
RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

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Teachers in classrooms since time immemorial have dealt with students whose behavior runs counter to their attempts to maintain an orderly environment for learning. Doyle (1978) cites notes from a teacher in 1865 regarding his management of misbehaving students:

Had a notion to flog Perry about his insolence and his geography lesson but let him off with a lecture and a promise. I had hoped to manage my school without using timber but I am now about to conclude that it cannot be done. The wild spirit of these boys will not be tamed by promises and lectures.

Teachers and education have moved well beyond such primitive means of responding to perceived problems of students, particularly by emphasizing preventive methods. Nevertheless, since preventive strategies are not likely to eliminate problems entirely, teachers still need ways of responding to them when they do occur. It is also the case that problems can range from minor to severe, and from infrequent to commonplace. Many of the behavior problems that teachers encounter are short-lived and have no long-term consequences. But other problems threaten the climate for learning, which potentially may affect many students.

This chapter's focus is on those teacher decisions and actions that are in response to student behaviors that interfere with classroom order. We espouse Doyle's (1986) view of classroom management as being those

activities and strategies that teachers use to establish and maintain order. In using the adjective *responsive* we are differentiating such teacher decisions and actions from those that are primarily proactive and prevent disruptions to classroom order. Naturally we'd prefer to always use proactive strategies, reflecting the adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." But prevention doesn't always work, and we're not always clever enough to anticipate all the contingencies likely to be presented to us by students.

This chapter is concerned with strategies that are responsive to behavioral problems, as distinguished from responding to curricular or learning issues. Even though the latter types of problems may have effects on the overall behavioral climate and on students' willingness to cooperate, such issues are beyond our scope. When learning problems are the primary source of a student's behavioral difficulties, however, then responsive classroom management must also incorporate appropriate accommodations to the student's learning needs.

Here are some situations that highlight the range of managerial issues and concerns facing the classroom teacher. Put yourself in the place of the teacher and consider your goal and the best approach to handling the situation.

- After a few months of teaching her fifth-grade class, Ms. Johnson feels that she is losing her ability to maintain order. Whenever she attempts to start a new activity, it takes her several minutes to obtain her students' attention

and get them ready to receive instruction. Constant talking by students and their movement around the room interrupt her lessons. Attempts to correct individual students go for naught while other students laugh and talk.

- Although Mr. Kim has generally good rapport with his middle school students and they respond positively to his instruction, two boys in the class often ignore him when he asks them to cease some off-task behavior. Then, when Mr. Kim follows the request with a more pointed redirection, the boys pointedly react with some hostility or derision. When an event escalates, it often leads to threats or a raised voice from Mr. Kim followed by continuing opposition from the boys.
- Mrs. Lopez is a member of her high school's teacher advisory committee. Because student tardiness to classes has become a nagging problem this year, several teachers on the advisory committee ask her to join them in recommending to the principal that tardiness be added to the school's zero tolerance code of conduct so that students are suspended after three unexcused absences over a semester. Mrs. Lopez is bothered by the high incidence of tardiness in her school, but she wonders whether suspending such students is the most appropriate strategy.

Why Do Teachers Find Classroom Management Difficult?

Classroom management is a primary area of concern for both experienced and new teachers. One explanation for this apprehension is that classroom interactions are unpredictable, and complex and happen quickly. Teachers have limited time to reflect on an appropriate course of action when misbehaviors occur, but at the same time must carry out consequences in full view of the students. Most teachers tend to avoid confrontation with their students (Ennis, 1996) and may find responding to problem behaviors in such a public forum uncomfortable. The cognitive demands of teaching, even when things go smoothly, are significant. Classroom researchers have noted that teachers make many decisions on the fly throughout the day, and it has been estimated that during classroom instruction teachers make a decision every two minutes (Clark & Peterson, 1986). Thus, teaching should be viewed as a complex skill that requires significant cognitive focus and energy. Behavioral challenges change the flow of classroom instruction, divert student attention, and slow the pace of instruction. Responding to problem behaviors can tax even the most experienced teacher's abilities.

Most teachers receive limited instruction in classroom management as part of their preservice training, and even a university-based program may not require coursework in classroom management. Similarly, while teachers usually attend workshops about particular types of behavioral interventions that are required by their district or state, these workshops do not seem to be sufficient—even expe-

rienced teachers identify classroom management as an area in which they would like still more training. Teachers who have not had sufficient training in how to assess and respond to behavioral challenges will be less effective in responding when they do occur.

Another feature of classroom life that affects classroom management is the expectation for students to gain mastery of a set curriculum, which requires them to engage in a predetermined series of classroom activities. Teachers are expected to oversee this process and, in the United States, are increasingly held accountable for the academic achievement of their students. Some researchers (e.g., Gathercoal & Nimmo, 2002; McCaslin & Good, 1992) suggest that these societal expectations for teachers may set up a dynamic of conflict and power between teacher and students. Certainly the aim of schooling is for students to learn, but when teacher-student confrontations occur in an environment where high-stakes accountability is in force, it may compound the stress teachers feel when behavior disrupts the learning process. Teachers who believe that they do not have enough time to carry out their many responsibilities may be particularly intolerant of behaviors that take away time from instruction.

The increasing linguistic and ethnic diversity of students in U.S. classrooms has also increased the diversity of skills that teachers need when responding to problem behaviors. Teachers with limited training in classroom management may not have mastered the breadth of strategies needed to teach a diverse group of students. Additionally, children with behavioral problems who have been traditionally placed in special education classrooms are increasingly being included in general education classrooms. Most teachers are unprepared for the significant behavioral challenges exhibited by these students. To address this problem, some districts use coteaching or collaborative teaching models in which special educators deliver instruction alongside general educators. Many studies have found that administrative support for coteaching is essential for its success and that teachers generally report that they benefit from participating in coteaching (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). In many cases, however, students who exhibit challenging behaviors are accompanied by teaching assistants to the general education classroom so that the assistant can intervene when these problem behaviors are exhibited in the general education classroom. Although some teaching assistants may do a fine job of interceding or even temporarily removing a student who acts out, problem behaviors can interrupt the flow of classroom instruction as well as serve as a negative model for other students.

In summary, teachers find classroom management difficult because it *is* a difficult skill. During their preparation for teaching, only limited attention is given to acquiring expertise in this demanding skill area. Classrooms contain a greater diversity of students, while at the same time teachers are expected to prepare their students in a high-stakes accountability environment.

Teacher Thinking About Classroom Management

How teachers think about classroom management affects their own instructional behavior, relations with students, and management of activities. Researchers have made a useful distinction between preactive and interactive thought and decisions—in other words, thinking that occurs before instruction, such as planning, versus thinking that occurs during face-to-face interaction with students, such as intervening with problem behaviors (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Shavelson & Stern, 1981). Since this chapter's focus is on responsive management, our concern is more with interactive thinking, although we acknowledge that preactive teacher thought can also be responsive in nature. For example, a teacher might spend time planning before class how to deal with a chronic problem or how to gain the cooperation of a class whose behavior has deteriorated. Clark and Peterson (1986) cited numerous studies showing that interactive teacher thinking and decision making are sensitive to departures from business as usual. That is, teachers monitor students during an activity and, as long as things go as planned, the teacher has no reason to alter course. An analogous situation is when driving on a familiar road, as long as nothing unusual takes place you do not alter your driving behavior and the trip is smooth. But when a dog darts into the roadway or a heavy rain occurs, you slow down, turn off the radio, and sit straighter in your seat. Similarly, when the flow of normal classroom activity is interrupted, then the teacher is on alert and will intervene if an acceptable strategy is easily implemented. The determination of how and when to intervene is dependent on a variety of factors. First, of course, is whether the teacher knows of an appropriate intervention, but the teacher must consider other factors.

Jackson (1968) identified enduring features of classroom life that he summarized as “crowds, praise, and power.” He meant to call attention to how teachers must often deal with students—usually in a large group of 20 to 30. Classrooms are also places where students are evaluated frequently, so they receive positive or negative feedback about their performance and behavior. Finally, teachers have more power than students. The teacher's status is conferred by the formal institutional process. Teachers' power, however, is not absolute; it depends on their ability to secure the cooperation of their students.

Doyle (1986, 2006) added to Jackson's perspective. He noted that classrooms have unique characteristics that shape the behavior and thinking of teachers and students. These include multidimensionality, simultaneity, immediacy, unpredictability, publicness, and history. In other words, the teacher is faced with a complex setting in which several things are occurring at any given time that may (or may not) require attention.

Classroom characteristics have important effects on teacher thinking. The crowded conditions in which instruction takes place means that delays and interruptions are an

inevitable part of life with which teachers and students must learn to cope. The exigencies of dealing with classroom life produce a degree of unpredictability for the teacher; lessons won't always go as planned and students can't be counted on to react as expected.

How do teachers adjust to the unpredictability of classroom life? Fenwick (1998) observed and interviewed junior high school teachers in order to learn about their thoughts and reasons for their classroom behaviors. Three themes emerged. First, teachers were focused on managing space, people, and objects. Second, teachers were concerned with managing student energy and engagement, in order to maintain the flow of activities during lessons. Finally, teachers managed their own identity and behavior.

The teachers in Fenwick's study were all experienced. Beginning teachers, even though they have spent thousands of hours as students in classrooms, are especially vulnerable to behavior management problems. Why? Perhaps because when they enter the classroom, new teachers have not fully developed the experienced teacher's more complex skill of managing space, energy, and self, nor are they able to draw from experience to discriminate what are feasible interventions from unworkable strategies. The immediacy, unpredictability, and crowdedness of classroom life require a management plan that organizes student and teacher behavior into routines that make day-to-day classroom life manageable.

Classroom Interventions

The phrase *responsive classroom management* implies that the teacher takes action in response to a classroom event. Responsiveness requires the teacher to monitor classroom activity and to be attentive to changes that occur in the classroom. As the literature on teacher thinking and decision making makes clear, teachers notice when there is an interruption to the flow of an activity or when student behavior disturbs classroom order. What different kinds of events disrupt the classroom routine?

One way to organize such events is by classifying their intensity and source (Emmer, Evertson, & Worsham, 2006). Minor problems are behaviors that are contrary to classroom rules or procedures, but that are only occasional and are not widespread. Examples include excessive side-talk during an activity, wandering around the room, interfering with other students who are trying to complete an assignment, or not working on an assigned task. Escalating or spreading problems are any minor problems that continue for more than a short time or involve more than one or a few students. Major problems disrupt a classroom activity for a significant time or prevent it from taking place, violate a significant school rule, or interfere with the teacher or other students' work. We don't include serious problems, such as fighting, suicide attempts, and weapons violations that typically occur outside of the classroom in our discussion of responsive classroom management. Of

course these serious behaviors have effects on students, and teachers do take some action when these behaviors involve one of their students, but these events usually occur outside of the classroom. Such serious problems are usually managed by policies contained in a school district's discipline plan or are subsumed within a school's crisis management plan and responded to by the school district's crisis management team (Damiani, 2006).

Momentary inattention, occasional sidetalking, or day-dreaming are not considered problems that require an intervention, because such behaviors are transitory and don't interfere with other students or with ongoing instruction. Moreover, when teachers do choose to respond to such behaviors they run the risk of slowing down activities, and they make too much of what is really a trivial behavior by calling attention to it.

We distinguish different types of problem events or behaviors because the teacher's response is dependent on the behavior's intensity or severity. Minor problems can usually be settled with interventions that are limited with respect to teacher time and energy. As problems become more intense and widespread, simple interventions are often not very effective, and the teacher's response requires more planning and energy; such interventions may also require the cooperation of others and alteration of classroom activities. From the standpoint of efficient use of teacher energy, as well as the need to preserve teacher and student time for instruction, it is preferable to limit interventions. But more involved interventions may be needed to counter a serious problem.

How teachers respond to problem behaviors can be determined by asking teachers what they do to deal with inappropriate behaviors or by observing teachers when students misbehave. Self-report allows us to get the teachers' view, but may be biased in a variety of ways. Observation provides a direct way to determine strategies, but it has limitations too. Observers aren't always in place to see what the teacher responds to (or misses), and it may be difficult to observe relatively rare but serious problems.

Research by Kounin (1970) analyzed videotaped lessons to identify teacher behaviors that were significant predictors of increased student on-task behaviors and that reduced student disruption. After several attempts to study characteristics of desist statements, Kounin identified "withitness," overlapping, and movement management as important teacher management behaviors. Withitness refers to the teacher's ability to detect inappropriate behavior and to signal awareness of it to students; overlapping is the ability to deal with more than one event at the same time; movement management refers to teacher skill in maintaining the momentum of whole class, teacher-led activities. Overlapping and movement management are proactive teacher skills; they prevent problems by keeping activities moving. Withitness, however, is both proactive and responsive as it prevents escalation by addressing minor problems early, before they can spread or become major.

The importance of withitness was corroborated in research by Emmer, Evertson, and Anderson (1980) and Evertson and Emmer (1982). These researchers observed both elementary and junior high school classrooms and obtained information about withitness by noting the degree to which teachers monitored students and stopped inappropriate behavior promptly. Teachers who exhibited these characteristics over multiple observations had classes whose students were more on task and were less disruptive, compared to teachers who were not very good at monitoring students or at stopping inappropriate behaviors promptly. Another study (Johnston, 1995), in middle school physical education classes, found that desists that were accurate and prompt (i.e., withit) were successful in returning students to the task 80% of the time as compared to 45% for desists that targeted the wrong students or were late.

The value of withitness is apparent. Teachers who are good observers of students detect problems early when these behaviors can be dealt with by simpler interventions. If a teacher is late in noting a problem, there is more potential for several students to become involved, and then an intervention is more apt to require greater time and attention. Moreover, if other students observe another student getting away with it, the teacher must then deal with this apparent inconsistency.

When a problem is chronic or major, other interventions may be needed. A national random sample of elementary and secondary school teachers was asked to describe the strategies that they used to manage the student who behaved the most inappropriately during the previous year (Ringer, Doerr, Hollenshead, & Wills, 1993). The categories used to classify the teachers' strategies included a reinforcement technique (e.g., positive reinforcement, praise, response cost, ignoring), an established behavior plan (e.g., Assertive Discipline or a self-developed plan), punishment (e.g., time-out, detention), proximity, conferences, or instructional techniques (e.g., peer tutoring, group instruction). The teachers' preferences are shown in Table 15.1.

Overall, elementary teachers used more interventions, though all teachers had a preference for conferences and proximity. Elementary teachers also made extensive use of behavior plans, and over half the sample used reinforcement, punishment, and instructional strategies. For middle and high school teachers, the next most endorsed intervention was instruction; the other three strategies were used only by small percentages of the samples. The more extensive use of interventions by elementary teachers could be the result of using a wider variety of factors, but surely one factor is the greater amount of contact time that elementary teachers have with the targeted student compared to the time spent with students in the secondary setting.

Why do teachers at all levels state a preference for using conferences and proximity to deal with major problems? Perhaps it is because proximity is an intervention that can

Table 15.1 Behavioral Techniques Chosen by Teachers ($N = 228$)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Reinforcement</i>	<i>Behavior Plan</i>	<i>Punishment</i>	<i>Proximity</i>	<i>Conference</i>	<i>Instruction</i>
Type of School						
Elementary	59	70	57	73	87	56
Middle	16	12	19	80	86	52
High School	23	16	22	65	85	36

SOURCE: Adapted from Ringer, M., Doerr, P., Hollenshead, J., & Wills, G. (1993). Behavior problems in the schools: A national survey of interventions used by classroom teachers. *Psychology in the Schools, 30*, 168–175.

NOTE: Table shows the percentage of teachers who chose the technique; teachers could identify more than one strategy.

be used during instruction without interfering with the flow of the activity. It allows the teacher to be “withit” while maintaining the focus on the academic task more so than other, more intrusive interventions. Conferences may also have been highly endorsed because the problems addressed were not readily amenable to solution, and also because conferencing allows the problem behavior to be managed without an audience.

Nelson and Roberts (2000) provide insight into the difficulty of intervening in a classroom setting. Researchers observed 99 target students identified as disruptive in six schools (Grades 1 through 8) and compared them to 278 additional students who were identified as typical. The target students were observed until 20 episodes of inappropriate behavior had been observed by the researchers. Teacher reactions to the target students during the episodes were also noted. Each typical student was observed long enough to note at least three episodes of inappropriate behavior.

The most common teacher reaction to inappropriate behaviors of typical students was to redirect the student’s behavior; this strategy was used 83% of the time. The second most preferred strategy was to reprimand (also referred to as issuing a desist) to the student (16% of the time). After the teacher used one of these strategies, the typical students stopped behaving inappropriately 93% of the time. Thus, simple interventions worked very well most of the time.

The situation was very different for the target students. Teachers used redirection 56% of the time and reprimands (desists) 37% of the time. But the target (disruptive) students stopped their inappropriate behavior only 24% of the time following the first teacher intervention. Certainly the target students were much less responsive to these initial teacher interventions than were the typical students. Furthermore, in 76% of these interactions the teacher was required to then deal a second time with the target student who had already ignored or negatively responded to the first intervention. One can imagine how a second interaction between student and teacher raised the stakes for both parties. Most teachers chose to continue to attempt to stop the inappropriate behavior. Only 7% of the time did a

teacher use the strategy of ignoring the inappropriate behavior after the first desist. During these second interactions a variety of strategies was observed: more commands or redirection, reprimands or desists, ultimatums, response cost (a penalty), dismissal from the classroom, or approval. Unfortunately, none of these strategies was particularly effective and inappropriate behaviors usually continued. In fact, Nelson and Roberts found that it took an average of four to five interventions before the target student’s misbehavior stopped, which means that in some cases six, seven, or more interventions were needed to stop the behavior!

When a teacher intervenes four or more times with a student, the regular academic activity in the classroom has been interrupted significantly, to the detriment of the instructional program and student learning. Inappropriate behaviors have been modeled, so there is some likelihood of contagion to other students. There is also considerable potential for the target student to be labeled as a troublemaker and suffer (or enjoy!) the consequences of negative teacher and peer expectations. Finally, the teacher is likely to experience stress.

Problems caused by teacher intervention–student resistance cycles such as these lead to the judicious recommendation that teachers use techniques that avoid such escalation. A common example of an intervention that mitigates escalation is some form of time-out. Time-out is more fully referred to as time-out from positive reinforcement, wherein the student is removed from a classroom and thus from a potentially reinforcing environment. Nelson developed a strategy that requires the student to move to another teacher’s classroom for some “think time” before returning to the class. Such a move interrupted the teacher intervention–student resistance cycle and allowed for both parties to take a break from the conflict. Other intervention strategies that can short-circuit the escalating cycle of action-reaction include a five-step intervention process (Jones & Jones, 2004) that allows the student to choose to exercise self-control in early steps, but that requires the student to leave the instructional area to develop a plan for change if these early steps don’t succeed. Problem-solving approaches are commonly used to

address escalating or major behavior problems that involve individual students. The setting for problem solving is usually a conference between the teacher and the student, away from the effects of a public audience. The teacher needs good communication skills to establish a basis for considering alternatives to the inappropriate behavior and to encourage the student to consider available choices. Problem solving often culminates in a written contract.

In addition to the relatively simple and easy to use in-class interventions (e.g., proximity control, eye contact, redirection, desist) and the more involved and time-consuming problem-solving strategies are other interventions that require varying amounts of teacher time and effort. These strategies include withholding a privilege or desired activity, assessing a penalty, assigning detention, or using a school-based consequence. These interventions can be effective, at least in the short run, at stopping the inappropriate behavior, but they have the disadvantage of focusing attention on the inappropriate behavior, and they do not, by themselves, help instruct students in what is appropriate behavior. Consequently, whenever an intervention to stop inappropriate behavior is used, teachers must consider whether students understand what behaviors are desirable and whether their classroom management system teaches positive behaviors to students. Although teaching students desirable behaviors is usually considered a proactive strategy, it can also be part of responsive classroom management. When teachers find that they are frequently using interventions to deal with inappropriate behavior, they should assess their expectations for student behavior, perhaps in consultation with another teacher, and reconsider the routines that they are using to manage the activity. This reflective process may lead to some new procedures that can be taught to students, along with a different teaching approach. Responsive classroom management is not simply reacting to and dealing with problem behaviors; it can involve establishing a positive classroom climate that responds to students' needs, thereby decreasing motivation for inappropriate behaviors and increasing student engagement (see Chapter 14).

Another set of interventions that are effective in reducing inappropriate behavior has been developed by behavior management specialists, special educators, and school psychologists who work in schools with teachers. Such interventions come from a long tradition of research in applied behavior analysis that emphasizes demonstrating the efficacy of behavior management programs by direct observation of target behaviors. Stage and Quiroz (1997) examined classroom-based research on such intervention strategies to determine the degree of effectiveness across multiple studies. The strongest effects were found for differential reinforcement of alternate behaviors, self-management strategies, and group contingency programs. Differential reinforcement uses rewards for students when they engage in desirable behaviors such as hand raising or work involvement that are functionally incompatible with problem behaviors such as interrupting and off-task

behavior. Self-management programs provide training for students to record and evaluate their own behavior. The teacher gives feedback so that the students learn to do this correctly and receive rewards when their behaviors improve. Self-management procedures emphasize student self-monitoring and learning responsibility for their own actions. Group contingency programs provide rewards for the entire class (e.g., a pizza party, activity time) when desirable behavior is exhibited and some goal or performance level is reached. A popular type of group contingency program is one that uses token reinforcers. Token reinforcers are objects that may be exchanged for something of value to a student. The token thus has symbolic as well as tangible value for the student. Systems in which students earn tokens and then can exchange them for objects or activities they desire are called token economies. In a simple token economy system, teachers award points or use marks on the board for good behavior; then the class is given extra recess time or free time once they have earned a predetermined number of points or marks. In more complex systems, teachers may design point cards or award small items, such as paper tickets or poker chips, which the student holds until a designated reward time when the teacher accepts these items in exchange for an item out of a selection of rewards. Token economies can be used to deliver positive reinforcement as we have described or can be used to reduce a behavior when the token is removed in response to undesired behaviors. Such systems are referred to as response cost token economies. The advantage of response cost token economies is that they enable the teacher to quickly respond to an undesired behavior with minimal fuss. A potential problem with response cost systems is with student bankruptcy wherein the student loses so many tokens that they can no longer receive a negative consequence through losing more tokens. The shrewd teacher will either design a token economy in which students can always earn tokens or one in which it is impossible for students to become bankrupt. Group contingency programs have the advantage of teaching desirable behavior and using peer pressure positively. Limitations include the time and effort required along with the potential for negative effects of using extrinsic rewards (for a discussion, see Cameron, 2001). For more extensive treatment of applied behavior interventions, the reader should consult additional sources, such as Alberto and Troutman (2006).

Schoolwide Responsive Strategies

Schoolwide models for conceptualizing academic and behavioral interventions have received increasing attention over the last decade. Schoolwide models extend beyond the immediate classroom but also usually include classroom-based responsive strategies that teachers can implement in response to problem behaviors. In particular, three-tiered models have been designed with the goal

to prevent behavioral problems and to provide a plan for responsive strategies that teachers and schools can use when more complex or serious behaviors occur (e.g., Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin, 1998; Walker et al. 1996). Three-tiered models of schoolwide discipline divide behavioral interventions into three levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary. In these models, approximately 70%–85% of a school population is seen as being responsive to primary interventions, 10%–20% to secondary interventions, and tertiary interventions are required by only 5%–7% of the population.

In three-tiered models, primary interventions are provided to all students in a school and focus on strategies that prevent behavioral problems from occurring. Primary interventions may include providing reinforcement to students who comply with classroom expectations (e.g., being on time for class). Secondary interventions are used when preventive strategies designed for the primary level do not have an effect. Secondary interventions include more intensive behavioral interventions or simple individualized interventions such as social-skills instruction or increased family involvement. For example, if a teacher continues to have difficulty with some children not being on time for class, he or she may choose to call the parents and ask for support in encouraging these children to arrive on time.

Tertiary interventions are designed for individual children who have demonstrated severe and stable behavioral problems and who have not responded to other interventions. Tertiary interventions should involve a functional assessment, in which the goal of the problem behavior is analyzed and the context for the problem is considered. Functional assessments examine the targeted problem behavior across several school contexts, for example, the classroom in which the behavior is most troublesome, in other classrooms, and in the lunchroom to see if the behavior occurs consistently across all school contexts. Similarly, the behavior can be examined across multiple tasks or subjects (e.g., during reading and social studies). The objective of a functional assessment is to analyze how different school contexts might be serving as antecedents to problem behavior. Once the functional assessment is completed, the teacher should be able to see clear patterns, such as when and where and with whom the problem behaviors typically occur.

Tertiary interventions are usually provided to students identified as having a behavioral disorder and who have not responded to a secondary intervention. For instance, a teacher may respond to a student who engages in verbal conflicts with other students during class by using the secondary intervention strategies of telling them to stop and then separating them from the rest of the class. If these verbal conflicts continue or escalate, despite the teacher's consistent use of these strategies, a tertiary intervention may be needed. Tertiary interventions often include some form of a pull out program. Thus, should the behavior become unmanageable in the general education classroom, the student can be removed from the classroom and

served in an alternate setting with a teacher or other school personnel who are prepared to address the behavior. While tertiary intervention may take place in an alternate setting, the ultimate focus is on returning the student to the general education setting as soon as the student is under behavioral control.

Positive behavioral support (PBS) is another behavioral change model that has been particularly influential in the field of special education. PBS refers to a systematic approach to preventing or reducing challenging behaviors by examining the context in which they occur and emphasizing the application of reinforcement in order to change behavior. Interventions are chosen to strengthen the antecedent-desired behavior relationship and to limit the use of punishment or response cost interventions. PBS also focuses on the social and contextual variables in the classroom or school setting that may be reinforcing the undesirable behavior. PBS has been used as part of schoolwide discipline programs, as well as part of individual interventions designed for students receiving special education services.

Teachers in schools that use schoolwide models are expected to follow school guidelines when problems become more intense or chronic in nature. The advantage of effective schoolwide systems is that expectations for behavior and selected interventions are consistent across classrooms and across teachers. These models require considerable training, commitment from administrators, and fidelity of implementation in order to be effective on a schoolwide level.

Responsive Classroom Management and Special Education Students

Students whose behavioral problems are chronic and intensive are usually referred for special education services. Special education students who have behavioral problems usually have a Behavioral Intervention Plan (sometimes known as a BIP) that is part of their Individualized Education Plan, which is required for all students receiving special education services. The BIP is designed after a functional assessment is completed on the student's behavior to identify factors that precede their acting-out behaviors, the settings for the behavior, as well as the types of reinforcement most likely to result in positive behavioral change. The BIP can be helpful to teachers because it documents past interventions, identifies reinforcers preferred by the students, and outlines a behavioral intervention for teachers to use. Another advantage is that it encourages teachers and administrators to consider alternatives. A disadvantage is that these plans are typically only discussed and formalized once a year when the Individualized Education Plan is developed.

For over three decades, students with chronic behavioral problems received educational services primarily in special education classrooms. Today, many students

receiving special education services spend the majority of their school days in general education classrooms. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that students with disabilities, including those with behavioral disorders, be educated in the general education classroom with their nondisabled peers to the fullest extent possible. Even a student with a documented behavioral disorder cannot be excluded from the general education setting solely on the basis of the disability (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 2004). In addition, while placement in another classroom may provide a lower teacher-student ratio and the opportunity for more intensive behavioral interventions, these placements may negatively affect student achievement. Studies of the effects of inclusion report more positive achievement outcomes for students with disabilities who are placed in inclusive settings (Soodak & McCarthy, 2006). Few studies exist, however, that suggest how inclusive classrooms are best managed to ensure these outcomes. Even less research exists on how classroom management practices used in general education classrooms may be similar to or different from those found to be the most effective in special education classrooms. Although the field of special education does have a tradition of examining the effects of interventions, they are typically designed for individual students rather than for whole-class use. What teachers need are techniques that have been used and proven effective in inclusive classrooms where students are receiving instruction in larger groups.

Students with intense, chronic behavioral problems who are not successful in the inclusive classroom may receive special education services in a separate classroom setting. These classrooms are staffed with special education teachers whose expertise is designing individualized behavioral interventions. Although there are not particular responsive strategies that are special education strategies, it is typical that special education teachers use interventions that are more individualized and that require more teacher time to implement than those used in the general education classroom. An example is how most special education teachers implement token economy systems. First, instead of applying the system to the classroom as a whole, the special education teacher designs a token system for a particular student, including reinforcers chosen to be particularly to his or her liking. Second, the timing for token distribution and how the behavior is to be reinforced is carefully considered. For example, a teacher may set a goal for a student who has difficulty staying on task to remain seated for 20 minutes. The student is then given a token for every 2 minutes spent on task. The system uses response cost as a way to provide the student additional feedback about behavior: When the student is not on task during a 2-minute period a token is removed. The number of tokens needed for a reinforcer is predetermined: Only when the student has 10 tokens may they be traded for the reward. Finally, the reinforcement comes close on the heels of success: No matter when the student ends up with 10 tokens, that is when he or

she receives a reward. Obviously, this level of attention to the behavior of one student requires close monitoring and implementation, and so it is commonly used only if there is a low teacher-student ratio.

Some Final Words About Classroom Environment

Public school populations in the United States are becoming increasingly diverse, so teachers need to have a similarly diverse array of strategies in order to manage 21st-century classrooms. What may have worked well with predominately Anglo students in rural Michigan may not yield the same results with Hispanic students in an urban Texas district. What caused high-achieving students in an East Coast school to pay attention might be ineffective when used with students with behavioral disorders in East Los Angeles. What always flavors these interactions is the socioeconomic and cultural milieu in which they take place, and even more importantly, the emotional relationship between a class of students and their teacher. Some research (Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003) reminds us that building and maintaining a positive relationship between teacher and students enhances what occurs in that classroom. Responsive classroom management occurs most successfully when teachers care not only about the effectiveness of their strategies and student behavior but also about the quality of their relationships with students.

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