

PREVENTATIVE APPROACHES: OVERVIEW

What is meant by preventative approaches?

Preventative approaches include anything a teacher implements to prevent undesirable behaviors. Instead of waiting for problem behaviors to occur, proactive techniques implemented successfully decrease the likelihood of problem behaviors and promote positive behavioral choices in the classroom. Many teachers are not proactive or prevention oriented, which logically results in an increase in behavior problems in their classrooms.

Why is it important to use preventative behavior management in the classroom?

Traditional approaches to managing problem behaviors have not been responsive to the behavioral and learning characteristics of students (Colvin, Kameenui, & Sugai, 1993). School settings have typically relied upon reactive behavior management techniques to attempt to decrease inappropriate and increase appropriate school behavior. Typical reactive techniques used in schools include teacher reprimands, office referrals, loss of privileges, detentions, suspensions, and expulsions. Use of these reactive techniques are imbedded in schools even though research does not support the use of such interventions and has even suggested that the use of these reactive techniques has a detrimental effect on student behavior.

On the other hand, preventative supports in the classroom has a growing body of research that support their use. They include a variety of proactive techniques and approaches that involve structuring the classroom environment to promote desirable behaviors, engagement in learning, and a positive classroom climate in which students understand expectations and can be successful both behaviorally and academically. By implementing these supports, teachers are more likely to be successful in increasing appropriate and decreasing inappropriate classroom behavior than exclusively relying on traditional reactive approaches.

What characteristics does an effective preventative approach include?

The literature discusses many different preventative and proactive techniques. Much of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports literature (PBIS) outlines countless ways to structure the learning environment to prevent problem behaviors. Effective proactive behavior management programs are responsive to individual and group behaviors for school interactions and participation (Carpenter, McKee-Higgins, 1996).

Table 1: Characteristics of Effective, Proactive Behavior Management Systems
Source: (Carpenter, McKee-Higgins, 1996)

Characteristic	Description
Use instructional techniques to develop desired behaviors	Approaches acquisition of behavioral skills similar to the way academic skills are taught. Provides students structured opportunities for students to learn and practice desirable behaviors.
Promote a positive climate to motivate students	Targets both teacher and student behaviors for intervention. Teacher structures classroom environment to facilitate productive work habits and positive interpersonal interactions.
Are dynamic and responsive to students' changing behavioral skills	Teachers adjust interventions in response to students' changing behaviors. Teachers respond to misbehaviors using a continuum of behavior management techniques that correspond to severity and importance of the problem.
Use collegial interactions to support teachers' use of effective procedures	Teachers utilize colleagues or consultants to assist them in developing an effective proactive plan. Outside observers tend to see the classroom through an objective eye, which can be crucial in developing a system for improving behavior.

References

- Carpenter, S.L. & McKee-Higgins, E. (1996). Behavior management in inclusive classrooms. *Remedial and Special Education, 17*, 195-203.
- Colvin, G., Kameenui, E.J., & Sugai, G. (1993). Reconceptualizing behavior management and school-wide discipline in general education. *Education and Treatment of Children, 16*, 361-381.

Additional Recommended Resources

- Colvin, G., Sugai, G., & Patching, B., (1993). Precorrection: An instructional approach for managing predictable problem behaviors. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 28*(3), 143-150.
- McEwan-Landau, B., Gathercoal, P. (2000). Creating peaceful classrooms: Judicious discipline and class meetings. *Phi Delta Kappan, 81* (6), 450-452, 454.