Promising Practices for Supporting Youth in BC Schools

Last Issue

In the last issue, we shared strategies for monitoring and acknowledging positive student behaviour, including research-based recommendations on using rewards in the classroom without damaging intrinsic motivation.

In this Issue:

Addressing Challenging Behaviour and Bullying

What can we do when we face challenging behaviour and defiance in the classroom? Although sending students to the office or giving detentions may deter some students, it may encourage others. Moreover, it doesn't teach students how to meet their needs without problem behaviour. Instructional responses to behaviour can be a powerful tool for school personnel.

What about bullying? How can we empower students to intervene when they see bullying? Read on!

Interested in involving students as mentors for social responsibility? See page 6 for ideas!

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EFFECTIVE RESPONSES TO PROBLEM BEHAVIOUR

Facing problem behaviour can be frustrating, and it can be difficult to respond appropriately without taking up more instructional time. Here are some things to think about when problem behaviour is occurring more than you'd like in the classroom:

1. Have I taught the expectations for this routine, and do the students need a booster lesson?

2. Do the students have the skills needed to do what is expected?

3. Is there something I can change to prevent problems in the first place (for example, seating change, schedule change)?

4. Do the students need a reminder of expected behaviour before difficult situations?

For more tips on preventing and monitoring student behaviour, see page 2 in Promising Practices Issue 2.2 !

5. Is there a disconnect between what is expected and the student's culture or previous experiences?

6. Are students being reinforced for problem behavior (for example, are they getting attention for misbehaviour, or escaping academic work)?

CORRECTING STUDENT BEHAVIOUR—without a power struggle

Even with good prevention practices in place, we may still face challenges from time to time. The following tips can be used to deescalate a power struggle and get back to instruction.

1.   Stay calm and neutral.

2.   Clearly and briefly a) state the expectation that was not followed, and b) request the student to follow a specific expectation. You may also need to state any consequences for continuing with the problem behaviour or provide a time limit for starting. This step may be more effective when done publically or privately, depending on the student.

3.   Disengage and return to instruction. When you avoid reacting to a student's immediate comments and provide physical space, a power struggle becomes less likely.

4.   Return after a brief period of time either to a) acknowledge the student's good choices, or b) privately follow through with any instructional consequences.

Teaching students to self-manage their behaviour is an important priority for many schools. As part of its Social Responsibility focus, the **Richmond** school district in British Columbia uses a traffic light intervention to teach self management.

First, teach the common language: Richmond uses the Ministry of Education performance standards ratings as a framework for teaching a common language of expectations.

Level 1—Not Yet Meeting Expectations

Red light: *Stop Behaviour* (e.g. teasing a peer)
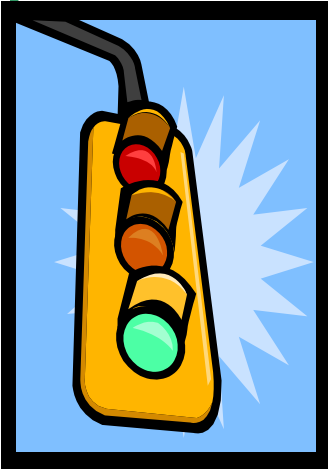
Level 2—Approaching Expectations

Yellow light: *Be Careful Behaviour* (e.g., talking during silent reading time)

Level 3—Meeting Expectations

Green light: *Go Behaviour* (e.g., following the teacher's directions)

Level 4—Exceeding Expectations

Blue ribbon: *Wow Behaviour* (e.g., offering to help clean-up after gym time)

Next, use the language to teach monitoring and self-management skills. After the common language of the school is established, it can be used to have students reflect on their behaviour and build self-management skills.

For example, if a student is observed talking to his peers during silent reading time, his teacher could ask, *"What colour/level do you think you are showing right now? What could you do to show green light behaviour?"*

For more information about Richmond's traffic light intervention, visit:

http://actrichmond.weebly.com

BULLY–PREVENTION IN POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT (BP–PBS)
Based on research by Good, McIntosh, & Gietz, 2011; Ross & Horner, 2009

Bullying involves repeated acts of aggression against a victim who is unable to defend him or herself, and is an unfortunate problem that is faced by school personnel. When bullying is identified as a problem in a school, a common response is to implement a stand–alone anti–bullying program, such as having a guest speaker at an assembly, or implementing a conflict resolution program. Unfortunately, research indicates that these stand–alone programs are generally ineffective (Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008).

A research validated bully–prevention curriculum (with elementary and middle school versions) integrates bullying prevention practices within the context of a school–wide positive behaviour support (BP–PBS). With **BP–PBS**, students are taught three steps to use in response to bullying behaviour, within the context of school–wide positive behaviour support.

Download the free BP-PBS manuals at http://www.pbis.org!

Stop: Teach students to use a "stop signal" that they can use when they witness peers being bullied or or are being bullied themselves. The stop signal could be a holding their hands up in a stop sign, or simply saying, "stop." Also make sure to teach students what to do if someone gives them a stop signal: stop what they are doing, take a deep breath, count to three, and go on with their day.

Walk: If the stop signal does not work, walking away from the problem is the next step. Teach students when walking away from the problem is appropriate. By walking away, students remove the attention the bully may be looking for.

Talk: If the stop signal and walking away have not stopped the bullying behaviour, teach students to talk to an adult. Make sure that students know the difference between 'talking' and 'tattling'. Make sure to emphasize that students should only talk to an adult after they have tried giving the stop signal and walking away.

School example: To address bullying in their school, **Ecole Central Middle School (CMS)** in Alberta implemented BP-PBS within a School-wide PBS (SWPBS) approach. After implementing SWPBS at the beginning of the 2007-2008 year, school personnel spent the rest of that year planning the implementation of BP-PBS. Students were included in each step of the planning process through the formation of a student SWPBS advisory committee. In addition, students took responsibility for presenting the program to other students!

Outcomes: The year after BP-PBS was implemented, the school found that office discipline referrals decreased by 41%. Teachers of students with special needs noticed that their students had clear strategies to use when faced with bullying.

The graph below shows staff responses to a year-end staff survey:

1. Have you noticed improved behaviours of students since we started [SWPBS]?

2. Do students know what the 3 behaviour expectations are?

3. Do you think the [SWPBS] lessons help students learn how to behave?
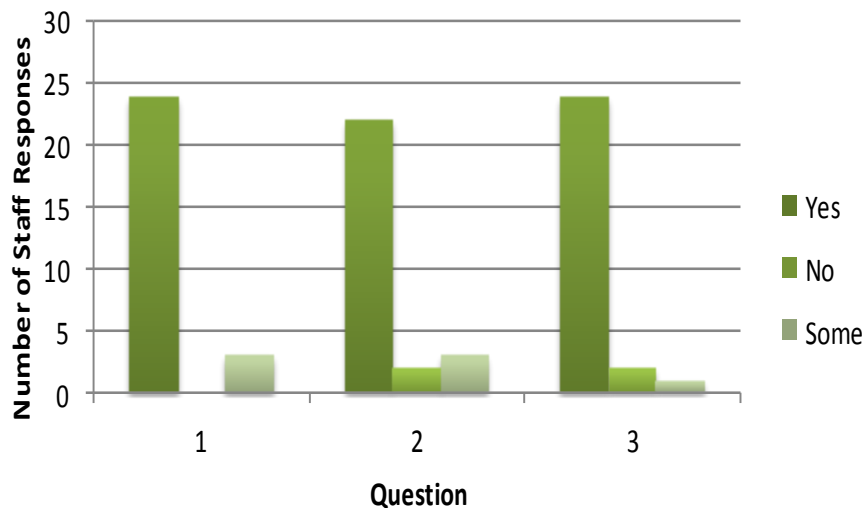
ENCOURAGING STUDENTS TO BE ROLE MODELS

If you are interested in involving students in your school who could be good role models for others, you may consider starting a Student Advocate group. Timberline Secondary, in Campbell River, British Columbia, created a group made up of students who were nominated by their peers. The school team gave students a survey asking them to nominate peers who they felt would most likely stand up for others being faced with verbal or physical bullying, peer pressure, social exclusion, or cyber–bullying. The same survey was given to school staff and the results were cross referenced with the student list. Through these steps, they ended up with a list of 48 students who they invited to take part in a **Student Advocate Pilot Project**. The student advocates attended a training workshop in Conflict Resolution and Mediation Skills training.

How do they know it's helping? One staff member said, *"September start up always has its rough spots as students try to see where they fit in as the new school year starts. During the 3rd week of school 2 students were in a conflict and many students surrounded them urging them to fight. One of our grade 12 student advocates happened by and stepped in between the 2 grade 9 boys and told them in no uncertain terms that this was not all right and had the crowd move on. Later the boys told me how relieved they were that he stepped in because neither really wanted to fight!"*

If you are interested in creating a student advocate group in your school:

1. Create a survey to send to all students and staff to have them nominate students who are most likely to stand up for others and be good student representatives.
2. Consider how you will train these students to provide them with skills to respond to inappropriate behaviour. Check out http://really.ubc.ca/resources/bystander–tips/ for tips and training options for teaching students to be 'active bystanders' – that is, someone who steps in to stop bullying behaviour or conflicts.
3. Facilitate regular Student Advocate meetings to provide your advocates with ongoing guidance and support.

Tips for Tomorrow

Tips for Tomorrow is a section for teachers that provides simple, practical, and low-cost resources to use … as soon as tomorrow!

Show Me Five

Timeouts are a common consequence strategy for student showing problem behaviour. Although this strategy can be effective (if it removes attention the student may be seeking), the timeout itself is not actually instructional, and may be a way for a student to 'get out of' doing a difficult task.

Show me Five is used in response to problem behaviour as an active and instructional timeout procedure. This strategy is used to help students identify "the right way" to do things.

Step 1   When a student is observed showing problem behaviour, direct the student to a designated time-out area.

Step 2   Have the student signal you when they are able to identify **five** students who are doing things the "right way." Ensure that the student provides specific examples of behaviours.

Step 3   Thank the student for providing you with examples of students doing things the right way, and allow the student to join in with the rest of the class.

Don't forget to review the expectations and Show Me Five procedures before implementing it in each setting!

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Promising Practices is a publication of the University of British Columbia, with support from the BC Representative of Children and Youth.

Our mission is to provide educators and parents with positive approaches that have been shown to work in creating positive school environments, preventing challenging behaviour and supporting students who are at risk for challenges.

We welcome your comments and ideas for future newsletter articles at:

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Visit us on the web and sign up for future issues at:

http://promisingpractices.research.educ.ubc.ca

To find out more about PBS in BC, including examples from BC schools, free downloadable materials, and info on the Making Connections Conference, visit

http://bcpbs.wordpress.com/

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

Is data a four-letter word in your school? Most of our experiences with data in our schools is frustrating, because it takes so long to collect and doesn't get used to improve things. Or worse, it gets misinterpreted and misused. In the next issue, we will show how the right kinds of data can be easy to collect and make a difference!