

P-5: Establish behavior management plans

Consequences that work – Elementary

Structures that make rules work by encouraging desired behavior and deterring misbehavior

[Why have consequences?](#)

[What are criteria for effective consequences?](#)

[What are examples of effective negative and positive consequences?](#)

[Examples within actual behavior management plans](#)

[Negative consequences](#)

[Sample progression of negative consequences](#)

[Positive consequences](#)

[Why and how should I track consequences?](#)

Why have consequences?

- They tell students what happens if they break a rule
- They tell students what happens if they follow a rule
- They introduce choice – once students know the consequence, they are choosing their destiny when they choose to break the rule
- They are an effective way to teach self-discipline (i.e., the cause and effect relationship between action and consequence)
- They serve as feedback for student behavior - just like with academic learning, feedback is critical to behavioral learning

What are criteria for effective consequences?

Characteristics	Rationale	Examples to Follow	Examples to Avoid
Gradual	Gradual consequences progressing from less severe to more severe as misbehavior is repeated.* This sends the message that students have the potential to behave and simply need to understand and choose to follow the expectation. When they repeat the misbehavior, they choose the more severe consequences.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Warning 2. Short detention after class or school 3. Written plan for improvement 4. Guardian contact 5. Severe clause: Sent to principal 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Warning 2. Sent to office <p>or</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phone call home 2. Parent conference 3. In school detention
Logical or natural	Natural consequences follow from the event or situation, as students are allowed to experience the outcome of their poor choices or behavior, highlighting the rationale	If a student runs to be the first in line, he receives a warning and is asked to walk instead at the end of the line. (natural)	When a student is disrespectful to a group member during group work, they are allowed to remain in the group but are held in from recess. (neither logical nor natural)

P-5: Establish behavior management plans

	<p>of the rule.</p> <p>Logical consequences are structured learning opportunities arranged to teach appropriate behavior.</p>	<p>When a student misbehaves during rehearsal for a play, she receives a warning and is told that if the poor behavior continues, she will have to sit out of the rehearsal until the next day. (logical)</p>	<p>Having students write “standards” (i.e., writing “I will listen to the teacher” 100 times) (not logical – it does not teach students how to improve their listening skills and it might suggest to students that writing is a punishment)</p>
<p>Maintain student dignity</p>	<p>Consequences should be consistent from student to student, and delivery of consequences should always address the particular behavior in question, not the student as a person and his or her behavioral history.</p>	<p>If three students interrupt the teacher during a class period, they all receive a warning.</p>	<p>If three students interrupt the teacher during a class period, the first gets ignored, the second gets a harsh warning, and the third student, who has a history of not raising his hand, gets detention after school because the teacher is so “fed up” by that time.</p>
<p>Likely to encourage desired behavior</p>	<p>Ultimately, if your consequences aren’t meaningful for students, they won’t be effective, even if they meet the criteria above.</p> <p>Your negative consequences must be undesirable and the positive consequences must be desirable for your students</p>	<p>This will depend on your students’ age and interests.</p> <p>View examples of common effective consequences for elementary students below.</p> <p>Ultimately, you will need to get to know your students to determine what consequences will work best for them.</p>	<p>Whole-class consequences for individual misbehavior (this will likely just anger students and cause more misbehavior)</p> <p>Making students do classroom chores as a punishment (e.g. organizing or passing out papers) (this is often used as an effective privilege so many students will probably enjoy this)</p>

* In the case of severe behavior that stops the entire class from functioning (e.g., fighting between students) students forfeit the right to move through the hierarchy of consequences. Such behavior calls for immediate removal from the classroom. However, save administrative intervention for extremely serious offenses such as fighting. Involving administration takes the situation out of your control and students may no longer see you as the ultimate authority.

What are examples of effective negative and positive consequences?

[Negative consequences](#)

[Sample progression of negative consequences](#)

[Positive consequences](#)

P-5: Establish behavior management plans

Negative Consequences

Consequences	Description
Call or write home	You might have students fill out a form that encourages them to reflect on their behavior. A family member should be required to read over and sign the reflection form before the student returns it to you the next day. If you have access to a phone and a free period you might have the student call home with you during a break in the day. Or, you could call a family member in the evening or send a note home with the student. When communicating with the family member about the misbehavior, always begin with a sincere positive comment about the student, explain the specific misbehavior that occurred that day, and state your confidence that the student will make positive choices in the future.
Send student to another room	Many teachers have arrangements with a nearby colleague where they can bring a student to the other teacher's classroom to work independently on an assignment. This strategy serves to provide the student with a chance to calm down and regroup. Be sure to avoid communicating an attitude of "good riddance" and do not use this strategy regularly. Leaving your room with no further consequence might be exactly what your student wants.
Revoke privileges	At the elementary level, chronic misbehavior results in a loss of recess time, classroom jobs, computer privileges, or other pre-determined "valuable" activities.
Move student to another seat	When a student is distracting – or seems distracted by – a nearby student, you should move him or her to another seat. Doing this in the middle of class is often quite effective with younger students (K-6). This immediate seat move can also be effective with older students. Some teachers suggest going a step further and creating a new, well-considered seating chart to implement the very next day if you discover there are several pairs or groups of students that need to be separated.
Time-out chair	Most appropriate in younger grades, the time-out chair is a physical space where students can go to cool off and think about their behavior. You might also have a student write a note of apology or a reflection on how to make better choices in the future. See the Tools section for a sample Reflection Journal and Behavior Essays.
Detention	Though you should check with your administration on the exact policies involved, you may have the authority to assign lunch or after-school detention to disobedient students. During detention, a student might have to clean all the desks in your classroom after defacing his, or complete a form that explains what he did wrong, why he made a poor choice, and what he plans to do when faced with a similar choice in the future.
"Hands are Not for"	If students use their hands to hurt others, you might consider requiring them to use their hands to

P-5: Establish behavior management plans

Hurting”	<i>help</i> others instead. The Hands are Not for Hurting Project is a non-profit organization that has developed a program of non-violence and conflict resolution. ¹ See Tools section for more information on introducing and using this.
“On the Porch”	When students misbehave at the KIPP academies, they are relegated to “the porch,” which comes from the expression, “If you can’t run with the big dogs, stay on the porch.” When a student is on the porch, she is not allowed to sit or eat with the rest of her class and she must write a letter of apology explaining what she did and why she is sorry.

Sample progression of negative consequences

- 1st time: warning
- 2nd time: 10 minutes away from group
- 3rd time: miss recess/speak to teacher
- 4th time: write behavior reflection/call home
- Severe clause: removal from classroom

[top](#)
[back to top of this section](#)

Positive consequences

Note: These positive reinforcements can be used both to reinforce behavior and to encourage students to work hard toward academic achievement (I-4).

- Praise – read about how to deliver praise effectively on the E-4 page
- Classroom privileges (e.g., using the computer at recess, helping the teacher, passing out papers, etc.)
- Eating lunch with the teacher (also a great way to build relationships with students)
- Positive phone calls home (read more about involving student influencers on the I-6 page)
- Other extrinsic rewards (e.g. tickets, raffles, prizes, team/group/class points, etc.)

Why and How Should I Track Consequences?

Tracking consequences is a way to maintain transparency and organize your management system.

What are the benefits?

- **Transparency for students** - students are more motivated to behave when they know what is expected of them and when they can track their progress towards the ultimate goal of exemplary behavior. Plus, if they don’t know where they are on the hierarchy of consequences, they can’t make informed decisions about how to behave.
- **Transparency for you** – if you don’t know how many warnings a student has, then you don’t know what consequence to enact at the next instance of misbehavior.
- **Good for your records** - you will need these citations for parent conferences, for proof during a disciplinary hearing, and for your own reflection on your interaction with students. Plus, you can always refer back to your records – and point back to the appropriate entry – if a student says this is her first offense.

¹ <http://www.handsproject.org/home.html>, accessed 1/30/06.

P-5: Establish behavior management plans

Systems for tracking student behavior

System	Explanation
Traffic Lights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A popular system at the early elementary level, the green, yellow, and red regions of a traffic light represent different levels of behavior. Student names are put on a clothespin and the teacher moves the pins up and down depending on student behavior (green = excellent behavior, yellow = warning, and red = consequence, such as time out or missed recess. Some teachers add another color, such as blue, which indicates that a phone call will be made to parents.) After students have completed the consequence, the teacher should move the student's clothespin back to yellow, and then to green with continued appropriate behavior. Students should be granted a fresh start each new day by beginning again on green. The principles of this consequence system can be applied in many different ways. For example, if you do a new thematic unit every 6 or 9 weeks, you might substitute a space ship for the traffic light during a unit on outer space or a sunflower during a unit on plants. When you begin the new unit, you have a great opportunity to review your rules and consequences when presenting the new system (which is the same except now students should be aiming to keep their clothespin at the top of the space ship or on the head of the flower).
Card Charts	<p>Many teachers, especially those who teach elementary students and have the same group of students all day, set up a class "card chart." In this system, each student has a library card pocket with his or her name on it and five cards of different colors. Rachel Schankula (Delta '99) had her fifth graders begin the day on black, representing excellent behavior.</p> <p>If a student chose to break a class rule, she was directed to move the black card to the back of the pocket and ensure that the yellow card, which represented a formal warning, was in the front. If the student chose to break a rule again, they put the red card in the front. This meant that the student had to sit by herself in the cafeteria OR write a behavior essay AND that I would call her parents that night regarding the observed behavior. If the student chose to break a rule yet again, she reached the blue card, which resulted in a 15-minute after-school detention on Friday afternoon (I would send a notice home to parents to let them know that we would need to make arrangements for their child to stay for detention). In extreme situations, a student reached her white card, which meant that the student had to leave the classroom immediately and go to the principal's office. I kept a record of where students' cards were at the end of the day in an Excel file. I referred back to this file when determining conduct grades and when having parent/student conferences. Every Monday morning, each student would start over again on the black card.</p>
Behavior rubric	<p>Similar to the traffic light system but instead of colors each level on the chart is a description of behavior. Student names are then placed on clothespins and are moved down the levels on the chart with misbehavior.</p>
Tracking Positive Behavior	<p>These can exist separate from negative consequences tracking systems. i.e., even if a student is a little farther down the consequence ladder, s/he can still be moving up on positive consequences. This suggests to students that they have a second chance and doesn't undermine their motivation for the rest of the day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Caught being good" chart - list names of students caught being good "Team Points" tracking system – give points to different tables or groups of students for meeting expectations. This utilizes peer influence to behave appropriately, a reliable lever in encouraging positive behavior.