Introduction

This document is written as a reference manual of strategies for classroom

behaviour management. The goal is that a teacher could consult this docu-

ment in order to prompt them to think of strategies they could implement

in their classroom.

This handbook is organised in chapters. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 form a

list of strategies, each as a section or sub-section therein. This list is not

intended to be comprehensive. These chapters separate strategies into the

three broad categories of: preventive, supportive, and corrective, respectively. The description of each strategy is as minimal as possible.

Further discussion of examples and theory are left for later chapters and ap-

pendices. Some strategies fall in multiple categories. I will include an entry

for a strategy in multiple chapters only if I deem that their use (or purpose)

is so different in the different categories context that they warrant considera-

tion as separate strategies. Chapter 5 aligns some of the videos shown in lectures

to these strategies, and Appendix A includes synopses and more detailed discussion of these videos. Chapter 6 introduces a selection of theorists, their

theories, and how they relate to the listed strategies.

Disclaimer 1: I’ve written this document from my perspective, so any

statements that are not explicitly referenced to be otherwise are my personal

opinion and nothing more.

Disclaimer 2: In some places I might use language such as “It is wrong

to...”, “You should...”, etc. — it is important to recognise that every situa-

tion comes with it’s own intricacies and context and that no such absolute

statements can ever be universal.

Word Count: 3080

Preventative Strategies

Are preventative in the sense that they describe strategies that can help

prevent misbehaviour occurring in the first place. These are by far the most

preferable strategies to be using and so should always be the place to start.

Praise

Praise your students! Some students may never have been praised before,

don’t underestimate the power it can have. Be specific — praise some

work they have done, or how they self regulated. But most importantly: be

genuine, if you are not, your students will know.

Show Interest

Be interested in what is going on in your students lives. This is a natural

extension of not assuming and being compassionate, but can also lead

to learning about what is important to your students and this can allow you

to design relevant and interesting lessons for them.

Use Names

Learn the students names. Use them. Students will appreciate the effort

you demonstrated by putting in the work. Similarly to praise, the

impact of this strategy is not to be underestimated.

Supportive: Using names can also be used to reinforce supportive strate-

gies such as praising peers by showing that you are not only noticing

a students on-task behaviour, but remembering that specific students name.

Rapport with Students

Praise, using names are both ways of showing interest in

your students. When you do these things you can develop a rapport with

the students and that can be a powerful and valuable thing.

Establish Routines and Procedures

Habit is powerful. If you can instill routines into you class early, you can

save yourself alot of headache in the future.

Democratic setting of classroom practices

Discuss classroom practices with students — give them an opportunity to

share their opinions. If they buy into the rules and routines by having influ-

ence on deciding what they are, they will have a sense of ownership, and be

more likely to follow those rules and routines.

Set clear Expectations

Once the ’rules’ of the class have been established, either by you or by demo-

cratic process with the class, ensure to communicate them clearly

and enforce them consistently.

Use of Language

The words we choose and the way we speak can have a profound impact on

how people perceive us, and students can be particularly sensitive to this.

• Use inclusive language — don’t assume!

• Use clear and concise sentences.

• Use appropriate vocabulary.

• Articulate well, and at an appropriate volume.

• If you have any English as an additional language students, or students

with hearing impairments, ensure they have access to the information:

– Use sign language (if possible),

– Provide translations (if possible),

– Speak slowly and clearly,

– Articulate deliberately,

– Do the above without being condescending.

Clear Instructions

It is particularly crucial to be clear when delivering instructions. For verbal

instructions,

• Be heard: Ensure there is silence before delivering instructions.

• Ensure students have access to all the information they need: If you

are asking them to interpret an image, ensure they can see the image,

etc.

• Use clear verbs so it is clear what is expected of them: “Calcu-

late”, “Write”, etc.

Clear Materials

Delivering instructions clearly equally applies to written instructions, not

only verbal instructions. This means using appropriate fonts

and vocabulary, etc.

Non-verbals

Similar to the use of language, non-verbals such as body language,

positioning, attitude, facial expressions, etc. have a big impact on how you

are perceived.

Enthusiasm

The students can tell if you are genuinely enthusiastic about the lesson, about

the topic, about seeing them, and enthusiasm is infectious.

Preparation

This is an important strategy. If you put in work preparing for your classes,

it will pay off both because of the preparation itself, but also because your

students will recognise the work you have put in for them, and appreciate it.

Relevance

Design material (lessons, activities, etc.) that is relevant to your students

lives. If you have some rapport with your students you can ask them

what they are interested in and design lessons and activities around their

interests.

Fun

Design interesting and fun lessons and activities! Similar to relevance

if you have some rapport with your students you could try asking them

what they think might be fun and try designing a lesson around that.

Variety

If you do the same kind of activity over and over, it will get boring. Mix it

up! Use a variety of approaches and activities both within a class and across

classes.

Structure

Design structured lessons. This is vague and broad, but having prepared an

appropriate amount of activities and a structure linking them together in a

lesson cannot be overstated.

Lesson Movement / Momentum

Having multiple different activities in your lessons is important.

Be aware of transitions between activities. Insist on silence and attention

before you deliver instructions for the next activity, and work this

into a class routine.

Start Well

Starting the class represents a big transition: from out-of-class to in-class,

and so you should ensure to managed it the same way. This is a

particularly important routine to set. One way to manage the start of

a lesson in a structured way is to use a starter activity. A starter

is a short (5-10min) activity that is fun, engaging, and easy, and serves the

function of settling the class.

Time Management

Reflect on how you have been spending your time in class, and if necessary

make adjustments.

Model appropriate behaviors

Don’t be a hypocrite. If you ask the students to behave a certain way —

adhere to the same standard yourself.

Supportive Strategies

Are for situations when misbehavior is occuring but is not so severe as to

require being addressed directly. Supportive strategies aim to encourage and

guide students towards adopting more productive and helpful behaviours.

Praise

Although praise can be preventative, it can also be used as a supportive

strategy. For students who sometimes meander off task, praising their on-

task behaviour can encourage more on-task behaviours.

Peer Praise

One of the strongest forms of praise you can offer a student is that of their

peers — if a student has done something particularly well, encourage their

peers to applaud, or similar. Warning: certain types of students may react

badly to this, use with discretion.

Praise Peers

Misbehaviour motivated by wanting your attention can be managed by prais-

ing other on-task students combined with carefully not giving attention to

the misbehaviour.

Be Compassionate

You don’t know what your students have gone through at home or in their

lives. You don’t know if their misbehaviour is malicious or is just coming

from learnt emotional reactions they have no control over. Don’t assume.

Train your initial reflex reaction to misbehaviour to be one of compassionate

calm. This has the potential to open a door to building rapport. It can

also help in giving genuine praise and showing interest.

This strategy is obviously easier said than done, but it is an important one

to keep in the back of your mind as you work on your personal development.

Scaffolding

If students are losing interest and going off-task as a result of trying, but

struggling to complete, a task — offer to help (scaffold) them in completing

the task. If you can give them a sense of success and accomplishment by

helping them complete the task, this can encourage future on-task behaviour.

Proximity (“The Whisper Technique”)

Proximity can be used as a supportive strategy by using it to deliver help

privately. Often if you offer help publically (in front of the students

classmates) it can be embarrassing for them and they might not be receptive.

In contrast, using proximity to deliver aid in a whisper that is not as public

can improve the chances that the student will be receptive to the scaffolding.

Corrective: Proximity can also be used to deliver correctives, either

a soft corrective simply by placing yourself (the teacher) near the misbe-

haviour to deter it, or by whispering an admonishment or a direct appeal. Warning: Proximity can be very intimidating and can prompt a strong

response in students if used in the wrong circumstances or with the wrong

student — use discretion.

Distraction

Distract the misbehaving student by giving them something unrelated and

interesting to engage their attention.

Tactical Ignoring

This is the other half of the coin to praising peers when dealing with

attention seeking students. You can deliberately ignore off-task behaviour,

giving your attention instead to on-task behaviour and the misbehaving stu-

dents may begin to feel left out, and start to cooperate in an attempt to be

Included.

Wait time.

Broken sentences — pause to get attention if students are misbehaving to

signal them to stop. This is one of those borderline correctives, also called

“Canter’s “Broken Record”” in Figure 4.1.

Challenge Students

Particularly if you suspect the misbehaviour is motivated from boredom, is-

sue a challenge to the misbehaviours to complete some task — preferably a

relevant and engaging task that will challenge them.

Use humour to depotentiate

Is a students misbehaviour has led to confrontation or tension in the class-

room, try using humour to depotentiate the situation.

Corrective Strategies

Are for the times when students misbehave to a point that their misbehaviour

must be addressed directly and can no longer be managed by supportive

strategies alone. The central thinking when implementing a corrective should

always be to avoid escalation. The harsher the corrective used, the more likely

it is to result in escalation, and so it is always preferable to use the softest

corrective possible that manages the behaviour. See Figure 4.1.

It is also important to note the special case of chronic misbehaviour —

in this case it is particularly important to try to understand the underlying

cause of the misbehaviour, for which Dreikurs’ social discipline model

can be particularly helpful. Hence I have incorporated my discussion of

strategies for managing chronic misbehaviour into section 6.6.

Eye Contact

Catch the misbehaving students’ eye from across the room and hold their

gaze for a moment.

Calling on Student

Call out the misbehaving student by name.

Questioning Awareness of Effect

Ask the misbehaving student if they are aware of the effect their behaviour

is having on the class or surrounding students.

Gordons I-Messages

Gordon suggested a three step process for initiating a conversation with

a student in a non-confrontational way (at least that is the intention!) about

behaviour the teacher is unhappy with:

• Describe the disruptive behaviour.

• Describe the effect on the teacher and/ or other students.

• Describe your feelings about the behaviour.

Reminder of Rules

Remind the student, by name, of the rule they are in violation of. Note

that these rules should have already been clearly set out previously — that they are breaking.

Direct Appeal

Tell the student, by name, to stop the misbehaviour. Note: do not ask

or use ”please”, you are giving a directive.

Glassers’ Triplets

Are three questions that can be posed to a student to answer:

• What are you doing?

• Is that against the rules?

• What should you be doing instead?

If the student is being uncooperative, instead of engaging in a confrontation

you should simply state the answers to these questions and move on 2 .

Private Talk

Arrange for a time out of class to talk with the student or students. Often

it might be easiest to ask them to stay after class. This would be one of my

preferred correctives, should a strong corrective be needed.

Give Choice

Give the misbehaving student a choice: either stop the misbehaviour, or

suffer a consequence.

Apply Sanctions

If the student has:

• been given a choice and chosen not to stop the misbehaviour, or

• broken an established rule either defined by you, the school, or by

the class,

then you must deliver the consequence, which could be anywhere from staying

back after class, having a chat with you, being ejected from the class,

detention, or even exclusion or suspension.

Video Examples

In the interests of brevity, all I will present here is a table showing the corre-

spondence between the video examples and the strategies. This is intended

to allow a teacher interested in a particular strategy to quickly and easily

identify which videos are relevant to that strategy. I have written more de-

tailed synopses and reviews of these videos, including specific time-stamps

for various key points discussed, see Appendix A. Infact, I use the section

numbering of Appendix A to identify the videos in Table 5.1

Theories and Theorists

In this chapter I discuss a selection of theories and theorists.

Skinners’ Operant Conditioning

Burrhus Frederic Skinner is attributed to the version of behaviorism “radi-

cal behaviorism” and amongst other things developed “operant conditioning” beyond the initial work of Edward Lee

Thorndike. In the context of teaching operant conditioning

is typically implemented through extrinsic motivators. That is, the “carrot

and stick” concept. In practice this will involve reinforcement either positive

(rewards such as praise are given for the desired behaviour), or negative

(retract sanctions as a reward for the desired behaviour).

Thomas Gordon

The approach of Thomas Gordon came to be known as ”the Gordon Model”,

and is centred on ”the importance of developing meaningful mutually bene-

ficial relationships”. Gordon believed that in relationships each

party (in our case students and teachers) bring their own values and needs,

and that these will inevitably not match and result in conflict. Gordon sug-

gested that to resolve such conflicts the first step is to identify who ”owns”

the problem — that is in essence, which is the disgruntled party. Then:

• If the student ”owns” the problem, the teacher should engage in ”active

listening” — that is they should listen to the students grievance and

genuinely try to understand and empathise with their frustrations.

• If the teacher ”owns” the problem, then they should use an ”I-message”

to initiate a conversation in a non-confrontational way.

Finally, the objective in Gordons framework is to achieve a solution in which

both parties have contributed and feel invested in, similar in principle to the

buy-in discussed in 2.5.1.

Vygotsky’s ZPD

The Zone of Proximal Development or ZPD was first proposed by Lev Vy-

gotsky, who defined it as

the distance between the actual development level as deter-

mined by independent problem solving and the level of potential

development as determined through problem solving under adult

guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.”

Although the concept has been developed further since, the basic principle

remains very close to the original proposed by Vygotsky, and fits well with

the broader philosophy of constructivism.

The key consequence for teachers is that according to this constructivist

model, all learning occurs in the ZPD. In essence, this puts the concept of

scaffolding front and centre to all teaching and learning efforts. In

order to maintain engagement and deliver effective teaching, students need

to be kept in the ZPD by careful planning of lessons and provision of

appropriate scaffolding.

Jacob Kounin

Jacob Kounin suggested good “Lesson Movement” is needed for effective

teaching. This means, amongst other things, regular transitions between

activities: the same activity over long periods would get stale.

Kounin suggested that in order to achieve good lesson movement, five compo-

nents where needed: “withitness” (a term he coined), overlapping, momen-

tum, smoothness, and group focus. Each of these has its own subtleties in

Kounin’s theories, but in essence, they sum to an awareness of the class and

an ability to intercede and prevent misbehaviours before they occur. Kounin

also wrote alot about the effect a teacher can have on misbehaviour in their

class through mostly preparatory techniques such as structuring lessons

Well.

Dreikurs’ Social Discipline Model (in the

context of chronic misbehaviour management)

Dreikurs’ “Social Discipline Model” claims that the goal of misbehavior is

usually one of:

• attracting attention,

• power,

• revenge, or

• escape by withdrawal.

and that which one it is likely to be can be diagnosed by observing the effect

the behaviour has on the teacher. If the teacher feels:

• Minor annoyance and frustration, the goal is attention seeking.

• Personally challenged, the goal is power.

• Deeply hurt, the goal is revenge.

• Like giving up, the goal is escape by withdrawal.

The two most common goals are attracting attention, and escape by with-

drawal. There are two broad approaches to addressing chronic misbehaviour,

which can roughly be matched against these two goals respectively:

• Relationship Building: through building rapport and having pri-

vate conversations with the student, often acceptable behaviours

can be negotiated where both the teachers and the students needs are

being met.

• Breaking the cycle of discouragement: through scaffolding, careful design of lessons and praise, the student can be given a feeling

of success which can sometimes break through their cycle of discour-

agement.