

What is needed for effective management in my classroom?



School resources

Since all behaviour occurs as a response to one's environment, it is essential to create a positive and safe classroom setting for supporting appropriate behaviour. An effective classroom management system promotes student engagement, teaches and reinforces appropriate behaviour, and builds positive student-teacher relationships. Both appropriate and inappropriate student behaviour occurs as a result of the interactions between the physical environment, student and teacher characteristics, the curriculum, and the instructional teaching strategies utilised. Teachers have significant influence over their classroom (in other words, the system) and, as a result, the ability to positively influence behavioural outcomes (by using specific practices). Using data (such as classroom observations and student voice) to critically review each of these variables within the classroom is necessary to develop, adjust as needed, and sustain an effective system. The purpose of this guide is to provide information on how to use a problem-solving process to self-assess and identify what is needed in order to develop an effective classroom management system, such as that established in Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

How do data guide instruction?

Effective classroom management systems such as PBIS require ongoing attention for continual improvement of the system and practices. Data are a dynamic part of decision making that provide specific, observable, and measurable information about students, teachers, or schools for problem-solving whether to continue, adopt, or modify practices and systems. Data that are valid, accurate, reliable, and efficient provide guidance in instruction and classroom management in many ways by:

- assessing how well core features of a practice or system are implemented (fidelity)
- evaluating progress toward desired goals (outcomes)
- guiding decision making and informing an action plan for improvement
- considering local norms and values (culture) when selecting and measuring strategies that support all individuals

Using a structured problem-solving process can identify areas of concern, determine why they exist, develop strategies to reduce or eliminate them, and monitor progress and outcomes. Each step of the problem-solving process requires key questions to answer and specific activities to complete in order to build an effective classroom management plan that is responsive to student needs.

Applying the problem-solving process

Applying the 4-step problem-solving process in your classroom uses multiple data sources to:

- identify and clearly define problem behaviours
- identify barriers to develop a hypothesis and prediction statement
- select and implement evidence-based PBIS classroom practices to prevent and/or reduce the problem behaviour and support appropriate behaviour

- monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving a practical and effective classroom management system that meets the needs of all students.

Step 1: Problem identification – What is the problem?

- Use data to clearly identify the problem
- Define the problem in observable (see, hear, feel) and measurable terms (number, percentage, duration)
 1. What problem behaviours occurred most often in the classroom? (Describe the behaviour. What does the behaviour 'look' like? Be specific!)
 2. When did most of the problems occur (time)?
 3. Where did most of the problem behaviours occur (context)? (e.g., large/small group, transition, seatwork, centres, math, reading, and so on)
 4. How many students were involved? (many, few)
 5. What consequences (response) were given most often by the teacher?
 6. What expectation was not met as a result of the behaviour?
 7. Why might students be engaging in the problem behaviour (function of behaviour)? (Get/Obtain or Escape/Avoid)

It's important to document any additional information about the behaviours in the classroom based on personal observations, anecdotal records, or notes. Using a summary of the data acquired, develop a **problem identification statement** by filling in the parentheses below.

- The (#) students in (class description) received a total of (# of major or minor) referrals (incidents). The most problematic behaviour(s) include (referrals by problem behaviour). The behaviour(s) occurred most often (time of day) and/or (context). The behaviours appear to occur to (Get/Obtain or Escape/Avoid – function of behaviour).

Then, complete this step by writing a **goal statement** that clarifies what is desired that students do instead of engage in the problem behaviours by filling in the parentheses below.

- During (when & where problem behaviours occurred), at least (__)% or (specific #) of the students in (class description) will demonstrate (classroom expectation; e.g., respect) by (describe specific desired student behaviour to demonstrate instead of problem behaviours).

Step 2: Problem analysis – Why is the problem occurring?

- Use data to develop a hypothesis as to why the problem may be occurring

Based on the data from Step 1, are problem behaviours occurring (a) for all class-wide, (b) for some in small group, or (c) for only a few individual student(s)? A comprehensive classroom management system is comprised of domains that include consideration for the environment, behaviour system, and curriculum and instructional practices. Student behaviour, both appropriate and inappropriate, is a result of the interactions (in other words, the classroom practices used) between these three domains. Review the questions below within and across each domain to determine if there are barriers preventing students from engaging in the classroom expectations.

Environmental considerations: Physical setting, scheduling, socialisation (Maximise structure)

- Minimal crowding, easy traffic flow, materials well organized?
- Adequate space for personal belongings?
- Daily schedule posted and reviewed?
- Effective communication strategies taught?

Behaviour system considerations: Define and teach behaviour (Teaching expectations, routines and procedures)

- Expectations, routines and procedures clearly defined, positively stated and posted?
- Expectations, routines and procedures taught? (to address skill deficit); When? How often?
- Expectations, routines and procedures practised? (to address performance deficit)

Behaviour system considerations: Reward system (Acknowledging appropriate behaviour)

- Recognition system with specific criteria exists?
- Students consistently recognised?
- Specific positive praise provided more often than negative (corrective) feedback? (5:1 ratio)

Behaviour system considerations: Consequence system (Responding to inappropriate behaviour)

- Hierarchy of responses/consequences?
- Consequences taught and consistently implemented?
- Prompts and pre-corrections provided?

Curriculum and instruction considerations: Instructional planning and delivery (Active engagement)

- What are students expected to do during instructional times when problems occur?
- What content is being covered during the most problematic instructional times?
- Variety of teaching methods, materials, and pacing? (e.g., lecture, worksheets, hands-on, whole group, small group, individual work, partners, etc.)
- Instructional strategies when most problem behaviour occurs?
- Instructional strategies when appropriate behaviour occurs?
- Curriculum matches students' skill level?
- Relevant & meaning assignments of interest? (match students' culture)

Once these domains are considered and all data have been collected and reviewed, develop a **hypothesis** (or best guess) as to why the problem behaviour may be occurring by filling in the parentheses below.

- (#) students (list the problem behaviours outlined in the problem identification statement from Step 1). 'Students engage in these behaviours because ___' (of the missing or ineffective considerations identified above – be specific). Environmental? Behaviour system? Curriculum and instruction?

Then, develop a **prediction statement** to confirm or refute the hypothesis by filling in the parentheses below. The 'If' portion of the statement outlines the planned practices to implement. The 'Then' portion describes the appropriate behaviours students are expected to demonstrate, instead of engaging in the problem behaviours as identified from the Step 1 goal statement.

- 'If' I... (classroom practices and/or strategies), 'then' students will engage in (expectation) by (behaviours in goal statement Step 1.)

Step 3: Implementation design – What are we going to do about the problem?

- Select evidence-based practices aligned with the reason(s) the problems are occurring
- Identify data to monitor the effectiveness of the practices and strategies
- Implement the practices, strategies, or interventions as designed

Designing an effective classroom management system involves targeting the identified problem behaviours (Step 1) and reduces/eliminates the barriers in the hypothesis (Step 2). The third step involves selecting and implementing **evidence-based practices** as outlined in the prediction statement (Step 2). Based on reviewing the considerations in Step 2, what needs to occur when answering these questions below? Consider the five evidence-based practices outlined in this series, the materials and supports needed to implement successfully, the person(s) responsible to implement the practices and timelines.

- **What evidence-based practices will be put in place to both support (a) appropriate behaviour and (b) reduce/eliminate problem behaviour?** For prevention (maximise structure, active engagement)? To instruct (teach alternate expected behaviours including routines and procedures)? To respond differently (acknowledge/reward appropriate behaviour and respond differently to inappropriate behaviour)?

Step 4: Evaluation – Are the practices, strategies, and/or interventions working?

- Collect and review outcome and fidelity data
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the practices to reduce or eliminate the problem

The final step in the problem-solving process is to collect and review student behaviour data, implement fidelity checks, and engage in **data-driven decision-making** to evaluate student behaviour outcomes and determine progress toward reaching the goal developed in Step 1. Reviewing the implementation fidelity of practices selected and student behaviour data can verify if the identified problems are decreasing (positive response), remaining the same (questionable response), or getting worse (poor response).

1. Are problem behaviours decreasing, increasing, or staying the same?
2. Are appropriate behaviours increasing, staying the same, or decreasing?
 - a. Are students demonstrating the expectations and following the rules & procedures?
 - b. Are students engaging in the appropriate behaviours outlined in the goal statement?
3. Has direct instructional time increased?
4. Has time on-task increased?
5. Are more students completing their assignments?
6. Are the classroom practices being implemented with fidelity (i.e., as designed/intended)?

After reviewing the data to determine how well the student has responded to the intervention (evidence-based classroom practices implemented), consider these next steps based on the results.

Positive response: Celebrate! Continue implementing the identified classroom practices that are working. Identify ways to enhance progress by extending the practices to other times, activities, or situations. Begin fading tangible reinforcers/rewards and/or increase behaviour-specific verbal praise to build teacher-student relationships and move toward student/class self-monitoring. And remember to identify the next date to review the data to check for sustainability.

Questionable response: Was the hypothesis accurate and supports the data from Step 1? Were the classroom practices selected aligned with the prediction statement from Step 2? Were the practices selected in Step 3 implemented with fidelity? Identify if there are additional barriers to implementation. Are the practices too difficult to implement? Is there adequate time to implement the practices? Modify the practices based on the identified barriers and update the classroom management plan.

Poor response: Was the hypothesis accurate and supports the data from Step 1? Were the classroom practices selected aligned with the prediction statement from Step 2? Were the practices selected in Step 3 implemented with fidelity? Do the practices address the barriers outlined across the three domains (see Step 2)? Are the practices too difficult to implement? Is there adequate time to implement the practices as intended? Modify the practices based on the identified barriers and update the implementation plan. Some additional considerations may be needed. Review the referral data to ensure accuracy of the identification of (a) the problem behaviours in Step 1, and (b) the function/purpose of the problem behaviours. Was the correct function identified and targeted in the hypothesis? Review the classroom PBIS practices identified and determine if practices (a) are linked to the function of the problem behaviours, and b) target the barriers from the domains in Step 2. Review the skills of the student(s). Do students have the pre-requisite skills to engage in the appropriate expected behaviours as outlined in the goal statement in Step 1? Is pre-teaching required?

Develop a classroom management system

Designing an effective classroom management system is essential for all teachers to ensure success. Classroom management plans like PBIS should include the following components:

- behavioural expectations
- explicit routines and procedures
- prevention strategies
- teaching strategies
- a continuum of effective responses to acknowledge/reward appropriate behaviour and respond to inappropriate behaviour
- timelines to monitor fidelity of the practices selected and student progress using a problem-solving process

A well-managed classroom encompasses the structure and organisation of the entire setting including behavioural and instructional practices. Remember to consider the domains (environmental, behaviour system, and curriculum and instruction) when developing the implementation steps for the components 3-5 above. Using data for problem-solving can guide the development of an effective classroom management system as well as inform ongoing implementation efforts for sustainability. Additional classroom resources are provided below.

- Centre on PBIS: <https://www.pbis.org/topics/classroom-pbis>
- Florida PBIS Project: <http://flpbis.cbcs.usf.edu/tiers/classroom.html>
- Northeast PBIS Network: <https://nepbis.org/classrooms-training-materials/>

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