Effective Classroom Practices

Responding to Problem Behaviours

Practice

Problem behaviours should be responded to as learning errors in the same way as academic errors. This involves a continuum or menu of strategies that use instructional responses to manage minor problem behaviour.

Research

All effective classroom management strategies focus on preventing problems from occurring. We can usually prevent many problem behaviours from occurring if we think carefully about elements in the environment that occasion problem behaviour and then modify the environment accordingly. "What can be predicted, can be prevented" (Scott and Eber, 2003, p 134).

Exclusion and punishment are ineffective at producing long term reduction in problem behaviour (Costenbader and Markson, 1998).

The National Council on Teacher Quality identifies the application of consistent and specific praise to positive behaviour, and appropriate and consistent consequences to misbehaviour as effective classroom management strategies (Greenberg, 2013).

When teachers are inconsistent in their enforcement of expectations, students become uncertain of what those expectations are and that the expectations apply to them (Evertson, Emmer and Worsham, 2003).

Implementation

Minor behaviour errors

Staff should manage minor behaviour errors by addressing and correcting just as they would an academic error. General guidelines for management of minor behaviours include:

- Be consistent.
- Increase active supervision.
- Increase pre-corrects.
- Provide a calm and immediate response.
- Engage in a quiet, respectful interaction with the student.
- Be specific and brief in what you want the student to do instead. Refer to the posted classroom rules and procedures.
- Re-focus the class if needed.
Strategies to manage minor classroom learning errors

A continuum or menu of strategies from least to most intrusive is detailed below. Whilst they are listed in order of intrusiveness the choice of strategies will depend on the individual circumstances.

Proximity

Proximity involves the strategic placement/movement by the teacher in order to encourage positive behaviour.

Signal/ non-verbal cue

Non-verbal techniques such as eye contact, stop signal, a handclap, finger snap or clearing one’s throat suggest that the teacher is aware of the behaviour and is prepared to intervene if it continues.

Ignore, attend, specific praise

Praise an appropriately behaving student in the proximity of a student who is not following expectations. Attention and praise is provided when the student exhibits the desired behaviour.

Re-direct

Provide brief, clear and private verbal reminder of the expected behaviour, linked to classroom rules and expectations. Later give praise for following directions.

Re-teach

Specifically instruct the student on exactly what should be done to follow the classroom rule. Provide opportunities for practice and praise.

Provide choice

Providing choice involves stating two alternatives for the student, both the desired behaviour and a less preferred choice such as moving away from peers or working during fun activity.

Student conference

A student conference is an individual re-teaching or problem solving opportunity.

References


For further support or information:

Email: pbl@det.nsw.edu.au