

Strategies to Respond to Challenging Behavior

Purpose: The chart below provides examples of effective classroom strategies for addressing challenging behavior. Use this tool to learn more about each strategy, including an example of its practical application. This tool can be used for a strategy checkup or a strategy inventory.

Strategy name	Explanation	Example
Redirect	This strategy employs a brief, private, and clearly stated verbal reminder of the expected behavior. A redirect includes a specific statement of the schoolwide or classroom expectation. A redirect emphasizes the “what” of the behavior instead of the “why.”	“Bella, we should all be working on the assigned word problems right now.” (Later) “Thank you for being responsible by starting on the assignment.”
Reteach	Reteaching builds on redirection and reiterates the specific expectation in question, reminding students of the specific procedures or routine for meeting the expectation. It capitalizes on the teachable moment to review the expectation more thoroughly by naming the skill, describing and demonstrating, and giving the students the immediate opportunity to practice demonstrating the behavior themselves. Once the student demonstrates appropriate behavior, then positive, specific, meaningful feedback should follow.	“Bella, you need to show responsibility by being on-task. That means your desk is clear of everything except your book and notebook. You begin working right away, continue working until you’re done, and if you need help, you raise your hand and wait to be called on. (Pause) Thank you for showing responsibility, Bella; you have the necessary materials out, and you started working. Let me know if you need help.”
Provide choice	Providing choice can be used when redirections or reteaching have not been effective. This presents two alternatives: the preferred or desired behavior and a less preferred choice. When options are paired this way, students will often make the preferred choice. Pause after providing the choice, and when the student makes a wise choice, praise them.	“Jordan, you have a choice: you may start your math assignment now with the class, or you’ll have to complete it during our special activity time later today. I’ll give you a moment to decide.” OR “Allie, you can quietly complete your work here at your seat next to your neighbors, or you can work alone in the quiet area. Which would you prefer?”

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Student conference	This is a lengthier reteaching or problem-solving opportunity when behavior is more frequent or intense. The behavior of concern is discussed, and any underlying concerns are fleshed out. Then the desired behavior is taught, and a plan is made to ensure the behavior is used in the future. This is to be done when students are calm, not while they are escalated.	“Elijah, several times today, I have reminded you about being on task. What is the expectation? What is stopping you from focusing on and finishing your work? How can you meet that expectation? Tell me what you will do when given an assignment. What will you do if you get stuck? Let’s practice Can I get a commitment from you to do that?”
Proximity	This technique is the strategic placement or movement by the teacher to encourage positive behavior. The teacher serves as a source of support and accountability, helping the student to regulate behavior through strategic placement of the student or the physical presence of the teacher.	A student, Brie, is off task, so the teacher continues to teach the group while, at the same time, moves toward Brie to stand next to her for a moment. Once Brie meets the expected behavior, the teacher provides brief, specific, positive feedback to help maintain the desired behavior: “Thanks, Brie, for showing respect by staying quiet while taking notes on the instruction.”
Signal nonverbal cue	Teachers have a variety of signals that communicate to the student(s) what is expected. These nonverbal strategies include techniques such as eye contact, hand gestures, picture cues, etc. Such simple cues suggest that the teacher is aware of the student’s behavior and is prepared to intervene if the behavior continues. This works best when the teacher has a relationship with the student(s) and has already taught the nonverbal cues to the group.	When Benjamin talks to his neighbor instead of listening to directions, the teacher looks at Benjamin, holds up one finger, and continues to hold the gesture and look until Benjamin makes eye contact and becomes quiet and attentive again. Then, the teacher provides Benjamin with positive, specific feedback. As the class is getting restless. The teacher uses a specific hand signal to regain their attention, then reminds them of the expectations for independent work time and provides positive, specific feedback for their corrected behavior.

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Ignore-attend-praise	<p>This strategy is based on the power of positive, specific, meaningful feedback. The teacher ignores a student displaying minor attention-seeking behavior and attends to a student who is meeting the behavior expectation through specific verbal praise while in the presence of the student demonstrating challenging behavior. The praise serves as an indirect prompt for the student demonstrating the challenging behavior (i.e., minor attention-seeking behavior) and an acknowledgement of the student demonstrating an expected behavior. It is essential to follow up with positive, specific, meaningful praise to the student who has corrected their behavior immediately after the expected behavior is demonstrated correctly.</p> <p>Avoid using this strategy for escape-based (i.e., avoidant) behaviors and behaviors that are harmful (i.e., dangerous, aggressive).</p>	<p>Benjamin is off task during independent work time; he is making jokes and trying to get his classmates' attention. The teacher briefly ignores Benjamin and specifically praises his neighbor, Annabel, who is on task: "Annabel, thank you for quietly reading the passage to yourself and writing your answers down in the workbook!" When Benjamin begins to quietly read and write down his answers, the teacher immediately praises him, "Thanks, Benjamin, for being respectful to your classmates and taking responsibility for your work by quietly reading the passage and writing down your answers in the workbook. Class, remember to ask for help by raising a quiet hand and waiting to be called on."</p>

Acknowledgements

This resource is adapted from:

Missouri Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support. (2018). *Tier I team workbook*. pbissmissouri.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/MO-SW-PBS-Tier-1-2018.pdf

Strategies to Respond to Challenging Behavior: Planning Tool

Directions: Use this tool to purposefully plan for the use of these strategies for addressing challenging behavior during specific lessons or activities. Select a specific lesson or activity and then use the questions below to intentionally plan how you will respond to challenging behavior during each instructional or interaction component. Preplanning enables the instructor to remain calm, objective, and ready to act when needed.

Lesson or activity: _____

Strategy name	Planning questions	Planning details
Signal nonverbal cue	What nonverbal cues will be used?	
	Do the students know what those cues mean, or do they need to be explicitly taught?	
	When will nonverbal cues be used for whole-class, group, and individual(s) during this activity?	
Redirect	What consistent follow-up statement will I use when my initial nonverbal cue fails?	
	What expectations will need to be reinforced for this activity?	
Reteach	What expectations need to be retaught before this activity begins?	
	What procedures should be modeled to prevent predictable challenging behavior?	
	What materials are needed (if any)?	
	At what points throughout this activity will I reteach behavior expectations?	

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Lesson or activity: _____

Strategy name	Planning questions	Planning details
Provide choice	What areas of the classroom can be used for providing a choice in location for this activity?	
	What are alternative times that can be used for providing a choice in the schedule?	
	What are other choices that can be provided during this activity?	
Student conference	When will it be appropriate to hold a student conference regarding a challenging behavior that occurred during this activity?	
	What consistent questions will I ask to discover any underlying difficulties during this activity?	
	What expectations for this activity might need to be retaught in this discussion?	
Proximity	Where will I stand, sit, or circulate to maintain situational awareness and presence?	
	Are there environmental changes that need to be made, such as rearranging furniture, chairs, or groups?	
Ignore-attend-praise	What are my behavior expectations for this activity?	

Strategies to Respond to Challenging Behavior: Planning Tool

Lesson or activity: _____

Strategy name	Planning questions	Planning details
	What minor challenging behavior is acceptable to ignore for this activity?	
	What are consistent positive, specific sentence stems I can use to reinforce my expectations for this activity?	

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Marzano, R. J., Marzano, J. S., & Pickering, D. J. (2003). *Classroom management that works: Research-based strategies for every teacher*. ASCD.

Strategies to Respond to Challenging Behavior Observation Tool

Directions: Use this tool to collect observation data on the use of these classroom strategies for addressing challenging behavior.

Date: _____ **Room #:** _____ **Observer:** _____ **Duration:** _____

Strategy name	Number of times strategy observed	Number of observed opportunities to use	Notes
Redirect			
Reteach			
Provide choice			
Student conference			

Strategies to Respond to Challenging Behavior Observation Tool

Strategy name	Number of times strategy observed	Number of observed opportunities to use	Notes
Proximity			
Signal nonverbal cue			
Ignore-attend-praise			
Other: _____			

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