing behaviour <p>Simply offering choices, however, does not guarantee that the young people make socially acceptable ones! Choice, therefore is linked closely to Consequences.</p>

Consequences	<p>When applying a consequence (whether a reward or a sanction) it is crucial to emphasise that the young person is receiving it as a result of their choice.</p> <p>Consequences should be an inevitable outcome of choice and the two should be inextricably linked. When this is understood in a teaching environment, they can become very influential teaching tools</p> <p>Holding students accountable helps you to teach them appropriate behaviours and personal responsibility. Frequent feedback, with a particular emphasis on noticing and acknowledging appropriate social behaviour, is a skill for teachers to develop to enhance and promote positive student behaviour</p>
Rules	<p>Rules should exist in your classroom or workplace area. These should protect the basic rights of everyone and should be developed using the 4R's Framework.</p> <p>Ownership of the rules by the students is important and helps them to engage with the rules</p> <p>Rules should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Related to the rights / responsibility relationship • Few in number so everyone can easily remember them • Phrased positively (what to do, rather than what not to do) • Related to observable behaviours • Explained to the students and regularly referred to and reinforced <p>Teachers and adults who are proactive in 'catching the students being good' and following the rules are reinforcing the successful behaviours which maintain a positive climate in the classroom and social areas.</p>
Routines	<p>Routines are the regular day to day practices that help to keep things running smoothly and effectively.</p> <p>Routines are a very important part of any teaching and learning environment. Many students rely upon the existence of predictable routines to help them to cope with the many challenges they can face in the learning and social contexts of schools and colleges.</p> <p>Teachers who recognise the importance of routines will prepare their students for any changes in routines, e.g. a visiting tutor or a change to the planned programme. By preparing for such changes, this can minimise any negative effects for students who find change difficult to cope with.</p>