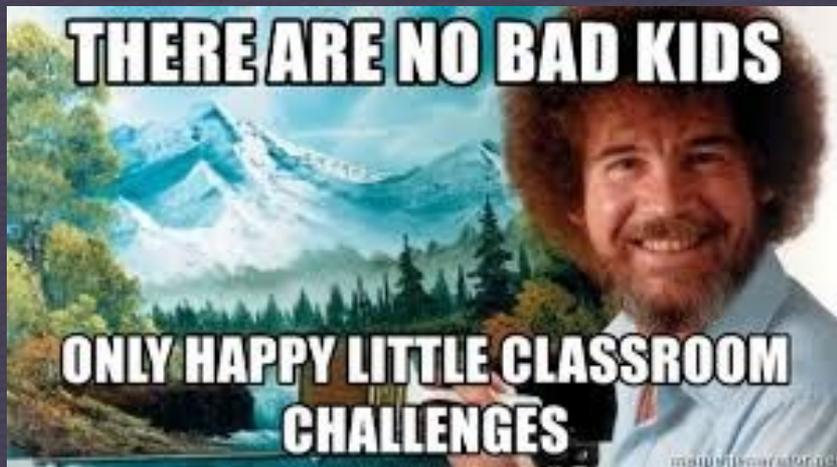


Proactive Strategies for Preventing and Managing Problem Behaviors



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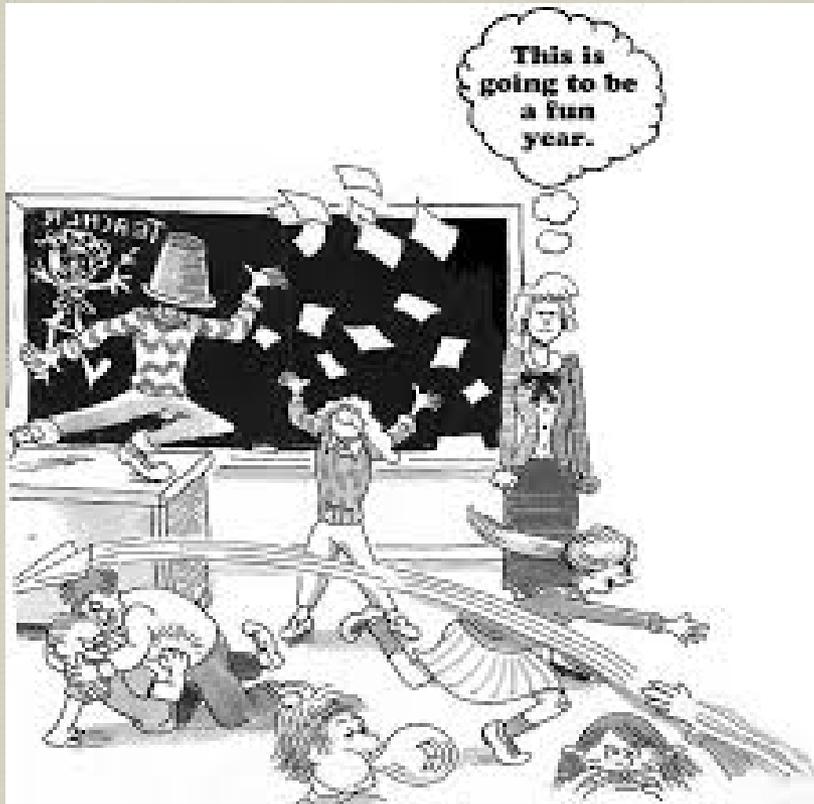
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My Background



Age Level	Subject	Classroom Setting	School Setting	Role
Elementary	English	General Education	Public	Teacher
Middle	Reading	Special Education	Charter	Coach
High School	Social Skills	Itinerant	Alternative	Administrator
	Math			Board Member
	Science			
	Social Studies			

My First Year Teaching...



Life as a Behavior Specialist: What I Thought I Would Do



Life as a Behavior Specialist: What I Really Did



What am I Doing Now?



Florida Gulf Coast
University



Five Proactive(ish) Strategies for Preventing and Managing Problem Behaviors



#1: Implementing Non-Contingent Reinforcement Procedures



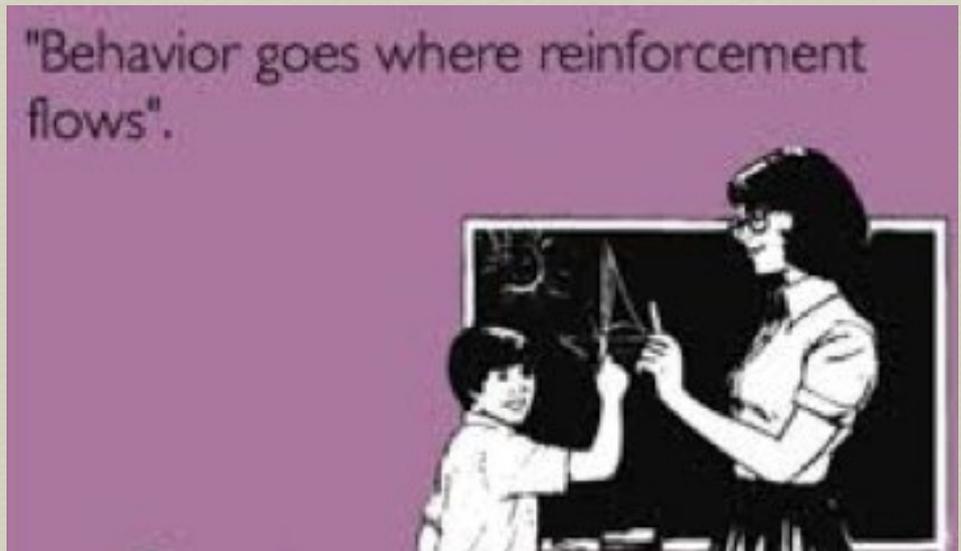
Student Behaviors Are Forms of Communication



What is a Behavioral Function?



- The source of reinforcement.
- What an individual accesses or avoids through his or her behavior.



Access to Tangibles

- Toys
- Tokens
- Cell Phones



Access to Attention

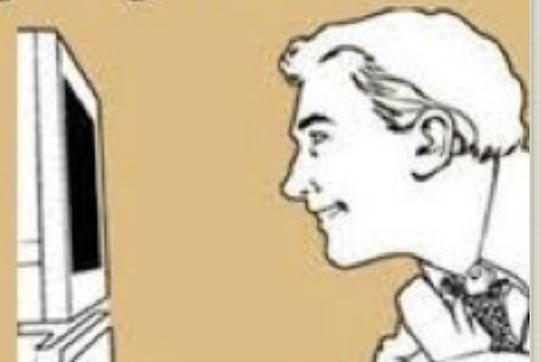
- Talking with Peers
- Calling out in Class
- Teasing and/or
“Stirring the Pot”



Escape/Avoidance of Non-Preferred Tasks and Activities

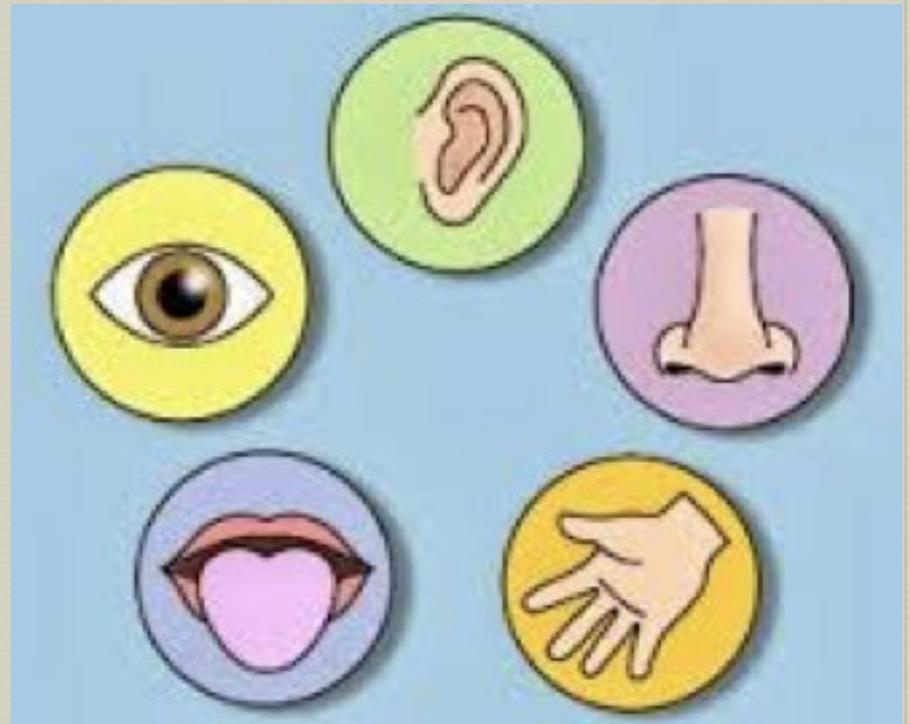
- Late to Class
- Bathroom Breaks, Sharpening Pencils, Frequent Trips to the Water Fountain, etc.
- Asking Frequent Questions

I'm very busy doing things I don't need to do in order to avoid doing anything I'm actually supposed to be doing.



Sensory (Automatic) Reinforcement

- Tapping Pencil or Finger
- Fidgets
- Singing and/or Humming



Multiple Functions



- Calling out in Class
- Late to Class
- Cursing/Inappropriate Language during Class



A Quick Recap

The four common functions of behavior:

"Everybody E.A.T.S."

Escape, Attention,
Tangible, Sensory

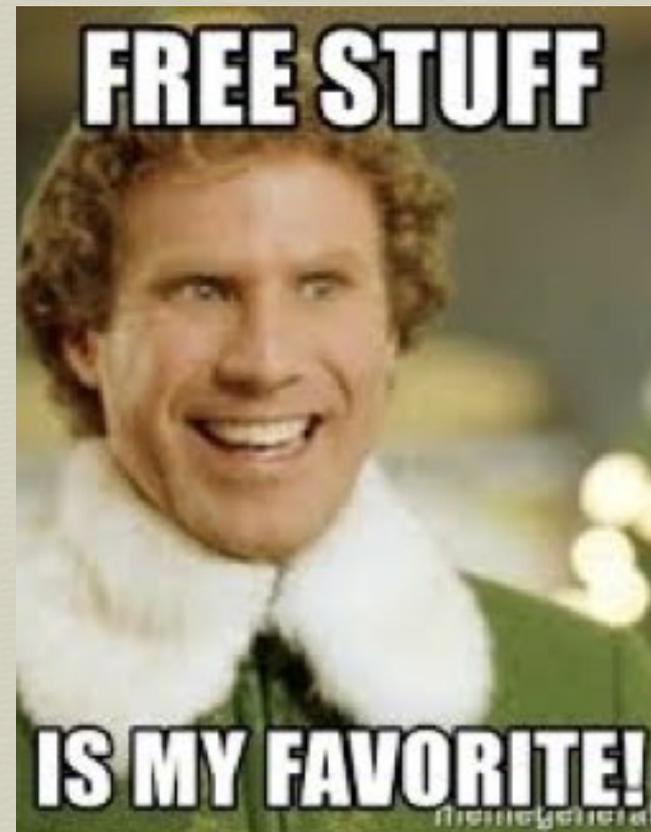


Functions of Student Behaviors

Function of Behavior	Description	Common Examples	Helpful Questions
Access to Tangibles	Student accesses an item or activity perceived by the student as desirable.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Running out of the classroom and into the computer lab in order to access a computer. 2) Taking out a cell phone in order to access an app or a video game. 	If the student has access to a preferred item or activity, does the problem behavior still occur? If no , access to tangibles is likely the function.
Access to Attention	Student accesses the attention of peers, adults, or both.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Calling out in class. 2) Talking to peers during instruction. 3) Using inappropriate language. 	If no students or adults were around, would the problem behavior still occur? If no , access to attention is likely the function.
Escape/Avoidance	Student either temporarily avoids non-preferred task or activity, or escapes non-preferred task or activity altogether.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Frequent trips to the pencil sharpener, restroom, or water fountain. 2) Arriving to class late. 3) Frequent requests to visit the school nurse. 	In the absence of a specific task or activity, does the problem behavior still occur? If no , escape/avoidance is likely the function.
Sensory (Automatic)	Maintained by a stimulus perceived as desirable by the student involving one of the five senses (taste, touch, smell, sound, or sight).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Cracking knuckles. 2) Whistling. 3) Humming. 4) Tapping pencil. 	If no students or adults were around, would the problem behavior still occur? If yes , sensory (automatic) reinforcement is likely the function.
Multiple Functions	Involve a combination of two or more of the functions above.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Student may be late to class in order to talk to friends in the hallway (attention) as well as temporarily avoid class work (escape/avoidance). 2) Student may crack their knuckles in class because it is self-soothing (sensory) as well as for the attention it provides from their peers (attention). 	Does student behavior consistently result in one of the four functions outlined above? If no , multiple functions are likely maintaining the behavior.

Noncontingent Reinforcement (NCR)

- Provide reinforcement independent of student behavior (Cooper et al., 2020).
- Reinforcement doesn't need to be earned and can't be lost.
- Schedule of reinforcement determined based on student data collection.



What Does NCR Look Like?



- **Access to Tangibles:** Provide access to preferred item frequently throughout the school day.
- **Access to Attention:** Provide frequent verbal praise or incorporate cooperative learning opportunities into lessons.
- **Escape/Avoidance of Non-Preferred Tasks/Activities:** Build brief activity breaks into your class/school day.
- **Sensory (Automatic) Reinforcement:** Provide students with access to sensory stimuli (fidgets, etc.), ignore sensory-seeking behaviors that do not impact student safety, learning, or social interaction.

Applying NCR Procedures with Cindy

Cindy engages in problem behaviors including biting, spitting at, and pulling the hair of her peers and teachers. She will also elope from the classroom and leave school property. Results of Cindy's most recent FBA hypothesize that these behaviors are maintained by adult attention and based on progress monitoring data, Cindy engages in these behaviors approximately every thirty minutes during the school day.

- **What is the function?**
- **Approximately how often are problem behaviors occurring?**
- **How often do we need to provide reinforcement?**
- **What does this reinforcement look like?**

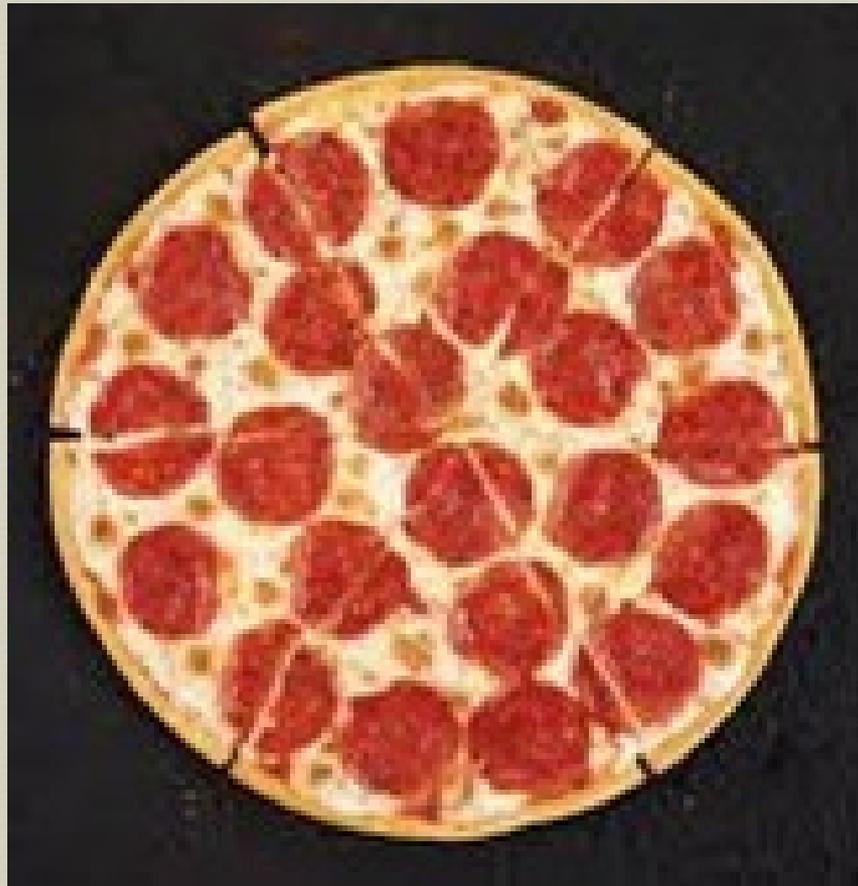
Checklist for Implementing Noncontingent Reinforcement within School Settings

NCR Implementation Steps	NCR Implementation with Cindy	Questions to Consider when Implementing NCR
Gather and review baseline data for the problem behavior.	Cindy engages in problem behaviors (biting, spitting at, and pulling the hair of her peers and teachers) approximately every 30 minutes.	Is baseline data based on objective and accurate data? If no , develop a data collection plan for obtaining this information. If yes , proceed to the next implementation step.
Determine initial rate of reinforcement to provide through NCR.	Cindy's team decides to implement NCR on a VI 20-minute schedule.	Will the initial rate of reinforcement provide student with access to reinforcement more frequently than the problem behavior? If no , revise the NCR schedule. If yes , proceed to the next implementation step.
Hypothesize function.	Based on a recent FBA, Cindy engages in problem behaviors (biting, spitting at, and pulling the hair of her peers and teachers) in order to access adult attention.	Is the hypothesized function linked to student's FBA? If no , revisit the student's FBA. If yes , proceed to the next implementation step.
Select reinforcer(s).	Cindy's team includes task-specific praise from Cindy's teacher, notes of encouragement from adults that work with Cindy, radio calls with preferred adults, check-ins from preferred adults, and passes to visit preferred adults as part of their NCR intervention.	Is reinforcer(s) linked to the function of the problem behavior? If no , choose a different reinforcer(s) that is linked to the function of the problem behavior. If yes , proceed to the next implementation step.
Continue monitoring occurrences of the problem behavior.	Cindy's attention-maintained problem behaviors (biting, spitting at, and pulling the hair of her peers and teachers) decrease by 40% two weeks after implementing NCR.	Are occurrences of the problem behavior decreasing? If no , revisit the steps above and meet as a team to determine if NCR procedures are consistently being implemented as intended. If yes , gradually fade the NCR reinforcement schedule and continue monitoring the occurrences of the problem behavior.

Implementation Tip #1: Establish Yourself as a Conditioned Reinforcer

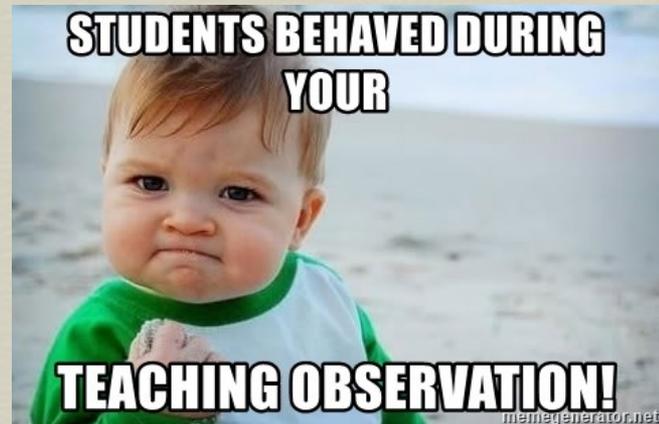


#2: Implementing Differential Reinforcement of Other Behavior (DRO) Procedures



Fixed and Variable Interval Reinforcement Schedules

- **Fixed Interval Schedule**
 - Involve the delivery of reinforcement after a set amount of time.
- **Variable Interval Schedule**
 - Involve the delivery of reinforcement after different amounts of time revolving around a specific average.



Extinction Defined

Extinction: The discontinuing of a reinforcer following a previously reinforced behavior.



What Does Extinction Look Like?

Tanya frequently says “you never call on me” when she is not called on after raising her hand (**access to attention**).

Steve frequently runs to the library during times when the star lab is set up (**access to tangibles**).

Maria frequently runs out of the classroom when presented with math or reading assignments (**escape/avoidance**).

Dan frequently dumps out pencils, folders, etc. in order to hear the sounds of these materials crashing to the floor (**sensory/automatic**).

Keep in Mind...

Extinction Burst:

Increase in behavior immediately after extinction procedure is implemented.

**WITHHOLDING REINFORCEMENT
FROM PREVIOUSLY
REINFORCED BEHAVIOR?!?**



Keep in Mind...

Spontaneous
Recovery: Sudden
return of problem
behavior despite
extinction procedure.



Questions to Ask Yourself Prior to Using Extinction

- Can I handle a temporary increase in the problem behavior?
- Can I ensure extinction is implemented consistently across settings?
- Will using extinction endanger the student or others in the school setting?



Differential Reinforcement Procedures

Differential Reinforcement Reinforcing
some behaviors but not others.



Differential Reinforcement to the Rescue!!!

- Put the target behavior on extinction.
- Reinforce the absence or reduction of a problem behavior, or a behavior(s) different from the problem behavior.



Fixed Interval Differential Reinforcement of Other Behavior (FI-DRO) Procedures



- Establish time intervals for data collection purposes (time intervals should initially be determined based on data collection related to the escalated behavior).
- Providing reinforcement contingent on the absence of the problem behavior during a time interval.
- Withholding reinforcement contingent on the occurrence of the problem behavior during a time interval.
- If problem behaviors do occur during a time interval, the time interval is discontinued, and a new time interval begins.

Applying DRO Procedures with Wendy

Instead of following her second-grade classroom schedule, Wendy frequently wanders around the classroom engaging in preferred tasks and activities. Specifically, tangibles Wendy frequently accesses include books, dolls, center items in her classroom, and items off of her teacher's desk such as figurines and stuffed animals. When tangibles listed above are taken away, Wendy engages in physically aggressive behaviors towards adults (primarily her classroom teacher) such as biting, scratching, hitting with a closed fist, kicking, and spitting. A recent FBA has determined that Wendy engages in the behaviors listed above to access tangibles. Wendy engages in physical aggression towards adults approximately every 15 minutes throughout the school day.

- **What is the function?**
- **Approximately how often are problem behaviors occurring?**
- **How often do we need to provide reinforcement?**
- **What does this reinforcement look like?**

Implementation Tip #2: Identifying and Responding to Precursor Behaviors



- **Precursor Behaviors** - Mild behaviors that typically precede more significant problem behaviors (Najdowski et al., 2008).
- Students often engage in different problem behaviors for the same reason.
- By responding to mild behaviors, we can more safely, more efficiently, and less restrictively address student problem behaviors.

Implementation Tip #2: Identifying and Responding to Precursor Behaviors



- **What Does Responding to Precursor Behaviors Look Like?** Scaffolding instruction, incorporating choice-making opportunities into daily instruction (e.g., allowing students to choose what reinforcer they can earn contingent on completing classroom assignments), and reminding students of reinforcement contingencies available in the classroom (e.g., DRO procedures; Colvin & Scott, 2015; Cooper et al., 2020).
- **What Did Responding to Precursor Behaviors Look Like with Wendy?** Prompts to view the timer on her desk, reminders that she will have her choice of preferred items and activities as soon as the timer beeps (contingent on physical aggression not occurring), frequent checks for understanding, instructional scaffolding and supports to ensure Wendy was successful with class assignments.

Differential Reinforcement of Other Behavior (DRO) Procedures for Preventing Escalated Student Behaviors

DRO Procedure	Description of the Procedure	Example Application of the Procedure	Reinforcement Schedule Used in Example Application
Fixed Interval DRO (FI-DRO)	Reinforcement is delivered contingent on the problem behavior not occurring within a set interval of time.	Student accesses reinforcement after participating in class for 15 minutes without hitting a peer or adult.	FI-DRO 15-Minute Schedule
Variable Interval DRO (VI-DRO)	Reinforcement is delivered contingent on the problem behavior not occurring within a variable interval of time that is based on a specific average.	Student accesses reinforcement after participating in class for approximately 15 minutes without hitting a peer or adult.	VI-DRO 15-Minute Schedule
Fixed-Momentary DRO (FM-DRO)	Reinforcement is delivered contingent on the problem behavior not occurring at the end of a set amount of time.	Student accesses reinforcement if, at the conclusion of a 15-minute time interval, the student is not engaging in property destruction (e.g., ripping bulletin board displays).	FM-DRO 15-Minute Schedule
Variable-Momentary DRO (VM-DRO)	Reinforcement is delivered contingent on the problem behavior not occurring at the end of a variable amount of time that is based on a specific average.	Student accesses reinforcement if, at the end of a time interval approximating 15 minutes, the student is not engaging in property destruction (e.g., ripping bulletin board displays).	VM-DRO 15-Minute Schedule

#3: Implementing Differential Reinforcement of Alternative Behavior (DRA) Procedures



Differential Reinforcement of Alternative Behavior (DRA) Procedures

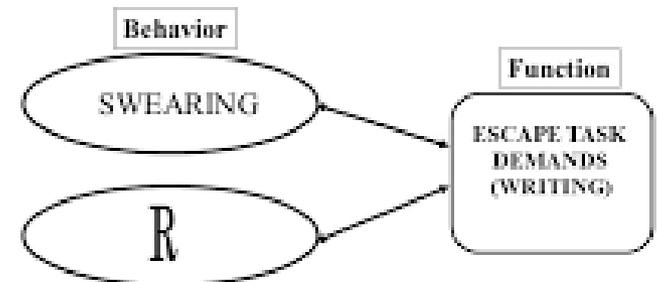


- Involves teaching and reinforcing socially acceptable alternatives to problem behaviors.
- By teaching and reinforcing alternative strategies students can use to access wants and needs within the school setting, educators can facilitate meaningful behavior change among their students by simultaneously reinforcing desired behaviors and withholding reinforcement contingent on occurrences of problem behaviors (Cooper et al., 2020).

Alternative Behaviors

- Meet the same function(s) as the problem behavior.
- Socially appropriate as determined by home and school stakeholders.
- Easier to demonstrate, or as easy to demonstrate, as the problem behavior.

REPLACEMENT BEHAVIOR

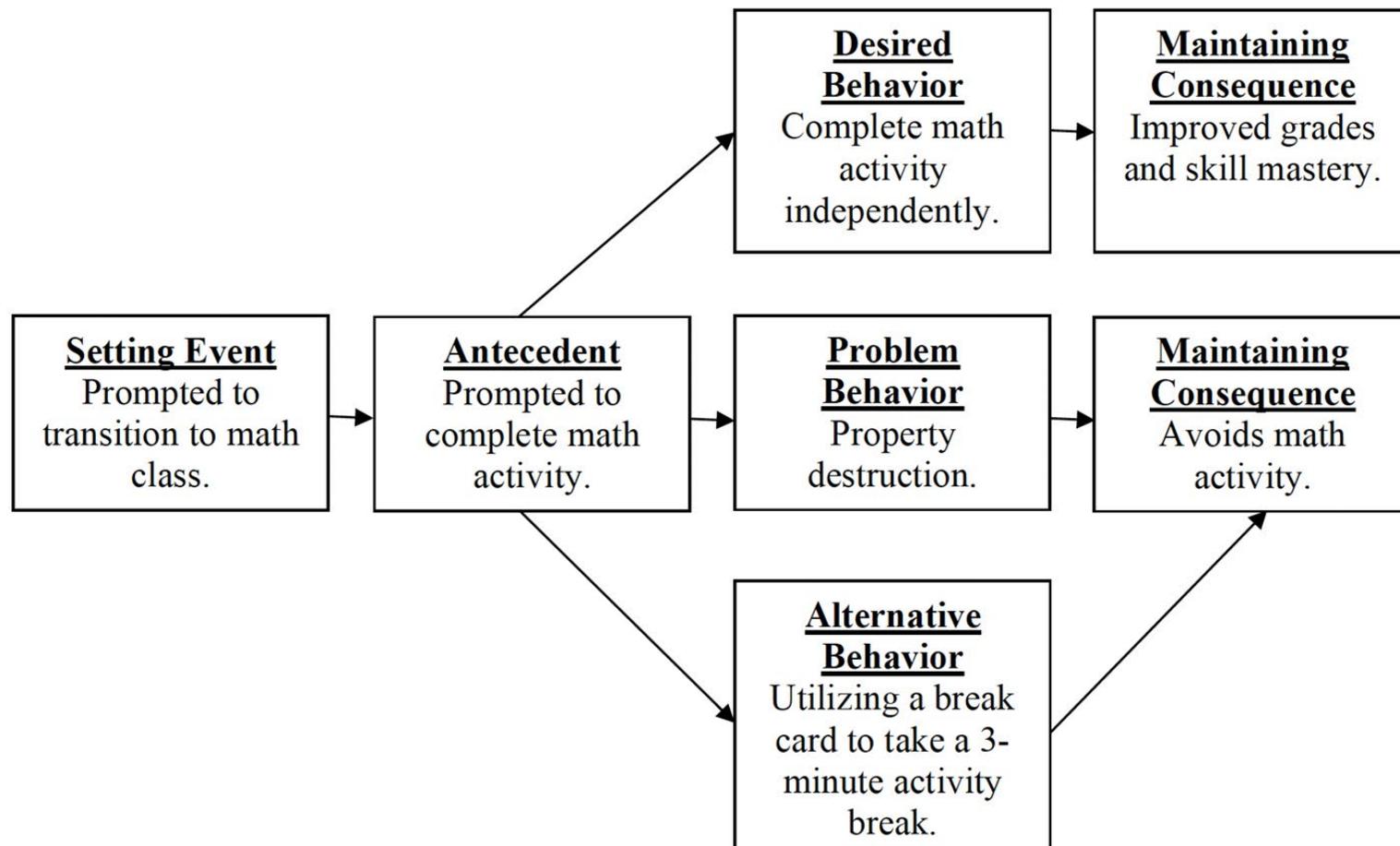


Applying DRA Procedures with Marcus

Marcus is a 5th-grade student who, based on a recent FBA, engages in escalated behaviors in order to avoid/escape non-preferred tasks and activities. For example, when Marcus is asked to engage in independent seat work during math class, Marcus engages in property destruction (e.g., throws computers and keyboards on the floor, flips over chairs and tables, rips down classroom bulletin boards).

- **What is the antecedent?**
- **What is the maintaining consequence/function?**
- **What is an alternative behavior we could teach and reinforce to support Marcus and his teacher?**

The Competing Behavior Pathway Model Used to Address Marcus' Property Destruction Behaviors



Adapted from O'Neill, R. E., Albin, R. W., Storey, K., & Horner, R. H. (2014). *Functional assessment and program development for problem behavior: A practical handbook*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing.

Robinson, J., Duncan, K., London, D., Gershwin, T., Trapp, L., & Shen, G. (Accepted). Prevention is the best intervention: Proactive strategies for supporting students who engage in escalated behaviors. Accepted by *Beyond Behavior*.

Implementation Tip #3: Present Alternative Behaviors as Initial Steps Toward Long-Term Behavior Goals

- It is possible that educators and students' family members may feel uncomfortable reinforcing alternative behaviors, believing that alternative behaviors involve lowering expectations for students that engage in escalated behaviors.
- Reinforcing occurrences of the alternative behavior is only temporary (O'Neill et al., 2014).
- As occurrences of problem behaviors decrease and occurrences of the alternative behavior increase, the team can gradually begin teaching and reinforcing behaviors that more closely resemble the desired behavior.

Desired Behaviors



- In a perfect world, what would the student be doing at a specific point in time or within a particular situation?

If we lived in a perfect world...

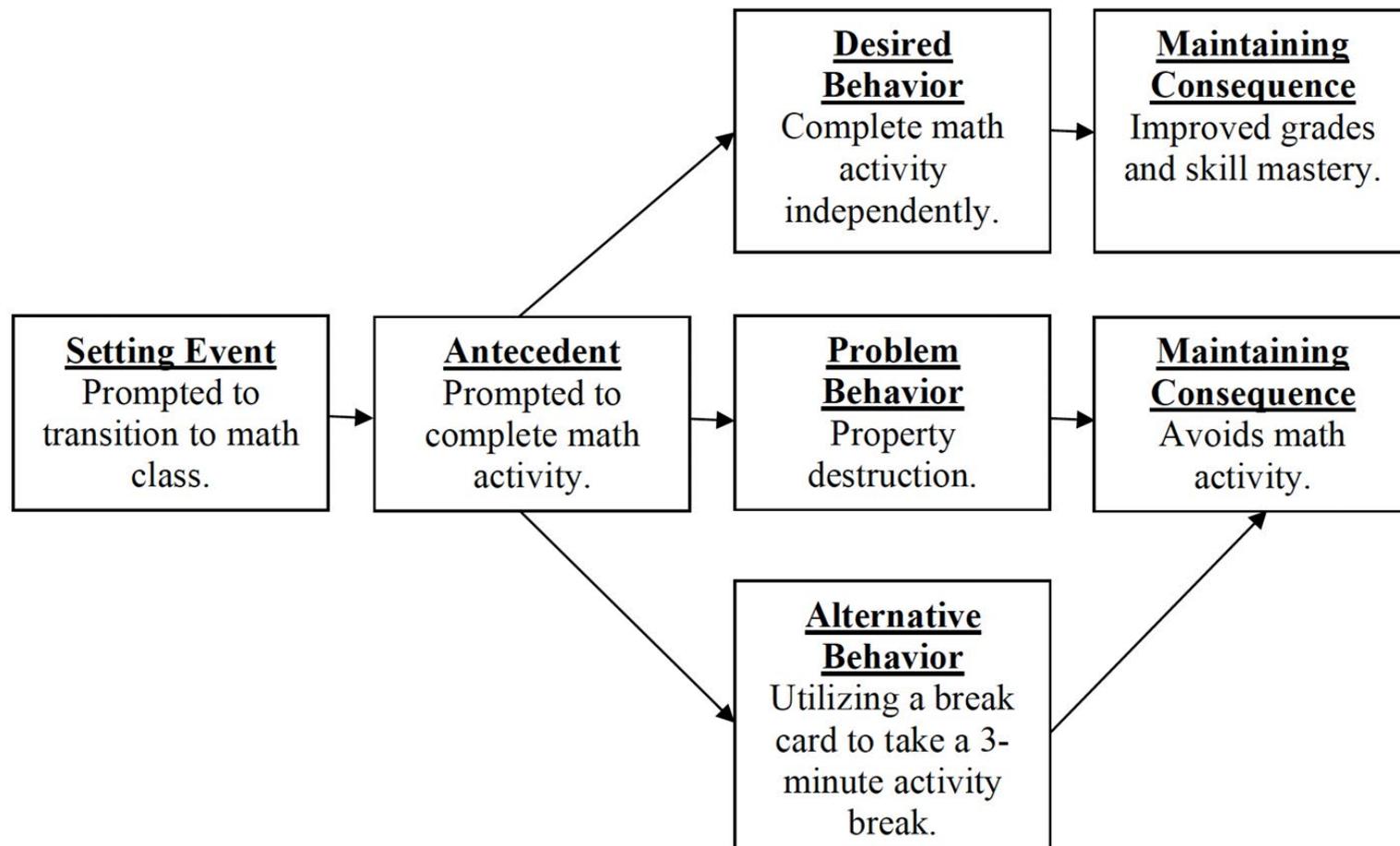


Consequences (of Desired Behaviors)

- What do we want our students to access/avoid by engaging in our desired behaviors?

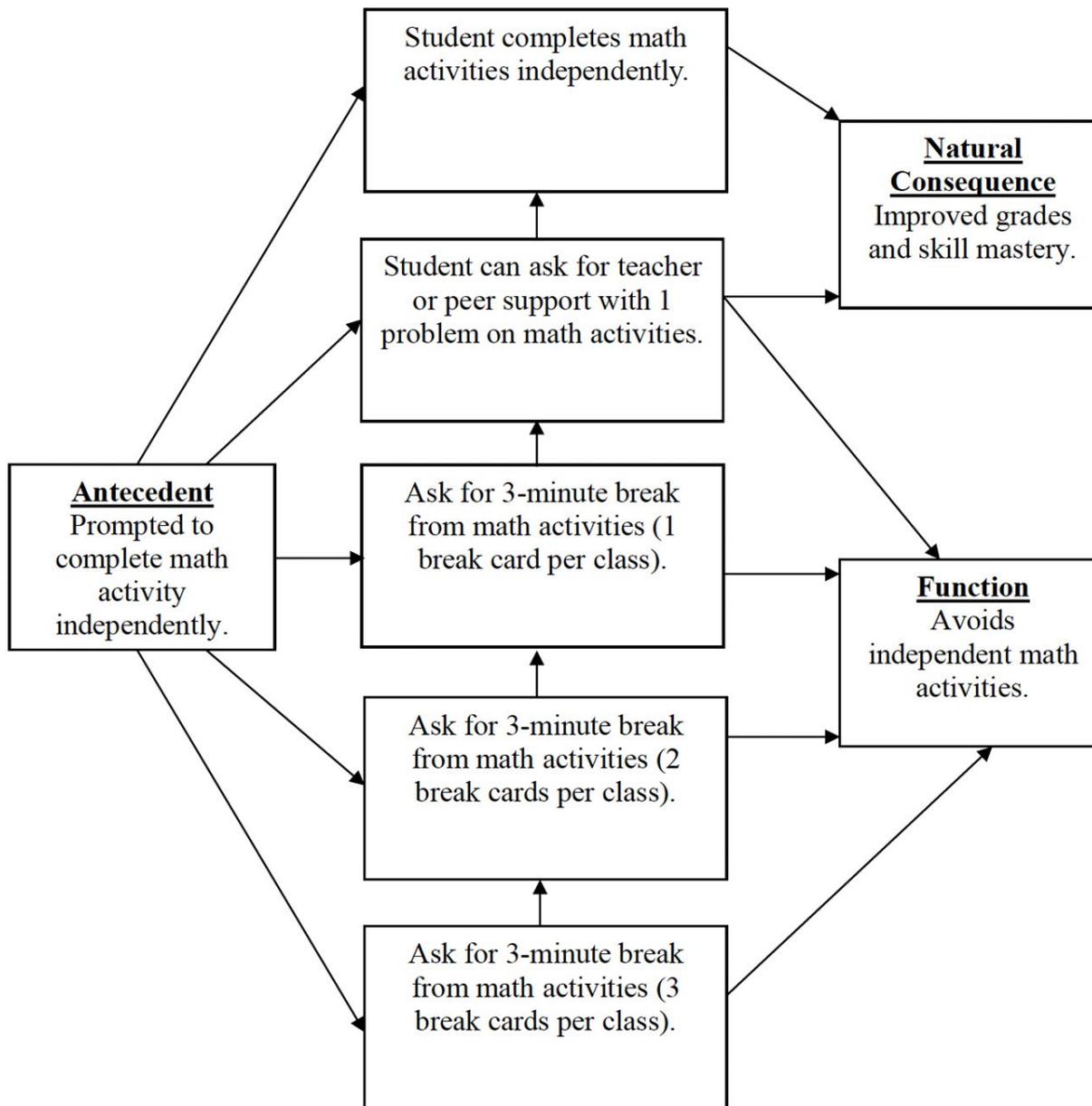


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Marcus' Plan for Progressing from the Alternative Behavior to the Desired Behavior

Robinson, J., Duncan, K., London, D., Gershwin, T., Trapp, L., & Shen, G. (Accepted). Prevention is the best intervention: Proactive strategies for supporting students who engage in escalated behaviors. Accepted by *Beyond Behavior*.

#4: Providing Students with Asymmetrical Choice-Making Opportunities



Asymmetrical Choice-Making Opportunities Explained

- High-value choice-making opportunities provided contingent on increased rates of expected behaviors, and/or decreased rates of problem behaviors (Rajaraman et al., 2022).
- Low-value choice-making opportunities provided with the goal of rendering escalated problem behaviors irrelevant and inefficient.
- Students and their family members should be actively involved in the conceptualization and monitoring of high-value and low-value choice-making opportunities.

Asymmetrical Choice-Making Opportunities with Emily



Emily is a second-grade student at James Elementary School who sometimes engages in physical aggression (e.g., kicking and throwing items at educators) when denied access to preferred items and activities within her inclusive classroom. In the past, when Emily has engaged in physical aggression, Emily's teacher would notify the school district behavior specialist and school principal. Upon entering the classroom, restraint procedures were frequently used to move Emily to the principal's office. Through data collection, the frequency of physical aggression occurrences have increased over the school year, as has the amount of time Emily has spent outside of her classroom.

Table 1

Checklist for Embedding Choices Into Students' Crisis Response Plans

Implementation Steps	Implementation with Emily	Questions to Consider when Implementing
Step 1: Hypothesize the function of the escalated student behavior.	Results of a recent FBA suggest Emily's physically aggressive behaviors are maintained by access to tangibles.	Is the hypothesized function of the escalated behavior based on the results of a recent FBA? If no , consult with the student support team to review the student's most recent FBA. If yes , proceed to the next implementation step.
Step 2: Collaboratively identify high-value and low-value reinforcers aligned with the function of the escalated student behavior.	Emily's team identifies high-value tangibles (e.g., police cars, fire trucks, Smart Board games, and puzzles) and low-value tangibles (e.g., drawing, coloring, and reading books about trains).	Are high-value reinforcers substantially more reinforcing than low-value reinforcers? If no , revise lists of high-value and low-value reinforcers. If yes , proceed to the next implementation step.
Step 3: Embed high and low-value reinforcers within asymmetrical choice-making opportunities.	If Emily meets the reinforcement criterion through the Good Behavior Game or her token board, then she receives a high-value choice between playing with police cars, fire trucks, Smart Board games, or puzzles. If requested or when prompted by an educator, Emily receives a low-value choice between drawing, coloring, or reading books at her seat.	Can educators consistently implement these reinforcement contingencies? If no , revisit choices to ensure consistency. If yes , proceed to the next implementation step.
Step 4: Implement choice-making procedures and monitor occurrences of the escalated behavior.	Occurrences of kicking and throwing items at educators in the classroom decreased by 40% two weeks after embedding choice-making into Emily's crisis response plan.	Are occurrences of the escalated behavior decreasing? If no , revisit the steps above and meet as a team to determine if choice-making procedures are consistently being implemented as intended. If yes , continue implementing the plan and monitoring student progress.

Five: Prioritizing De-Escalating Over Re-Escalating Teacher Actions

Table 2

Examples of Teacher Actions Serving as De-Escalators and Re-Escalators When Responding to Escalated Student Behaviors

Components of Authentic, Compassionate, Non-punitive Verbal Support	De-Escalators (Actions Likely to Decrease Student Agitation)	Re-Escalators (Actions Likely to Decrease Student Agitation)
Teacher Body Language	The teacher keeps their arms to their sides if standing next to the student, or keeps their hands on the table if sitting next to the student.	The teacher keeps their hands on their hips if standing next to the student, or keeps their arms crossed if sitting next to the student.
Teacher Proximity to Student	The teacher stands within one to three feet of the student, who is also standing, or sits within one to three feet of the student, who is also sitting.	The teacher stands over the student, who is seated in close proximity; the teacher places their hand on the student to direct the student back to their seat.
Teacher Conversational Pace, Tone, and Voice Volume	The teacher maintains the same conversational pace, tone, and voice volume during crisis situations and non-crisis situations.	The teacher talks faster than their typical conversational pace and raises their voice above their typical conversational volume during crisis situations.
Teacher-Initiated Questions	The teacher asks questions such as, “How are you feeling right now?” or, “What can I do to help you right now?”	The teacher asks questions such as, “What gives you the right to destroy other students’ property?” or, “Why are you always so disrespectful?”
Teacher Responses to Student Questions/Comments	The teacher paraphrases student questions to check for understanding prior to responding, or validates students’ feelings through comments such as, “Wow, it sounds like you are really feeling overwhelmed right now.”	The teacher characterizes student comments as “excuses for poor behavior,” or ignores student questions in retaliation for the student disrupting their class.

Thank You!!!



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www.youtube.com/@SchoolBehaviorTalk