IES Institute of Education Sciences

Teacher-Delivered Behavioral Interventions in Grades K–5

Practice Guide Summary

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Students succeed in school environments that support them in demonstrating prosocial and positive behavior. Student behaviors that disrupt or distract from classroom instruction can result in fewer learning opportunities for students and decreased likelihood of academic success. Behavioral interventions can help students engage in positive behaviors, contributing both to their individual education success and to the success of their peers in the classroom.

The purpose of this practice guide, developed by the **What Works Clearinghouse™** (WWC) in conjunction with an expert panel, is to provide guidance on implementing teacher-delivered, low-intensity behavioral interventions in grades K–5 classrooms. The overarching aim of the recommendations is to help teachers support students in demonstrating positive behaviors in the classroom so that students and their classmates can engage in learning. The recommended strategies are intended to complement existing schoolwide behavioral programs and apply to both general education classrooms and separate classrooms. The recommendations also support the teaching of positive behaviors that students can generalize to other settings and relationships.

This summary introduces the seven recommendations and supporting evidence described in the full practice guide.

Recommendation 1 introduces a process to co-establish, model, and teach clear expectations for student behavior consistent with schoolwide expectations (when these are present). Clear behavior expectations are foundational to the other recommendations in this practice guide. **Recommendation 2** and **Recommendation 3** focus on practices to remind students to engage in expected behaviors and to acknowledge students when they demonstrate those expected behaviors.

Recommendations in this practice guide:

1. Co-establish, model, and teach clear expectations for student behavior consistent with schoolwide expectations
   Strong Level of Evidence
2. Remind students to engage in expected behaviors
   Strong Level of Evidence
3. Acknowledge students for demonstrating expected behaviors through positive attention, praise, and rewards
   Strong Level of Evidence
4. Offer instructional choices to students to increase engagement and agency
   Moderate Level of Evidence
5. Provide students frequent and varying opportunities to respond to and engage in activities
   Moderate Level of Evidence
6. Teach students to monitor and reflect on their own behavior
   Moderate Level of Evidence
7. Use behavior ratings to provide feedback to students
   Strong Level of Evidence

Recommendation 4 and **Recommendation 5** focus on practices that offer instructional choices to students and provide opportunities for students to respond to and engage in learning activities. **Recommendation 6** and **Recommendation 7** focus on ways to teach students to self-monitor and reflect on their own behavior and to use behavior ratings to provide feedback to their peers.

For more details about the recommendations and more implementation tips, download your free copy of the full practice guide from the What Works Clearinghouse website: **https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/WWC/PracticeGuide/31**.

Recommendation 1. Co-establish, model, and teach clear expectations for student behavior consistent with schoolwide expectations

Teachers can proactively address students' behavioral needs by establishing a supportive classroom climate guided by positive behavior expectations. Ideally, these behavior expectations are connected to schoolwide expectations that are implemented across the school *and* in individual classrooms.[1]

The goal of this recommendation is to support teachers in cocreating, teaching, and modeling clear behavior expectations, and then adjusting or revisiting the expectations if students are not meeting them.

How to carry out the recommendation

Clear behavior expectations should, if possible, be developed at the beginning of the school year and should be consistent with schoolwide behavior expectations. Plan to reteach and revisit expectations on an ongoing basis throughout the school year, with refreshers after school breaks and holidays.

1. Start with schoolwide expectations if available

If schoolwide expectations are in place, start with these when thinking about classroom behavior expectations. Create opportunities for bidirectional conversations with parents and other caregivers on how to model and reinforce schoolwide expectations. Students are expected to follow certain cultural and behavioral norms at home. Engage parents and caregivers during one-on-one conversations to ask them if they have any questions about the expectations and whether they align with their own values at home.

2. Co-establish and post classroom behavior expectations

When revising or developing new classroom behavior expectations, identify a set of expectations that are observable, measurable, positively stated, applicable, and culturally relevant. **Example 1.2** presents guidelines for developing behavior expectations. Partner with parents and other caregivers and students to create a shared vision for what learning and success look like in the classroom and ensure the cultural relevance of the expectations.

Example 1.2. Guidelines for developing behavior expectations

- Define 3-5 expectations. There should be 3-5 expectations and, if possible, the expectations should be essentially the same across settings (for example, cafeteria and classroom). See classroom expectation matrix in Example 1.3.
- State expectations positively. Try to tell children what to do rather than what not to do. For example, say "*Ask permission before taking something from a friend*" instead of "*Don't take things from others*."
- Be simple and specific and use developmentally appropriate language. For example, say "*Use your inside voice*" for first grade students rather than "*Talk quietly when you are inside the school*."
- Define observable and measurable goals. Students need to have a clear definition of what each behavior looks like in their classroom. It's easier to observe "*Return everything to its proper place*" than "*Keep things tidy*."

Source: Adapted from **https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/ecbm/cresource/q1/p03/#content**

Teachers can also engage students in conversations about what the identified behavior expectations "look like" in their classroom through class discussions and student shares. Once developed, encourage students to create visuals for shared expectations by writing, drawing, taking pictures of themselves, finding pictures on the internet or in magazines of examples and non-examples of the expected behaviors. Display the shared expectations in the classroom so that students have a reminder of the classroom expectations they helped develop.

3. Teach clear behavior expectations

Teach clear behavior expectations by frequently recognizing and acknowledging students' positive behavior, explicitly restating students' appropriate behavior, and consistently reinforcing the behavior of students who meet expectations during classroom instruction, interactions, and transitions. **Example 1.5** lists several strategies for teaching behavior expectations to students. The panel recommends teaching expectations at least daily for the first three weeks then monthly, with refreshers after each school break and holiday.

Example 1.5. Strategies for teaching expectations

There are many ways to teach behavior expectations. For example, teachers can:

Model expectations. Model clear behavior expectations by explicitly acknowledging when and how students are demonstrating classroom expectations.

Restate expectations/prompt students to practice. Focus on frequently recognizing and acknowledging students' expected, positive behavior by explicitly restating students' appropriate behavior, efficiently prompting and encouraging demonstration of these behaviors (see **Recommendation 2** for more details), and consistently showing appreciation for such behavior in your classroom (see **Recommendation 3** for more details). This can occur seamlessly throughout the day, week, and school year.

Provide feedback to students. Students can receive feedback on their demonstration of each behavior expectation during planned practice opportunities that occur more frequently when behavior expectations are first established and less regularly (but as needed) throughout the rest of the school year (see **Recommendation 7** for more details).

Promote generalization of expectations. Acknowledging appropriate behavior can expand students' understanding of the nuances of behavior expectations as well as how to generalize the related skills learned through the behavior expectations to other contexts. Acknowledging appropriate behavior can increase opportunities for students to learn new and alternate ways of behaving appropriately in different settings.

Use consistent expectations across the school. This will help all adults—as well as students and caregivers—be clear on expected behaviors, creating an opportunity for adults to teach, practice, and acknowledge expected behaviors. This also allows students to receive feedback from multiple adults, including adults beyond the classroom (for example, custodian, culinary staff, substitute teachers).

Source: Adapted from **https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf_case_studies/IRIS_establishing_classroom_norms_and_expectations_case_study.pdf**

4. Adjust instruction and revisit behavior expectations if expectations are not being met

Adjust practices if certain behavior expectations are not being met, and revisit the relevance of behavior expectations throughout the school year with students, parents and other caregivers, and other staff. Every quarter, ask students and parents and other caregivers how they interpret and put into practice the behavior expectations. Consider revising or revisiting behavior expectations based on feedback received and what occurs in the classroom. Integrate this feedback into ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement of the behavior expectations.

Recommendation 2. Remind students to engage in expected behaviors

To help students build self-awareness and self-regulation skills, teachers may need to remind them throughout the school day to engage in appropriate behaviors. Providing precorrections—also known as prompts or reminders—is an easy-to-use strategy that involves explicitly requesting a student to engage in a specific expected behavior. Precorrections can guide students on how to approach a new task or situation or one where they typically struggle to be successful.

The goal of this recommendation is to guide teachers on how to select behaviors to focus on, how to consider different types and levels of precorrections, and how to deliver and reinforce precorrections using supportive language.

How to carry out the recommendation

Providing precorrections can be integrated into learning activities throughout the school day. The panel recommends using precorrections to promote expected behaviors that are consistent with schoolwide and classroom expectations (see **Recommendation 1**). Precorrections are ideally paired with acknowledgments in the form of positive attention, praise, and rewards (see **Recommendation 3**).

1. Select the expected behaviors to focus on for specific times and transitions during the school day

Precorrections are ideally focused on expected behaviors for specific contexts where students may need extra guidance on how to engage in activities and with one another. Selecting which contexts and behaviors to focus on is an important first step towards developing effective precorrections. Take time to think about the transitions or times throughout the day when students typically struggle. The specific times and challenging behaviors may differ across students. Engage students and their parents and other caregivers in deciding which behaviors to focus on and what types of precorrections to use.

2. Consider the type and level of intensity of the precorrections to use

Tailor the type of precorrections to specific student needs. **Example 2.1** describes different types of precorrections. Precorrections can be directed at individual students or groups of students. In general, the panel recommends using group precorrections first and then following up with individual precorrections for students who have greater need for support. Precorrections range in intensity from least intensive (visual precorrections) to most intensive (modeling precorrections). For establishing a behavior, start with a precorrection that is as minimal as possible, such as a gesture to remind students to raise their hands during circle time. If the initial precorrection is not effective, increase the intensity of the precorrection by repeating the gesture and adding a verbal precorrection.

Example 2.1. Types of precorrections

- **Visual precorrections** include pictures, written instructions, schedules, and other objects, such as using a checklist for expected classroom behavior during circle time.
- **Verbal precorrections** include guiding statements, questions, and hints about expected behaviors, such as reminding students to raise their hands. Questions can including asking students to describe or explain expected behaviors, including what steps students should take for different activities.
- **Nonverbal precorrections** include pointing to, looking at, motioning, gesturing, or nodding to indicate an expected behavior, such as pointing to written instructions for expected behaviors when coming back from recess.
- **Modeling precorrections** involves showing or acting out the expected behaviors, such as modeling how to wash hands after coming back from recess.

Source: Adapted from Neitzel & Wolery, 2009.

3. Deliver precorrections using supportive and action-oriented language

Deliver precorrections in a positive, warm, and supportive manner and use action-oriented language. For example, before starting circle time, smile warmly and say, *"Remember, we need to be active listeners during circle time and stay quiet when the teacher is talking."* Calling a student out for challenging behavior is not considered a precorrection.

4. Reinforce delivered precorrections by providing immediate acknowledgment of students engaging in expected behaviors

Reinforce precorrections by providing students an opportunity to practice the expected behavior and by immediately acknowledging students engaging in expected behaviors. For example, precorrect students for a desired behavior before an activity, then remind them to engage in the behavior during the activity, and finally praise them for engaging in the behavior.

5. Ask students for feedback on which precorrection approaches they prefer

Ask students what types of precorrections work best for them. For example, say, *"What is most helpful for you when I remind the whole class of what is expected before we walk to the cafeteria? Is it more helpful if I check in with you privately as well to remind you about expected hallway behavior?"* Share and review behavior expectations and approaches to precorrections regularly with students as part of building a classroom culture.

Recommendation 3. Acknowledge students for demonstrating expected behaviors through positive attention, praise, and rewards

Acknowledging students' positive behavior is part of creating a positive learning environment where all students feel connected and included. Teacher positive attention, praise, and rewards are three distinct strategies that can be used to acknowledge students engaging in expected behaviors in the classroom. By linking positive attention, praise, and rewards with specific behaviors, teachers can reinforce student behaviors they would like to see more of in the future.

The goal of this recommendation is to guide teachers on how to engage parents and other caregivers and students in selecting behaviors and rewards to focus on, and how to acknowledge students for engaging in expected behaviors throughout the school day.

How to carry out the recommendation

Acknowledging students engaging in expected behaviors can be integrated into daily instruction throughout the school day. The panel encourages teachers to use praise and rewards to promote expected behaviors that are consistent with schoolwide and classroom expectations (see **Recommendation 1**). Praise and rewards can also be used as a reinforcement for precorrected behaviors (**Recommendation 2**) and opportunities to respond (**Recommendation 5**).

1. Engage students and their parents and other caregivers in deciding on culturally relevant praise and rewards for expected behaviors

Meaningful engagement with students and their parents and other caregivers can ensure the cultural relevance of acknowledgements. Engage parents and other caregivers in selecting relevant acknowledgements as part of back-to-school or other school-home class meetings. Provide a list of optional rewards and give parents and other caregivers an opportunity to add to the list or mark the ones their child would prefer. Consider both tangible rewards (such as stickers or home notes) and intangible rewards (such as activities or experiences).

2. Focus praise on behavior and effort rather than ability

Praise should focus on student behavior or effort rather than on ability. State the specific behavior motivating the praise. Rather than saying, *"You are so smart,"* praise something the student can control, such as, *"Great job contributing to today's discussion! I appreciated hearing your thoughts," "I appreciate the way you helped your friend when they're filling their tray in the cafeteria,"* or *"I appreciate you listening to somebody else's thought patiently when it was so different than your own idea."* **Example 3.2** provides illustrative examples of effective behavior-specific praise statements. Make sure the praise statements are delivered consistently and immediately following the desired behavior.

3. Be sincere when delivering praise

Praise and rewards should be provided in a positive, respectful, and nurturing environment where students are acknowledged in a positive way by teachers, other school staff, and peers throughout the school day. Demonstrate genuine interest in and appreciation of each student by using a pleasant voice, initiating eye contact, and using the student's name when delivering praise.

Example 3.2. Effective behavior-specific praise statements

Situation	Instead of saying …	Say this …
Student entering classroom	"Thank you for being on time"	"Jasmine, I appreciate how you entered the classroom quietly and went straight to your desk"
Student taking out appropriate materials	"Thank you for getting ready"	"Kai, you did an excellent job getting your textbook out and are ready to learn"
Student following directions	"Well done"	"John, you did a great job cleaning your desk"
Student actively participating in learning activity	"Thank you"	"Thank you, Jodi, for volunteering and working the problem on the board"
Student attempting to answer questions	"Good job"	"Great, Maddie, you remembered to raise your hand"
Student sharing materials	"You are such a good sharer"	"Robert, I saw you sharing your crayons—look at how you are both having fun"
Student staying on task	"Good job staying focused"	"Thank you for keeping your hands to yourself and focusing on your work, Ana"
Student completing an assignment	"What a beautiful drawing" "You are so smart"	"Elijia, can you tell me how you drew the fur on the tiger? Your details made it lifelike" "Emily, you worked hard on that"
Student completing work on time	"Nice work"	"Way to go, Mandy, you were focused and were right on time!"
Student completing work accurately	"Your answer is right"	"Diego, I can tell you took the time to check your answers and get it right"

Source: Adapted from Haydon & Musti-Rao, 2011, **https://reachformontessori.com/what-is-effective-praise/**

4. Focus rewards on the behavior of the entire class, groups of students, or individual students

Provide rewards based on individual students, groups of students, or the entire class engaging in expected behaviors. Rewards may include activities, items, or sensory experiences students might like to earn or avoid.[2] Tailor the range of rewards to specific students. Some students may enjoy spending time in the cafeteria with peers, and others may prefer to escape the noise by eating lunch in the classroom. Some students may enjoy extra recess time, and others may prefer to play board games in the classroom.

5. Scan the classroom continuously to look for and acknowledge students meeting expectations

Acknowledge students for demonstrating expected behaviors throughout the school day. Some experts suggest the use of about six praise statements every 15 minutes.[3] Other experts suggest a ratio of four praise statements for every correction.[4] Make sure acknowledgments are applied equitably across all students. Remember to vary the rate of praise over the course of the day. Use high rates of behavior-specific praise to teach new behaviors, and then shift to less-frequent reinforcement to maintain expected behaviors. Decrease the frequency of praise when students spend more time engaged in the expected behaviors.

Recommendation 4. Offer instructional choices to students to increase engagement and agency

Students may need support staying engaged in classroom activities. Instructional choice provides an individual student or group of students with two or more options for how to engage in classroom activities. Instructional choice is a low-intensity and versatile strategy that provides students with increased agency and promotes student engagement and reduces challenging behaviors.

The goal of this recommendation is to guide teachers on how to implement instructional choice in the classroom, including guidance on how to create a list of choices and key considerations when offering students a choice of how to engage in learning activities.

How to carry out the recommendation

Instructional choice can be integrated into daily instruction with limited resources and materials. However, teachers will need some additional planning time to build instructional choices into lesson plans. Although instructional choice can be used throughout the school year, it should primarily be applied during specific class periods (or segments within a class period) where students may need extra support staying engaged.

1. Determine which type of choices you feel comfortable offering and create a menu of choices

Develop a list or table of the various types of choices you feel comfortable offering to each student. The list of choices can be tailored to specific students, considering their diverse backgrounds and needs, or the list could provide a set of choices that could be offered to any student. Consider creating lists of both within- and across-activity choices. Within-activity choices involve giving each student a choice of materials, location, or partner for a specified activity (for example, *"Would you like to use crayons or markers to color your map today?"*). Across-activity choices involve giving each student a choice of what activity they would like to do (for example, *"Would you like to work on your presentation or the text for your paper today?"*). **Example 4.1** illustrates different types of across- and within-activity choices.

Example 4.1. Different types of choices

Across-Activity Choices	Within-Activity Choices
Differentiation of product: Written paper, oral presentation, YouTube video, Think-Tac-Toe boards (see template in Example 4.4).	**Differentiation of materials:** Crayons or markers? Pencil or pen? Paper and pencil or computer?
Order of completion: Which activity would you like to do first? Select a learning center.	**Differentiation of work completion:** Select three out of five math problems, choose even or odd problems, work independently or with a partner, finish in class or at home.

Source: **https://ci3t.org/tier_library/ic/00_Instructional_Choice_Introduction.pdf**

2. Use the menu of choices to determine which type of choices to add to a particular lesson

When developing lesson plans, refer to the menu of choices and determine which types of choices are most appropriate for a particular topic, as well as where these choices could be incorporated in the lesson and which students will be offered the choice (for example, an individual student, a group of students, or the whole class).

While instructional choices are best incorporated frequently throughout the curriculum, begin by implementing instructional choice during a specific class period (or segment within a class period) when students struggle to maintain engagement. After successfully incorporating instructional choice into a lesson, consider ways to provide a range of choices in a range of contexts. Change the choice options over the course of the school year, depending on how responsive students are to the choices that are being provided.

3. After choice is built into the lesson, offer each student the established choices

When offering instructional choice, ensure that the choices are clearly presented to each student. For example, present the student with a choice of an index card with a picture of the class library and an index card with a picture of the teacher table.[5]

4. Ask the student to make their choice, providing ample time for the student to respond

After choices have been offered, explained, and clarified, the next step is to ask students to make their decisions. For example, teachers can directly pose the following question to an individual student: *"Emily, where would you like to sit while you conduct your assignment?"* Each student should be given sufficient time to make their choice. The choice-making process can be challenging for some students. When students are struggling to make the requested choices within the allotted time frame, it may be necessary to prompt them in an encouraging way. For example: *"Brian, it is time to make a choice. Do you want to use paint or clay for your art project? I am sure either option will be great."*

5. Listen to or observe the student's response and provide them with the selected option

After the students make their choice, it is important to provide them with their selected option. It is not appropriate to discourage the choice the student selected, as this would not promote student agency or motivation to engage with the task.

6. Offer students an opportunity to give feedback on the choice they selected

It is important to find out what students like or do not like about their instructional choices to continually improve instruction. This information can inform future lesson plans incorporating instructional choice. Although it may not be practical to ask students at the end of each lesson what they thought about the choices offered, it could be helpful to ask for input at the end of some lessons.

Recommendation 5. Provide students frequent and varying opportunities to respond to and engage in activities

Providing all students with observable, active ways to respond and engage with learning activities can encourage student on-task behavior and active engagement in learning.[6] Opportunities to respond (OTR) is an instructional strategy that provides students with opportunities to be engaged in the learning activity by asking for immediate, fast-paced student responses to questions or statements. Students may respond verbally or with gestures, actions, or preprinted response cards. The teacher provides immediate feedback to student responses.

The goal of this recommendation is to guide teachers on how to design and implement OTR as part of a learning activity.

How to carry out the recommendation

Providing OTR is an easy strategy to engage students that can be implemented during a variety of activities, including direct instruction or review, as a warm-up activity, or for a quick knowledge check. Although OTR can be implemented throughout the school year, it should primarily be applied during specific class periods (or segments within a class period) where students may need extra support staying engaged.

1. Identify the instructional goal

Identify the main goal of using OTR. Is the purpose to promote active engagement in a specific learning activity or classroom instruction, to teach students about expected behaviors during classroom instruction, or to check how well students understand the academic content? By identifying the purpose of OTR, teachers are better positioned to develop relevant and effective questions and response options.

2. Prepare a list of questions and potential responses

Informed by the purpose of using OTR, prepare a set of questions and decide how students will respond and for how long OTR will be implemented (usually 3–10-minute blocks). Develop questions that are relevant to the purpose for using OTR and are interesting and engaging for students. Ensure questions are developmentally appropriate. Consider whether students should respond to questions individually, as a group (chorally), or in some combination of group and individual responding.

3. Teach students how to respond

Before implementing OTR, ensure that all students have the needed materials, such as response cards or dry-erase boards and markers. Instruct students on whether to respond individually or as a group. Model how students are expected to respond to a question. If using cards or dry-erase boards, allow students to practice putting their cards or dry-erase boards up and down multiple times until all students are comfortable in using them. **Example 5.1** illustrates different options for students responding to questions.

4. Ask a question, wait for a response, view the response, provide feedback, repeat

When implementing OTR, go through the question-wait-feedback cycle multiple times: Ask a question, wait 3–5 seconds for a response, view student responses, provide supportive feedback, and repeat.[7]

To keep students engaged, consider incorporating variety and unpredictability into question asking, changing the pace of questions, and switching back and forth between using group and individual OTRs.[8]

Make sure all students have an opportunity to respond. Remember to provide evaluative and encouraging feedback to all students, for both correct and incorrect answers. If a student is unsure how to answer a question, allow them some think time or let the student "phone a friend" to help with the answer.

Modify instruction based on the OTR. If less than 80 percent of student responses are correct for new material or less than 90 percent of student responses are correct for review materials, consider spending more time on the material during instruction.

Example 5.1. Different options for student responses

Student Response Options	Benefits	Limitations
Response cards: Students respond using preprinted cards with images, words, letters, numbers, colors, symbols, or signs (+/-; higher/lower; true/false).	• Preprinted cards can guide the students to correct responses by limiting the set of potential responses	• Developing cards can take time
Individual, small, dry-erase boards: Students respond by drawing images or writing their answers on the dry-erase boards and holding them up for the teacher and peers to see.	• Reusable and versatile • Do not require pre-creation of responses • Improve fine motor skills	• Can be difficult to read due to messy writing • Requires dry-erase boards
Thumbs up / Thumbs down: Students respond by holding thumbs up or thumbs down to indicate whether they agree/ disagree with a statement, whether a statement is true or false, or whether something is higher or lower.	• Can be weaved into instruction as quick knowledge checks • Easy to use for students in lower grades	• Need to have questions with binary answers (agree/disagree, true/false)
Holding up fingers: Students respond by holding up fingers to indicate numbers and counts.	• Can be weaved into instruction as quick knowledge checks • Easy to use for students	• Need to have questions with numerical answers
Choral response: Students provide short verbal response in unison when prompted with a cue.	• May increase the frequency of student response or refocus attention • Useful in having students repeat a word or phrase, particularly when learning new words or languages	• Must be used in short periods • May be hard to identify students who are not responding and may not be following learning activity
Movement: Students respond by standing up, sitting down, clapping their hands, stomping their feet, or some other type of physical movement.	• Can relieve energy and may be a preferred format for younger children	• Some students may become overstimulated

Source: Adapted from Haydon et al., 2012.

5. Provide opportunities for reflecting on learning

Have students complete feedback forms[9] to provide their perspective on what they think about this type of rapid questioning learning activity. If feasible, ask a colleague to observe a lesson, count the number of OTRs, and provide feedback.

Recommendation 6. Teach students to monitor and reflect on their own behavior

All students need to meet certain social, behavioral, and academic expectations to succeed in school and in life. Some students may need extra support to meet these expectations.[10] Self-monitoring involves teaching students to observe and record their own behaviors in the classroom, with the goal of promoting self-determined behavior and self-regulation. Self-monitoring can help students identify, reflect on, and demonstrate expected behaviors that allow them to successfully engage in social and academic activities in their classroom.

The goal of this recommendation is to guide teachers on how to implement self-monitoring in their classrooms, including guidance on how to determine whether self-monitoring is appropriate, how to design self-monitoring procedures and tools, and how to teach students to self-monitor their behavior.

How to carry out the recommendation

Self-monitoring can be integrated into daily instruction and implemented at any time during the school year. The panel encourages teachers to implement self-monitoring in combination with prompts (**Recommendation 2**) and acknowledgments (**Recommendation 3**) for students engaging in positive behaviors. Self-monitoring can fade as the students successfully engage with the expected behavior.

1. Establish the prerequisite conditions

Consider whether a student can perform the expected behavior.[11] If a student knows how to perform the expected classroom behavior but does not do so, then their behavior can potentially be remediated through self-monitoring. The challenging behavior and the expected replacement behavior should be readily observable and easy for the student to record. If it is difficult for the student to tell whether they are engaging in challenging behavior, they may not be well-positioned to monitor that behavior. Think about whether the challenging behaviors occur frequently enough to interfere with the student's learning and disrupt the classroom environment. Self-monitoring strategies are unlikely to effectively address infrequent behavior problems. **Example 6.1** provides a self-monitoring suitability checklist.

Example 6.1. Self-monitoring suitability checklist

Self-monitoring is only suitable for addressing a challenging behavior if you answer "YES" to the following three questions:

- Is the challenging behavior able to be clearly defined, readily observable, and reasonable for the student to record?
- Is the student capable of controlling the challenging behavior and performing the expected behavior?
- Does the challenging behavior occur at a sufficiently high frequency to allow it to be monitored?

If the answer to any of these questions is "NO", then other strategies described in this practice guide may be more appropriate for addressing the challenging behavior.

Source: Lane et al., 2011.

2. Identify and operationally define the challenging and expected behaviors

Communicate and explicitly define both the challenging behavior and the expected replacement behavior to the student through discussion, examples, and modeling. It is important for the student to learn the expected behavior that can replace the challenging behavior so that the challenging behavior is replaced with appropriate behaviors as opposed to different challenging behaviors.

3. Design the self-monitoring procedures and monitoring tool

Determine when and how students will conduct self-monitoring. The self-monitoring period should be of an appropriate length to encompass times when challenging behavior is likely to occur during the daily classroom schedule. To aid the student in their self-monitoring, create an age-appropriate paper or electronic self-monitoring checklist.

Set realistic behavior goals that allow the student to be successful. For example, praise and reward students for being engaged during 80% of the measured time periods. Once the student has reached the 80% goal, set a new goal for the student being engaged during 90% of the measured time periods. See Recommendation 3 for additional guidance on how to deliver praise and rewards.

4. Teach the student the self-monitoring procedures

Use discussion, modeling, coaching, and role play to explain how to use the self-monitoring tool. When the student is first learning the self-monitoring procedures, it could be helpful to remind them of the challenging behaviors they should try to avoid and the expected behaviors they should be working towards.

5. Monitor student progress

Monitor and reward the accuracy of the student's self-recorded behavior by completing the self-monitoring tool during the same intervals and comparing the results to those of the student.[12] If the comparison reveals the student is not accurately recording their behavior, discuss the discrepancy with the student, reteach the recording process, and be more intentional about providing reinforcers for both engagement in self-monitoring and accurate recording. Analyze the student's self-monitoring data over time to determine whether student behavior is improving as intended.

6. Consider maintenance and follow-up

Review the self-monitoring data every 6–8 weeks to determine whether self-monitoring should be faded or discontinued. Once a student consistently demonstrates the expected behavior, fade out the formal self-monitoring system by implementing self-monitoring during fewer activities each day or by gradually decreasing the student recording time. Continue to use reminders (**Recommendation 2**) and positive acknowledgments (**Recommendation 3**) to reinforce the expected behavior.

Recommendation 7. Use behavior ratings to provide feedback to students

Providing students structured, formal feedback on their behavior can be an effective strategy to support their self-reflection and engagement in expected behaviors. Behavior ratings are formal routines for having teachers or peers rate how a specific student or groups of students demonstrated—or did not demonstrate—expected behaviors in the classroom. Providing students with formal feedback through behavior ratings reinforces behavior expectations and promotes student self-reflection and self-regulation of behavior in the classroom and in other settings.

The goal of this recommendation is to guide teachers on how to co-develop behavior ratings with parents and other caregivers and students, and to implement behavior ratings with students in the classroom.

How to carry out the recommendation

Behavior ratings can be implemented throughout the school year and require materials and some teacher planning. Some teachers may benefit from seeking out consultation or coaching from other teachers when implementing behavior ratings. The panel encourages teachers to use behavior ratings to reinforce established classroom behavior expectations (see **Recommendation 1** on establishing behavior expectations) and to acknowledge students through praise and rewards when a goal for engaging in expected behaviors is reached (**Recommendation 3**).

1. Engage students and their parents and other caregivers in co-developing behavior ratings

Partner with parents and other caregivers and students to co-develop classroom ratings aligned with schoolwide expectations (when available). Focus behavior ratings on specific, measurable behaviors. Engage parents and other caregivers in conversations about what behavior expectations to focus on and how parents and other caregivers can model or reinforce these behaviors in the home setting. Emphasize the importance of using behavior ratings in nonpunitive ways to promote and reinforce expected behaviors.

2. Break the school day into natural segments for feedback and ratings

Determine how to break the class into segments that make sense for doing the ratings and providing feedback about the ratings. Keep the time period brief (5–10 minutes) and extend it when students are successful.

3. Optional: For interventions focused on groups of students, determine how to divide students into groups

A group-based intervention can be easier to implement than an individual intervention because teachers are implementing it for more than one student. Consider the student needs in the classroom when deciding whether to implement an individual or group-based behavior rating intervention. For students with more individualized needs or for students for whom the group-based behavior rating intervention was not effective, an individual behavior rating intervention might be appropriate.

4. Teach and provide students opportunities to practice behavior expectations or implement the game procedures

Teach and model the ratings and rules of the game and have students practice the game to ensure they understand how to behave according to the rules. Provide opportunities for students to ask questions about the ratings and rules and discuss which ratings or rules are challenging or easy to meet and why. If it becomes clear that students are struggling to follow a certain rule, spend additional time unpacking what this rule means and what it looks like to behave according to that rule. Ensure that the ratings, rules, and rewards are culturally appropriate and meet the needs of all students.

5. Review data for individual students, groups of students, or the entire class to show progression towards rewards, posting ratings for groups or the entire class as appropriate

Review the behavior ratings and provide feedback either privately to individual students or publicly to groups of students or the entire class. Look for trends over time, such as if an individual student's daily behavior is considerably different from their norm for more than a week, while expecting that there might be some natural variations.

Consider using technology to collect and organize ratings of behavior. Technology can facilitate efficient collection, organization, tabulation, and posting of group and class ratings. Depending on the technology, the feedback can streamline the procedures to track and manage behaviors and provide real-time feedback to teachers, students, and the students' parents and caregivers.

Consider posting the performance levels of groups of students or the entire class—not individual students—to motivate students to engage in expected behaviors. Focus public posting on the positive developments in students' engagement in expected behaviors. The purpose of public posting is to motivate—not publicly shame—the students to engage in expected behaviors.

6. Optional: Use group-based rewards

Group-based rewards can be effective in promoting expected behaviors. Combine classroom-based group rewards with schoolwide, universal rewards if schoolwide behavior systems are in place, or with other classroom acknowledgements if schoolwide expectations are not in place. Set targets for rewards at a level that allows teams to make some errors and promotes the sense of community and connectedness that team-based activities can inspire.

Consider culturally responsive rewards both for individuals and for groups of students. For example, students might be happy to earn a point for their team as opposed to earning a point for themselves because they and their culture value group success. Parents and other caregivers of certain backgrounds might also value rewards that promote a sense of community in addition to recognizing individual accomplishments.

Summary of Evidence by Recommendation

Recommendation	Number of Studies	Level of Evidence	Meta-Analysis Results by Outcome Domain: Student Behavior
1. Co-establish, model, and teach clear expectations for student behavior consistent with schoolwide expectations	14	Strong	+
2. Remind students to engage in expected behaviors	13	Strong	+
3. Acknowledge students for demonstrating behaviors through positive attention, praise, and rewards	16	Strong	+
4. Offer instructional choices to students to increase engagement and agency	3	Moderate	+
5. Provide students frequent and varying opportunities to respond to and engage in activities	2	Moderate	+
6. Teach students to monitor and reflect on their own behavior	3	Moderate	+
7. Use behavior ratings to provide feedback to students	12	Moderate	+

+ = Statistically significant positive effect

For more practical tips and useful examples, download a copy of the *Teacher-Delivered Behavioral Interventions in Grades K–5* practice guide at https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/31.

The Institute of Education Sciences publishes practice guides in education to provide educators with the best available evidence and expertise on current challenges in education. The What Works Clearinghouse™ (WWC) develops practice guides in conjunction with an expert panel, combining the panel's expertise with the findings of existing rigorous research to produce specific recommendations for addressing these challenges. The expert panel for this guide included Kathleen Lynne Lane, Tabathia Baldy, Tammy Becker, Catherine Bradshaw, Virginia Dolan, Kent McIntosh, Rhonda Nese, Ruthie Payno-Simmons, and Kevin Sutherland.

Visit the WWC at **whatworks.ed.gov**

Sign up to receive additional information from the WWC at **http://ies.ed.gov/newsflash/**

You can also find us on **Facebook** and **Twitter**.

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Notes

[1] Scott et al., 2007.

[2] Umbreit et al., 2004.

[3] **https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ907149**

[4] Myers et al., 2011; Stichter et al., 2009.

[5] Ennis et al., 2018.

[6] Clarke et al., 2016; Gardner et al., 1994; Munro & Stephenson, 2009; Narayan et al., 1990; Randolph, 2007.

[7] Adapted from Clarke et al., 2016.

[8] **https://www.classroomcheckup.org/increasing-opportunities-to-respond/**; **https://tennesseetsc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Opportunities-to-Respond-Tips.pdf**

[9] Messenger et al., 2017.

[10] Lane et al., 2011.

[11] Lane et al., 2011.

[12] Lane et al., 2011.