

## The Behavior Management Cycle

The Behavior Management Cycle again, begins whenever teachers give directions to the students:

- One: Teachers clearly communicate the explicit directions they need the students to follow.
- Two: Teachers utilize a unique strategy called —Behavioral Narration to provide positive support to students who are complying with the directions.
- Three: Teachers take corrective action with students who are still not complying with their directions.

### STEP ONE: EFFECTIVELY GIVE CLEAR DIRECTIONS

#### THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Research indicates that the first step teachers need to take to motivate all the students to follow their directions is to make sure that the students know —exactly how they are to behave in any activity they engage in, be it a transition from one activity to another, entering or leaving the classroom, during direct instruction, working in groups, etc. (Riegler & Baer 1989, Walker & Walker 1991). Studies show that effectively communicating explicit directions is critical to reducing the disruptive behavior of students (Walker & Walker, 1991)

#### WHAT YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE AND HEAR

You will often see that teachers who struggle with classroom management have the following weaknesses regarding how they communicate their expectations to students:

##### *Teacher Gives Vague Directions*

You will hear teachers giving unclear or vague directions to their students. Vague directions are those that do not explicitly communicate to students exactly “how” the teacher wants them to behave in order to be successful during an activity.

*I need everyone to work on your assignment.*

*I want everyone to take your chair to your study group and wait for my directions*

*I want you to begin working with your partner on the questions on page 14.*

None of these directions again communicate to the students what it will “look” and “sound” like if they follow the directions.

##### *Teacher does not effectively give Directions*

You will in addition see ineffectual teachers:

- Giving the directions when they don't have all the students' attention
- Forgetting to check that the students understand the directions
- ✱ Allowing the students to start following the directions before they are ready for them to do so

#### WHAT YOU WANT TO SEE AND HEAR

The following are the guidelines of what you want to see and hear when teachers are effectively giving explicit directions:

- Directions tell students “what” to do and “how” to do it
- Whenever teachers give directions to students they need make sure they communicate their expectations for “how” the students are to behave related to three key areas:

### Verbal Behavior

Up to 80% of the disruptive behavior of students can be categorized as one form or another of inappropriate verbal behavior. Thus whenever teachers give directions to the students, they need to explicitly communicate what verbal behavior is expected:

*No talking.*  
*Use your “12 inch indoor voice.”*  
*Raise hand and wait to be called upon before speaking..*

*Quietly is vague  
 ↓  
 much better to  
 be explicit*

### Physical Movement

Approximately 15% of the disruptive behavior of students involves inappropriate movement. Thus the second area which teachers need to communicate what behavior they expect when they give directions relates to student movement.

*Stay in seat.*  
*Walk.*  
*Go directly to seat.*

*What other type of  
 disruption occurs?  
 what else should  
 I look out for?* • participation

### Participation in the Activity

In most activities that teachers ask students to engage in, they need to know how they want the students to participate in the activity in order to be successful. Thus, the third area in which teachers need to communicate what behavior they expect is how they want the students to participate in the activity.

*Get right to work.*  
*Do your own work.*  
*Take turns with partner.*

Let’s go back to the previously presented “vague” directions and see what they would sound like if they became more “explicit.”

*I need everyone to work on their assignment. That means I should see you all doing your own work while staying in your seat, and I should hear no talking. If you need help turn over your “help card.”*

*I want everyone to silently pick up your chair and without talking, walk directly to your study group, sit down and wait for my directions on how to do your assignment.*

*When I say go, I want everyone to take out your workbooks and immediately turn facing your partner and begin working on the questions on page 14, using your indoor voices.*

## Teachers have all Students' Attention when giving Directions

Teachers only give directions when they have the attention of all of the students. They utilize an attention getting signal i. e. hand signal, verbal cue, flash the lights etc. to insure they quickly get all the students focusing on what they are about to say.

## Check to insure Students understand their Directions

Whenever teachers give directions they check to see if all the students understand the directions.

Teachers should have students repeat the directions:

"I'm going to call on students and have them tell me one behavior I want to see and hear when I tell you to go back to your seats."

Teachers should also have students signal their understanding: *is this truly effective?*  
"If you understand the directions give me a 'thumbs up' and if you don't, give me a 'thumbs down.'"

## Cue the Students to Start the Activity

Often when teachers give directions to the students they will begin the activity before the teachers are ready for them to do so. Teachers need to be sure to always tell the students not to start the activity until they say, "GO!"

## STEP TWO: UTILIZE BEHAVIORAL NARRATION

After teachers give explicit directions to the students the next step for them to utilize is to provide positive feedback to those who are complying.

### THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Research indicates that teachers who provide effective positive feedback can reduce disruptive behavior by over 30% (Stage & Quiroz, 1997.) In order to be effective the positive feedback needs to be:

- Provided immediately after the students engage in the desired behavior
- Provided in recognition of the specific behavior the students are engaging in
- Provided frequently to students throughout the period or day

One of the most effective types of positive feedback is behavioral narration. (Canter, 2006)

### WHAT YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE AND HEAR

You will often see struggling teachers, after giving directions, immediately respond in a negative manner to students who are off task and disruptive.

*Steven, stop talking, I told you I want you to get to work. Maria, what's up with you, stop fooling around. What's wrong with you kids, why don't you listen to me?*

During instructional activities the teacher ignores students who are on task and only responds to those who are off task and disruptive.

- When the teacher starts the lesson she has all the students' attention, only to find in a few minutes some of the students start "zoning out", or talking, and quickly more and more students follow their lead. Soon the teacher begins reprimanding the students for their inappropriate behavior.
- The students start working independently, they are all silently working but soon some students start talking, a "low buzz" begins and in no time it seems like more students are talking and fooling around than working. Again, the teacher ultimately ends up voicing her frustration or disciplining students.

Constantly responding in such a negative manner sets a detrimental tone in the classroom and dramatically harms the relationship between teacher and student.

#### WHAT YOU WANT TO SEE AND HEAR

After teachers give directions to their students you will want to see them utilizing behavioral narration. This is done in the following manner: when teachers finish giving directions to the students, they immediately monitor the class looking for students who *are complying*, and then in a voice that is loud enough for all the class to hear, simply "narrate" or "describe" what the teachers see them doing.

With elementary level students teachers can single out students by name.

*When I say GO, I want everyone to go directly back to their seats, take out their books and immediately get to work, and I want you to do this without talking. I'll be looking for students who are following my directions. Ready, GO!*

*Lisa is going directly back to her seat without talking Kyla has taken out her book and is already getting to work, Juan has gone back to his seat, taken out his book and is working without talking. (Behavioral Narration)*

Since middle-secondary level students often do not want to be singled out by their teachers for "being good" with older students teachers may want to narrate groups of students who are following directions.

*When I say GO I want everyone to go directly back to their regular seats, take out their books and immediately get to work, and I want you to do this without talking. Ready, GO!*

*I see students walking back to their seats without talking. Students at table three already have their books out. Students at table five are working without talking. (Behavioral Narration)*

#### *Benefits of Using Behavioral Narration*

The following are the reasons behavioral narration is such an important strategy for teachers to utilize.

### **Enables Teachers to Repeat Directions in a Positive Manner**

When teachers utilize behavioral narration they are basically repeating their directions to the students by describing the behavior of those students who are following their directions.

*Direction: Go directly back to your seat.*

*Behavioral narration: Lisa is going directly back to her seat.*

*Direction: Take out your book and get immediately to work.*

*Behavioral narration: Kyla has taken out her book and has already gotten to work.*

### **Enables Teachers to Be On Top of Student Behavior in a Positive Manner**

Teachers need to let their students know that they are “with it” i.e. “on top” of what is going on at all times in the classroom, and are prepared to make sure students will comply with their directions. Why is being “with it” so important?

Students are always keeping an eye their teacher and constantly determining if they have to listen to them, or can choose to do what they want. The more teachers can convince students that they are on top of what is taking place in the classroom the more likely they will choose to listen to the teacher rather than do what they want.

The reality is that most teachers have been taught that the only way to demonstrate they are on top of the students is to be constantly vigilant and immediately respond to off task students. The issue with this approach, as we have discussed, is that the teachers will find themselves constantly having to be correcting students, “Chanta cut that out,” “Let’s go Isaac, pay attention.” These responses, again, can set a negative tone in the classroom.

The dilemma teachers face is this; how do they demonstrate to students they are on top of their behavior without being negative? You thus come to another major benefit of utilizing behavioral narration.

By actively monitoring student behavior and narrating those who are on task: “Ronald is on his way to his seat and Annika is working without talking,” teachers send a clear message to all the students that they are aware of what is going on and definitely on top of how they are behaving. The important point is that through the use of behavioral narration the teachers will have a vehicle to demonstrate they are on top of the students in a positive not negative manner.

### **Enables Teachers to Set a Positive Tone in the Classroom**

Teachers again who are struggling with student behavior tend to focus on those students who are not following instructions:

*“James, stop fooling around and get to work. Cathy, it is time to work and not talk.”*

Focusing on students who are not on task and constantly “badgering” them to follow directions will again set a negative tone to your classroom management efforts.

When teachers use behavioral narration they give attention to the students who are following directions:

*“Jose is starting to work. Linda is in her seat and has already started to work. Michael is working without talking.”*

When teachers focus on students who are on task and give positive attention to their behavior they will set a more positive tone in the classroom.

### **Enables Teachers to Motivate Students without the Drawbacks of Praise**

Many teachers confuse behavioral narration with praise. Though both can be utilized to motivate students to follow directions, behavioral narration can prove significantly more useful, and is a particularly good tool for those students who continue to frustrate the teachers.

*Praise is judgmental.*

When teachers say, “I like the way Amy is working,” or, “Barb good job listening,” they are making judgmental statements regarding what they do and do not like. Some students are motivated to do what their teachers like, but in reality some obviously don’t care to do so.

*Behavioral Narration is simply descriptive*

*“The students in row two are working without talking. Teachers are simply describing what they see the students doing.”*

If teachers are constantly carrying on about how much they like what the students are doing, or what a good job they have done, or how proud they are of how the students are behaving, eventually several issues will develop. First, teachers will find themselves sounding syrupy-sweet and second, eventually many students will come to see that teachers basically praise everything students do and thus the value of their comments diminishes dramatically.

Behavioral narration is, again, merely a matter of fact description of the students’ on task behavior. Given the matter of fact nature of behavioral narration, teachers will find they can use it consistently without feeling phony. Even more important, students are not likely tire of the teachers’ positive comments, and will continue to be motivated by them.

### **Guidelines for utilizing Behavioral Narration**

The following are the guidelines for what you want to see and hear struggling teachers doing after they give directions to the students.

*Utilize Behavioral Narration within Two Seconds of Giving Directions*

Teachers need to immediately begin narrating the behavior of students who are following directions to be sure to effectively motivate the students’ behavior.

*Using Strong Voice, Narrate the Behavior of Two or Three Students or Groups of Students*

Using Strong Voice that can be heard by all the students, teachers will want to narrate the behavior of at least two or three students to insure they have sufficiently repeated the directions and are setting a positive tone in their classrooms.

### *Consistently Narrate Students Who Have Difficulty Following Directions*

The more teachers monitor the behavior of students who are difficult and narrate their behavior when they follow the teachers' directions, the more the students will be motivated to behave appropriately.

### *Teachers utilize Behavioral Narration before Correcting Student Behavior*

When teachers give directions some students obviously may not immediately comply. Again, the teachers need to resist the temptation to correct the students' behavior until they have narrated the behavior of three on task students. This will only take a few seconds and may be sufficient to cue the off task students to get on task in a positive manner.

The obvious exception to this guideline would be if students become extremely disruptive (yelling out, throwing objects, running in the classroom etc.), teachers would not want to ignore the students' behavior and narrate that of other students. Teachers would want to immediately correct the extremely disruptive students' behavior.

### *During Instructional Activities utilize Behavioral Narration every 60 seconds*

When teachers have issues with keeping students on task during instruction, as a rule of thumb you want to see them monitor the students' behavior at least once per minute. When monitoring their students the teachers will want to utilize behavioral narration and recognize those who are on task.

The teacher is conducting a direct instruction lesson with the class. Every time she finishes a point in the lesson she scans the class and narrates students who are engaged in the lesson. "Wilma, Josh and Estefan have their eyes on me, are paying attention and are not talking."

The students are working independently on an assignment. As the teacher is walking around the room helping students she stops after helping each student and narrates students who are staying on task. "The students in the back of the room are working on their assignment without talking. I see some of the students have finished their assignment and have begun working on their homework."

The teacher has a small reading group working with her while the other students are working independently at their seats. As she finishes reading with each student she looks up, monitors the class and narrates students who are staying on task. "Kristin, Peter and Alana are still staying in their seats and reading without talking."

By using behavioral narration with such frequency the teachers will be able to communicate to the students that they are on top of the students' behavior during the instructional activity.

### *Teachers utilize Behavioral Narration as frequently as needed*

When teachers begin using behavioral narration, you want to see them use it every time they give directions and once every minute during instructional activities. Such consistency will help the teachers quickly motivate the students to follow their directions.

Over time teachers can phase out the frequency of how often they use behavioral narration. The key criteria to determine the frequency teachers use this strategy is directly related to the level of off task or disruptive behavior they encounter. As long as teachers have students who do not follow directions, they need to continue using behavioral narration.

### *Combine the Use of Behavioral Narration with A "Points on the Board" Class Wide Reward System*

With middle secondary level students teachers may want to combine the use of behavioral narration with a class wide reward system. A class wide reward system is a program in which all students work together to earn a reward that is given to the entire class. Typical rewards may include free time, a small party, a special treat, permitting them time listen to music in class, or a homework free night, etc.

One of the most effective class wide reward systems is called "points on the board." In this system teachers establish a goal for the number of points the class must earn to get its reward. Whenever teachers observe students following their directions, they not only narrate their behavior, but also let the class know the students have earned a point on the board that will move the class closer to its reward. "Juan is going back to his seat, Kris has started working, Allie is working without talking and they have earned a point for the class."

## **STEP THREE: TAKE CORRECTIVE ACTION**

When teachers have followed the first two steps of the Behavior Management Cycle, clearly given effective directions, narrated the behavior of students who are complying, yet still have students who are engaging in inappropriate behavior they need to move to the third step of the cycle and take corrective action.

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

Taking corrective actions, also known as disciplining students, is one of the most controversial aspects of classroom management. Some so-called experts claim that such actions are basically counterproductive. Research and experience tell us otherwise. *Who?*

Effective use of disciplinary consequences can reduce disruptive behavior in a classroom by close to 30% (Stage & Quiroz, 1997)

When used effectively, disciplinary consequences reduce disruptive behavior at all grade levels (Marzano et al., 2003)

In order to be effective, corrective actions must be provided:

- Immediately after the students start disrupting (Kounin 1970)
- In a calm, matter of fact manner (Jones 2000)
- As a choice to the student (Canter 2006)
- From a discipline hierarchy (Newcomer 2009)
- Every time students engage in disruptive behavior (Sprick, Garrison, & Howard, 1998)

When teachers take corrective action, they need to have strategies to utilize if students try to test their limits by becoming argumentative and angry (Walker et al 2004). If students become defiant teachers need to have effective support from administrator.

### **WHAT YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE AND HEAR**

You will often observe teachers who are struggling with classroom management ineffectively responding to the students' disruptive behavior as follows:



### Nagging

Teachers often ineffectively respond to students' disruptive behavior by initially nagging at them to stop.

*Why are you talking?  
How many times do I have to talk to you about your behavior?  
Please try to control yourself.*

Students have learned that teachers who nag at them don't mean business, and thus they can continue their disruptive behavior. (Jones, 2000)

### Threatening

Another ineffective response teachers make to disruptive students is to threaten them with disciplinary actions.

*Next time you talk I'm going to give you detention  
I'm serious, if you disrupt again I'm going to call your parents*

Students also have learned that most teachers' threats are empty and thus keep testing the teacher because nothing is probably going to happen to them if they do so.

### WHAT YOU WANT TO SEE AND HEAR

The following are the guidelines teachers need to follow to effectively take corrective action.

#### **Follow the 10-20 Second Rule**

Teachers need to take corrective action immediately. Teachers basically have a maximum of only 10-20 seconds from the time they cue the students to begin following their directions to correct any off task or disruptive students, or the number of such students will quickly grow (Kounin, 1970).

Regarding the "10-20 second rule" teachers often think: "How will I have time to use behavioral narration before correcting students in under the 10-20 second time limit?" In reality it will only take teachers 5-10 seconds to use behavioral narration. Thus teachers still have enough time to correct those students who continue to be off task.

#### **In a Firm "Teacher Voice" Restate Directions and provide Consequence as a Choice**

The most effective response teachers can make to students who are not following their directions is to in a strong firm "teacher voice" tell the students that they expect them to follow the directions they have just given and the consequence they have "chosen":

*Connie, the directions were to be sitting and looking at me without talking, you have chosen to earn your warning.*

*Jack, students need to do their own work without shouting out, you have chosen to go to time out.*

*Thomas, the direction was to stay in your seat when you're working, you have chosen to go to lunch detention.*

Such clear firm responses communicate to the students that the teacher is serious about them following their directions. In addition, when teachers give students a choice as to whether or not they receive a consequence teachers place responsibility where it belongs—on the students.

### **Consequences Should Come From a Discipline Hierarchy**

The consequences teachers provide students should be part of a predetermined discipline hierarchy that has been presented to the students (Canter, 2006).

### **Take Corrective Action Every time Students Are Disruptive**

Students will never believe teachers mean business and follow their directions unless and until they know their teachers will take corrective action—provide disciplinary consequences each and every time they choose not to follow teacher directions (Sprick, Garrison, & Howard, 1998).

### **Catch Students Being on Task**

After teachers have had to provide consequences to students, they will want to find the first possible opportunity to narrate the students' on task behavior. Teachers want to be sure to demonstrate to students that they are not simply going to limit their inappropriate behavior, but that they are committed to supporting their appropriate behavior as well (Canter, 2006).

*Jake is poking and talking to students sitting next to him on the rug. Teacher corrects his behavior. A few minutes later the teacher monitors his behavior, and he begins behaving appropriately so the teacher narrates his behavior,*

*“Jake is sitting on the rug with his hands to himself, paying attention and not talking.”*

### **If Students are continuously disruptive the Teacher needs to “Move In”**

There may be times when students will continue to disrupt even after they have been given a warning or a consequence. It is not uncommon when these occur, for the teacher to get angry and continue to give the student one consequence after another until the student ends up being sent out of the classroom.

In order to try to prevent such a drastic reaction the teachers need to learn how to calm the students down and let them know their behavior is unacceptable. This can be accomplished by utilizing the “moving in” technique. The teacher needs to move close to the student, show their concern and in a quiet firm voice let the student know that his behavior is inappropriate.

Remind the student of the consequences received so far and what will happen next if the misbehavior continues.

*Devon, I'm concerned about how you're choosing to behave. You know how to follow directions. Now, you've chosen to receive a warning and a consequence. One more inappropriate comment and you will have your parents called. Do you understand?*

### *Teachers Need to “Move Out” with Older Students*

With older students, it may be more appropriate to “move out” of the classroom to speak with them. Removing the audience of peers may increase the effectiveness of the teachers' corrective actions.

### *Teachers Need to Utilize Professional Judgment in Providing Corrective Actions*

Consistently providing corrective actions is critical to effective classroom management. There are times though that the teachers must use their own professional judgment in determining if it is appropriate to take corrective actions.

- A student who is normally cooperative suddenly becomes highly disruptive
- A student who is not a behavioral problem comes to class upset and is uncooperative

Teachers need to talk with these students and determine what if anything they can do to help the student be more successful in the classroom on a rough day.

### *Teachers need to be prepared for the Students to Test their Limits*

When teachers set limits they can expect that some students will test them to see if the teachers do, in fact, “mean business” (Walker, et al. 2004). Here are some examples of what teachers can expect students to try, and what teachers can do to respond effectively.

### *Students Will Get Upset*

Teachers have students who have learned that when teachers set limits on their behavior, all they need to do is get upset in order to get their way. These students know the vast majority of teachers would do just about anything rather than deal with their angry outbursts. What to do if teachers have such students?

### *Stay Calm*

Students know how to deal with teachers who get upset with their angry outburst—they get angrier. It takes two people to fight. Students feed off teacher emotional upset and use it to further fuel their own anger. The answer is to remain calm. The more upset the teachers’ students get the calmer teachers need to become.

### *Do Not Engage*

Rule of thumb—teachers will never win an argument with students! Why? Students are experts at arguing with adults, but teachers are not experts at arguing with students. Teachers thus should avoid getting into arguments with students. Instead, teachers need to stand their ground and simply keep repeating what they want the students to do.

*Teacher: Adrian, I want you to stop talking and get to work.*

*Adrian: Why are you getting on me? The other students aren’t working.*

*Teacher: I understand, but Adrian I want you to stop talking and get to work.*

*Adrian: But why do I have to if the other students aren’t working?*

*Teacher: Adrian, that’s not the point—either you stop talking and get to work or you will choose to have your parents called.*

*Adrian: O.K. I’ll get to work.*

*Students will become Defiant*

A small percentage of students may become defiant when teachers set limits. These students may refuse to stop their disruptive behavior and/or refuse to leave the class if ordered to do so.

*Have a Back up Plan*

Teachers must have a back up plan to insure they can get support to remove students from their classroom who become defiant. Without a plan, teachers will be reluctant to stand up to some students for fear that they will not be able to deal with the students if they get too out of control.

Most teachers establish a plan that involves the principal or other administrator being notified and coming to their classroom and removing the disruptive student.

If no administrator is available don't try to forcibly remove the student, simply tell the student you will deal with his behavior at the next break.

Please Note: When students "test" the teacher they are sending a clear message that the relationship between the two of them needs work. Teachers need to reach out and build positive relationships with such students.