



**School-Wide Positive  
Behavior Support System  
Handbook**

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# Purpose

A School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support program (SWPBS) allows students to become engaged learners by understanding correct behaviors and self-manage their inappropriate behaviors consistently throughout their day. The ultimate educational goal of any school environment is to maximize all students' academic and social, emotional, behavioral development. If students do not demonstrate social, emotional, and behavioral skills, it can be difficult for teachers and students to achieve the academic outcomes that we all want. For this reason, we have to think about these as a package, focusing not only on academics, but also on the social, emotional, and behavioral skills which according to research, actually may be a prerequisite that facilitates the academic engagement and then academic achievement.

# WVA Core Principles

West Virginia Academy's Student Code of Conduct was written based on the following core principles:

1. Teachers will collaborate to create a set of behavioral expectations of standards that they teach and to which they hold students accountable.
2. Students must be taught the social, emotional, and behavioral skills they are expected to demonstrate.
3. Teachers will recognize that some of the students may need modifications and accommodations because they do not learn the skills as quickly as others.
4. After the skill instruction, teachers then must teach students how to apply those skills in various classroom settings, in real-life situations, and across the common areas of the school.
5. Teachers will find ways to motivate students to use the skills that they've learned and mastered. Motivation can come in the form of meaningful incentives that encourage students to make good choices and consequences that motivate them to not make bad choices.

# Overview

Student behavior and conduct will be explicitly taught and enforced consistently and positively. We strive to make WVA a welcoming place for all who work, study, and visit. We will do this in four main ways:

1. Self-management skills will be integrated in to the teaching of academic subjects in all levels and subjects.
2. Our teachers will be encouraged to have multiple positive interactions with their students, colleagues, and visitors as well as attempt to understand the behavior in order to correct the behavior;

3. Mindfulness and the CHAMPs program to keep consistent expectations and standards throughout the school.
4. WVA's environment will be filled with collaboration. Teachers will need to collaborate with each other to ensure personalized learning is taking place in the appropriate levels for each individual student. Students will be encouraged to collaborate within their ambassador teams, their classes, and within the community through various school-wide events.

## Self- Management

The goal from an academic learning, mastery, and achievement perspective is to teach students to be independent learners. We want students to have the skill sets to independently learn and apply their academic information to real-world problems. On a social, emotional, and behavioral level, we're trying to teach our students to be adept at self-management. We want students to arrive at a level of self-management such that they can apply and infuse their skills more and more independently over time.

What is self-management? Knoff (2011) defines self-management as the ability to be socially, emotionally, and behaviorally aware of one's self and others and to effectively control one's own emotions and behavior. Students who struggle with social, emotional, and behavioral skills tend to face more disciplinary consequences because they are unable to engage in appropriate behaviors in the classroom.

## Positive Classroom Environment

### Positive Youth Development

Positive Youth Development (PYD) transitions away from the traditional approaches of solely responding to youth at risk and their negative behaviors toward a more proactive approach. This approach ensures young people have the knowledge, skills, and support they need to thrive as adults, enjoy good health, succeed economically, and make meaningful contributions to their communities.

WVA recognizes that all students learn differently and part of the education process is understanding how to learn. We will strive to foster a positive environment that promotes self-knowledge and advocacy to make certain that each scholar knows their most effective learning strategies and how to monitor their progress in achieving their personal goals. One proven way to develop PYD is youth-centered or youth-led activities.<sup>1</sup> Our WVA Ambassador program will be youth-led and an excellent way to promote positive youth development within our school.

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<sup>1</sup> Alvarado, G., Skinner, M., Plaut, D., Moss, C., Kapungu, C., and Reavley, N. (2017). A Systematic Review of Positive Youth Development Programs in Low-and Middle-Income Countries. Washington, DC: YouthPower Learning, Making Cents International.

## 5 Positives for every Negative

Knoff (2013) studied and found that more positivity needs to occur in the classroom to build a positive school culture.<sup>2</sup> We are adopting his recommendation of 5 positive comments or feedback for every one negative interaction. We will be encouraging our administrators, staff, and students to also follow this simple guideline.

We want to avoid criticism and derogatory feedback, instead follow our 5Bs:

- Be specific,
- Be immediate,
- Be consistent,
- Be frequent, and
- Be preventative.

Our interventions need to be focused, directed on giving them the skills of self-management, motivating them and facilitating their execution at a level of automaticity.

As teachers we must:

- Teach the students listening, engagement, and response skills, communication and collaboration skills, and social problem-solving skills.
- Teach them to master these skills and apply them not only in the classrooms, but in social arenas outside of our classroom and under conditions of emotionality, when frustration, anger, depression, or even excitement can cloud their judgement and make self-management even more difficult.

An organized and safe classroom is the first step to creating a supportive classroom environment that teaches self-management. Each building level team will have the same classroom arrangement and organization

### **Classroom arrangement/design**

Problems can arise when spaces are not dedicated for independent or partner work. As teachers, our goal from an academic learning perspective is to teach students to be independent learners. That looks different in kindergarten, third grade, seventh grade, and 11th grade, but what we're trying to accomplish is giving the students the skills they need to independently learn and apply academic information to real-world problems. On a social, emotional, and behavioral level, we're trying to teach our students to be self-managers, social self-managers, emotional self-managers, and behavioral self-managers. Again, this looks different at different grade levels, but the goal that we're trying to accomplish with them is the same. We want them to get to a level of self-management where they can apply their skills more and more independently over time.

### **Consistent Expectations and Routines**

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<sup>2</sup> Knoff, H.M. (2013) Changing Resistant Consultees: Functional Assessment Leading to Strategic Intervention. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation*. 23(4). 307-317.

Buiding level teams will also have consistent expectations and classroom routines. See the Section entitled CHAMPS for more information.

## Understanding the Behavior

Students have moments! They may scream, kick, curse, throw things, or even fight. At times, these behaviors can be frightening for all of us, but it is important to remember there is always a reason for the behavior. Once there is a supportive classroom environment in place, teachers will be able to find the source of the behavior.

Challenging behaviors can often indicate broader issues outside the classroom. What can be underlying issues for inappropriate behavior?

- Communication difficulties. At times children may not be able to clearly articulate their needs and wants. For example, a student who does not understand directions rips up an assignment.
- Academic delays such as learning disabilities, emotional disabilities, and skill gaps. Instructional or curricular mismatch. For example, a teacher may lack some knowledge or professional skill that is somehow contributing to the challenging behavior. Or it could be that the curriculum is lacking the scope and sequence it needs and is, therefore, creating a curricular gap for students, or it is not aligned well with the actual situation and demographic of students.
- Social/emotional difficulties, such as when a student experiences trauma at home and then acts out in the classroom to gain attention, control, or experience an emotional release. Inability to self-regulate. For example, a student may have difficulty staying in his or her seat or not talking during instruction.
- Avoidance. This can occur when directions are unclear or misunderstood or when the student has a lack of motivation to complete the task. Escaping a given situation, such as walking out of the classroom, refusing to stay a seat, and other escalating behavior in order to be removed from the classroom.

While teachers should establish classroom room expectations and routines, they cannot treat each student and each problem in the same matter. Not every challenging problem can be "fixed" with the same strategy. Teachers must remember that students come from diverse cultures and personalities with diverse areas of needs.

### **Root of the Problem**

Some suggestions for how to get to the root of a student's challenging behavior include these ideas:

1. Get feedback from other colleagues within the building. This will give you a sense of if or when the problem behavior occurred in the past or is occurring in other educational settings and how often, and how others have tried to manage the issue. Colleagues may also have insight as to the underlying cause of the behavior.

2. Meet with the student's parents or family. Talk about if or when the problem behavior has occurred in the past or is occurring at home and how they have tried to manage the issue. Family members may also have insight as to the underlying cause of the behavior.
3. Third-party observation of teacher and student in the learning environment. Invite a colleague or administrator to come in and take observational notes and then review and discuss their observations with them after the lesson.
4. Review student data from the office or from other colleagues. Look for patterns or implications for the existing behavior.

## Primary Reasons for Challenging Behavior

According to Cullinan (2007), most behaviors are learned, and students' unwanted behaviors can be modified with re-enforcers and consequences. For teachers to find effective means of modifying unwanted behaviors, they need to first identify the reasons behind them.

Often when negative behavior happens, there is usually not just one, but several contributory factors. Cheung and Cheung (2008) suggest these possible influences:

- Disrupted social bonds. This occurs when a student has the inability to sustain peer relationships.
- Delinquent association, or in other words, when there is a neighbor conflict or gang affiliation.
- Under achievement. For example, consistently not meeting grade level standards and struggling day to day academically.
- Coercive parenting, which is defined as aggressive or threatening behaviors from parents and communication towards school in general.
- Negative school experiences, such as feeling embarrassed or disrespected by peers and/or adults in the learning environment.
- Stressful life events. An example may be death of family member, abuse, relocation, or divorce.
- Labeling by teachers and parents. For example, due to academic ability or disability, teachers see students as a troublemaker, or if teachers had difficulty with an older sibling, they assume their experience with the younger one will be the same.

Ask Yourself:

- Is this a skill problem?
- Has the student been taught the social, emotional, behavioral self-management skills?
- Has he or she learned to master those skills?
- Is this a motivational issue? In other words, can the student behave appropriately but is choosing not to do so?
- What's the accountability system look like? In other words, is the teacher holding the student accountable for his or her inappropriate and appropriate behavior?
- What is the accountability system? Is there consistency?
- Is this a situational problem? Are the challenging behaviors a function of special situations, issues that are going on in the common areas of the school, issues that relate

to peer interactions or some of those more personal situations, such as home situations or previous traumas or experiences that have occurred outside of the school?

Often, when students are seeking attention or display a lack of self-confidence, they tend to act out more than usual in the classroom. Sometimes, teachers unknowingly contribute to what is causing students to misbehave.

Some of the common mistakes that teachers may make are:

- Not talking to the student but rather talking over him or her. This can cause a student to feel disrespected and not valued.
- Poor listening skills. For example, refusing to hear a student's side of a story or not allowing enough time for the student to explain his or her thoughts and ideas about a situation.
- Not being prepared. This can be an issue because students need structure, boundaries, and clear expectations. Teachers should arrive before students and/or stay late after students to have the classroom itself and the instructional materials prepared and ready for use when students arrive to begin the day.
- Allowing students to yell answers instead of having a method in place to respond to a question. Yelling out answers can cause increased distractions in the learning environment, as well as allow certain students to dominate regarding instruction and/or asking for clarification and assistance. Those students unwilling to yell loudest may also need support. And, all students should have opportunities to participate in the daily class activities.
- Rushing ahead with a given concept without giving the student enough time to process the information. This can cause anxiety and escalate negative behaviors as students often act out rather than admit they are confused or need support with the academic content.
- Negative body language, such as walking away from the student, which can then create feelings of neglect and disrespect. Negative comments towards the student in front of the class. For example, I've heard teachers say things such as, "I cannot believe you did such a thing!" or "Why are you not using your brain?" Even if this comment is meant to be silly or in a joking manner, sarcasm can hurt and cause students to shy away from class participation and asking for help when needed.
- An unorganized classroom. Examples of this would be having materials scattered throughout the classroom and not in designated areas or not having policies and procedures in place for daily activities, such as going to the restroom or lining up for lunch.
- Allowing the students to set the tone of the classroom in a negative manner. For example, allowing students to arrive tardy without an excuse or a penalty of some kind or not having consequences for students who speak to their peers and/or teacher in a disrespectful tone.



Students need to have a strong model of appropriate behavior in the classroom setting. Successful teachers manage their classrooms with well-planned lessons and an environment that is peaceful and conducive to learning.

## Positive Approaches

Teachers need to be able to create a safe and welcoming physical and emotional learning environment for their students. All students come into the learning environment with ideas, experiences, and attitudes. Students may vary in how well they are able to make friends and gain acceptance. Let's face it. Children are hard on each other. They have a way of setting social standards and social classes within the school walls. Some children enter the learning environment well-liked and popular, and others are shy or timid or seem to cause trouble.

How teachers respond and what interventions they use to correct inappropriate classroom behaviors will have a lasting effect on all students, not just those exhibiting the inappropriate behavior. Often, there is a trigger or catalyst for inappropriate behavior and teaching students to recognize and understand those triggers is one effective way to reduce negative incidents.

Teachers can develop methods for helping students learn how to self-check their inappropriate behaviors. These include:

1. **Guidance Approach**: which consists of developing trust with students. This trust fosters mutual respect between student and teacher.
2. **Being proactive** in the classroom is another effective strategy. For example, Gibbs (2007) suggests stimulating, interesting, and strength-based environments will allow students to be more engaged in learning. This engagement in academics will reduce the likelihood of challenging behaviors from reoccurring in the classroom setting as students are involved and focused in their academic work.
3. Curtis and Carter (2004) suggest **understanding and responding positively to challenging behaviors** in these ways: Support for students' rights. For example, use strategies to create a safe environment that fosters learning, as all students have the right to feel safe and valued in school, as well as the right to a positive learning environment.
4. **Understanding a student's development**. Teachers need to utilize strategies to get to know each student individually both as students and as young people, so they can work to support each student socially, emotionally, and academically as needed.
  - a. Strategies can include reviewing student records, talking with colleagues, including previous teachers, interviewing students and/or family members, and analyzing student work.
5. **Understanding the development of social skills**. For example, creating a safe space and multiple opportunities for students to develop positive relationships with their peers and adults. Teachers should infuse social skill instruction with academic lessons.
6. **Understanding the impact of relationships and environments on a student's behavior**. A good example of this would be cooperative learning activities with rotating roles so that students get multiple experiences and opportunities to be successful.

7. **Consistency** is another key aspect of a positive learning environment.

NOTE: We cannot assume students have mastered self-management skills and thus we need to teach students appropriate behaviors desired in the learning environment.

## Consistency

Being consistent is a key factor to helping students achieve long-term success in the learning environment and beyond.

Be consistent in:

- **Modeling and teaching our students to manage their behavior** with reinforced, consistent messages will allow them to create habits and over time develop social and emotional competencies that will prepare them for success both inside and outside of the school walls. Modeling is a powerful tool. It can be used to change a behavior or improve social skills within the learning environment (Curby, Brock & Hamre, 2013). Modeling allows students to have a visual for the correct appropriate behavior required in the classroom setting and gives them a reference point for the correct way to handle different situations. It can also allow the expectations of the classroom to rise to an even higher level.
- **Positive reinforcement** can be the greatest resource a teacher has in a toolbox of ideas. This simple tool is often overlooked by many teachers. A kind word is a powerful thing! As a teacher, receiving praise from a principal or peer can change the day and sometimes the entire week. As a student in any classroom, the concept is the same. A positive word or gesture from the teacher can change a student's day or week.
- A safe and positive learning environment is dependent on a **calm and controlled teacher**. As the leader in the classroom, remaining calm at all times helps students to remain in control as well. This type of atmosphere allows students to be more successful throughout the school day, emotionally, socially, and academically.
- **Time management and pre-planning** are critical to having a consistent and successful classroom setting. Often lessons or activities that fall apart do so because of the teacher's lack of control in the classroom. Typically, when students are off task without something upon which to focus, behavior issues develop. Not managing time well or being unorganized can lead to disruptive behaviors throughout the school day.
- A variety of **attention cues** are another resource to include in a teacher's toolbox of ideas. This resource allows teachers to maintain order throughout the school day. When teachers provide structure in the physical space and in the timely routine of daily activities, they allow students' minds to focus on the tasks at hand.

- Taking time to customize and design **engaging and motivating lessons** also attracts students to the learning activities rather than leaving time for them to wander off-task and look for something to occupy or entertain them.
- Developing **simple, but consistent, rewards and consequences** helps to discourage inappropriate behavior and promote the development of social skills in the classroom setting (Ridley, Dart, & O'Handley, 2016). Developing classroom expectations and the consequences for not meeting them will encourage each student to self-monitor his or her behavior throughout the school day, decrease inappropriate behaviors, and increase peer interaction and positive thinking. In addition, with a safe and positive classroom environment, academics will also improve

## Classroom Management

Classroom management interventions can be as simple or as complex as teachers chose to make them. Use non-verbal and verbal clues can help teachers make connections with their students. Non-verbal clues include eye contact body language, and engagement with students with given lesson concept. Verbal clues include redirecting behavior, using positive feedback, and one-on-one encounters with the given instruction.

- Engage students as soon as they enter the learning environment. Teachers can do this by shaking hands when they walk in the room, calling students by name, and asking conversational questions.
- When a student is modeling a desired behavior, give quick positive praise. For example, giving students high fives, thanking students for different actions, or saying things like, "I like the way you are helping your classmate with this activity."
- Provide positive feedback to the group or individual several times throughout the lesson. Teachers can do this by verbally acknowledging a group or giving them tangible rewards.
- Give positive feedback when students are engaging with peers in the appropriate manner, such as verbally praising them or putting Post It notes with positive words on their desks.
- Minimize distractions in the classroom. For example, while students are working, circulate the room, so students stay on task and are able to get your support quickly if needed.
- Students need attention. Taking the time to get to know students individually helps teachers to develop written or mental notes on each student and what causes him or her to respond in a positive manner. Teachers can then use these notes to give positive feedback and to have constructive and meaningful interactions with students.

TIP: You must be careful not to fall into the negative attention trap! In order to use the attention-seeking intervention effectively, teachers need to decide how they will ignore the behavior but also how they will show positive attention to the student and then be consistent with the processes. Here are the 5 steps:

1. Make a list of positive attention seeking responses such as: Make eye contact and smile at the student. Pat the student on the back or shoulder. Check in on the student during

an activity or assignment. Call on the student in class to answer a question or solve a problem on the board, especially one on which the student will be successful.

2. Give the student words of encouragement throughout the day. Ask the student to carry out a task in the classroom such as giving out papers or handing out supplies. Decide how often to give the positive attention to the student throughout the day. This can be completed in short time periods or longer time periods, whichever makes sense for the teacher, the student, and the classroom environment. This step is more effective if the teacher is able to give a high level of attention in the beginning of the intervention process and with time, increase the period between positive attention events (Lalli, Casey, & Kates, 1997).
3. Choose the times or places to give the positive attention. Start random attention interventions. The teacher needs to use these rules or boundaries: Any time the student tries to get attention in a negative manner, ignore the student's behavior but in a neutral manner redirect the student back on track and keep moving forward with the lesson. During a class period, if the student is due a praise but is off task, walk over, give a pat on the shoulder or back and keep teaching.
4. When the student has self-corrected inappropriate behavior, give him or her a positive attention. Be aware that when the teacher first begins to ignore a behavior he or she did not previously ignore, the disruptive behavior will most likely increase at first in attempts to get the teacher to react and/or respond. Eventually, however, it will decrease and be replaced with appropriate behavior. Over time, fade out the successful attention.
5. Throughout the process, teachers should collect data to verify that the negative behavior is decreasing due to the random positive attention. If appropriate, peers may also need to be involved in this process, and they, too, can be taught to ignore the negative behavior and reward the positive.

## CHAMPS - Behavior Matrix

A behavioral matrix clearly identifies appropriate and inappropriate behavior for students and staff. It also gives a consistent roadmap that helps to reinforce appropriate student behavior and facilitate change in inappropriate behavior. West Virginia Academy will utilize the CHAMPs (Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, Participation and Signal) program. Sprick created the CHAMPS program in 1998, with the understanding that behaviors must first be actively strengthened, instead of focusing on correcting bad behaviors. Teachers or grade-level teams come up with a Behavior Matrix outlining expectations for the various activities done in class.

Specific training and professional development hours are available through a series of DVD's that help them understand CHAMPS and how to implement the program within their classroom. Each building level coordinator will also have access to the book, "Champs: A Proactive and Positive Approach to Classroom Management." It is a great reference of various "misbehaviors" and how to handle them in a positive manner. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate with each other on various behavioral issues with their colleagues. You can always ask the curriculum specialist who is specifically trained in the CHAMPs methodology.

Once the expectations for the various classroom activities and for the common areas of school are established, all teachers are encouraged to stay positive and find ways of promoting appropriate behavior. As a school-wide incentive, leaders from the various student organizations will pick out students to recognize them as the Champs that month. Positive Student Awards (PSAs) will also be given out by peers and teachers to recognize positive behavior or actions seen around school. We want positivity to be rewarded and recognized as much as we can to encourage all to model the same behavior.

## Mindfulness

We know that our scholars are entering the classroom from a variety of home environments. Each come with their backpacks full of school supplies, but also stress, worry, anger, sadness, happiness, excitement, fear, etc. Mindfulness has been found to help students examine their “internal and external stressors” and create “a culture of calm” with some “simple, effective, inexpensive evidence-based strategies that can be implemented in every classroom.”<sup>3</sup>

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), mindfulness skills and practices have been found to increase self-awareness and self-management which are among the five core skills of social emotional learning (SEL) education. Research has linked mindfulness-based practices with a more positive school climate.<sup>4</sup> More specifically, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) have been found to help with anxiety and stress management.<sup>5</sup> Evidence has been found that MBSR “may produce positive effects on educators’ sleep and skills such as self-regulation and self-compassion, as well as on their overall job satisfaction.”<sup>6</sup>

## Mindfulness Moments

Starting the day on a positive and focused note is an excellent way to prepare students to be engaged and involved throughout the rest of day. It sets a tone of being ready for the learning environment and all the responsibilities that come with it. Our school will start each day with a “Mindfulness Moment.” This is where teachers will take time to help students understand their own thoughts, feelings, and sensations, as well as how they can affect their own actions. We will also be explicitly teaching and focusing on social skills through the Stop and Think Social Skills Program to help our scholars understand and manage their emotions, develop positive self-identity and recognize themselves as life long learners, and make responsible choices while recognizing and connecting to the community at large.

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<sup>3</sup> Kane, M. (2017). Creating a culture of calm. *Gifted Education International*, 34(2), 162–172.

<sup>4</sup> Birnie, K., Speca, M., & Carlson, L. E. (2010). Exploring self-compassion and empathy in the context of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR). *Stress and Health*, 26(5), 359–371.

<sup>5</sup> Marchand, M. (2012). Mindfulness-based stress reduction, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, and Zen meditation for depression, anxiety, pain, and psychological distress. *Journal of Psychiatric Practice*, 18(4), 233–252.

<sup>6</sup> Browning, A. (2020). Mindfulness in education: An approach to cultivating self-awareness that can bolster kids’ learning. Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety at WestEd. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

## Daily Intentions

Another approach to mindfulness is the idea that you live with intention or live in the present. Setting small goals for the day, also known as daily intentions, can help motivate students to live in the present and work on positivity throughout their day. Encouraging daily intentions through the morning announcement and having the whole school focus on that daily intention can bring positivity and mindfulness to all that work in the school community. Lunch and recess are two times of the day when students can work specifically on their daily intention.

Another aspect of being present is being aware of your feelings when conflict arises. It helps to have the whole school community trained to know what to do when they encounter a negative situation. The STOP procedure, where the student takes time to Stop, Take a breath, Observe, and Proceed, can be taught and prominently displayed throughout the school (Billy and Garriguez, 2021). All administrators, educators, parents, and staff can help students walk through the STOP procedure helping them to be aware of their emotions and calm them down when they see a conflict arise.

## STOP Procedure

**Stop** what you are doing - freeze!

**Take** a deep breath - count to three in through your nose and out through your mouth for count of three -

**Observe** around us - notice where you are one one thing about the room or person you are talking to

then **Proceed** - go on with your activity or go ahead and continue your conversation.

## Anti-Bully Initiatives

Bullying is repeated, unwanted aggression perpetrated by a greater power on someone considered weaker. In a bullying situation, research states there are three participants or groups of participants involved: the bully, the victim, and the bystander. WVA has a legal and ethical responsibility to create a healthy teaching/learning classroom which is characterized by allowing students to express their thoughts and ideas, by practicing collaboration among students, and following through with consequences.

## Awareness

Awareness on everyone's part will be a top priority by our whole school community, including, teachers, administrators, parents, and students. There are three underlying reasons why children bully:

1. They don't have good relationship skills;
2. They don't have good emotional control skills, and/or
3. They don't have good consequence and response skills.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Knoff, H. M. (2013). Changing resistant consultees: Functional assessment leading to strategic intervention. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 23(4), 307-317.

Interventions and prevention strategies need to be in place to ensure that all students are learning in a bully-free environment. We plan to combat bullying at WVA through our strong positive school support program and behavioral framework as well as our social-emotional learning program which emphasizes appropriate social skills.

## Emotional Control

A teacher's goal should be to help students in academics and also in becoming strong and independent individuals. Managing emotions can be hard for an adult at times as well. Teachers need to understand that students are still growing and developing their emotions and learning how and when to use them correctly (Hyson, 2004).

Teachers need to be able to recognize the emotions students exhibit but more importantly, the triggers that cause those emotions. Emotional triggers that students experience in a typical school day can be love, joy, sadness, fear, anger, and guilt. These emotional triggers can cause negative and/or positive responses in students. Being able to identify these triggers is the first step in learning how to help them control different emotions that they may express in the classroom setting.

A common trigger for students is not feeling respected. Teaching the knowledge and interpersonal skills needed to help them respect themselves and others can be difficult. Working with students on how to effectively control their emotions requires much planning and patience on the part of teachers, but being able to minimize students' inner struggles will allow them to be more in control. This control will not just settle them emotionally but often spills into control over academics.

It is important for teachers to be self-aware when dealing with a student's different emotional triggers. Ask yourself these five questions:

1. Am I proactive in identifying and defusing triggers?
2. Am I paying attention to what I need to do within the learning environment?
3. Am I taking care of myself so that my students get the best of me each day?
4. Am I building positive relationships with my students?
5. Am I making a positive difference in my students' lives?

## Positive Reinforcement

Students must be taught that they can get the response they desire if they work within the expectations of the classroom. For positive reinforcements to be most effective in changing a negative behavior, methods should be in place from the start of the school year. Another critical point in terms of positive reinforcement is that the reinforcers need to be meaningful, powerful, and motivating to the students.

Types of Reinforcement:

1. Direct reinforcement, a type reinforcement that results in direct appropriate behavior such as interacting appropriately in group activities. For example, cooperative learning activities.
2. Social reinforcement occurs when giving praise to a student such as "Great Job!" "Way to Go!" in front of his or her peers. Naming the specific reason for the praise is even more effective. For example, "Great job getting your materials out quickly and being ready to learn!"
3. Activity reinforcement consists of rewarding a student for a completed task. This strategy can be very effective. For example, students may receive 10 minutes of free time for every 55 minutes of completed work on task. Their 10 minutes of free time can be used as computer time or chat time.
4. Tangible reinforcement is another effective strategy and is defined as anything students can take away with them from the classroom. The rewards can be toys, stickers, and other treasures students enjoy.
5. Token reinforcement is a method that uses a point system as the reward. The points can then add up to be exchanged for several different items, typically tangible items. Clothes, gift cards, and school supplies are some ideas. The items are given a point value and when a student meets that amount, he or she can receive the chosen item and the points are then deducted from the total. This type of reinforcement can also be used to earn events or activities, such as a game day or a movie.

Positive reinforcements help to teach students how to work within boundaries, and if used correctly, they teach skills that allow students to leave the bad behaviors or habits behind permanently and the use of the reinforcements can become less grandiose and occur less frequently. The ideal goal is to create situations where we're reinforcing the students' behavior so progressively, we get more and more appropriate behavior, and we're able to fade out and need fewer and less overt positive reinforcements. The reinforcement may be tangible; it may be social; it may be symbolic.

## Group Contingencies

Group contingency procedures can be described as an if-then behavior method. If a behavior is exhibited, then something positive will take place. One of the things that group contingencies can be used for, for example, is to help to decrease mild, inappropriate behavior while also motivating and increasing the appropriate or the replacement behavior.

3 Types:

1. **Independent group contingency** - each member of a group earns the reinforcement or the reward if he or she meets a certain criterion relative to the targeted behavior. While both the work and the reinforcement are individual here, the idea is for the group to work together so that they're motivating each other and working to help each other be successful. It's a team-building mentality.
2. **Dependent group contingency** - the groups earn a reward based on the behavior of individual group members. Therefore, if you have a group and for example, two students in that group hit the criterion of the expected behavior, then the entire group gets the



reward. It's a group reward, but it is earned by individuals. This would be used in a situation such as if you have a student with challenging behavior in the group and he or she is able to stay in the group for a specified period of time without doing an inappropriate behavior, then the entire group earns a reward. The group then is motivated to help the individual meet his or her criterion and all are rewarded.

3. **Interdependent group contingency** - all of the members of the group need to meet the behavioral criterion in order for the group to get the reward. If one student doesn't hit the criterion, then the entire group doesn't get the reward, even if all the other members are successful. This type of group contingency takes a lot of preparation. Students need to learn how to encourage each other in the most appropriate ways and how they should handle the situation if they do not receive the reward.

## Time-Out Rules and Regulations

Time-out, when used correctly in the classroom, is a powerful, strategic, scientifically based educative intervention. The goal is to decrease and eliminate inappropriate behavior, while at the same time to increase and hopefully move to self-management of the appropriate behavior. What teachers are doing is strategically choosing the time-out process with the assumption that this intervention will have the quickest impact on the student in terms of decreasing inappropriate and increasing appropriate behavior (Knoff, 2013).

Time-out interventions have many different possible elements. One simple element of the intervention is that the student is being removed from the given stimuli that may be increasing the issue in the learning environment. To where the student is removed, how long the student is removed, and what he or she does, if anything, while in time-out are other elements that will vary depending on the student, the classroom, and the situation.

The effectiveness of all time-out interventions depends greatly on the person who is enforcing it. As with all interventions, consistency is the key to success. Setting up a time-out intervention and following through each and every time the student displays the inappropriate behavior will give the best results (Betz, 1994).

For time-out interventions to be effective, the target behavior must first be acknowledged by both the student and the teacher. The teacher then needs to reduce the student's access to the stimuli for a period of time (Busch & Shore, 2000).

Four primary types of time-out interventions:

1. **Inclusion** - Is the least intrusive of the four interventions. It should be used to remove the student from the reinforcement environment, which may be for example, going to a designated area of the classroom but not being completely isolated from the classroom. This could be a chair, a desk, or even a table away from other students. **The student can still observe the classroom instruction but is not able to participate** (Betz, 1994). This time-out intervention can contain one or more of these elements

- a. Planned ignoring. For example, not acknowledging the inappropriate behavior when the student does it.
  - b. Withdrawal of materials, such as when the class is doing a hands-on assignment with manipulatives, the time-out student is instead required to do a written assignment.
  - c. Contingent observation, which means that the teacher and student agree on an expectation, such as finishing a math activity in a required amount of time, and they also agree on a reward, such as 10 minutes of extra computer time to play a math review game.
2. **Exclusion** - is when the student is removed from either classroom instruction or from the classroom itself. He or she is removed or repositioned completely away from his or her peers. Examples of exclusion time-out interventions include: Corner of the classroom facing the wall, behind a partition within the classroom, or in another classroom or office (Assistant Director's office).
  3. **Seclusion** - is also referred to as isolation time-out. In seclusion time-out, the student is removed to a given area and is prohibited from leaving that space and returning to the classroom until a given time (Sensory Room). While the student is removed from the classroom, it does not mean he or she does not have supervision. The classroom teacher will need to find someone to either stay with the class, or enforce the time-out situation with the individual student. Seclusion time-out allows for space for the student and the rest of the class until the student can return and be a positive contributor to the learning atmosphere.
  4. **Restrained** - is also known as the physical time-out intervention. This intervention is **not widely used. It is the most restrictive form of the time-out interventions and is characterized by a physical hold by trained personnel.**

## Behavior Contract

A behavior contract can be a simple but positive reinforcement intervention. In addition, it is a strategy in which the student has a stake as well as a voice. It is defined as a written agreement with expectations that are agreed upon by both student, teacher, and often times by parents.

A behavior contract should include the following:

1. The contract should coincide with class and schoolwide rules.
2. Expectations need to be clear, understood, and agreed upon by both parties.
3. The contract should have positive replacement (re-enforcers) behaviors for undesirable behaviors. The reinforcers are:
  - a. These may come in the form of food, play money to buy something from the classroom store, handwritten notes to parents and/or to the student for exemplary behavior, among other external rewards.
  - b. Extra computer time, extra physical education time, or the opportunity to be the teacher's helper for a class period are examples.
  - c. These are typically opportunities such as lunch time with the teacher, earning a positive call to a parent, or extra free time or game time with peers.

- d. These are immediate affirmations often in the form of gestures or verbal praise, such as thumbs-up, pat on the back, positive shout out in front of the class.
4. A behavior contract is flexible but still has boundaries. A teacher can use the contract on a regular or an as-needed basis, and it is individualized and customized by the teacher by using goals and rewards he or she knows will be specific to each student's interests and needs.

## Behavior Modification Plan

Behavioral accountability for students in the classroom and across the common areas of our school involves two components: (1) identifying and communicating the behavioral standards, expectations, and response system for all students and (2) motivating students with powerful and meaningful incentives and consequences.

A Positive Behavioral Support System (PBSS), such as CHAMPs, in the classroom allows students to understand correct behaviors and self-manage their inappropriate behaviors. A well-developed behavior modification plan can help with classroom management. When behaviors distract from the learning environment in the classroom, there needs to be a system in place to help teachers know how to respond and intervene efficiently and effectively so that instruction time does not suffer. With a Response-to-Intervention (RtI) system in place all administration, staff, and educators can be unified in helping all students succeed.

A behavior modification plan operates on these principles:

- Behavior is controlled by antecedents, which are defined as anything that triggers or happens right before the behavior is displayed.
- Consequences are events that happen after the inappropriate behavior is exhibited.
- Antecedents and Consequences can be adjusted to increase or decrease the chance for behavior to continue.
- Behavior is learned.

An example of this type of plan is the token economy. In this process, students receive a tangible reward for appropriate behaviors, but can also lose something for inappropriate behavior; for example, a point system or play money that students can both earn and lose. While individually the points or play dollars do not mean much, at the end of each term, students can trade in their currency for other rewards such as extra free time or recess, a homework pass, pencils, or stickers. Therefore, there is a strong desire to earn as many positive reward points or dollars throughout the term, and this motivates students to behave appropriately.

## Response to Intervention Approach

RtI is a multi-tiered intervention system to help all student be successful. Typically it consists of three tiers:

1. Primary Prevention: All students entering the school start at the Tier One setting. This is when the teachers explicitly teach the CHAMPs model and the students have a chance to practice and develop a thorough understanding of the expectations required of them in the general education classroom as well as the common areas of the school.
2. Secondary Prevention or Targeted Interventions: If a student is having trouble meeting the CHAMPS behavioral expectations, they may be placed in a Tier Two intervention. This is a more targeted approach to a small group of students who may continue to escalate in behavior if they are not redirected. Students will be grouped together based on similar issues.
3. Tertiary Prevention: Students typically receive Tier III supports due to non-responsiveness to secondary interventions and intensity of behavior (e.g., self-injurious behavior, severe aggression).<sup>8</sup> The teacher will consult with the PBS School Leadership Team and then implement a Behavior Modification plan for the specific student. Interventions in Tier Three are meant to be temporary and the teacher will continue to consult with the PBS Leadership Team to determine when the plan can be altered for that student.

## PBS School Leadership Team

The assistant directors along with the student services manager, special education counselor/nurse, and curriculum specialist will serve on the PBS School Leadership Team. The team's main goal is to implement and continually monitor the school-wide PBS system. The PBS Leadership team develops interventions and strategies for the groupings of misbehaviors in Tier Two. They assist the teacher in implementation within the classroom, then follow up with the teacher to see how the intervention is progressing.

All students on Tier Three will receive individual assessments and behavior intervention plans or individualized supports. The PBS Leadership team will be responsible to conduct the Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and help the teacher come up with a Behavioral Intervention Plan with specific goals and interventions. The team will also follow up on the student progress and assist the teacher where needed.

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<sup>8</sup> Simonsen, B., MacSuga-Gage, A. S., Briere, D. E., Freeman, J., Myers, D., Scott, T. M., & Sugai, G. (2014). Multitiered Support Framework for Teachers' Classroom-Management Practices: Overview and Case Study of Building the Triangle for Teachers. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 16(3), 179–190.