**Moment by Moment: An Instructional Approach to Positive Behavior**

**Positive student behavior develops from expectations, relationships, and direct instruction.**

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Although many schoolwide discipline efforts focus on systems, rules, and consequences, they often overlook effective response strategies to students' misbehavior. Without straightforward approaches to teach, encourage, and correct behavior moment by moment, discipline efforts can fall short of changing student behavior.

When asked why they don't uphold expectations and address misbehavior, teachers often say that ignoring the behavior is best, that they are unsure of *how* to respond, or that they are apprehensive about student reactions. Unfortunately, tolerating inappropriate behavior can validate the misbehavior and overlooks an opportunity to teach coping skills.

Teachers would never ignore academic errors; they would use mistakes as an opportunity to reteach. So it should be with student behavior. Teachers can modify behavior with direct instruction, practice, encouragement, and correction as needed. Instruction for positive behavior should be given *preventively* to set expectations and allow for success. In addition, teaching *incidentally* lets the teacher strengthen positive behavior through praise or discourage misbehavior with correction. Incidental teaching capitalizes on the "teachable moment" when the student is active and the learning is relevant.

For more than 25 years, educators have used five positive discipline strategies, based on the early work of renowned behavioral analyst Montrose Wolfe. Grounded in effective instruction, social learning theory, and youth-preferred adult behaviors, these strategies provide all the tools educators need to teach, encourage, and correct behavior without disrupting the classroom:

* *Individual Instruction* quickly teaches an expectation for a student who requires more frequent review to be successful.
* *Preventive Prompt* briefly reminds a student or group of an expectation just prior to the opportunity to use that behavior or skill.
* *Positive Feedback* strengthens responsible behavior through the power of praise and specific feedback.
* *Effective Reprimand* replaces common ineffective public reprimands or rhetorical questions with a brief and personal instructional redirect.
* *Corrective Teaching* responds to misbehavior, interrupting the behavior and teaching the correct response so the behavior can be practiced and reinforced. This interaction approaches misbehavior similarly to the way educators address academic errors: by reteaching and practicing. It requires as little as one minute for minor misbehavior.

Let's focus here on Corrective Teaching.

**The Corrective Teaching Process**

The Corrective Teaching process begins with the teacher speaking privately to a student who is misbehaving in a friendly way through a smile, eye contact, pleasant voice, and a hand on the shoulder. Because misbehavior can evoke frustration or anger, educators should pause to embrace the teaching moment that misbehavior offers and highlight the redeeming qualities of the student. Not only will the student be more receptive to the correction, the educator is modeling appropriate social interactions and problem solving. The steps of Corrective Teaching include:

**1. Provide praise/empathy.**

Immediately comment on something the student has or is doing right in relation to the current situation: *"Jason, thank you for calming down and looking at me."* This lets the student know you are not just correcting the negative behavior, but also noticing the good things, which helps build rapport. If it is difficult to find something to praise, an empathy statement provides the same positive opening and conveys an understanding of what the student is experiencing: *"I know it can be difficult to be corrected."*

**2. Describe inappropriate and appropriate behavior.**

After the initial praise, present a specific and nonjudgmental description of the incorrect behavior. Identifying the behavior through verbal descriptions, demonstrations, and direct quotes tells the student exactly what is not acceptable. *"When I was helping you with your work, you slouched down in your chair, folded your arms, and mumbled under your breath."*Follow that with step-by-step teaching of the behavior you'd like to see. *"A better way to accept correction is to look at the person, say 'okay,' no arguing or slouching. If you have a question, it's okay to ask calmly."*

**3. Explain a rationale or reason for the appropriate behavior.**

A rationale helps teach students the relationship between behavior and responses of others, increases compliance, and helps students rethink their commitment to desirable behavior.*"When you can accept correction, you'll be able to learn and avoid future mistakes. It is also respectful to teachers,and they will be more likely to want to help you."*

**4. Check understanding.**  
In any teaching situation, you check to see if learning has occurred. In regard to behavior, you are checking for understanding of the rationale as well as the steps the student needs to take. *"Do you see how accepting correction might help you? Tell me the steps."* [Student shares the steps.]

**5. Provide practice/feedback.**

Talking may not be enough to ensure a change in behavior. Practice ensures the student's ability to perform the skill and can also allow closure to the original problem.*"I still need to help you with your corrections, so let's practice what we just talked about. I'm going to finish going over your work; I'll be watching for those steps. Are you ready?"* [Practice by completing the correction.]

Feedback begins with general praise for the appropriate behavior followed by an exact description of the steps performed. *"Excellent, this time you looked right at me, said okay, and didn't slouch or mumble."* If errors were made, pointing those out and practicing a second time may be necessary.

**6. Provide a consequence. (Optional)**

Detaining the student to discuss the behavior correction, even briefly, is a mild consequence; however, additional simple and logical consequences may also help motivate behavior change: *"Because I had to take time to talk with you, your seatwork assignment will not be done at the end of the period. You will need to complete it on your own time and bring it to me by the end of the day. However, because you did show me you can accept correction, we'll shorten your assignment by one row. Thank you, Jason."*

Corrective Teaching always ends on a positive note, just like it began, with general praise for what the student has done well.

**Accentuating the Positive**

When everyone handles social errors as they would academic errors–with corrective feedback—students learn that what happens when they misbehave is instructional, not personal or punitive, and is intended to help them be the best they can be. Teachers are saying, *"I care too much about you to let you behave in any way other than your best. Learning behavior is just as important as math, science, etc., and we'll approach it the same way. My job is to help you with your behavior, and your job is to learn and strive to do better."*

As a process, Corrective Teaching has a natural flow for most educators and parallels their teaching pattern. It allows them to use the approaches they were professionally prepared to use: teaching and mentoring.

*Corrective Teaching*, along with the other teaching strategies encourages positive student behavior, empowers staff to respond definitively and effectively to misbehavior, and allows them to maintain and achieve high expectations for student behavior.