Breaking the Cycle:
Practical Strategies for Managing Disruptive Student Behavior

@characterstrong

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A Rising Need

Over 80% of educators **an increase in student behavioral challenges since COVID (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2024)**

Educators have taken on much of the stress of their students' increased needs and **burnout rates have increased** (RAND, 2024).

Most frequently reported behaviors include **physical and verbal aggression, refusal of work, and disrespect towards educators and peers** (NCES Survey, 2023).

*Student behavior is **directly** tied to relationships –*

with educators

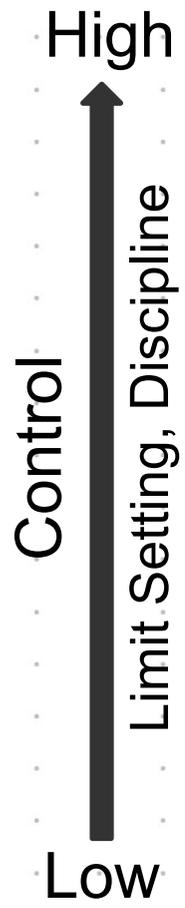
with schools

with their peers

with **themselves**.

If we are not using **relational discipline practices,** *we are setting students up for future failure.*

Social Discipline Window



Social Discipline Window

High

Control

(limit setting, discipline)

Low

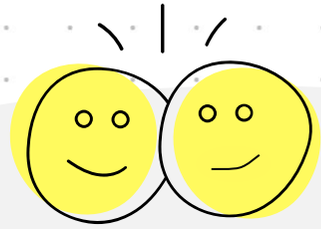
To Power Struggles Confrontation Authoritarian Win/Lose Retribution Stigmatize	**With** Consistent Accountable Responsive /Flexible Responsible Cooperation Negotiation
Not Uncaring Tired Lazy Burned Out Given Up	**For** Chaotic Inconsistent Excusing Giving In Blurred Boundaries Rescuing

Support

Encouragement, nurture

High

The Responsive Practices Handbook by Bob Costello, Joshua Wachtel and Ted Wachtel



Turn & Talk:

What causes us not to be in the “With” quadrant?

If there’s time:

What steps could we take to be in the “With” more?

BRIGHTER TOMORROW

Personal, Proactive, Progressive

Personal:

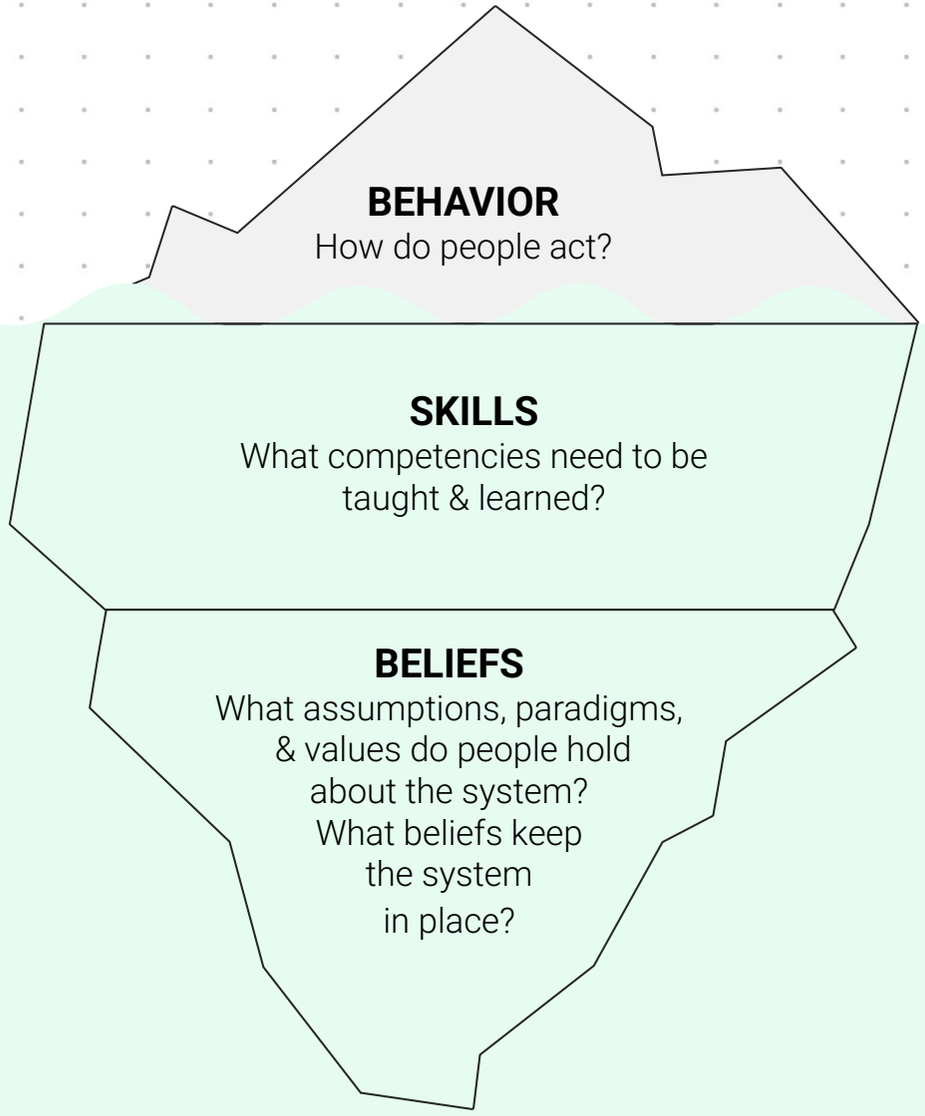
Understanding our Students

Character Strong

Don’t take it personal,

GET PERSONAL.

The Iceberg Model



WHY do people act?

- Avoid something not desired
- Obtain access to something desired

Character Strong

Obtain

Avoid

Character Strong

Obtain

Avoid

Shouting out answers in class.

Character Strong

Obtain

Avoid

Putting in your headphones while others are talking.

Obtain

Avoid

“I’m tired.”
(Then head goes down)

Character Strong

Obtain

Avoid

Being rude to others.

Obtain

Avoid

“Can I go to the bathroom?” (Again)

Character Strong

“You have to understand why a behavior occurs before you can change it. Turns out why people behave the way they do is predictable, and ***if it is predictable, it is addressable.***”

Pat Friman

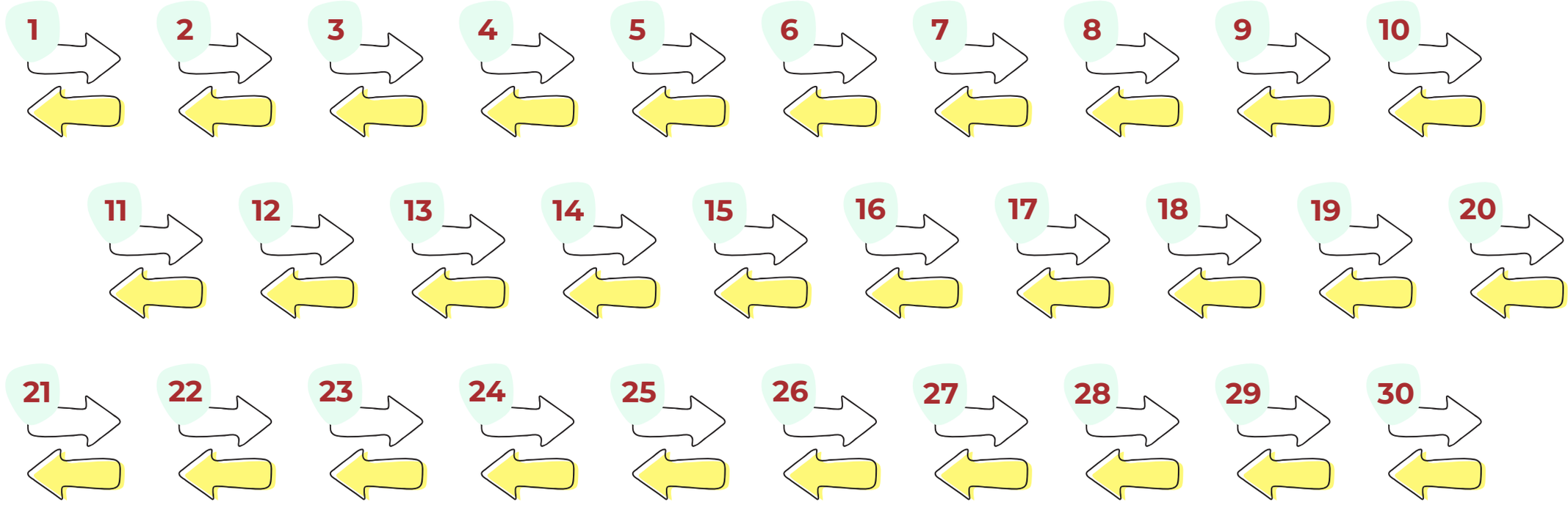
Don’t take it personal,

GET PERSONAL.

Half of students report their teachers don't care about them as people.

Would You Rather?

Choose a number to reveal a “Would You Rather?” question. Share your answer and don’t forget to tell us why you made the choice you did!



Character Strong

Back

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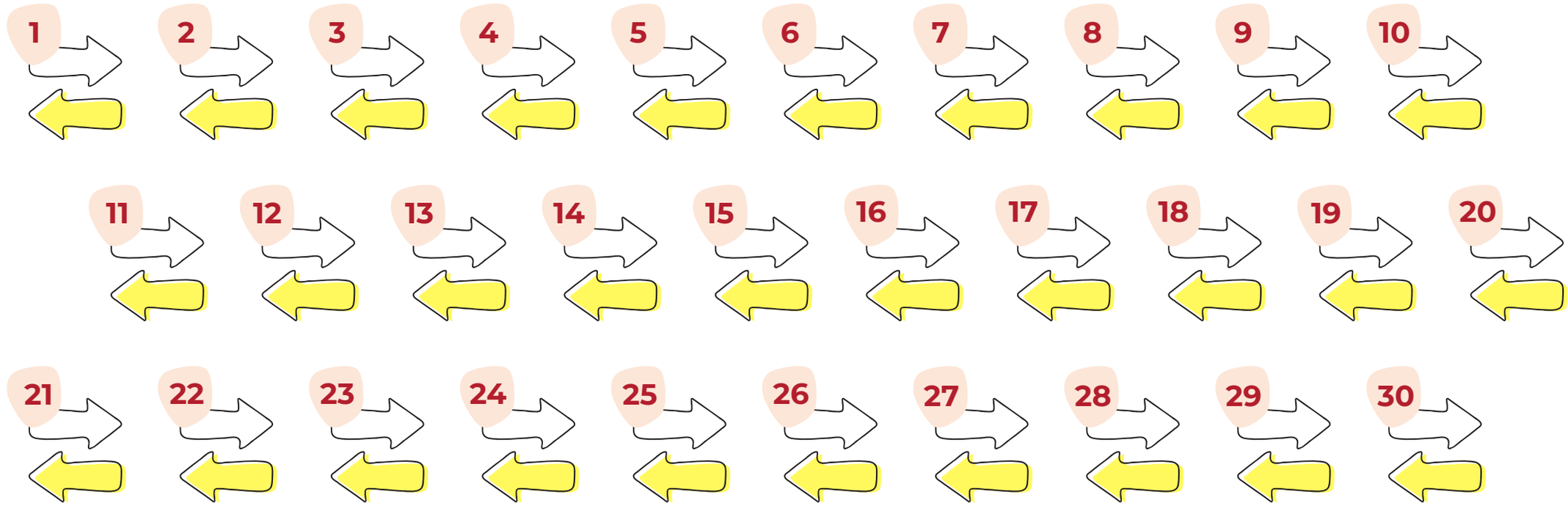

Character Strong

If you love people well,

they will eventually come around.

Proactive:

Setting up a Safe and Predictable Environment

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All behavior is directly related to the ENVIRONMENT in which it occurs.

Turn and Talk:

What are other environmental factors that might cause people to use unskillful behaviors?

If there's time:

What might they be trying to achieve with those unskillful behaviors?

Character Strong

"When a flower doesn't bloom ***you fix the environment in which it grows***, not the flower."

Alexander Den Hiejen

What happens when people are ***unclear*** about what is expected of them to be successful?

What is a behavioral expectation?

An **agreed upon** set of behaviors that everyone in a given setting owns responsibility for

Clear and observable

Represent **Dos,** not Don’ts

by MASCOT JUNCTION®

R O A R

	Respect	Ownership	Acceptance	Responsible
Hallway	• Keep hands and feet to self • Stay quiet - classes are in progress	• Go directly to your destination • Set a good example • During class have a pass	• Follow directions • Hold doors for others	• Walk face forward • Keep to the right • Keep hallways clear and clean
Restroom	• Respect privacy • Use kind words and actions • Use equipment and supplies properly	• Throw trash in receptacle • Use time wisely	• Wait your turn • Go, flush, wash	• Wash hands • Report problems to an adult • Walk at all times • Keep water in sink
Assembly	• Eyes and ears on speaker • Participate • Use appropriate applause	• Keep hands and feet to yourself • Sit appropriately	• Follow directions from adults • Enter and exit quietly	• Enter and exit quietly • Walk at all times • Stay in designated area
Playground	• Take turns • Use kind words and actions	• Line up when you are called • Set a good example • Use equipment appropriately	• Play by the rules • Invite others to play	• Stay in designated area • Report problems to an adult • Walk to and from building
Cafeteria	• Respect other's space • Use kind words and actions	• Leave a clean table, chair and floor	• Sit with feet under table • Use an indoor voice • Raise your hand for help	• Follow directions from adults • Walk at all times • Eat only your food
Library	• Take care of books and equipment • Respect others trying to read and learn	• Stay on task • Put things away in their proper place • Return materials on time	• Be quiet • Use time wisely	• Follow directions from adults • Walk at all times
Classroom	• Use classroom materials appropriately • Walk at all times • Keep hands, feet and objects to yourself	• Complete your work • Organize	• Be ready to learn • Try your best • Stay on task • Participate	• Pay attention to your teacher • Follow instructions • Use kind words and actions • Raise your hand to speak
Bus	• Stay seated face forward • Watch for traffic when entering/exiting • Keep hands and feet to yourself	• Listen to bus driver • No eating or drinking • Keep track of your belongings	• Keep your backpack closed • Report problems to adult	• Keep noise down • Use kind words and actions • Listen for your stop • Remember your bus number

Panther Expectations

	Hallways	Cafeteria	Restroom	Bus	Playground	Library
P Pride	• Take care of others' work • Keep the halls clean	• Clean up after yourself • Place all trash in the trash can	• Clean up after yourself • Wash hands with soap and water	• Be a good example to others • Be kind to others and personal property	• Be a problem solver • Use equipment appropriately	• Handle books with care • Return your books on time
A Attitude	• Walk quietly	• Use a quiet voice • Use good table manners	• Use a quiet voice • Allow for privacy for each person	• Use a quiet voice • Use appropriate language	• Use positive and appropriate language • Invite others to join in	• Use your library voice
W Wise Choices	• Go to your destination quickly	• Use time to eat wisely • Eat your own food	• Return to class quickly • Use water and supplies wisely	• Keep belongings in your book bag • Be ready for your stop	• Line up at first signal • Agree on rules before the game • Stay in approved areas	• Bring your golden ticket • Put things back in their proper place
S Safety	• Keep hands, feet and other objects to yourself • Walk on the right	• Walk in line • Stay seated until dismissed	• Keep hands, feet, and other objects to yourself	• Remain seated until the bus stops • Walk on and off the bus in a single file line	• Keep hands, feet, and other objects to yourself • Report problems and injuries to adults	• Walk calmly

Adding in Staff Expectations

	Student	Teacher/Staff
Responsible	Arrive every day on time Turn in assignments when due Follow directions promptly	Be timely with lessons and activities Provide clear timelines and due dates Use Give Me 5 then clearly state directions
Respectful	Use school appropriate language Help others when needed Listen actively to others Share the AIR (be self-aware)	Listen when students have ideas or worries Check in with students often Create time for discussions and activities Plan Body Breaks into schedule
Engaged	Focus on the lesson/activity Share materials and technology Participate in lessons, activities Be open to feedback and push myself to grow and learn	Plan effective units and lessons Use a variety of teaching and learning options Be open to ideas and feedback Provide helpful, clear feedback and grading

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Classroom Matrix Example

Laketown Elementary is a community of learners where every child matters and every moment counts.
We show **Wildcat PRIDE** by being **Peaceful, Respectful, Inclusive, Determined, and Engaged.**

	Direct Instruction	**Group/Partner Work**	**Individual Work**	**Transitions**
Peaceful	Focus on the teacher	Use a calm voice Show care for others	Keep control of your voice and body	Help keep classroom environment calm Line up quietly
Respectful	Use whole body listening	Acknowledge every group member's ideas	Respect others who are hard at work	Take care of your belongings Keep your place in line
Inclusive	Help others if needed	Let everyone contribute	Work independently for the success of the group	Allow for others to join in as needed
Determined	Focus on the instructions	Show grit	Use grit	Be quick
Engaged	Actively participate	Use listening skills	Stay focused Ask clarifying questions when needed	Know what is happening next

CharacterStrong-Aligned Classroom Behavior Matrix

	Entering & Leaving Class	Whole Group Instruction	Independent Work Time	Small Group Work Time	When I'm Upset/ Having a Bad Day
Be Kind	I greet my teacher at the door	I use Strong Listening!	The way I work is respectful to others	I breathe it out, move it out, or talk it out when there is conflict	I am kind to myself
Be Strong	I complete the entry task or exit ticket every day	I raise my hand to ask questions when I am confused	Use "yet" - "I don't understand this yet"	I help my groupmates reach their goals	I have the courage to ask for help
Be Well	I check-in with myself to make sure I'm ready for learning	I am honest about what I need to learn	I take 3 deep breaths when I am frustrated	I name my emotions when there is conflict	Identify 1-3 things I am grateful for

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“If everything is important,

then nothing is.”

Patrick Lencioni

Defining What's Important

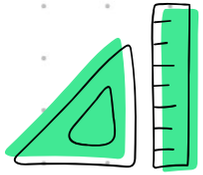
- What are **3 words** for how you want your students/staff to feel?
- What are **2 things** that could get in the way of that?
- What is **1 thing** that tends to dysregulate you?

Classroom Matrix

	Entering Class	Teacher-Led Whole Group Instruction	Individual Work Time	Small Group Work Time	Leaving Class
Example: Be Responsible	Start the entry task	Refer to supplemental materials (notes, anchor charts)	Turn off distractions	Stay on task and redirect tangents	Leave your space nicer than you found it
Expectation 1:					
Expectation 2:					
Expectation 3:					

Pre-Corrections

People



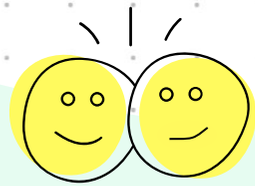
Preference

Place

Pre-Corrections

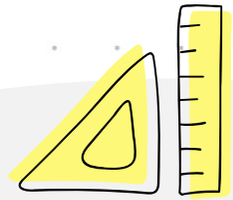
People

- Turn & Talk
- Grouping
- Sharing
- Feedback



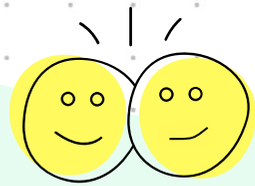
What **questions, assumptions, or anxieties** might people have?

Pre-Corrections



Preference

- Group work to independent work
- “Easy” to “hard”
- Independent work to group work

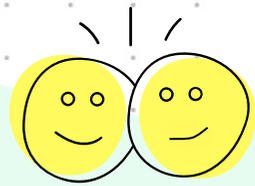


What **questions, assumptions, or anxieties** might people have?

Pre-Corrections

Place

- Classroom movement
- Between classroom and non-classroom space
- Entering new environments or using new tools



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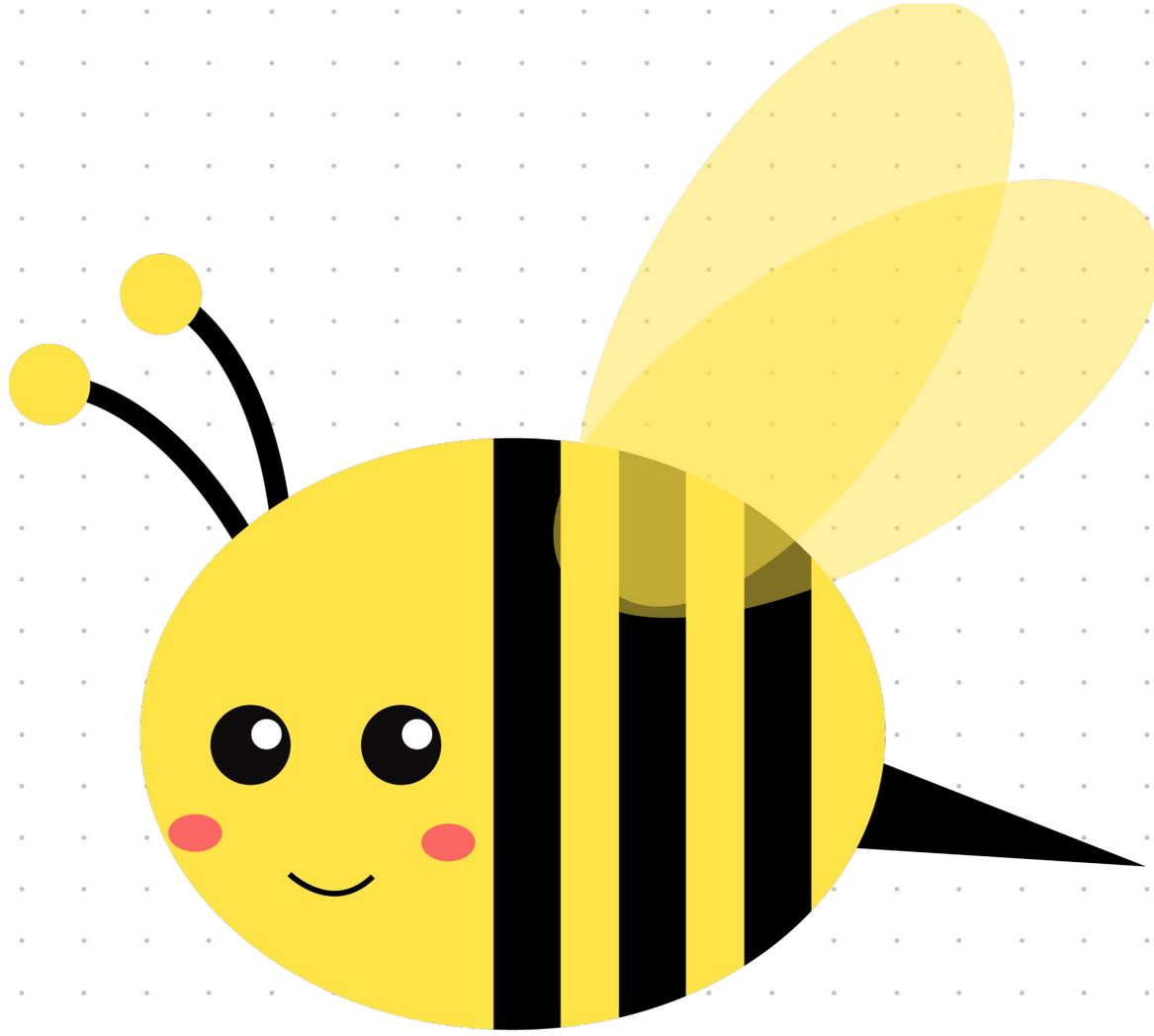

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All behavior is directly related to the ENVIRONMENT in which it occurs.

Progressive:

Responding with Empathy and Teaching

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[PROMPT]

Character Strong

PROMPT =

A research-backed, progressive approach to low-level student behavior.

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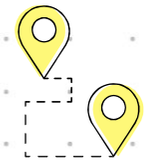


Proximity Control

Redirection Strategy

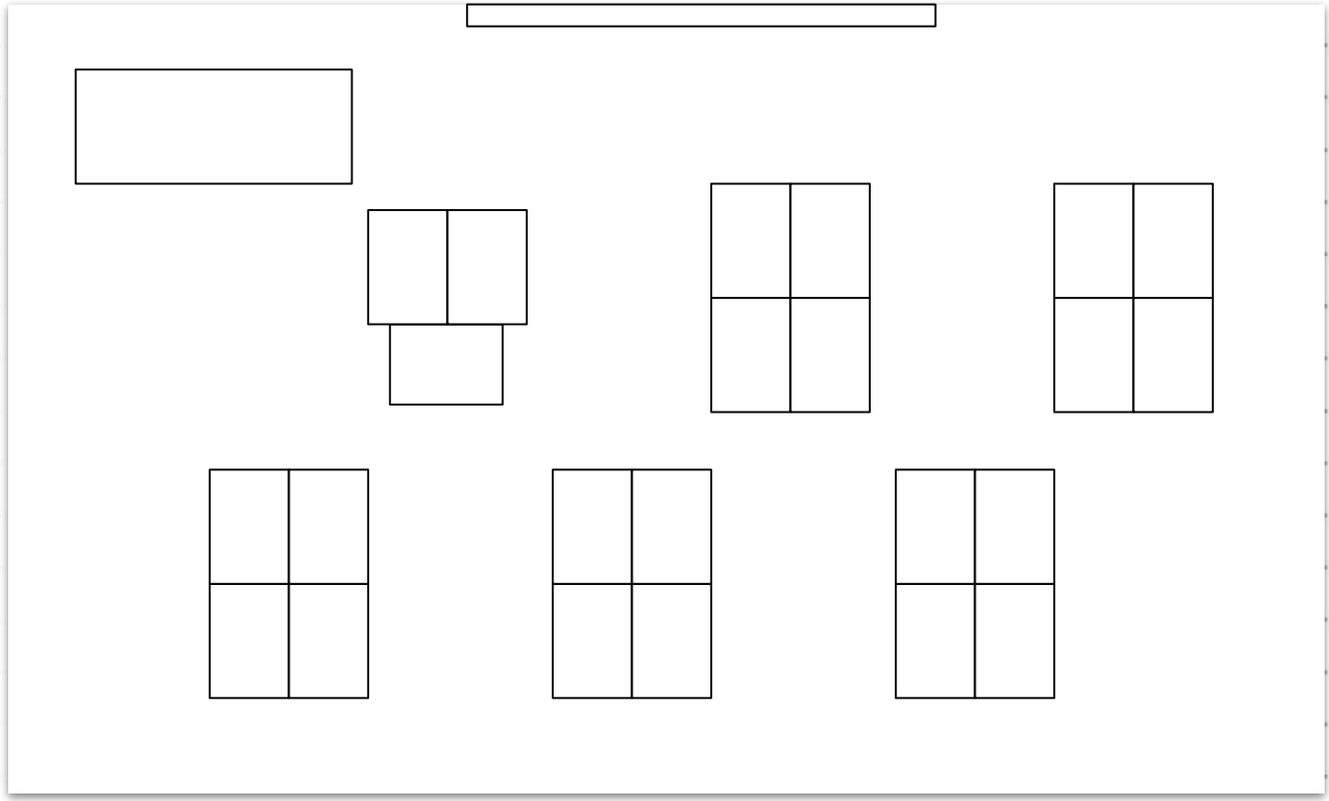
Ongoing Monitoring

Prompt Expected Behavior

Teaching Interaction

Proximity

Teach like the floor is on fire!



Proximity

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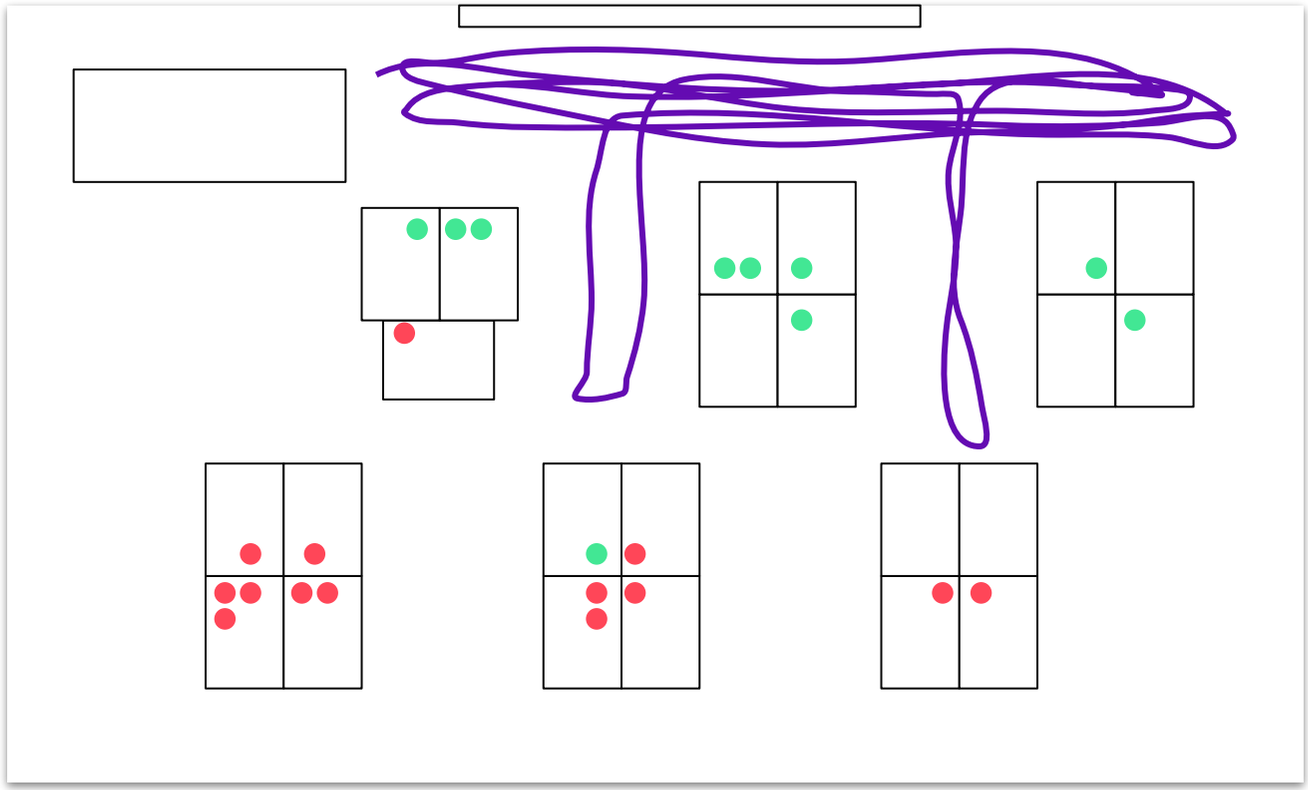

Redirection

Ask the student to do something with a high probability of answering YES.

- Breaks up current behavior
- Establishes momentum for success

Ongoing Monitoring

- Behavior specific praise
- Positive calls home

Prompt Expected Behavior

Direct | Explicit | Concise

A *do* statement with a singular direction.

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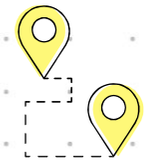

Proximity Control

Redirection Strategy

Ongoing Monitoring

Prompt Expected Behavior

Teaching Interaction

Teaching Interaction

Empathy Statement

Label Unskillful, then Skillful Behavior

Rationale & Check for Understanding

Decisional Dilemma & Think Time

Check in & Give Feedback

Empathetic Statements

Example	Non-Example
• Put aside your own feelings to see the situation through your students eyes • Understand students' feelings • Put aside judgment • Communicate that you understand	• Bring up your feelings over your students • Not understanding their feelings • Judging • Not communicating that you understand

“**Look at a stonecutter** hammering away at his rock, perhaps a hundred times without as much as a crack showing in it. Yet at the hundred-and-first blow it will *split in two*, and I know it was not the last blow that did it, but *all that had gone before.*”

–Jacob A. Riis