Why Behavior Plans Fail: 7 Reasons and 7 Fixes

Presented by Philip Young
Leaders in Literacy
January 18th 2019

Adverse Effects when the plan does not work
- Student Behavior
- Placement/LRE
- Teacher Retention
- Legal Compliance
Why Behavior Plans Fail: 7 Reasons, 7 Fixes

- It’s most likely not a problem with these
  - Your FBA Form
  - Your BIP Form
  - Your data collection process
  - Your IEP process

The real reasons

- The reasons are related to (1) implementation of the plan and (2) other school/classroom practices
- Once identified, they can be remediated with increased:
  - Awareness of common errors and misperceptions
  - Behavior strategy scrutiny and corrections
  - Commitment and consistency
We will discuss and fix

- Three reasons related to components of the BIP that break down in implementation (regardless of how well it is written)
- Four reasons related to school practices that sabotage the BIP (regardless of how well it is written)

Reason #1

There are no small, pre planned consequences for noncompliance with directions

Note: Noncompliance should not result in office referrals, in-school suspensions, out of school suspensions, or any other removal from class
Noncompliance

- Virtually every student misbehavior can be traced back to not following a direction given by an adult.
- If noncompliance is addressed with small, predictable consequences, more severe behavior is prevented.
- Many behavior plans contain specifics for aggression and other highly disruptive behavior, but not for non-compliance.
- Because behavior plans rarely include specific, small consequences for noncompliance, adults fall back on human nature...

Behavior Escalation
(or How We Make Kids Worse Over Time)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Withdrawing or Changes Request/“Negotiates” (OK, you can have 5 more minutes)</th>
<th>Tantrum/Aggression Stops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large Threats (I guess you don’t want to go on the fieldtrip…)</td>
<td>Tantrum/Aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Threats/Warnings (If you don’t, you won’t get…)</td>
<td>Argue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Prompts (Come on, Let’s go. If you do, I’ll give you…)</td>
<td>Delay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request in Question Form (Would you sit down? Could you get your book out? Are you ready to work?)</td>
<td>Ignore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Fix #1

1. Structure language when giving directions; use a standard two-part direction with precise wording.

2. Establish a consequence hierarchy of small steps for noncompliance with directions.

Fix #1 - Precision Directions

Definition: A method for delivering teacher directions to prompt compliance and consistently follow up noncompliance (Jenson & Reavis, 1997).
Steps (Jenson, & Reavis, 1997)
1. 1st request for compliance using “Please” and characteristics of effective commands
2. Wait 5 seconds – if there is compliance: REINFORCE!
3. Noncompliance: Repeat request using signal words: You need to …
4. Compliance: REINFORCE!
5. Noncompliance: mild preplanned negative consequence (e.g., loss of opportunity to earn token for that time period)
Evidence: DeMartini-Scully et al., 2000; Kehle et al., 2000; Mackay et al., 2001; Musser et al., 2001; Neville & Jenson, 1984
Note: Consider using Precision Requests in combination with other strategies as part of a multicomponent intervention (e.g., Kehle et al., 2000)
Fix #1 - Precision Directions

1. “Name, direction, please”

WAIT 3 to 5 seconds (students with no language delays)
WAIT 7 to 10 seconds (students with language delays)

Compliance
REINFORCE!

Non-compliance

Fix #1 - Precision Directions

2. “Name, you need to direction.”

WAIT 3 to 5 seconds (students with no language delays)
WAIT 7 to 10 seconds (students with language delays)

Compliance
REINFORCE!

Non-compliance
Fix #1 - Precision Directions

3. Pre-planned Consequence

Label the behavior --- “That’s not following direction.”
Label the consequence --- “That’s ______.”

Compliance
REINFORCE!

Non-compliance

Small, Preplanned Consequences

1. 32 sec.  
Example – recess minutes
2. 1 min., 13 sec.  
• Small steps  
• Feels inconvenient for student  
• Hierarchy – 4 or 5 steps  
• Does not interrupt instruction
3. 1 min., 28 sec.
4. 1 min., 47 sec.
5. 2 min., 7 sec.
Small, Preplanned Consequences

1. 17 sec.  
   Example – passing time (secondary)

2. 38 sec.  
   - Small steps
     - Feels inconvenient for student
     - Hierarchy – 4 or 5 steps
     - Does not interrupt instruction

3. 54 sec.

4. 1 min., 8 sec.

5. 1 min., 23 sec.

Fix #1 - Precision Commands

Students are taught the process ahead of time

Students know exactly when the consequence will occur (after noncompliance with “need” step)

Consequences are predictable and consistent

More severe/escalated behavior is prevented
Reason #2

“High rates of positives” statement in the BIP does not translate into high rates in the classroom.

The BIP may say something like this:

There is a wide range of interpretation of “high rates”
Problem #2

- “High rates” doesn’t translate from the BIP because
  - The schedule of reinforcement is too thin (by midafternoon the student has received only 3 points on a point card)
  - Staff uses an all-or-nothing rating for blocks of time (e.g., behavior contracts that rely solely on end-of-day or end-of-period ratings)

Non Example: 4/5 ‘good’ days = privilege on Friday

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Non Example: 5/7 ‘good’ class periods/subjects = privilege at end of day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
<th>5th</th>
<th>6th</th>
<th>7th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Non Example: 5/7 ‘good’ class periods/subjects = privilege at end of day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Social Studies</th>
<th>Language Arts</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Specials</th>
<th>Computer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There's more reinforcement for off-task than on-task: almost all “redirections” and reminders to get back on-task are, in effect, rewarding the student for off-task, over and over.

There is no visual feedback component (point card, chart moves, etc...); these are needed to prompt the adults to reinforce and to motivate kids by creating anticipation.

There is no visual menu of reinforcers; verbal reminders are not enough and are often paired with attention for off-task.

Fix #2

- Rate of reinforcement must be higher than baseline
- Visual feedback component (point card, etc...); cumulative system; minute-by-minute feedback, in the beginning.
- Planned ignoring for the small stuff, combined with proximity praise of peers; adults need to be trained to quit talking to misbehavior.
Reason #3
Not enough of the school day is spent in academic learning time.

What does a lack of academic learning time look like?
- Free time blocks in the schedule
- Long, inefficient transitions
- ‘Fluff” activity group rotations vs. academic groups
  - iPad group (free play on iPads)
  - Fine motor group (with little change in activities all year)
  - Art group
  - Free reading group

No reinforcers or negative consequences can compensate for lack of engagement.
What does a lack of academic learning time look like?

- Too much whole-group instruction, especially in self-contained classrooms.
- Too many filler activities
  - Videos
  - Multiple art projects
  - Long opening/calendar times in lower grades

Fix #3

- Direct unambiguous feedback from increased observations
- Posted schedule for students
- Posted schedule for adults
- No down time, no free time, limited filler activities
- Explicit instruction; limited worksheets
Social skills training 1x per week is not enough (but it’s the norm)

Reason #4

Inadequate instruction time for teaching replacement behavior(s) to mastery

Fix #4

- Teach social skills and other replacement behaviors 3 to 4 times per week, 20-40 minutes, depending on the grade level

- Who’s going to fit that into their schedule?
Social Skills Instruction

- Review student’s social skills goals with the entire team.
- Prioritize and combine across team members – school based counselor, speech and language therapist, special education teacher.
- May need to decrease total # of goals and amend the IEP.

Benefits

- The student is taught the same skills 3 to 4 times per week.
- Increased instructional time for the student without adding a session to any team members schedule.
- Built-in generalization – the same skill taught across three staff members, three settings, and with different groups of peers.
Zero-tolerance approach results in the overuse of suspension and other ineffective and/or harmful interventions.

**Reason #5**

No school plan for restorative practices

---

**Restorative Practices**

- Suspended students are more likely to fail classes and have chronic absences (Hammond, Linton, Smink, & Drew, 2007)
- Increased disengagement and subsequent drop-outs have significant social and economic impact (Rumberger & Losen, 2016)
- Experiencing just one out-of-school suspension can potentially alter a student’s educational trajectory (Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2013)
- Minority students are suspended at significantly higher rates than their white peers (Noltemeyer, Marie, Mcloughlin, & Vanderwood, 2015)
Fix #5

Implement School wide Restorative Practices

- Staff training on the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)
  - Awareness of types of ACES
  - Effects on brain development
  - Specific resultant behavior

Restorative Practices

- Relationship-building
  - Check-in, check-out
  - Include one-to-one adult time on reinforcement menu
  - Give student a school job (investment, belonging, ownership)
- Accountability
  - Structured social restitution (apologies, social skills groups)
  - Physical restitution (supervised repair and/or improvement)
- Example: Classroom Circles – centerforrestorativeprocess.com
Reason #6

No systematic student access to alternative to handwriting for work completion (all ages)

Example: Students with Autism – Kennedy-Kreiger study (2009)

Fix #6 – Low-Tech Strategies

- Allow verbal responses for assignments and non-standardized tests; assign a scribe
- Use older peer tutors to augment individual student help (adds a natural reinforcer); kids will often attempt tasks with a peer.
- Other low-tech alternatives - spelling tests on magnetic board, etc...
Fix #6 – High-Tech Strategies

- Co:Writer
- SnapType app
  - Take a picture of the worksheet, page in book, etc...
  - It’s instantly converted to an editable document.
  - Student uses keyboard to complete assignment.
  - Assignment can be printed or emailed to teacher.
- Voice-to-text (Google Read and Write)

---

Fix #6

- Find ways to have students demonstrate mastery of concepts without touching pencil lead to paper.

- This alone will eliminate the need for “escape” behaviors on the part of many students.
Misperceptions about the role of reinforcement
Awful Clip Charts

Reason #7
Lack of consistency in implementation of BIP in general education settings
**Why don’t they work?**

- Too subjective
- Often there are no clear criteria for moving up/down
- Adults are not consistent
- Public Shaming

**Why don’t they work?**

But mostly because...
- When you use the same system for both positives and negatives, both types of consequence lose their impact.
Fix #7

- School-wide behavior training and behavior/discipline plans
- All team members aware of and trained on individual student BIPs
  - Immediate training priorities for all BIP implementation
    - ‘Planned ignoring’ strategy combined with differential SR+ for desired behavior
    - Direct feedback about clip charts
      - Utter uselessness and negative effects

Contact Information

Please give me feedback on this session:
https://tinyurl.com/aikenlil

Philip Young
Coordinator of Evaluation & Student Services
School Psychologist II
Aiken County School District
803-641-2624 ext 12323
pyoung@acpsd.net


Melissa Genaux – LRP National Institute 2018