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Effective Behaviour Management for Students with LDs and Behavioural Disorders

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Effective Behaviour Management for Students with LDs and Behavioural Disorders

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This article is an adaptation of a book on behaviour management. To find out more on this subject, please refer to S. Bissonnette, C.

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Gauthier and M. Castonguay, L'enseignement explicite des comportements. Pour une gestion efficace des élèves en classe et dans l'école (Montréal, Canada, Chenelière Éducation), 2016.

Steve Bissonnette, Ph.D., TELUQ University & Clermont Gauthier, Ph.D., Laval University

Introduction

Behavioural disorders, particularly those of the externalized type[1], and learning disabilities often occur together. Indeed, the comorbidity between these two types of disorders in students was identified more than 20 years ago (Hinshaw, 1992). More specifically, empirical studies have shown that 75% of students with learning disabilities also lack social skills (Lane, Gresham, & O'Shaughnessy, 2002; National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, 2008). Conversely, more than 80% of students with a behavioural disorder also have a reading disability (Nelson, Benner, Lane, & Smith, 2004; Vannest & Harrison, 2008). In addition, these dual disorders can appear in students with learning difficulties from the first year of their attendance in elementary school (Morgan, Farkas, Tufis, & Sperling, 2008).

Consequently, teaching students with learning difficulties requires that both the effective teaching of content (Gauthier, Bissonnette, Richard & Castonguay, 2013) and behaviour management be taken into consideration. This article addresses only the topic of effective student behaviour management at the preschool, elementary and secondary levels. This article begins by defining the concept of effective behaviour management and then discusses a few preventative and corrective interventions, based on related evidence.

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A Definition of Effective Behaviour Management

Effectively managing student behaviour means “*using a set of educational practices and strategies, on one hand, to prevent and effectively manage inappropriate behaviour and, on the other hand, creating and maintaining an environment that promotes both teaching and learning.*” (Bissonnette, Gauthier and Castonguay, 2016, p. 51) (Unofficial Translation). Thus, effective behaviour management entails two types of interventions: preventative or proactive interventions and remedial or corrective interventions. Essentially, proactive interventions aim to create an environment conducive to teaching, learning and the prevention of inappropriate behaviour. Preventative interventions encourage the development of appropriate behaviours, whereas remedial or corrective interventions are to be used when students are engaging in inappropriate behaviours.

Research over the last forty years has demonstrated that teachers who manage their classroom effectively carry out more preventative interventions than their colleagues (Bissonnette *et al.*, 2016; Kounin, 1970; Knoster, 2008; Missouri Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support, 2012). Thus, effective teachers intervene before problems arise. Conversely, teachers who have a hard time managing student behaviour tend to intervene too late or not at all. These teachers intervene in response to problem behaviours instead of preventing them.

As illustrated in the figure below, behaviour management can be considered as a system of gears: preventative (or proactive) interventions and corrective (or remedial) interventions. First of all, teachers must carry out preventative interventions that encourage students to develop positive behaviours, but, afterwards, they must carry out corrective interventions in



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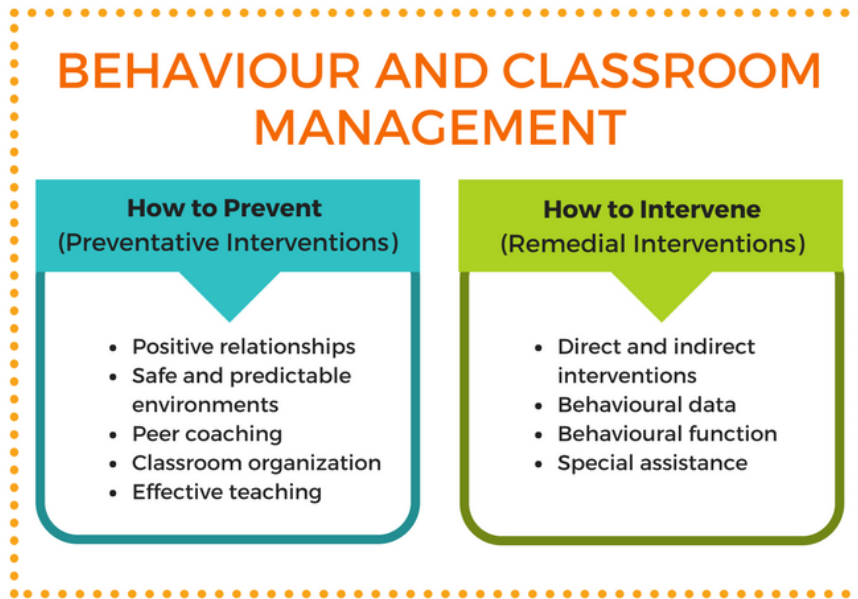
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response to inappropriate behaviours. These two types of interventions are necessary and complementary: if one of the gears is not turning in the right direction, the entire mechanism of behaviour management will be affected.

Figure 1 - Behaviour and Classroom Management

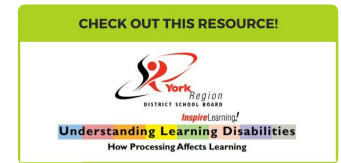


Preventative Interventions

In managing behaviour, teachers should primarily focus on prevention. Knoster (2008) discusses the 80/20 rule to illustrate the fact that 80% of teacher interventions should initially be preventative, and then 20% of interventions should be corrective. In order to manage behaviours using a preventative approach (Evertson et coll., 2005; Knoster, 2008; Kounin, 1970; MSPBS, 2012), teachers must:

1. Build a positive relationship with their students;
2. Create a safe, orderly, predictable and positive environment;
3. Coach and supervise their students on a continual basis;
4. Organize their classroom;
5. Use effective teaching strategies.

Waterfall chart, so be sure to download your own copy on our site! bit.ly/2le7SOa



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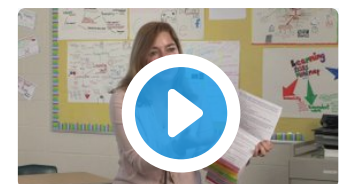


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Each of these interventions corresponds to a set of strategies and means. The latter are practical actions that teachers must carry out daily to encourage the development of appropriate behaviours and to prevent inappropriate behaviours. The following paragraphs present some of these preventative strategies and corrective interventions.

Building a Good Relationship with Students

Building a positive relationship with students may seem obvious, but it is not necessarily easy to do with all of them. For teachers, maintaining a good relationship with their students is different from interacting with close friends in their everyday life. At work, we do not choose the people with whom we interact. With some students, teachers can make a natural connection, while it is harder to do this with other students. However, establishing a good relationship with students is an essential component of effective classroom management. This is why teachers must be familiar with appropriate strategies for managing their classroom: e.g., having high but realistic expectations for all students, greeting them when they enter the classroom, listening to them, showing them empathy, being interested in them, interacting with each student, etc.

Creating a Safe, Orderly, Predictable and Positive Environment

In order to create such an environment, teachers must have clear expectations for all of their students, including those with learning disabilities (LDs). Setting expectations consists of creating behavioural standards for the classroom and ensuring the development of appropriate student behaviours. It does not consist of making an endless list of things *not to do*, e.g., boundaries *not to cross*. Rather, it is a matter of focusing on 3 to 5 values (e.g., being respectful, being responsible, etc.) and defining them in practical terms through specific behaviours in

the context of daily classroom life. This exercise leads to a model that provides students with a type of roadmap, or behavioural map, giving them specific information about how to act. The desired target behaviours are not only named, they are also explicitly taught through modeling and guided practices. Identifying desired values and making them concrete through specific behaviours to adopt in the classroom creates a high level of predictability that helps students realize that they have some power over their own behaviour in the classroom (development of self-regulation). This model can also serve as radar for teachers, allowing them to identify and reinforce good behaviours that meet their expectations as well as classroom expectations.

Coaching and Supervising Their Students on a Continual Basis

The ability to effectively supervise and coach student behaviour is one of the best ways to prevent discipline problems from developing in both the classroom and within the school (Boynton & Boynton, 2009; Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008). Various strategies allow teachers to provide effective coaching and supervision of students: periodically reviewing rules and expectations (pre-correction), constantly supervising students (regularly scanning the classroom), moving around the classroom (occupying the whole space), and quickly dealing with problems.

Organizing the Classroom

A well-organized classroom is a structured environment where a minimum amount of time is wasted and a maximum amount of time is devoted to teaching and learning; during unstructured moments, when time is wasted, students tend to start misbehaving. Evertson and her collaborators (2005) propose various strategies to ensure that the classroom is organized optimally: assigning seats to students at the

beginning of the year, arranging the furniture so that all students can easily see the teacher, handing out and collecting teaching materials in an orderly fashion, and explicitly teaching this routine. Having an organized classroom provides structure for all students and especially those with LDs and weak organizational skills.

Using Effective Teaching Strategies

A teacher's goal should not be just to create a classroom that is organized and peaceful. Above all, the classroom should be a place where students can and will learn! This is where behaviour management and learning management meet. Activities that are well planned and delivered encourage students to be involved and engaged in their task, which in itself will reduce potential classroom management problems. Research on teaching, in particular teaching core subjects to students with learning difficulties, has yielded robust and convergent results. Indeed, the results of several meta-analysis grouped within mega-analysis have shown the positive outcomes associated with explicit and reciprocal teaching methods (Bissonnette, Richard, Gauthier and Bouchard, 2010; Gauthier *et al.*, 2013; Hattie, 2009, 2015).

Corrective Interventions

Even though preventative interventions should be prioritized, it is also necessary to use corrective interventions with students who demonstrate inappropriate behaviours (Marzano, 2003). Firstly, a distinction should be made between minor and major behavioural concerns.

A minor behavioural concern is a failure to meet previously taught behavioural expectations:

- that does not interfere with the functioning of the class nor with the students' learning,
- but that is disruptive for the student demonstrating inappropriate behaviour or a few students around him/her.

A major behavioural concern is either:

- a failure to meet previously taught behavioural expectations that interferes with the functioning of the class and with teaching, and consequently, with other students' learning;
- a dangerous, unlawful or illegal behaviour (violence, bullying, drug-related behaviour, theft, etc.);
- a minor behavioural concern that persists in spite of various interventions.

For an intervention to be effective, it is necessary to determine with the school team what constitutes a major behavioural concern because, in the event of such behaviour, the student must be removed from the classroom as his/her behaviour interferes with teaching and with other students' learning (MSPBS, 2012). Consider the following:

... an effective school is a school that has established a clear policy regarding the management of major misbehaviours. In such schools, the teachers can adequately manage student behaviours, as the reasons for which a student must be removed from his/her learning environment have been specifically defined. The lack of such a policy leaves room for all sorts of interpretations associated with each teacher's perceptions. (Unofficial Translation) (Bissonnette et al., 2016, pp. 101-102)

For minor behavioural concerns, teachers can begin by using indirect interventions, such as using proximity control, giving non-verbal instructions, intentionally ignoring the behaviour, and providing differentiated reinforcement, etc. If the behaviour persists, they can use direct interventions, such as redirecting the student, teaching the expected behaviour one more time, give the student choices, using formative consequences, meeting with the student individually, etc.

In the event of major disruptive behaviours, the teacher may need to consult with the school-based support team (psychologist, special education resource teacher, etc.), the principal and parents to develop a behaviour plan.^[2] For instance, the team can systematically observe the student who is causing a disturbance in order to gather behavioural data on the student's appropriate and inappropriate behaviours in various situations, in order to formulate hypotheses as to what the student is trying to obtain or avoid through reprehensible conduct and to adapt the intervention accordingly (behavioural function, MSPBS, 2012). In developing a behaviour plan, students should be aware of the positive and negative consequences of their behaviours and choices.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the use of corrective interventions is based on the previous use of preventative interventions. In fact, students will more easily accept a consequence for their inappropriate behaviour if their teacher has built a positive relationship with them and when they are aware of the consequences. Consequently, the effectiveness of corrective interventions is strongly influenced by the implementation of preventative interventions.

Effective behaviour management must be understood as a system of gears combining applicable preventative and corrective interventions, both at the classroom and school levels.

Ideally, effective interventions should help to provide effective teaching for all students!

Notes

[1] An individual who exhibits **externalizing behaviors** engages in **behaviors** that harm others as opposed to engaging in self-injurious or **internalizing behaviors**. **Externalizing behaviors** include physical aggression, verbal bullying, aggression, defiance, theft and vandalism.

[2] Note: in Ontario, it is the responsibility of each school board to develop protocols on dealing with students who demonstrate disruptive, aggressive or violent behaviours. Please refer to the Related Resources section of this article to access information on safe schools.

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Related Resources on the LD@school Website

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Related Resources on the Internet

[Click here to access various documents from the Ontario Ministry of Education related to "Safe and Accepting Schools".](#)

[Click here to access the Ontario Safe Schools Act, 2000, S.O. 2000, c. 12 - Bill 81.](#)



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