

Better Behaviour Better Learning  
**Essential Skills** for  
Classroom **Management**

# Core learning component



## Message from the Minister

The Better Behaviour Better Learning (BBBL) initiatives were introduced in 2006 to assist Queensland state schools to provide safe, supportive and disciplined learning environments which promote high standards of achievement and responsible behaviour in all students.

We are building on these initiatives in 2007 with three new, complementary professional development packages:

- BBBL Online course
- BBBL Professional Development Suite of modules
- Essential Skills for Classroom Management.

These initiatives reinforce the expectations, principles and standards in the Code of School Behaviour, which emphasises the close relationship between learning, achievement and behaviour.

The Essential Skills for Classroom Management package outlines the minimum standards required for effective classroom management.

It will be delivered by trained facilitators and contains a core knowledge component and coaching sessions which underpin the skills necessary for effective application in the classroom.

I encourage all staff to take advantage of the opportunities for professional development which this new resource offers.



Rod Welford  
Minister for Education and Training, and the Arts

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## Introduction

For over a decade the 'micro-skills' described in the *Behaviour Management Skill Training Handbook* (Queensland Department of Education, 1996) have been used in Queensland schools to help teachers develop effective behaviour management strategies. The original program was designed by Christine Richmond (Senior Guidance Officer, Behaviour Management) with the assistance of a team in the Logan-Beaudesert District.

The effectiveness of using micro-skills for managing behaviour, which leads to more time spent teaching and learning, has been validated by the informed practice of numerous teachers across the state.

In 2006, the Handbook was revised and extended by Paul Leitch (Logan-Albert Beaudesert Behaviour Advisory Team), with 10 Essential Skills defined and explained as essential for good classroom management. Facilitator's notes have been added along with a section on the application of skills via facilitated, small group coaching sessions. These skills are considered to be a minimum standard of teacher practice for classroom management.

The Essential Skills Core Learning Component is part of the Essential Skills for Classroom Management package; a three-hour course covering the following key elements of behaviour management:

- setting clear expectations
- timely acknowledgment
- appropriate correction.

Five one-hour follow up coaching sessions reinforce the core learning and develop skills.

Applying these skills allows for individual teaching styles while fostering responsible behaviour and improved learning outcomes.

The Essential Skills Core Learning Component emphasises teacher's language, both verbal and non-verbal to focus students' attention, as well as the importance of positive teacher-student relationships developed through the learning process.

This Essential Skills package complements the Better Behaviour Better Learning Professional Development Suite and the Better Behaviour Better Learning Online Course. Together, these three new resources have been developed to build knowledge and skills for teachers by providing flexible access to a broad range of theory and practice.

Education Queensland commends this package to you and trusts that it will significantly enhance your ongoing professional learning.

## Essential Skills in context

Essential Skills in classroom management are not a substitute for well-planned, innovative and engaging curriculum. Fry and Long explain that, ‘the mere use of exciting classroom materials and activities is not the answer to behaviour problems in classrooms’ (cited in MACER 2005, p 14). ‘If teachers cannot obtain student cooperation to proceed with instruction, then it is most unlikely that teaching of any level of effectiveness will ensue’ (MACER 2005, p 14).

Behaviour management fits within a broad educational context. To specifically address student learning needs, teachers must understand behavioural development as well as the range of cognitive and physical differences that influence student learning styles and abilities. When students are provided with relevant curriculum and tasks that allow them to succeed, the need for management conversations in classrooms is reduced.

The 10 Essential Skills for Classroom Management are:

Essential Skill	Description
1. Establishing expectations	Making rules
2. Giving instructions	Telling students what to do
3. Waiting and scanning	Stopping to assess what is happening
4. Cueing with parallel acknowledgment	Praising a particular student to prompt others
5. Body language encouraging	Smiling, nodding, gesturing and moving near
6. Descriptive encouraging	Praise describing behaviour
7. Selective attending	Not obviously reacting to some bad behaviour
8. Redirecting to the learning	Prompting on-task behaviour
9. Giving a choice	Describing the student’s options and likely consequences of their behaviour
10. Following through	Doing what you said you would

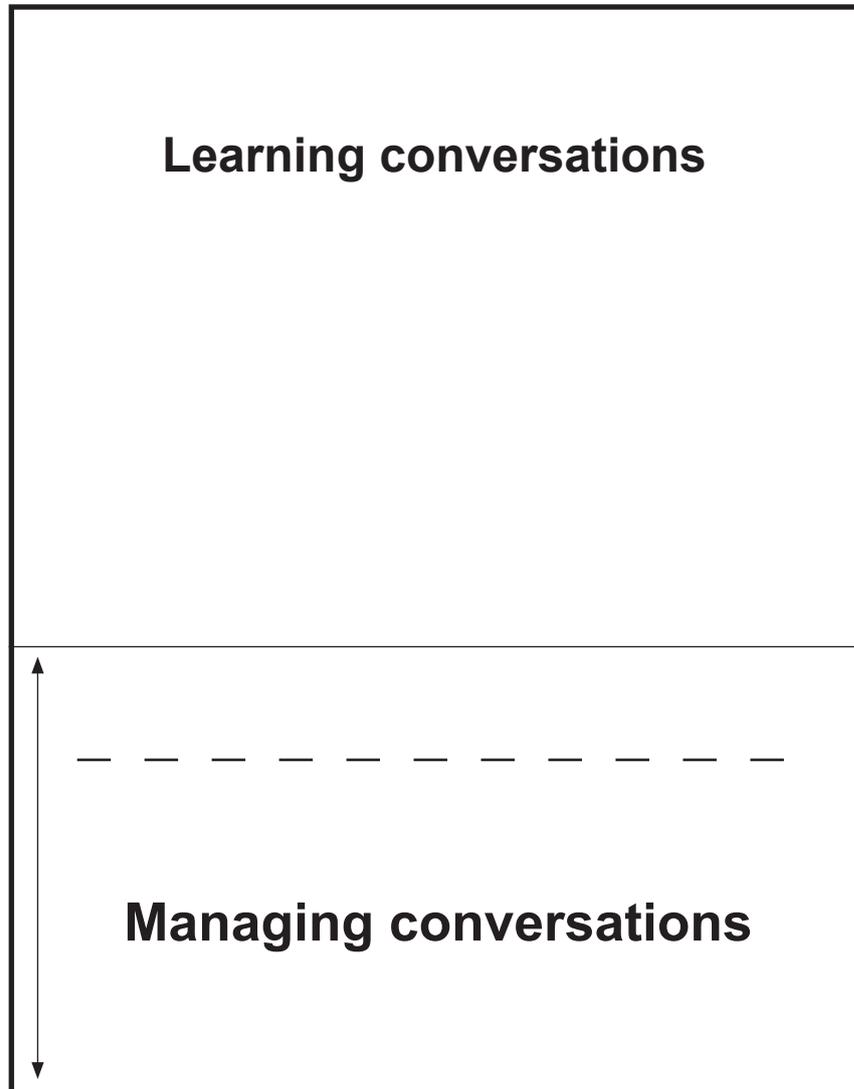
Teachers need to establish order in their class, and then respond flexibly to student management issues. Once students have a positive concept of themselves as learners and have developed greater self control, the Essential Skills pertaining to the ‘language of correction’ are likely to be less frequently required.

The core elements that allow for successful learning are: teachers setting clear expectations; acknowledging appropriate behaviour; and the timely correction of inappropriate behaviour (Richmond c. 2007). The 10 Essential Skills provide teachers with a framework for developing these core elements of effective teaching.

Once teachers have undertaken the three-hour, Essential Skills Core Learning Component course, facilitated, follow-up sessions for small groups have been designed to reinforce this knowledge, using elements of peer coaching, self-evaluation and reflection.

Teachers can also consider this knowledge in conjunction with other relevant techniques such as classroom profiling: a method of peer coaching conducted by a trained profiler.

## Teacher language in the classroom



Richmond (1995)

By using the Essential Skills for Classroom Management, teachers will be able to reduce time spent on managing conversations and increase the time spent on learning conversations. More effective learning conversations and experiences i.e. clear instructions, clear expectations and well-sequenced pedagogy will also reduce time spent on managing conversations.

## The Balance Model

The Balance Model is made up of three sets of information (Richmond 2002):

1. The strategies teachers use to teach their expectations to students.
2. How teachers acknowledge students when they are behaving appropriately.
3. How teachers correct students when they behave inappropriately.

The Essential Skills for Classroom Management are directly related to setting expectations, acknowledging appropriate behaviour and correcting inappropriate behaviour.

**When a teacher is said to be 'in balance' in the classroom, they have:**

- clearly articulated their expectations to students
- established an evenness (balance) in their use of verbal and non-verbal language to acknowledge appropriate behaviour and correct inappropriate behaviour.

This is represented by 'The Balance Model of Behaviour Management'.

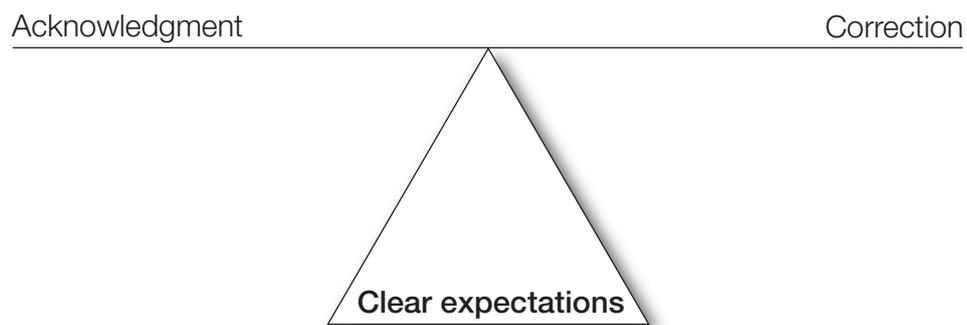
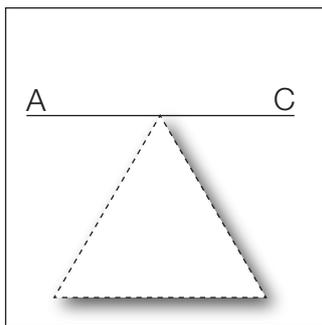


Figure 1: The Balance Model of Behaviour Management

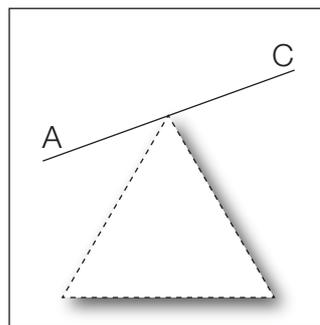
There are also three situations in which a teacher's approach to behaviour management would be described as being an 'imbalance' and if sustained, will manifest as 'problems with behaviour management' (Richmond c. 2007).

The three imbalances in behaviour management are the result of:

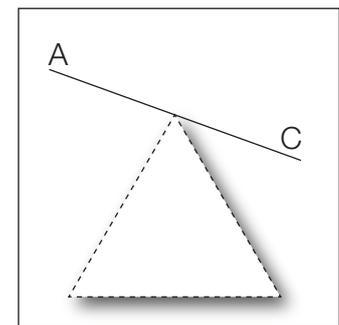
1. unclear expectations: represented diagrammatically by the triangle of dotted lines
2. too much acknowledgment (**A**)
3. too much correction (**C**).



Imbalance 1



Imbalance 2



Imbalance 3

In **Imbalance 1** the teacher provides **unclear expectations** and there is a balance between acknowledgment and correction. This is problematic because students will be unsure about the limits and boundaries of the classroom and what tasks they need to be doing.

In **Imbalance 2** the teacher provides clear expectations but uses **too much acknowledgment**. This is problematic because students are not being corrected appropriately. This situation often arises when a teacher tries to be liked by students at the expense of class order and attention to on-task behaviour. It is also evident when the teacher lacks assertiveness.

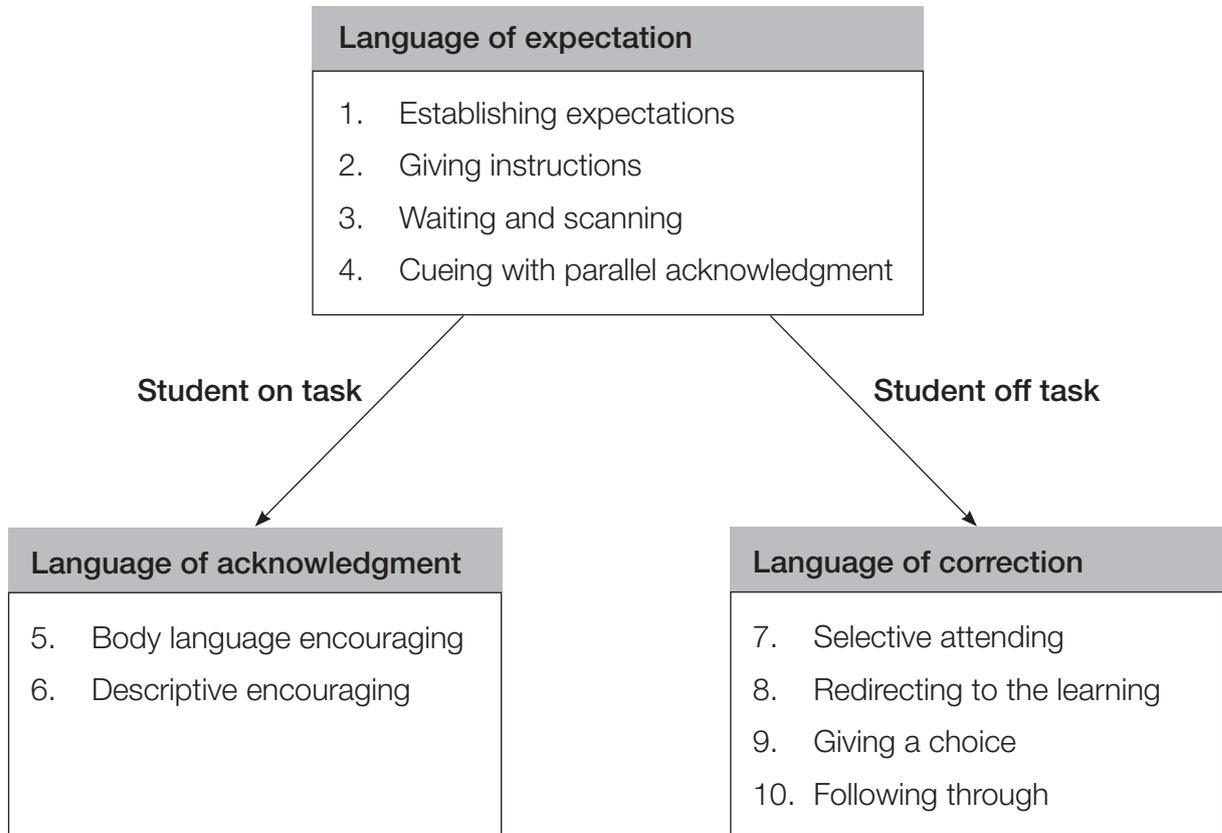
In **Imbalance 3** the teacher is using **too much correction**. Students become resentful and continue to act inappropriately due to a lack of acknowledgment and encouragement. In this imbalance a teacher may not intend to be negative, but has developed the habit of only attending to inappropriate behaviour. In most cases where a whole class behaves inappropriately, this is the evident imbalance.

On any given day, a teacher may shift from one imbalance to another.

► *Note: Over time, effective classroom management that promotes cooperation should allow for a steady increase in the acknowledgment rate with a corresponding decrease in the correction rate. Therefore, there will not necessarily be an ongoing 'even balance' between acknowledgment and correction (Richmond c. 2007).*

*If the class is functioning well (more acknowledgment than correction), there is no need to use unnecessary correction to 'balance' the acknowledgment.*

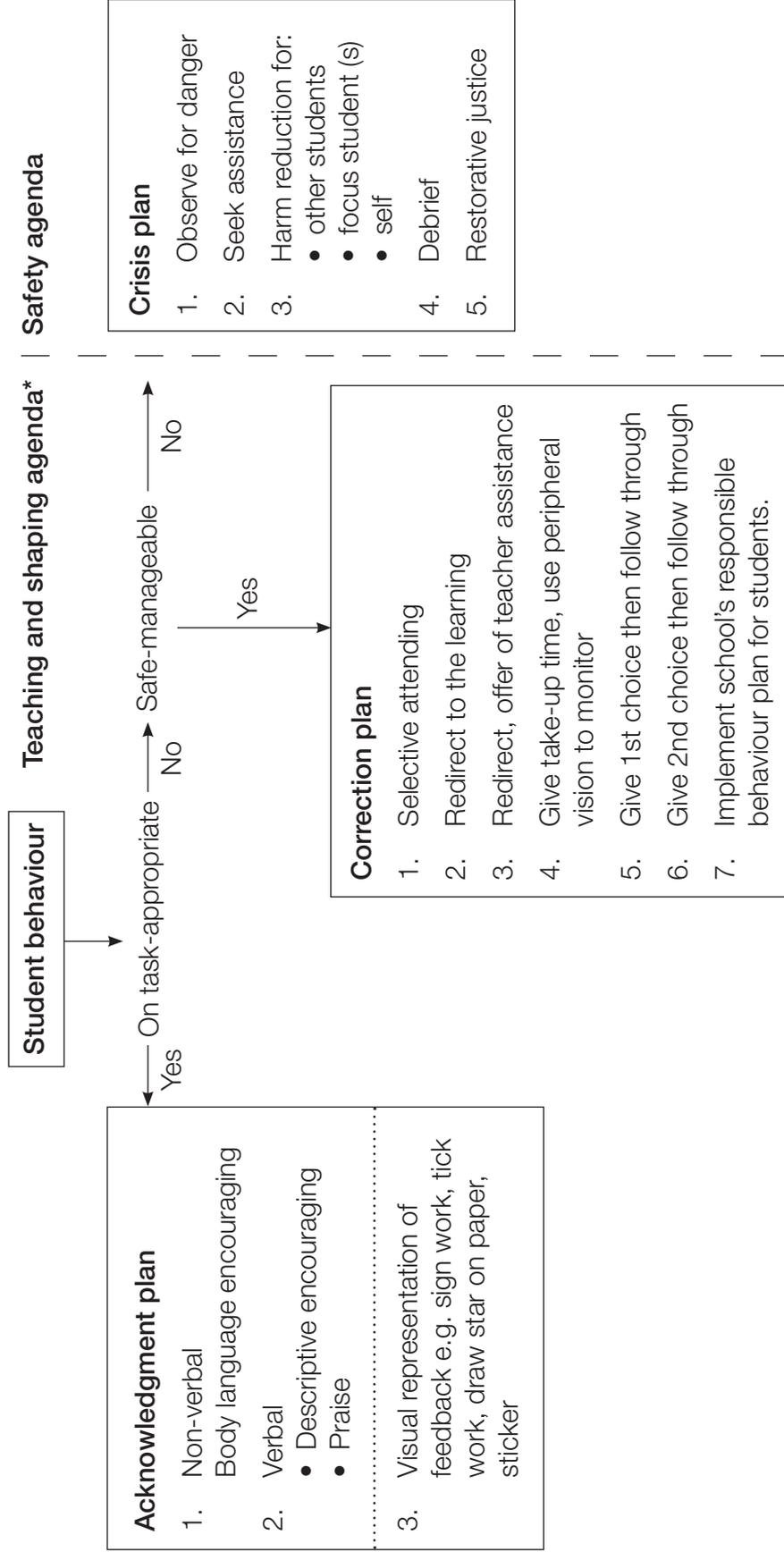
## Management focused language: Essential Skills



Adapted from: (Richmond 1995)

- *Tip: Expectations must be stated clearly to students and followed by precise instructions. Some form of 'checking for understanding' e.g. questioning, asking students to repeat etc. in the instruction phase of the lesson will reduce disruptions. Without clear expectations and instructions in place, the opportunity to acknowledge will be reduced.*

## Active student management



► **Tip: The 'active' component is acting to implement the acknowledgment plan, reducing disruptions.**

\*Shaping is related to the concept that new behaviours develop over time and sometimes the teacher's role is to consistently observe behaviour, and influence (teach) behavioural change for students i.e. shape behaviour.

## Skill 1 Establishing expectations

*To clearly articulate and demonstrate the boundaries of pro-social behaviour*

### Why is establishing expectations an effective management skill?

So that everyone is clear about what is, and what is not, regarded as responsible and safe in a particular context.

▶ *Hint: The key is the clear articulation and regular reinforcement of teacher expectations.*

### How to establish expectations

1. Initially, present a small number of rules to students. Developing class rules in a class meeting can also be effective.

Teachers who engage with students on an infrequent or irregular basis need to present their own rules as they may not have the time or rapport to negotiate rules.

2. Publish the rules where students can read them.
3. Keep the rules short, simple and clear, for example:
  - arrive on time and prepared
  - follow teacher instructions
  - keep hands and feet to yourself
  - use manners
  - stay on task.
4. Make the rules positive to draw attention to appropriate behaviours rather than highlighting inappropriate behaviours.
5. Discuss the rules with the class.
  - refer to the rules frequently
  - discuss relevant scenarios, positive and negative
  - discuss possible consequences in advance, both positive and negative
  - refer to the rules when they are being followed, not just when they are not being followed.

6. Model, model, model.

Demonstrate good social skills e.g. appropriate manners, tone of voice, body language, punctuality, and dress.

## Skill 2 Giving instructions

*To give a clear direction about what students are to do*

### Why is giving an instruction an effective management skill?

- Clear, short instructions help students understand what they are expected to do.
- Instructions help students organise what they are required to do.
- Instructions cue to students that they need to be actively engaged with the curriculum.

▶ *Hint: Learn how to tell if student attention is focused before you give an instruction.*

### How to give effective verbal and non-verbal instructions

1. Use a verbal and/or non-verbal attention gaining prompt to focus student attention towards the teacher, for example:

#### Verbal prompts:

- “Stop and look to the front, thanks.”
- “Look here, thanks.”
- “Put pencils down, attention here thanks.”
- “Face me, thanks children.”

Combine with an appropriate gesture.

#### Non-verbal prompt:

- clap (this could be in sequence)
- bell
- whistle (especially relevant to physical education)
- standing on an ‘attention calling’ spot in the classroom, which is known and understood by students.

2. Wait and scan (Skill 3).
3. When student attention is focused, start the instruction with a verb. Keep instructions short; be concise.
4. Follow the instruction with a short pause and scan the class.
5. Separate instructions from curriculum/content talk. Avoid interrupting content talk with instructions.

6. Phrase the instruction as a direction rather than a question. For example, **Instead of saying:**

“Would you like to copy the sentence, year four?” or “Can we stop working now?”

**Say:**

“Copy the sentence year four.” and “Stop working, thanks.”

If you get into the habit of phrasing instructions as a question rather than as a direction, students may believe that following instructions is optional.

7. Use “thanks” rather than “please” at the end of an instruction for a crisper, less questioning tone. “Thanks” implies compliance; however, saying “please” at times is appropriate.
8. Give the instruction in a firm, calm and measured voice, for example:
- “Come here, John.”
  - “Open your books at page 17, year eight.”
  - “Steven and Sharon, hand out the science equipment, thanks.”
  - “Move to your group areas now.”
  - “Stop what you are doing and look here.”
  - “Sit in the shade, please.”
  - “Walk down the stairs, thanks.”
  - “Year three, take out your pencil, eraser and ruler, and get ready to work.”
9. Use “now” if the group or student is unlikely to comply, for example:

**Initial instruction:** “David, look to the front, thanks.”

**If he does not respond or his behaviour deteriorates:** Look in his direction and say, “Now” (Using a firmer tone of voice, possibly with a slight increase in volume or inflected pitch, but with no anger.)

**Or it may be necessary to say:** “David, look to the front, now.” (Do not shout, but use a calm, firm tone of voice.)

When he responds appropriately, pause slightly to reaffirm, then look away and continue.

## Skill 3 Waiting and scanning

*To wait and look at your students for 5–10 seconds after you give an instruction*

### Why is waiting and scanning an effective management skill?

- It gives students time to process the direction.
- It indicates non-verbally to students that you mean what you say.
- You avoid filling all the available time with excess talk which can inadvertently train the class to stop listening to you.

#### ► Hints:

- *If students are not following many of your instructions, evaluate your use of ‘waiting and scanning’—you may not be using this skill effectively.*
- *You may perceive the time spent ‘waiting’ to be longer than it is.*
- *Do not be overly concerned with ‘wasting time’ by waiting and scanning.*
- *If students are not following your instructions because you are not ‘waiting and scanning’ then time is being wasted anyway.*
- *If you do not ‘wait and scan’ students are more likely to ignore your instructions.*
- *Do not fill the ‘scanning time’ with unhelpful dialogue, an easy habit to form.*
- *Consider strategies to attend to students who do not give their attention after a ‘wait and scan’. For example, a specific individual or group verbal redirect or prompt.*

### How to wait and scan

1. After you have given an instruction, pause, remain quiet and look at your students; scan the room for 5–10 seconds to maintain their attention.
2. When you have their attention, continue with your dialogue or prompt them to begin following your instruction i.e. start working.
3. Use the waiting and scanning time to encourage a period of quiet focus. Use assertive body language—stand still facing the group, while scanning the class. Then, prompt students to maintain the quiet focus while they start working.
4. Use this short time to think ahead and calm yourself, if necessary.
5. Scan the group, link with a descriptive encourager (see Skill 6) or a redirection as necessary.

## Skill 4 Cueing with parallel acknowledgment

*To acknowledge students' on-task behaviour with the intention of encouraging others to copy*

### Why is parallel acknowledgment an effective management skill?

- It cues other students to match the behaviour that is being acknowledged.
  - It is an alternative to a redirection, so can help you to avoid nagging or becoming too prescriptive.
  - It contributes to a positive tone in the classroom.
- ▶ *Hints: This is more effective with younger students but can be used judiciously with upper primary and secondary students in some cases. Experiment with its use by:*
- *paying attention to your tone of voice*
  - *acknowledging individuals or groups of students who are on-task*
  - *being aware of peer pressure issues when publicly acknowledging students.*
- With older students your tone should be more matter of fact/neutral rather than a higher pitched 'encouragement' tone often used effectively with younger children.*

### How to use parallel acknowledgment

1. Scan the class regularly. When students are off-task, choose to acknowledge an individual or group in close proximity who is on-task.
2. Acknowledge that person or group with a descriptive encourager (see Skill 6) in a loud enough voice for others to hear.

For example, if Jenny is off-task during a writing activity while sitting next to Mark who is on-task, you say to Mark, "I can see Mark working quietly on his writing."

This is a prompt for Jenny or other students who may be off-task.

If a group of students sitting at one table is off-task, then acknowledge a group of students sitting near them who are on-task.

**Say:** "Group one is constructing their straw tower." (Loud enough for group two to hear.)

This is minimal and positive, and prompts group two to begin to construct their tower.

3. Follow up with a low-key acknowledgment to the students as soon as they choose to be on-task.

### **Examples of low-key acknowledgment: verbal and non-verbal**

Verbal low-key acknowledgment is low volume, verbal acknowledgment delivered in close proximity such as:

- descriptive encouragement: “Daniel, I can see you writing.”
- praise: “Well done Melissa.”

Non-verbal, low-key acknowledgment involves body language such as:

- smiling
- finger signing
- close proximity
- touching of students’ materials.

As you move around the room, touch the books or desks of those students on-task. Do not touch the books or desks of those students off-task. When off-task students become on-task, calmly go back to their position and touch their book or desk.

## Skill 5 Body language encouraging

*To intentionally use your proximity, body gestures and facial expressions to encourage students to remain on-task*

### Why is body language encouraging an effective student management skill?

- It takes no time.
- It promotes a positive tone in the classroom.
- Body language is an integral part of communication and strengthens relationships.
- It promotes on-task behaviour when used intentionally.

► *Hint: By moving around the room and interacting non-verbally with students, the teacher's level of classroom monitoring increases and should therefore help to reduce episodes of inappropriate behaviour.*

### How to use body language encouraging

1. Set students to task. Immediately move around the room to non-verbally signal to students that they should be working on the task. Walk near all members of the class.
2. Touch the work of students who are on-task. This ensures you circulate throughout the classroom.
3. Pause after you have made one tour of the room, maintain minimal teacher talk then walk slowly toward students who may be off-task. This is a quiet prompt for them to resume on-task behaviour.
4. Smile and make eye contact to acknowledge appropriate behaviour. These are powerful, positive signals that help students feel valued and noticed. This intentional use of encouraging body language does not describe or preclude all spontaneous body language messages that teachers send.
5. Make discrete nodding movements and finger signals where appropriate as acknowledgment for on-task behaviour.

**Avoid the following:**

- Standing too close to a student. This can be intimidating and cue hostility. It is better to prompt/correct, pause, then walk away and scan back.
- Moving too fast towards a student. This can induce a fight or flight response.
- Holding eye contact, since it can become a 'stare-out' challenge.
- Showing irritation or annoyance through tapping your foot, pursing lips, crossing arms or frowning.

If something is irritating you, respond immediately by:

- providing a rule reminder
- redirecting the behaviour
- describing the irritating behaviour with minimal words and a neutral tone and giving a redirection.

Alternatively, you may choose to use selective attending (see Skill 7).

## Skill 6 Descriptive encouraging

*To encourage students to become more aware of their competence by describing exactly what you see or hear from them that you hope to see more frequently*

### Why is descriptive encouraging a useful management skill?

- It describes to students the behaviour that will enable them to learn.
- It reinforces the rules.
- It promotes a positive, supportive learning environment.
- It focuses on strength and builds self esteem.
- It stimulates students to take risks in terms of behaviour. They become more able to display the courage to tackle difficult work, or practise self-control.
- It tells students about their competence.
- It directs attention to strategies that are useful for problem solving.
- It strengthens your relationship with students.

► *Hints: This skill appears far easier to master than it is.*

*Pay particular attention to the timing of its use and the tone of voice you use.*

*Descriptive encouraging will require sustained intentional practice.*

### How to use descriptive encouraging

1. Describe exactly what you see or hear from students that you want to see or hear more frequently. In other words, state the obvious that is positive. For example:
  - “Steven has started work.”
  - “This group is on-task.”
  - “You have responded to my direction straight away.”
  - “Most students have moved to the correct place.”
  - “You sat in your seat as soon as I gave the direction.”
  - “Melissa, you followed a class instruction.”
  - “Year nine, you are all working quietly on the questions.”
2. Use a respectful, measured tone rather than an exaggerated tone.
3. Be genuine, and use descriptive encouraging sooner rather than later. If you wait too long this technique can become ineffective.

5. You may use it privately towards individual students. If used publicly towards individuals, be brief and to the point.
6. Use it collectively to the group.
7. Use frequently.

**Avoid the following:**

- Giving conditional praise.

For example: “Good work, why didn’t you do it like this all along?”

The student may resent this and the learning relationship may suffer.

- Replacing descriptive encouraging with generic praise.

For example: “Good, great, terrific, nice work”.

You can use these as add-ons after descriptive encouraging. Remember that generic praise alone can be used but has a limited training effect.

## Skill 7 Selective attending

*To deliberately give minimal attention to safe, off-task or inappropriate behaviour*

### Why is selective attending an effective management skill?

- It avoids unintentionally reinforcing off-task or disruptive behaviour, decreasing the likelihood that this behaviour will be repeated.
- It gives you time to think about how to handle the student's behaviour in a productive way.
- It gives you time to attend to other students who are on-task.
- It sends a message to all students about your expectations.
- It is a powerful modelling device implying: "I can stay focused on my work despite the disruption."
- It is a deliberate process used within a discrete timeframe, having a beginning and an end.

► *Hints: There is a difference between 'ignoring' and 'selective attending'.*

*Ignoring inappropriate behaviour may imply that the teacher is deliberately demonstrating no outward awareness of it and is not monitoring the behaviour. This may indicate that the behaviour is, in some way, being tacitly condoned.*

*'Selective attending' requires the teacher to consider the inappropriate behaviour being demonstrated and act immediately if safety is compromised.*

*Selective attending may involve subtle signalling to the students who are displaying appropriate behaviour that the inappropriate behaviour of others has been noticed and that the teacher is deliberately choosing to pay minimal attention to it. This has a powerful modelling effect.*

### How to use selective attending

1. Do it when the student is displaying off-task or inappropriate behaviour that is not seriously disrupting others.
2. Keep this student in your peripheral vision. Avoid turning your back at this point as you may miss an opportunity to use a descriptive encourager if the student chooses to come on-task.

3. Attend to the student when:
  - a. the student displays on-task or appropriate behaviour. Use a body language encourager or less obvious descriptive encourager to reinforce the appropriate behaviour.
  - b. the student begins to seriously disturb others
  - c. the student's off-task or inappropriate behaviour is maintained over an extended period of time (determined by the teacher).

In case b or c, give a clear redirect to the learning or offer of assistance (see Skill 8), followed by take-up time. (Take-up time allows students to respond to a direction before a redirection is given.)

If the disruptive behaviour continues, give the student a clear choice (see Skill 9) including the likely consequences if their inappropriate behaviour continues.

If a clear choice has been given previously, follow through (see Skill 10). Remember, the goal of a clear choice is to modify the inappropriate behaviour, not to punish the student or damage the positive teacher–student relationship (learning relationship.)

When giving choices, use a least-to-most intrusive approach without emotional engagement (Rogers 1997, pp 72–74). For example, start with an offer of teacher assistance rather than a more severe consequence e.g. a lunchtime detention.

4. Use the 'Vaseline eye' to encourage the resumption of on-task behaviour.

That is, if you have tried to cue an off-task student with 'a directive look and pause', slide your eyes away from the student once they have resumed on-task behaviour or if you think they are about to resume on-task behaviour.

If you realise you are maintaining eye contact with an off-task student for too long and possibly inadvertently encouraging the continuation of off-task behaviour, use the 'Vaseline eye' to prompt them to resume on-task behaviour.

You can also use the 'Vaseline eye' as a prompt to begin on-task behaviour once you have given an instruction or redirect. (see Facilitator's notes re praise, prompt, push off etc.) Combine the 'Vaseline eye' with a slow 'walk away'.

## Skill 8 Redirecting to the learning

*To respectfully prompt the student who is off-task or disrupting others, initially with a redirection to the learning. This can be verbal or non-verbal*

### Why is redirecting to the learning an effective student management skill?

- Initially, it provides a least-intrusive, positive, learning-focused prompt to resume on-task activity, reducing the need for further correction.
- It puts the responsibility onto the student.
- It reinforces the importance of on-task behaviour.
- When linked with giving a choice, it reinforces to the student or group, your expectations and the likely consequences of the choices given.

#### ► Hints:

- *Avoid making a redirection to the learning sound like a threat or punishment.*
- *Remember the impact of body language, tone of voice, proximity and facial expression when giving a redirection to the learning or choice.*
- *It is important to be calm, clear, firm and positive in tone.*
- *Keep language to a minimum.*

### How to give a redirection to the learning, not the behaviour

#### 1. Verbal redirection to learning

- When a student is off-task, the period of off-task behaviour is extending or they may become disruptive, ask a question about the set task or ask a question related to an offer of teacher assistance (Richmond 2003, p 6).
- For example, if a student is off-task, talking to a neighbouring classmate, the teacher could say:
  - “Shane, what question are you up to?”
  - “Shane, are you working on the writing task now?”
  - “Shane do you need some help?” (Offer of teacher assistance)
- Allow some take-up time.

#### 2. Non-verbal redirection to the learning

- When a student is off-task, the period of off-task behaviour is extending or their behaviour may become disruptive, redirect the student to learning and/or offer teacher assistance, using body language encouraging e.g. proximity, gesture, and facial expression.

3. If the student resumes on-task behaviour, use a form of low-level acknowledgment.
  - If the student accepts the offer of teacher assistance, assist them. When they resume on-task behaviour, use a form of low-level acknowledgment.
4. If the student maintains off-task behaviour:
  - redirect to the learning again (allow for take-up time; this can vary with developmental levels)
  - redirect, giving a specific instruction about the appropriate behaviour you would like the student to demonstrate (allow for take-up time)
  - offer teacher assistance
  - give a choice if necessary.

## Skill 9 Giving a choice

*To respectfully confront the student, who is disrupting others, with the available choices and their logical consequences*

### Why is giving a choice an effective management skill?

- It provides the student, or group, with information about your expectations and the logical consequences of the choice.
- It puts the responsibility onto the student.

▶ *Hints: The most important factor in this skill is thinking carefully about the choice to be given. Pause to allow yourself thinking time.*

*Do not give a choice you cannot or will not follow through.*

*Avoid making this (giving a choice) sound like a threat or punishment—an easy mistake to make.*

*To avoid escalating situations, allow students' time to think (take-up time) when responding to your direction.*

Choices may have positive options or be positive in their intent, for example:

- Offering to stay after school to assist a student to comprehend or complete class work.
- Offering the student the option of having a peer tutor during class.

Pause and look at the student briefly after giving a choice, then turn your attention slightly away from the student. Use the 'Vaseline eye'. This avoids a 'stand off' situation where either party can 'lose face'. Keep language to a minimum.

### When to give a choice

1. Give a choice when, despite redirection, the student has remained off-task and is disturbing other students, or the period of off-task behaviour has become extended.
2. Give a choice when the student has begun to seriously disturb the class after a redirection from you. For example:
  - the student may be engaging in intense secondary behaviour (Subsequent behaviours after the initial redirection that are more severe, such as sulking, accompanied by large-scale distracters such as paper tearing, spitting, chair rocking or loud interrupting).

Secondary behaviour describes behaviour that has the objective to change the original focus of your concern. Often minor secondary behaviours are selectively attended to, allowing for focus on the primary behaviour. More severe secondary behaviours require an obvious teacher response.

Secondary behaviour frequently elicits arguing or convincing talk from the teacher. This has no productive end and wastes precious time.

3. Give a choice when the student is overly hostile to you and is challenging your management.
4. Give a choice when you can't think of any less intrusive options.
5. Give a choice when it is clear to you that the student's inappropriate behaviour is escalating.

**Say:**

"Chris, your choices are ..."

You may also experiment by adding, "Which would you prefer?" Then pause:

"Chris, your choices are ... Which would you prefer?"

Allow Chris to resume on-task behaviour without more teacher talk.

Wait a short while. Allow for a short delay (thinking time) in the student's response to your direction. If they are on-task and you believe it is appropriate, in close proximity to the student, use a low-level verbal or non-verbal encourager.

Acknowledge the student discreetly by not using loud or attention gaining verbal or non-verbal encouragers, at this point.

**How to give a choice—other verbal examples:**

- "Year eight, you can choose to start now or later. The first two questions have to be finished before lunch today or you will need to stay back to complete them. If anyone needs help, please let me know."
- "Steven, the choices are: move over here near the window and you will be able to join us, or stay there on your own. Make your choice now."
- "Kate, if you can't complete the two problems on your own in the next 10 minutes, I will ask you to choose someone in the class to give you some help."
- "Jason, continue with your work or you will have to see me at the end of the lesson."

If the student asks what will happen at the end of the lesson, the teacher says:

- "We will need to have a talk at the end of the lesson and then take it from there. It depends on what you do between now and the end of the lesson."

Redirect the student to the learning and do not engage in further discussion about the choice given. If necessary, use body language to cue that the discussion is over by slightly turning your back toward the student and walking away slowly.

The last choice (“... or you will have to see me at the end of the lesson.”) is particularly useful as:

- It allows students to redeem themselves during the remainder of the lesson.
- Students will not perceive the certainty of a consequence other than a quick talk at the end of the lesson, and will often choose to behave more appropriately, rather than maintain inappropriate behaviour because they know they are going to be ‘punished’ anyway.
- This choice also allows the teacher time to calm down and think about what they may say or do to the student at the end of the lesson.
- This choice allows the teacher to respond to the inappropriate behaviour without escalating the situation immediately or needing to commit to a specific consequence beyond the end of the lesson.
- This choice is a least intrusive option.

### **Do not escalate the situation immediately**

6. Use a firm, calm and measured tone.

Depending on the student you may need to use proximity purposefully; for some you will need to give the choice in close proximity; for others it will be more effective to be further away.

7. Pause briefly after giving the choice. Walk away after the pause and look back intermittently (scan back).
8. Link this strategy to the most logical alternate management skill.

#### **For example:**

**Descriptive encouragement** if they return to the task.

**Selective attending** if a student de-escalates the disruptive behaviour so that it is no longer disrupting others.

**Follow through** (see Skill 10) if the behaviour escalates, or continues to seriously disrupt others, or if the student remains off-task for an extended period of time.

9. When the situation has de-escalated, deliberately act to restore the ‘working relationship’ between the student and teacher and minimize any harm done (Rogers 1995, pp 110–111).

## Skill 10 Following through

*Resolute, planned action in the face of extended off-task behaviour, or on-going disruptive behaviour that is seriously disturbing the learning environment*

### Why is following through an effective management skill?

- It clearly establishes that you mean what you say.
- It models assertive behaviour in the face of threat.
- It models morally courageous behaviour.

#### ► Hints:

*Following through is necessary when all other skills have not been effective.*

*Behave as if you are confident even though you may be feeling nervous or uncertain.*

*It is the certainty of the consequence rather than the severity of the consequence that is important (Rogers 1995, p 38).*

### How to follow through

1. Demonstrate confidence using appropriate body language and a calm, firm voice.  
Be conscious of the difference between a calm, firm, assertive tone and an angry or 'annoyed' tone. A voice does not have to be loud to imply firmness.
2. Do what you planned and said you would do. Make it happen now.  
Consult with colleagues and/or administrators to plan an appropriate course of action for following through, if necessary.
3. Avoid letting your embarrassment about what others may think erode your confidence.
4. Consider removing the class from the problem situation if safety is a particular concern.
5. In a crisis event send for help immediately and put the Crisis Plan into action.

6. If you feel powerless to do anything, make an anecdotal note of what is happening in objective, descriptive language. Remember to sign and date it, for example:

*Tuesday 18 March 2006 at 9:45 am:*

*David is throwing paper around the classroom, intermittently screaming obscenities and refusing to join the class despite direction from the teacher.*

*I gave the direction, "Sit down now, thanks", then a choice to join the group or sit to the side.*

*I called administration for assistance at 9:50 am with a 'red card'. Other students appeared agitated.*

*Used calming and distracting procedures with the class by reading a story.*
7. Reassure the class and work on your self-control.
8. Following through may look and feel disturbing at times.
  - Do it anyway as it establishes and reinforces the boundaries.
  - All students will know you mean what you say.
  - They may feel safer and build their trust in you as their teacher as a result of your commitment to follow through.
9. Reflect on the event later with a colleague if possible and:
  - a. Debrief if necessary. Seek advice from your supervisor or guidance officer.
  - b. Critique your action by asking:
    - What did I do that helped?
    - What did I do that did not help?
    - What could I have done differently?
    - Who can I go to for advice?
  - c. Review your behaviour management plan if necessary – consider how effectively you used preventative strategies.

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