

Proactive strategies to prevent misbehaviour

The following proactive measures can also be used to prevent misbehaviour in the first place:

Provide support with routines

Announce and post the daily/lesson schedule to give students a sense of security and direction.

Provide cues

Signal to the students that it is time for a certain behaviour to be performed. For example, to stop work and pay attention to you, prepare to leave at the end of a period.

Modify the classroom environment

Placement of desks, tables, supplies, teacher actions and actions of other students may contribute to off-task behaviour. Examine the behaviour and determine the factor that contributed to it and make appropriate modifications.

Communicate clearly and confidently

Display a firm, confident, pleasant, interested and enthusiastic manner. Keep your voice controlled and modulated. Make sure explanations are clear.

Give effective directions

Limit directions to 2-3 at a time; gain full attention; issue directions step-by-step with clear signposting by a key words such as 'first'; directions for more difficult tasks should be written on the whiteboard; check that students understand the directions; observe to check that students are carrying out the directions.

Plan thoroughly

Well-planned learning experiences that are interesting and within the students' range of achievement are associated with learning gains. The teacher can make learning more attractive by giving a coherent and smoothly paced lesson presentation. Getting the lesson going, keeping it going with smooth transitions, avoiding abrupt changes that interfere with student activity, and postponing satiation are important in maintaining positive student behaviour associated with being on task.

Provide variety

Teachers should vary the way they present their lessons from day to day. They may demonstrate, lead a group activity or discussion, or have students work quietly on their own. Routines can become ruts if there is not some variety to "spice things up".

Consider the physical environment

The classroom should be clean and pleasantly decorated with student creations, yet free from distracting stimuli. Is the space warm and inviting? Consider the comfort levels of students. How will crowding, clutter, noise, excessive heat or cold affect them? Consider the most suitable location for the teacher's desk. Equipment needs to be secure and accessible.

Consider seating arrangement

The desks should be arranged to allow students to work as a whole class, in groups and individually as well as allowing the teacher to circulate freely and efficiently. Decide whether students will be required to sit in set seat allocations or whether seating arrangements will vary according to activities. Some teachers may prefer to allow students to sit wherever they like.

Create walls that teach

As well as displays of student work, create walls that teach by displaying rules, procedures, timetables and whole-school expectations as well as prompts for students as they are working independently. For example, spelling tips, comprehension strategies, editing codes, etc.

Use lesson starters

As part of an effective routine, it is best for students to become engaged immediately after entering the classroom or at the beginning of a new lesson. Fun problems, a picture stimulus, music or interesting reflection topics can be put on the whiteboard to engage students and 'hook' them into the learning to come.

Plan lesson introductions

Present an outline of what is to come in the lesson that includes a clearly stated learning intention, the learning experiences that student will engage in and criteria for completion of the lesson's work. Make clear the consequences of not completing the lesson's work/task.

Establish good relationships with the students

(Marzano, Marzano, & Picketing, 2003) found that the quality of teacher-student relationships is the keystone for all other aspects of classroom management.

- Be warm, natural, pleasant, approachable and tolerant.
- Share yourself evenly.
- Set limits and apply them consistently and fairly.
- Show respect for students.
- Communicate high expectations.
- Respond to all students enthusiastically
- Show that you care
- Teach critical social skills

Help students over hurdles

Students who are experiencing difficulty with a specific task need help in overcoming that problem. This may consist of encouraging words, an offer to assist, making additional materials or equipment available. Hurdle helping prevents the student giving up on the task or becoming disruptive.

Alter lessons when necessary

Students may lose interest in the lesson for a variety of reasons (Satiation). When this happens the lesson needs to be altered in some way – select a different type of activity. Altering the lesson early enables you to keep students' attention focuses on the lesson and maintain order.

Spend more time observing and less time micromanaging

Linsin (2012) (Marzano, Marzano, & Picketing, 2003) asserts that most teachers talk too much, help too much, and are seen too much. He claims that micromanagement breeds needy, demanding, and dependent students who expect from the teacher what they can readily do for themselves. It is important to give "efficient help" to the students. This type of help may also reduce the number of cases of the "dependency syndrome" - students asking questions without actually needing help.

Use the 20-second rule

Research shows teachers spend too much time working one-on-one with students - 20 seconds is recommended. Avoid doing the work for the learner by providing one suggestion and then moving on. Offer praise for successful small steps. Move on, but check back later for on task behaviour.

Alert students to new learning

Alert the students when you are about to present something new for them to learn. Present the new information in a clear-cut, efficient, high-impact way. Check for understanding before moving on.

Practice guided and independent practice of new learning

Allow students to co-operatively or independently work on the lesson task/product.

Re-teach if necessary

If you find yourself buzzing around the room, re-teaching one student after another, bring the group back together and re-teach the missed concept to the whole group.

Identify student learning goals

Explain to students where they are in terms of their learning and identify where they need to go next. Have students identify their own short term, achievable goals for their learning. Work with students to set short and long term learning goals based on syllabus standards. Support students to monitor their progress and achievement.

'Learn', not 'do'

Switch the focus from 'doing' to 'learning' in each lesson. Let students know what the learning focus for each lesson will be. Ask students to describe what they have learned each day/lesson. Signal to students when there is new learning for them.

Vary learning experiences

Using a variety of activities helps keep students from becoming bored by the same lessons day after day. Consider authentic application through Field Trips, Guest Speakers, Debates, Writing Activities, Independent Work, Interviews, etc.

Focus on student needs

Lesson topics should be relevant to the students if at all possible. Teaching strategies should be congruent with student learning styles. The teacher should help the students develop learning goals which are real, attainable, and a source of pride. Activities should be fun for the students.

Establish group cohesiveness and responsibility

A teacher's enthusiasm, level of concern for the students, and class involvement all can affect the level of class togetherness. Group rewards can be used.

Be flexible

No matter how long you have spent preparing a lesson, be prepared to “let it go” if it is obviously not working. Try a new approach, a different angle, as long as whatever you do results in the learning intention for the lesson being achieved. Talk to older students, as they will likely be able to tell you what went wrong with the lesson. Under no circumstances should you continue to try to teach a lesson if the students are starting to disengage.

Conclude the lesson effectively

Always allow time at the end of the lesson for students to reflect on their new learning and their progress towards individual learning and behaviour goals.

Remove distracting objects

When you see that distracting objects are keeping students from assigned tasks, simply collect the object and quietly inform the student that the object can be collected after class.

Provide encouragement for all students

Encouraging words and guiding suggestions make all students feel they are being supported in their efforts.

Treat all students with dignity and respect

Use a respectful tone and mannerisms when addressing students and misbehaviour. Listen carefully to what students have to say, speak politely to them, and treat everyone fairly. Never engage in discussion with a student while you or the student is angry. Allow some wait time so that you can both speak in a calm, matter-of-fact manner.

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