

Progressive Response to Classroom Problem Behavior

PROMPT Method

Teachers are constantly in search of methods to respond to problem behavior when it happens to get the student back on track. The PROMPT method is just that—a systematic method of progressively and systematically responding to problem behavior. The aim is to begin with less intrusive and intensive tactics and progressively use more intrusive and intensive tactics to respond to and correct the problem behavior.

Proximity control

Involves actually standing near the student to correct behavior. For many problem behaviors, the first step before getting involved in a verbal interaction with the student should be to stand next to the student or students who are beginning to engage in off-task, disruptive behavior. The teacher or paraprofessionals presence is often enough to correct problem behavior. Proximity control also involves being mobile and moving about the classroom, which requires students to be alert in order to track and pay attention to the speaker. The idea behind proximity control is to “teach like the floor is on fire.” This means to not stand in one place too long or one’s feet would burn. Rather, the attentive and aware teacher or paraprofessional is moving around the room and scanning for the earliest warning signs of problem behavior. When problem behavior is observed, proximity control is used.

Redirection

Involves actually asking the student to do something. The aim here is to regain instructional control over the student. If the student complies with your request, then the student is now under your instructional control and it stops the inappropriate behavior in an attempt to redirect to appropriate behavior. Examples of redirection tactics include:

Ongoing Monitoring to shape behavior

Involves keeping an eye on the student to catch the student behaving good. Teachers and paraprofessionals often miss opportunities to reinforce and praise appropriate behavior after issuing a redirection or using proximity control. After using either of these tactics, the teacher should pay close attention to the student, and at the first signs of good behavior, the teacher should be ready to reinforce (e.g., give points) and praise the student (e.g., “I really appreciate you getting your book out. Thanks a lot!”). By engaging in ongoing monitoring to shape behavior, you will be able to help establish momentum for on-task, compliant behavior instead of the problem behavior. This is also called ‘catch the student behaving good.’ When a teacher engages in ongoing monitor of the student to shape their behavior to be better in the class, the student is more likely to alter his behavior from inappropriate to appropriate behavior.

Prompt

Involves providing a direct, explicit, and concise command to the student about what he or she should be doing instead of the problem behavior. Often teachers and/or parents provide commands that are phrased as a question or involve

ambiguous language. These commands are often ineffective and do not result in behavior change. An effective command that is delivered as a prompt tells the student precisely the behavior you want him to exhibit instead of the problem behavior. For example, if one observed a student talking out

Teaching Interaction

The teaching interaction is a standardized method of addressing problem behavior that did not respond to lesser corrective tactics. As a result, the teacher or paraprofessional must now teach to the problem behavior in a structured and systematic way. A teaching interaction treats the presence of chronic problem behavior as an opportunity for the student to learn appropriate, desired behavior.

- **EMPATHY STATEMENT & LABEL THE INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR:** Describe the problem behavior of concern followed by an empathy statement (e.g., John, you just took Billy's pencil, I could imagine that you really needed one and some time we want what we don't have)
- **LABEL ALTERNATIVE, APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR:** Describe the alternative, acceptable behavior (e.g., What you should have done instead is ask to use the pencil; then wait for a response)
- **RATIONALE:** Give a reason why the alternative behavior is better (e.g., Asking to use something before taking it is better because people are more likely to respect us in return)
- **CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING:** Ask for acknowledgement (Do you understand?), this is partially to gain compliance and see if the student is willing to cooperate
- **DISCIPLINE CONSEQUENCE:** Deliver the consequence (Because you took his pencil without asking, I want you to put down "taking pencil without asking on your point sheet" and subtract 5 points)
- **RETRIBUTION:** Deliver praise and points back if the student accepted the consequence (John, because you accepted the consequence well, you can earn 250 points back. I'm really proud of you for accepting without arguing)

Note: If the problem behavior did not respond to this progressive sequence, then the student will earn access to the boring room or removal from the classroom. Also, if the student engaged in dangerous behavior or another zero out behavior, a teaching interaction should be used and the boring room should be the consequence.