

Back to the Future

*Forgotten Behavioral Strategies Every
Teacher Should Know and Use*

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I. Premises

Behavioral strategies work

Despite popular press to the contrary (e.g., Kohn, 1993), behavioral procedures work well, and provide teachers with some of the most effective and humane instructional tools available. Indeed, some contend that teachers who do not implement what we know about our most effective treatments are falling short of their professional responsibility.

Proactive strategies are better than reactive strategies

It should go without saying that preventing behavior problems from occurring in the first place is easier than dealing with problems after they appear. Nonetheless, teachers often miss these preventive steps, which predictably lead to behavior problems.

Effective instructional routines rely on behavioral principles

There are many ways to teach, and lessons can take many forms. The most effective lessons for ensuring mastery of content while at the same time reducing the likelihood of behavior problems are based on simple behavioral principles.

‘Instructional behavior management’

Behavior management and instruction are not separate. The point is not to learn to put good teaching together with good behavior management. Instead, teachers should view sound instruction and all of its components as key elements of (a) ensuring learning, (b) reducing the incidence of behavior problems, and (c) providing a context for dealing with behavior problems that do occur.

II. Behavioral Strategies Defined

A. Reinforcement – behavior is strengthened

Positive reinforcement – behavior is strengthened by contingently applied (added) stimulus

Negative reinforcement – behavior is strengthened by contingently removed (subtracted) stimulus

Key ideas: *immediacy, consistency, contingency, fading/thinning, pairing social and tangible reinforcers, negative reinforcement trap*

B. Extinction – behavior is weakened when reinforcer is withheld or discontinued

Key ideas: *extinction burst, deciding when extinction is appropriate, deciding when extinction is possible, differential reinforcement ('praise & ignore')*

C. Punishment – behavior is weakened

Response cost punishment – part of earned reinforcer is removed contingent on occurrence of negative behavior

Application of aversives – aversive is applied contingent on occurrence of negative behavior ***extreme caution warranted***

Key ideas: response cost preferred, aversives are highly controversial and seldom appropriate

D. Time out – delivery of reinforcer is temporarily suspended contingent on occurrence of negative behavior

Key ideas: reinforcement must be occurring, non-exclusionary versus exclusionary, cautions in using

III. *Illustrations of Basic Procedures*

A. Praise

B. Ignoring

C. Soft reprimands

D. Response Cost

E. Modeling

IV. The Effective Lesson

Lesson Components

A. Gaining Attention

B. Review of Previous Learning

C. Statement of Lesson Objectives and Expectations

D. Model

E. Guided Practice

F. Independent Practice

G. Review and Re-teach

IV. The Effective Lesson (continued)

Lesson Characteristics

A. Rapid Pace

B. Questions

C. Prompting

D. Praise (reinforcement)

E. Corrective Feedback

F. Extinction

G. Differential Reinforcement

V. Putting it All Together – What does good teaching look like?

An effective lesson, start to finish

VI. Common Errors and Pitfalls

A. Inconsistency

B. Inappropriate expectations

C. Insufficient allowance for individuality

D. Inappropriate instruction

E. Misguided reinforcement and punishment

F. Undesirable models

VII. Take Home Messages

FOCUS ON:

A. Structuring lessons, classroom routines, and interactions

B. Knowing and using behavioral procedures

C. Tipping balance of interactions from negative to positive

D. Tipping balance of instruction from failure to success

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***Note. This list includes a combination of references that support the ideas presented in this workshop, and resources teachers may wish to consult to learn more about implementing sound instructional and management procedures. Those marked with an asterisk (*) are thought to be most useful to teachers for this latter purpose.**