

	4. Need for control
	5. Sensory processing differences
	6. Lack of self-regulation
	7. Lack of instruction
	8. Lack of understanding
	9. Poor self-image
	10. Special education need
	11. Special medical need
	12. Other:

## BEHAVIOR A: GETTING OUT OF SEAT... WITHOUT PERMISSION

### Attention Span and Children

Sousa (2006) reported that most students will have a normal attention span of approximately one minute for each year plus or minus four minutes. It is important to provide students with an activity change or brain break before they reach the end of their attention span. Usually off-task, wiggly, disruptive students are signaling that their attention span has expired.

Consider the following possible strategies or supports to prevent excessive movement or getting out of their seat without permission.

- *Alternative seating:* From wobble cushions to bean bags to cube chairs, alternative seating can provide just the right structure and support to stay engaged and focused on the task at hand. In some situations, simply allowing the child to sit away from a group of students may actually

help them to attend better. You will know if this is an effective strategy when the child or children participate to a greater degree.

- *Fidgets:* There are a variety of fidgets available through many outlets. From spinners to squeeze balls to thera-putty, there is quite a business building around the need and usefulness of fidgets. Something as simple as a pipe cleaner can also be effective as a fidget. One student even asked to bring his to library with him, which is usually a tough time for him. Just having the pipe cleaner in his hands helped him to focus during an entire story. This is an example of how a child can be empowered to understand their needs and advocate for themselves.
- *Class rules:* If staying in their seat during certain times of the day is an important part of the class expectations, then it should be stated clearly as a class rule. The difficulty is that the conditions in which staying in your seat is an expectation often change. For instance, children are encouraged to walk around the room and engage in different learning experiences during center/station time. So, the rule applies some of the time, but not all of the time. Because of this inconsistency, the teacher needs to decide exactly what she does expect from the children and develop rules that are based on those expectations in clear and explicit terms.
 

Review the class rules as a form of prevention and then they can become more effective references to remind children of the expectations. A personal set of those rules can be placed on a keychain for children who need a little more concrete support. Be sure to number the rules so that you can promote self-regulation by simply asking a child to check rule #3 as a way to remind and redirect discretely.
- *Props:* By bringing in props that children can hold and use in activities, their level of focus and engagement is increased. This is especially true when connections are made between the props and the instructional focus. Some examples of

simple props include scarves, musical instruments, wipe-off boards, items from a prop box, glasses with the lenses popped out, pointers, etc.

- *The "dancing square"*: A very creative teacher decided that she was tired of competing with students who have a need to express themselves as they are moved to do so. Rather than redirect them back to their chair or spot, she decided to sanction the need for random expression with a "dancing square" placed just off to the side of the carpet. Using electrical or duct tape, you can quickly mark off an area where children are encouraged to go to when they feel the need to move. In this classroom, the teacher made four small squares anticipating that everyone would want to go to the "Dancing Square." As with most strategies, the novelty wore off after a few days and only two of the students used it on a regular basis.

*We get control by giving control.*



- *Song choice board*: A song choice board can increase student interest and motivation in participating in the large group activities. The song choices can also be organized on a strip to indicate the order of the songs to provide additional structure.
- *Incorporate music and/or movement*: There are a variety of ways to incorporate music and movement to enhance the learning process. The following are but a few resources to continue to add to your own:
  - Go Noodle at [www.gonoodle.com](http://www.gonoodle.com)
  - Cosmic Kids Yoga Adventure Series on YouTube
  - Jack Hartman Series and Brain Break on YouTube

- *Positive behavior flip book*: A positive behavior flip book has universal appeal in that it talks in pictures to all the children with consistency and predictability. As you start to build this strategy, you want to think of the most common requests you make verbally on any given day and make sure they are included in the flip book. You can adjust your template by changing the pictures provided, adding new pages and/or deleting current pages. Once you have chosen your pages, then organize them in the order that you like. Now you can cut the tabs to fit your sequence, making each page have one tab that is easy to view at a quick glance.

The positive behavior flip book can help to organize companion strategies such as a "first/then" board, surprise card, and even a "levels of talking" chart. Remember to use the visual strategies to reinforce appropriate behaviors. An example of this might be to use the positive behavior flip book when you see appropriate behaviors and show the visual as you give positive feedback.

- *T-chart*: The T-chart may be used to clarify acceptable or desired behaviors versus unacceptable or undesired behaviors, as in Figure 3.1. When possible, generate both lists with the students. If student input is not possible, then collaborate with support staff and parents to identify what might be most essential to clarify. For younger children, pictures may enhance the effectiveness of this strategy. Refer back to the T-chart when the undesired behavior occurs. Practice replacement behaviors from the acceptable options outlined on the other side of the T-chart. The T-chart may be posted in the class or located in a student folder/notebook or both.

**My T-Chart for:  
Staying in My Seat**

<b>Not Quite Right</b> 	<b>Way to Go!</b> 

**Figure 3.1** T-Chart

Example of a T-Chart in action:

Casey was a young fourth-grade student who loved to bring toy guns to school. Each day the teacher struggled to have him put the toy gun in his backpack once he had brought it to school. This item was not acceptable for the safety and security of all other students at this school, even in toy form. On some days, the debate about the toy gun took up much of their instructional time.

The teacher introduced the T-chart strategy to clarify that this was not an acceptable item to have at school. As a matter of fact, on the very first day the teacher asked which side the toy gun belonged on, and Casey looked at the T-chart and said “at home.” Once they wrote it down, it seemed to become “the law.” From time to time, he would still try to take the toy gun out of his backpack. The T-chart reduced the debate by taking a moment to refer back to this strategy.

- *Get out of seat cards:* For students that present a greater challenge in staying in their seat, personalized “get out of seat” cards may be helpful to develop self-control within limits. By providing a certain number of “get out of seat” cards to a student, they become more aware of how many times they are getting out of their seat and they also become more responsible for regulating their own behavior by managing the cards. Just like chill passes or break cards, the cards can be cut up and given to the teacher each time the student gets out of their seat without permission. They can also be kept on one page that is laminated so that the student can check them off as they are used. As the end of the day, the teacher and student can have a reflective conversation about how many were used and how the strategy is working for the student.

*We get control by giving control.*

## **BEHAVIOR B: TATTLING**

Teachers of young children are often faced with the challenge of what seems to be an endless parade of students reporting as they are trying to teach. Figuring out how to deal with what we

commonly call “tattling” can take a significant amount of time and energy and, as a result, teachers are often tempted to tell children to keep problems to themselves.

While perhaps well-intentioned, discouraging tattling creates more problems than it solves. It leads to a “culture of silence” in our schools and sends children disheartening and confusing messages: “Adults say they care, but they won’t listen to my problems. If I tell when someone does something bad, I’m being bad, too. I’m alone here; no one will help me.”

Such inadvertent but powerful messages clearly work against the culture of emotional and physical safety we want to establish for our children. Frequently we see reports of school officials who uncover bullying and learn that many students knew of prior incidents involving the same children. But the witnessing children told no one, and their silence emboldened those experimenting with bullying to go even further. We are often surprised by children’s silence in these cases, but we shouldn’t be. Often, they are simply following the “no tattling” rule they learned at home or in school at a young age.

Rather than tattling bans, educators need to develop a more nuanced view of tattling, along with ways to help children understand when and how to report problems.

### Why Do Children Tattle?

There are many different reasons why students “tattle.” Here are the most common ones:

- *Legitimate concerns:* Students may have good reasons for concern about others’ behavior and its effects on them and their friends.
- *Need for information:* Some children may be testing the limits or trying to figure out whether adults will enforce the rules consistently.
- *Wish for attention or recognition:* Some children want adults to notice them or to acknowledge their efforts at following the rules. With their regular reporting and need

for constant affirmation, these children can often interrupt the flow of instruction.

- *Limited problem-solving skills:* Adults often tell students to handle problems themselves, but students may lack the skills to do so. Tattling may be their only problem-solving strategy.

### Replacing “Tattling” with “Telling”

Encourage children to report significant events—those that threaten someone’s emotional or physical safety. Assure students that if they’re uncertain whether an event is significant, adults want them to speak up. Help children develop independent problem-solving skills and resiliency.

Be sure to clarify the difference between telling and tattling in ways that your children can understand. Often, adults assume that children know the difference but just can’t help themselves from tattling on their friends. For many children, they are just reacting to a situation without really thinking through their actions as not appropriate. A positive discussion about the difference between telling and tattling is the starting point to better understanding and building positive momentum toward better behavior.

You might begin by exploring students’ prior understanding of tattling, followed by sharing your own perspective.

“I know that some teachers and maybe even your families have told you that tattling is not a good thing. While that is sometimes true, I want you to know that there will be some times you should tell adults about things that have happened that you are worried or concerned about. Today we’ll begin talking about how you’ll know when to tell the difference.”

Help students know when to tell you about incidents that are important. Brainstorm common events that students report to you as a class activity. Put these incidents on index cards, perhaps in picture format for younger children, and then sort them with students using a chart with two columns, labeled “Tell an Adult” or “Work it out with a Friend.” If you implement a journal for tattling,

then you might add another column that directs the children to write it down in the tattling journal if they are unsure. This will be sure to provide a safety net for those situations that children have difficulty interpreting.

Possible ways to describe the main differences may include the following components:

- "Telling" is when you have tried to solve the problem yourself, and still need some help.
- "Telling" is when you are worried about someone else and want to be helpful.
- "Tattling" is when your goal is to get the other person in trouble.

Strategies to decrease tattling and increase positive reporting of concerns include:

- *T-chart*: A T-Chart, which we discussed earlier, may help to clarify the difference for children more explicitly. The chart may also be used when unplanned situations arise as a way to determine whether they are telling or talking.
- *Positive attention*: As a prevention strategy, give students positive ways to get your attention, especially if you suspect the tattling is derived from a need for attention. Also consider giving them a unique responsibility in the classroom, spotlighting them at morning meetings, or writing them the occasional note letting them know you've seen their positive efforts or accomplishments. He or she might be in charge of selecting the class celebration from time to time.
- *"Tattle tickets"*: Tattle tickets may be another way to minimize the amount of tattling, while promoting self-regulation. Each teacher can decide how many tattle tickets to give to each student per day. As an example, each child may start out each day with one tattle ticket. At the end of the day, they can put their ticket into a basket if it was not used for tattling. At the end of the week, the tattle tickets

can be added up to earn certain incentives, such as extra recess time, free dance time, free choice time, etc. The incentives may even correlate to the class percentage of tattle tickets saved or not used. If 100 percent of the tickets are saved, then the most prized incentive is what is earned and so forth.

- *Problem solving*: By teaching a process for solving problems as stated previously, children are less likely to have a need to tattle or tell. They will be more equipped to work through their problems with each other, even our very young three-, four-, and five-year-olds. Above all, children need to know that when someone's behavior worries them, adults will listen. Learning is not interrupted when we teach children how and when to voice their concerns. Such teaching increases their feelings of safety and also the possibility that we really can fulfill our responsibility to keep everyone safe in school.

### BEHAVIOR C: TALKING OUT OF TURN (AKA "BLURTING OUT")

Many students have difficulty controlling their impulses, especially as they relate to talking out randomly or blurting out answers in class. In small doses, these behaviors may not present too much of a disruption to the flow of the class; however, when these behaviors occur frequently and excessively, the focus and attention of the entire class may be impacted negatively to varying degrees. Here are some strategies to help clarify expectations and set limits on blurting out.

#### Positive Behavior Flip Book

Effective teachers help children know when it might be acceptable to share without raising hands and when it is not. After all, there might be times where a teacher actually encourages the free exchange of ideas. But then, the expectations may change within the course of an activity and students can be confused.

Have you ever been enjoying a group discussion where all the students are contributing their ideas without raising their hand and having a great time. Then, it gets a bit too loud and you then say, "OK, remember to raise your hand" as a way to bring down the noise level. It can be difficult for students to navigate and self-regulate this behavior when the expectations change, sometimes without warning.

Adding pictures in the positive behavior flip book, which clarify when it is time to raise your hand to speak versus an open class discussion, may help students respond more positively to the teacher's expectations for any given activity.

### Talk Passes/Blurt Out Cards

Talk passes (or blurt out cards) are designed to set limits on a specific behavior while empowering the individual to have a sense of control and self-regulation.

The student is given a certain number of talk passes (or blurt out cards) either for the class period or the day. Upon talking (or blurting out), the student gives up one of the talk passes (or blurt out cards) to the teacher. So how many cards should you give at first? In order to determine the best number of cards to give each student, collect baseline data to see how many times they are actually talking off task or blurting out. It might feel like 200 times, but it could actually be more like 15. If it is 15, then start with a number that would be attainable and build success with the strategy. If the student is blurting out 15 times, then the teacher might give 11-13 cards to gradually decrease the frequency. It is a wonderful thing when a student counts out how many talk passes (or blurt out cards) they have left before deciding to speak! This strategy develops self-control by setting limits and putting control back in the hands of the student...literally. The role of the teacher feels much more supportive: "Thanks, do you have any cards left?"

If the student runs out of talk passes (or blurt out cards) before the end of the class or day, you can institute a "borrow from tomorrow" policy. The child starts to manage their behavior with more reflection and self-regulation when they are part of the problem-solving process. Collect data and make a plan with the

student to reduce the number of talk passes (or blurt out cards) gradually. Feel free to incorporate the student's interest to increase the effectiveness of the strategy.

As with tattle tickets, any unused blurt out cards can earn incentives once they are added up. A greater number of blurt out cards saved or unused can equal more special rewards.

### Thinking Journal

Note pages decorated with a student interest can be used to jot down thoughts (words and/or pictures) during the morning meeting or other instructional times.

## BEHAVIOR D: WORK AVOIDANCE

When addressing work avoidance behaviors, it is essential to try to analyze the reasons behind the behavior.

Is the work truly too difficult for the child? If so, then instructional strategies that clarify, scaffold or differentiate through technology may be effective. Perhaps the child could benefit from more hands-on instruction or "I need help" cards to prevent frustration

Is the work too simple for the child? If so, then incorporating a choice of more challenging activities may be effective—perhaps a choice board that incorporates activities that are both challenging and of high interest to that student.

Is the child easily distracted? Is the child more interested in social endeavors? If so, then perhaps a checklist with a choice board can increase focus and attention.

So, depending on the reason for the work avoidance behavior, teachers and parents will want to collaborate to build instructional success that will lead to behavioral success.

### I Need Help Cards

"I need help" cards can provide support to students as they feel frustrated or overwhelmed with tasks, whether they be academic or

otherwise. Even if a student is very verbal under most conditions, they may struggle with verbal expression when frustrated.

Another system for students to indicate a need for assistance is the stacking of colored cups.




- Green = I got this.
- Yellow = I'm struggling, but trying.
- Red = I need help now.

### Chunking with a Checklist

For some students, a simple checklist, as in Figure 3.2, is all that's needed to get them started, build momentum, and keep them moving through academic activities. A checklist helps to make a difficult task feel more doable by:

- breaking it down into smaller chunks
- doing it visually
- sprinkling an interest.

These three simple components are highly effective for most students. By having a way to check off items as the student completes activities, there is a sense of accomplishment and the motivation of getting closer to a break, a preferred activity, or moving on to the next part of the day. And a simple decoration of a preferred character or thing can increase the effectiveness of this strategy.

Subject _____	Check when done
1st	 <input type="checkbox"/>
2nd	 <input type="checkbox"/>
3rd	 <input type="checkbox"/>

Next: \_\_\_\_\_

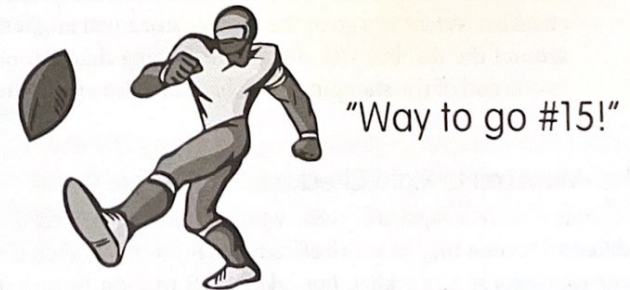


Figure 3.2 Checklist

However, other students may need a bit more support to be successful. Here are some considerations to increase the effectiveness for these students:

- *Add a motivating activity at the end of the checklist:* Remember to encourage the students to check off the activities as they are completed. This can increase independence and provide a sense of accomplishment.
- *Use a “sandwich” technique of strategically placing simpler, or more preferred activities at the beginning and end of the checklist:* When the student sees an activity that they would like to do at the beginning of the list, they are more likely to get started. Once they have checked off the first activity, then they are to proceed to the next. Although this might not be a preferred task, they can easily see that another activity that they do like is soon to follow.
- *Add an element of choice:* You can do this by having the student choose three of the four activities on the checklist. This allows them to have some control over their academic activities while still holding expectations of completing academic tasks. Another way to provide choice is to have the student decide the order in which they complete the checklist. When you go to the grocery store, you might skip around the list, but you still get everything that you need by the end of the shopping list. The same idea applies here.

### Mini-Map: Left to Right Checklist

For some children, especially those who are younger, a checklist in a different format may be more effective. A mini-map includes the same elements as a checklist, but takes a left to right format that is more interactive. The mini-map looks more like a small easel with pictures of the activities in a left to right sequence. As they are completed, the pictures are then moved to the back of the easel to indicate completion. Some students respond best to having a more concrete way to interact with strategies.

### Instructional Scaffolding

Instructional scaffolding is a process through which a teacher adds supports for students in order to enhance learning and aid in the mastery of tasks. The teacher does this by systematically building on students' experiences and knowledge as they are learning new skills. The example of instructional scaffolding in Figure 3.3 is to support understanding of different punctuation. Some students may have difficulty determining the appropriate punctuation as this requires first understanding what the sentence is saying. The “If...Then” bridge serves to connect the necessary understanding in a visual format.

If...		Then
This is a question	Asking something	?
This is a statement	Saying something Telling something	.
This is said with	Excitement about something	!



Figure 3.3 Instructional Scaffold

### Research

Visual scaffolding is a strategy for teaching students that utilizes drawings, photographs, imagery, and other visuals in order to help students to better understand the language and concepts within instruction. Alber (2014) notes:

Using visuals for on-the-spot scaffolding (for an individual student or for the group) is unquestionably a best practice. Research shows that the population is made up of 65 percent visual learners. And only 10 percent of students are auditory learners yet 80 percent of instruction is delivered orally (University of Illinois 2009).

### Pre-teach Vocabulary

Pre-teaching vocabulary involves introducing the words to children in photos or in context with things they know and are interested in. Use analogies and metaphors, and invite students to create a symbol or drawing for each word. Give time for discussion of the words to build relevance and make meaning. When possible, include photos of the vocabulary words in their own environments at school and at home.

### Visual Aids

Visual aids such as graphic organizers, pictures/photos, graphs and charts can all serve as scaffolding tools. Graphic organizers are very specific in that they help children visually represent their ideas, organize information, and grasp concepts such as sequencing and cause and effect.

When used as a scaffolding tool, the completion of a graphic organizer is not the goal but rather a support that helps guide and shape the students' thinking. Many students benefit from using a graphic organizer when presented with a difficult reading selection or new information in any subject area that may be more challenging.

### Kinesthetic Activities

Kinesthetic activities involve active learning and the use of large muscles when possible. As one example, if students are learning about a step-by-step process, consider writing each step out on a piece of paper and then placing the pieces of paper in order on the floor. The student can then physically walk through the process to have greater impact and meaning.

By placing a number line on the floor, children can walk up and down when adding and subtracting. By placing a large keyboard on the floor, children can "type out" spelling words with a partner. These kinds of activities not only increase meaning, but also provide an outlet for movement related to instruction.

A kinesthetic representation incorporates a body movement that helps understand and retain a concept. As an example, if I want children to remember that the brain remembers best when the body is involved, I might rub my head and then shake my body as I say, "The brain remembers when the body moves." With enough repetition, the kinesthetic representation will trigger the concept/message taught. The more we use nonlinguistic representations while learning, the better we can think about and recall our knowledge.

### Mnemonic Devices

Mnemonic devices are patterns of letters, sounds, or associated ideas that aid people in remembering information. These mnemonic techniques use acoustically linked proxy words to connect two pieces of information. For example, students were given the keyword "rainy day" and told to think of a frog sitting in the rain to remember that the scientific classification for common frogs is ranidae.

### Incorporate Technology

When the purposeful use of technology in the classroom is seamless and thoughtful, students not only become more engaged, they begin to take more control over their own learning. The following are but a few ways to incorporate technology throughout instruction across content areas:

- PowerPoint
- project-based learning
- Kidspiration
- learning videos
- ebooks
- interactive websites
- web quests

- voice recording
- virtual math.

### Instructional Choices

When teachers offer instructional choices, they decide on the goal of the lesson or activity, then give students a list of options for what to learn and/or how to go about their learning in order to reach the defined goal.

The choices may be organized in a choice board or an "I Can..." chart as discussed previously. Plan choices based on the general abilities of your class, and structure them according to the goals that need to be achieved. Activities may include a wide range of options, such as writing reports, writing a comic strip, outlining a flow chart, acting out a passage, watching videos, or listening to educational audios.

### Incorporate Student Interests

Student interests can be powerful in connecting the learner with the learning at hand. When a student is interested in the topic they are working on, there is no greater motivator. When possible, incorporate those interests throughout instruction in fun and creative ways. A math lesson just using Mario and Luigi characters to add and subtract may increase student engagement and motivation. Writing about a topic of choice can bring forth a wealth of knowledge about the topic and a desire to learn more about this.

#### Just Playing

*When I'm building in the block room,  
Please don't say I'm "just playing."  
For, you see, I'm learning as I play,  
About balance, I may be an architect someday.*

*When I'm getting all dressed up,  
Setting the table, caring for the babies,  
Don't get the idea I'm "just playing."  
I may be a mother or a father someday.*

*When you see me up to my elbows in paint,  
Or standing at an easel, or molding and shaping clay,  
Please don't let me hear you say, "He is just playing."  
For, you see, I'm learning as I play.  
I just might be a teacher someday.*

*When you see me engrossed in a puzzle or some "playing" at my school,  
Please don't feel the time is wasted in "play."  
For you see, I'm learning as I play.  
I'm learning to solve problems and concentrate.  
I may be in business someday.*

*When you see me cooking or tasting foods,  
Please don't think that because I enjoy it, it is "just play."  
I'm learning to follow directions and see the differences.  
I may be a cook someday.*

*When you see me learning to skip, hop, run, and move my body,  
Please don't say I'm "just playing."  
For, you see, I'm learning as I play.  
I'm learning how my body works.  
I may be a doctor, nurse, or athlete someday.*

*When you ask me what I've done at school today,  
And I say, "I just played."  
Please don't misunderstand me.  
For, you see, I'm learning as I play.  
I'm learning to enjoy and be successful in my work.  
I'm preparing for tomorrow.  
Today, I am a child and my work is play.*

(Author Unknown)

## BEHAVIOR E: DIFFICULTY WITH TRANSITIONS

### Checklists

Checklists, once again, may be used for any activity that presents a challenge for the student. For example, a checklist may support a student who has difficulty with the steps of the morning routine.

#### Starting the Day at School

- a. When I get to school, I will first open my backpack.
- b. Then, I will take my folder out.
- c. Next, I will put my yellow folder in my chair pocket.
- d. The last thing to do is put my backpack on the hook.

Now, add some pictures of each step and you have a helpful visual tool to promote student success and independence. Checklists can be created for any difficult transition such as getting ready for lunch, entering the classroom, walking in the hallway, and packing up at the end of the day.

### Transition Songs/Cues

Most transition songs are sung to traditional and familiar tunes. Just change the words to relay the message and instructions.

#### Welcoming Song (Tune: "If You're Happy and You Know It")

*I'm so happy to see you today,  
I'm so happy to see you today.  
(Child's name) won't you stand,  
And shake your neighbor's hand.  
Now everybody clap and say hooray!*

#### Circle Time (Tune: "Oh, My Darling Clementine")

*Time for circle, time for circle,  
Time for circle time today.*

*Let's sit down, let's be quiet,  
Wonder what we will do today?*

#### Wiggles Out for Quiet Time (Tune: "Jingle Bells")

*Clap your hands, stomp your feet,  
Wiggle all around.  
Reach your hands high in the air  
And now let's touch the ground.  
Hold your hips, hold your head  
Give yourself a hug.  
Sit right down, eyes to look,  
It's time to read a book.*

#### Clean Up Time (Tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star")

*We've had lots of fun today,  
It's time to put our things away.  
We need all the girls and boys,  
To stop now and pick up toys.  
We've had lots of fun today,  
It's time to put our things away.*

#### Good-bye Song (Tune: "Are You Sleeping")

*School is over, school is over,  
Time to go home, time to go home,  
I'll see you tomorrow, I'll see you tomorrow,  
Bye, bye, bye; bye, bye, bye!*

For older students, more contemporary songs can be used for the tune. As an example, the tune from the *Frozen* song "Let it Go" can be used with the words "Time to Go..." as a transition song out of the classroom or at the end of the day. As a class activity, take some time to have groups create songs for different transition cues. By giving the students this responsibility, their enthusiasm and ownership of these cues becomes enhanced. The groups can create songs for the following possible transitions:

- Get your materials.
- Line up.
- Get back to your seat.
- Finish up your work.
- Time for lunch.
- Start the day or good morning.
- End the day or good-bye.

### Attention Grabbers

Teachers of young children have come to learn the effective use of fun attention grabbers to help increase attention and focus when needed and to indicate upcoming transitions. Instead of saying, "OK everybody, listen up," over and over, the teacher says a fun phrase that the students learn to respond to in unison. Introduce a few at the beginning of the year and then continue to add more throughout the year to keep the novelty factor up. The following are but a few attention grabbers to add to your menu:

- Holy Moly—Guacamole.
- Hocus Pocus—Everybody Focus.
- Hands on Top—Everybody Stop.
- Macaroni and—Cheese.
- Macaroni and Cheese—Everybody Freeze.
- Pepperoni—Pizza.
- Peanut Butter and—Jelly.
- Pop—Corn.
- My Bologna has a First Name—It's O-S-C-A-R.
- Ready, set—You bet!

### Hallway Transition Cues

*Scenario A:* The teacher is taking her class to lunch through the hallways. Most of the children are walking as if they are pure and full of grace. Two students, however, are talking and falling out of line. The teacher stops the line, raises her voice and tells the students to stop and get back in line with her "teacher face" on that is looking angry, disappointed, and tired. The line resumes for another five feet when another student messes up the beauty of the line yet again. They stop and receive another reprimand. This happens five or six times to the destination. I won't even go into the transition out to recess! Sound familiar?

*Scenario B:* A teacher is taking her class to lunch through the hallways. She has instructed her students that they are "Spies." They are supposed to try to go down the hall so quietly that no one will know they are there, just like a spy. She shows them how to tip toe past doorways and duck under windows. She gives a big "Whew," wiping her hand across her forehead when they reach the destination. Smiles are seen up and down the line, including the teacher. You probably have your own creative way to focus students to walk quietly down the hallway in fun and kid-friendly ways. Here are just a few more ideas:

- Slither like a snake with your hands moving to and fro.
- Waddle like a penguin quietly.
- Walk like an elephant moving your trunk back and forth.
- Swim like a fish.
- Give yourself a big hug as you walk.
- Walk with a shark fin on your head.
- Walk like a chicken.

### BEHAVIOR F: MINE, MINE, MINE!

Recommendations from the Institute of Education Sciences recognize that:

just as poor academic performance can reflect deficits in specific academic skills, some students' failure to meet behavioral expectations reflects deficits in specific social or behavioral skills. And just as explicit instruction can help students overcome some academic deficits, explicit instruction can help students learn the positive behaviors and skills they are expected to exhibit at school. Showing students how they can use appropriate behaviors to replace problem behaviors and consistently providing positive reinforcement when they do so can increase students' chances of experiencing social and behavioral success. (Epstein *et al.* 2008, pp.7-8)

### Positive Teacher-Student Interactions

Positive teacher-student interactions are at the heart of building positive behaviors, including social skills. Studies conducted by Pekrun *et al.* (2004) linking positive emotions to achievement show that joy, hope, and pride positively correlate with students' academic self-efficacy, academic interest and effort, and overall achievement. Epstein *et al.* (2008) further note:

Teachers show the warmth, respect, and sensitivity they feel for their students through small gestures, such as welcoming students by name as they enter the class each day, calling or sending positive notes home to acknowledge good behavior, and learning about their students' interests, families, and accomplishments outside of school. Teachers also can help students develop peer friendships by having them work together, thereby learning to share materials, follow directions, be polite, listen, show empathy, and work out disagreements. Fostering students' social and emotional development can improve their interactions and attitudes toward school, thereby reducing problem behaviors. (p.8)

### Sharing Cube

A sharing cube may be introduced in a small group activity to promote an understanding of how it feels to share in a structured situation. Each child rolls the cube and then role-plays sharing the

item or thing that the teacher has previously gathered for props. The teacher facilitates the interaction with specific feedback that helps to shape the behavior of sharing. Choose common things that children have shown difficulty sharing in the past, along with some fun options. Some possible things children can share include:

- toys
- crayons
- books
- cars
- smiles
- snacks
- blocks.

This explicit instruction in a structured setting will promote the understanding of the goal or desired behavior so as to increase generalization to other, real-life situations. Adults should be ready to provide support and feedback as children build positive momentum toward more positive behaviors throughout the day.

### Narrative or Short Story

A narrative, or short story, may be effective in clarifying a situation and providing ideas on how to deal with that situation positively. Some of the most effective stories include photos of the students themselves telling a story.

The following narrative for teaching how to take turns at circle time can be enhanced with photos of the students performing the different activities.

#### TAKING TURNS AT CIRCLE

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old. I go to school at \_\_\_\_\_.

We do many activities at school like work, play, eat snack and have circle time. During circle time, we do lots of different

fun things like listening to books, dancing to songs and \_\_\_\_\_. At circle time, friends get to help with jobs like \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. I really like to help with different jobs. There are lots of friends in our classroom who also like to help with circle time jobs.

Sometimes I will get to help with jobs like \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and sometimes it will be someone else's turn.

If I really want to help and I don't get chosen, I can say, "Maybe next time."

If it is someone else's turn and he/she chooses something I don't like, I can say, "Maybe next time." If a kid chooses something I like, I can give him/her a big thumbs up!

Circle time is fun when we all take turns!

While the stories can help teach almost any behavior, they can also celebrate student success and provide positive reinforcement as behaviors are acquired. When made in PowerPoint format, the stories can be projected for the entire class to see and they can be printed and placed in the class library for quick and easy reference. They can even be sent home to families as a way to collaborate and reinforce specific goals. There are also several apps, such as Creative Book Builder, that can help create stories in fun and friendly formats. Be sure that you have permission from all the parents to use their child's photograph for this purpose.

The following resources provide narratives or short stories for your consideration:

- Head Start Center for Inclusion: <http://headstartinclusion.org>
- Kansas Technical Assistance System Network (TASN): [www.ksdetasn.org](http://www.ksdetasn.org)

## BEHAVIOR G: MY SPACE, YOUR SPACE...BODY AWARENESS

One of the ways that children start to demonstrate self-regulation is through the understanding of spatial awareness. This awareness

involves specific language about directions and specific concepts of what this looks like in everyday life. My body moves and impacts others in the world when I play in many ways. This is a concept that often needs to be explicitly pointed out and clarified.

### Teaching Body Awareness

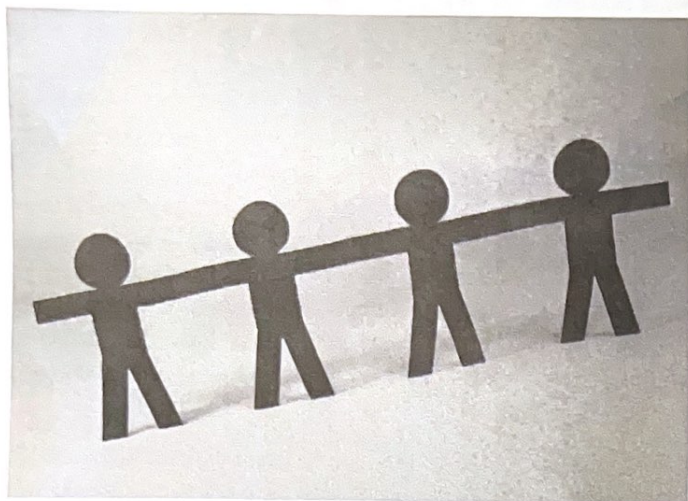
Body awareness is the foundation upon which children learn to coordinate their body parts and move through space and about objects in their environment. Some children need practice to develop a better understanding of their body in relationship to others and the world. Teachers can help children develop better body awareness with activities that emphasize identifying body parts and how they work.

- The "Robot Game" is where the child pretends to be a robot and the teacher gives directions, such as "turn right," or "stop at the carpet," or "turn left."
- The "Freeze Game" helps children to transition from movement to stillness while also responding positively to directions.
- "Simon Says..." is another standard for developing body awareness and self-regulation.

### Visual Cues

Some students may benefit from more explicit instruction through visual clarity as in Figure 3.4. Including the students themselves in the pictures can increase the relevance and effectiveness of the strategy.

## Personal Space



I will try to stay in my own personal space.



**Figure 3.4** Visual Cue for Personal Space

### Narrative or Short Stories

Once again, a short story about personal space can be created to help clarify expectations and teach how to meet those expectations. Props such as hula-hoops or yarn can help create visual boundaries as the story is reviewed. Practice as a whole class and then refer to the story when problems arise as a way to re-teach the developing skill.

### BEHAVIOR H: ROUGH PLAY

Fry (2005) has outlined that in appropriate rough play, children's faces are free and easy, their muscle tone is relaxed, and they are usually smiling and laughing. In real fighting, the facial movements are rigid, controlled, stressed, and the jaw is usually clenched.

The challenge is to help children understand how to play freely within safe boundaries.

## Classroom Organization

Curtis and Carter (2005) have noted that the learning environment should provide rich opportunities for children to use their bodies both indoors and outdoors. When planning for big, rough, vigorous body play, give keen, thoughtful attention to potential safety hazards. Children need to play vigorously with their bodies, but they should do so in a safe setting. Some teachers find it helpful to draw or mark off a particular section of the room and dedicate it to big body or large muscle type play. One teacher established a "climbing zone" in her classroom by placing mats and tumble forms for safe climbing and jumping.

### T-Chart

A T-Chart can be used once again to help clarify expectations. In this situation, the categories on the T-chart would be to clarify types of play that are safe and unsafe. As a class, discuss what would be examples of safe play and then what would be examples of unsafe play. Using pictures of each example can enhance the effectiveness of this strategy, especially for younger children.

### Visual Cues

In addition, pictures of safe playing and/or ground rules should be posted to provide further support. For safe play with equipment, the rules may state that the slide can be used for climbing on alternate days with sliding, or that a child can climb up only after checking to make sure no one is sliding down, and that jumping can be from stationary structures only and never from swings. Other rules may say that tumbling indoors always requires a mat and cannot be done on a bare floor, and that children may only roll down hills that are fenced or away from streets and traffic. Personal visual reminders may be created for students who continue to struggle to remember the rules.

### Video Modeling

Watching videos of appropriate play may be another effective teaching strategy.

Burdette and Whitaker (2005) state that when children successfully participate in big body play, it is “a measure of the children’s social wellbeing and is marked by the ability of children to...cooperate, to lead, and to follow.” These abilities don’t just support big body play; these skills are necessary for lifelong success in relationships.

### BEHAVIOR I: SCREAMING

Sometimes children are not aware that their voice has elevated to the screaming level. Screaming may occur for various reasons, including the following:

- communicating pain
- communicating frustration
- communicating fear
- communicating a need for attention
- communicating a sense of desperation.

The common thread for screaming is communication. So, adults should interpret the reason for the screaming as best as possible and respond accordingly.

### Emotion Scripts

We often tell children to use their words or talk calmly when they start to scream or cry out. However, when they are frustrated or overwhelmed, their words may be hard to access and generate thoughtfully. Emotion scripts may help to communicate in more effective ways. An emotion script may have certain pictures of emotions outlined with stems or opening statements. Some examples of emotion scripts might be:

- “I feel angry because...”
- “I am worried because...”
- “I am frustrated because...”
- “I am sad because...”

The students are encouraged to point to the emotion that best describes their feeling and then fill in the speech bubble with words or pictures as further explanation. It can be very enlightening to see what is behind their emotions. This can also serve to further build the relationship between the adult and child.

### Levels of Talking Chart

There are several things to consider when helping children keep their voice at an appropriate level. Teachers and parents can model in their own calm voice how they would like to be spoken to. You may even give it some clarity by connecting it to a levels chart by saying, “I am at a level 1 and I hope you can come down to a level 2 or 1 so we can both hear each other.”

Using the levels of talking chart on a regular basis throughout the day becomes an effective tool to provide feedback (“You are at a 4 right now”) and teach self-regulation (“Let’s try to bring the voice level back to a 2 or 3. Which level can you make it to?”).

### Narrative or Short Story

As stated previously, a narrative or short story can be used to teach almost any skill or behavior. A story about how to use the levels of talking chart can further increase student understanding and build toward more positive behaviors.

As an example, imagine this story with photos of the children embedded:

### Using an Inside Voice

*It is OK to have a loud voice when I am outside.  
Sometimes, I get excited when I am in the classroom.  
When I get excited, I start to talk loudly.  
I don't want to hurt my friend's ears in the classroom,  
Or distract them from their activity.  
So, I will try my best to use an inside voice in the classroom.  
An inside voice means staying at a level 1, 2, or 3.*

*A level 4 is OK outside. I will try to save my excited voice for outside times.  
I can do this!*

## BEHAVIOR J: AGGRESSION!

Aggression can take on many forms that can occur one at a time or in a combination of any of the following:

- biting
- kicking
- scratching
- pinching
- pushing
- pulling hair.

No single pathway is sufficient to explain the development of aggressive behavior, nor is there a single prototype of an aggressive preschooler. Research findings reveal that the critical window for intervention should be in early years. (Tremblay *et al.* 2004)

The child who lashes out often feels sad, frightened, or alone. They don't look frightened when they are about to bite, push, or hit, but fears are most likely at the heart of the problem. Fear and emotions can rob a child of their ability to think rationally and calmly.

Parents and teachers do have the ability to help a child engaging in aggressive behaviors through preventive strategies and responsive intervention techniques. In the moment, a child's aggression cannot be addressed by reasoning, punishment, or enforcing "logical consequences." The mix of intense feelings inside the child is not motivated by rewards or punishment in that moment. Once a child's behavior is out of their control, it is the responsibility of the adults around them to stay as calm as possible and do everything to help the child regain their composure.

## Label Actions/Emotions

While the first course is prevention, there may be situations of aggression that arise in spite of all the best efforts. During intervention, adults always remain calm and refrain from casting blame or fault. These comments can further isolate children, and possibly exacerbate the situation. Labeling actions and feelings without judgement can be an entry into the de-escalation process once the safety of all is secured. Statements that label actions and/or feelings might include:

- "You look very upset right now. Let's take a deep breath together."
- "You are screaming very loudly and I can't understand what you need. Let's try saying that again more slowly."
- "You look very angry. Let's use a chill pass right now."
- "It looks like there is a big problem. Let's set a timer and take a minute's break so we can try to solve this problem safely."

## Feelings Chart: Teach an Alternative Response

Anger and frustration are real emotions that everyone experiences to varying degrees. It is how those emotions are handled that indicates the ability to self-regulate in positive and effective ways. Children often lack those self-regulation abilities early in life and need guidance and support to develop these lifelong coping strategies.

"When you feel \_\_\_\_\_, that is very real. What are some other ways to show those feelings that are kind and gentle?"

This is a conversation that needs to happen when everyone is calm and rational. By writing or drawing pictures of healthy responses, adults can help build a menu of options of what to say and do. These options can then be organized on a problem-solving wheel or a feelings chart as in Figure 3.5.

Feelings Chart		
	How I feel	What I can do
5	I need some help!	Make a cartoon Talk with someone
4	I'm really upset.	Color Think about the ocean
3	I've got a problem.	Listen to music
2	Things are pretty good.	Breathe Get a drink of water
1	Feeling great!	Take a walk

Figure 3.5 Feelings Chart

When using a feelings chart to teach alternative ways to dealing with anger or frustration, it is important to help children have a realization of their own internal signs of escalation. Consistent and thoughtful implementation of this strategy can both prevent the escalation of problem behaviors and de-escalate a situation once it has occurred. A key feature to this, and almost any other strategy, is to teach and review it when the individual is calm and there is no problem occurring at the moment. These conditions help to ensure that the brain is at its best, with most rational thinking, and that the strategy is not associated with a negative or difficult situation.

If a student can express their inner feelings, then adults could help them prevent further escalation by engaging in conversation about the problem or a calming activity. Often, however, the student has difficulty expressing those feelings until it is too late. A feelings chart may be an effective visual support to help students express how they are feeling with or without using any words.

In order for the feelings chart to be an effective strategy, students must understand the meaning of different feelings represented at each level. What does it mean to feel great versus having a problem? Connecting meaning for each feeling may require direct instruction for some students. Lessons to build this understanding can be done in a variety of ways, including the use of props or pictures of self or others. The teacher can start out the lesson by describing a certain feeling or emotion through pictures, scenarios and even video clips. This lesson includes the students participating by answering questions or acting out the different scenarios themselves. Then, the teacher can assess their understanding by asking them to toss the bean bag into the correct basket for each picture, scenario or video. Once the students understand the meaning behind the different feelings, then they are able to use the feelings chart more effectively.

The start of the day is usually a good time to use the feelings chart as the person checks in to the school routine. Unless there has been a morning problem at home or on the bus, this is usually a time where there is a clean slate from which to build. Depending on the grade level, the feelings chart may be posted as a large visual

guide of feelings, or as a personal tool in a notebook, or both. The calming activities may be reviewed along with some role-playing. By using the feelings chart first thing in the morning, the teacher can assess where the students are in their feelings and respond accordingly. Responses may include celebrating and reinforcing positive feelings and offering support to those who indicate a problem is developing.

Throughout the day, look for opportunities to use the feelings chart to check in and prevent possible difficulties. My experience has been that on a scale of 1–5 (with 1 being very calm and happy), once a student has escalated to a 4 or a 5, it becomes much more difficult to de-escalate. Therefore, it is critical to intervene when students are at a 3 in order to increase the likelihood that they will be able to calm down.

Include calming activities based on student strengths, needs and interests. The following may be included as calming strategies either on the problem-solving wheel or the feelings chart:

- *Yoga cube:* “Everyone knows that if you see a shooting star, you make a wish. Ready? Sit with legs crossed. Bring palms together across your heart with fingers pointing up. Gently press hands against each other and straighten back. Inhale and bring hands over head. Exhale and lower hands to sides, twinkling your fingers. Whisper the word ‘wish’ as you lower your arms. As we’ve just seen a shooting star let’s all wish for...(e.g. world peace).”

A yoga cube can include any pose that has been taught to the students. By rolling the cube, the child can make a decision about how to calm down when it is difficult to do so when asked.

- *Sensory basket:* A sensory basket may include fidgets, play-doh, Rubik’s cube, yarn, blocks, etc.
- *Breathing techniques:* An endless breathing chart or other cues for breathing can be posted. Some examples of breathing cues can be flower breathing (act like you are blowing petals off a flower), rainbow breathing (move your arms up and out

as if you are blowing up a rainbow), balloon breathing (start with your hands at your mouth and then spread them out as if you are blowing up a balloon), candle breathing (act like you are blowing out candles on a cake), etc.

The feelings chart may also be used to debrief the day at the end of school. The chart may facilitate a conversation about what worked, what did not and how to make a better plan for the next day. And remember to refer to the feelings chart when the student is calm and happy. The more we celebrate those moments, the more we focus on good times and positive energy.

#### Real-Life Example of the Feelings Chart

As I entered a classroom for the first time, the teacher told me that one of the students was getting upset and was not sure what to do at that point. Although I had never met this student, I relied on the clarity of visual supports to assess the situation and determine the next best steps. I opened my computer and showed the student the feelings chart and explained each level briefly. Then I asked the student to tell me which level best described how he was feeling. On the scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the most frustrated, his exact words were “I’m at a 4 and I don’t know what to do about it.” Although the student had not been screaming or hitting or throwing things, he felt internally that he was at a 4, a very high level of frustration.

In this example, you can see that the feelings chart not only helps students to communicate their feelings, but more importantly to determine how to calm down or de-escalate. Even in this heightened state, this student was able to identify some strategies that would be calming to him. We wrote a few strategies in the boxes to the right of the feelings column, including reading a book about planets, holding a fidget, and getting a drink of water. The feelings chart became a tool for communicating feelings and a tool for dealing with those feelings appropriately.

## Chill Zone

Do you have a place in your life that you retreat to when you are feeling the stressors of the world come down on you? For some, it might be as simple as your home. For others, it might be in a specific location such as sitting on a bench in the garden or soaking in the bath tub with some soothing bubbles and lit lavender candles. Wherever your “chill zone” is, you are rejuvenated when you emerge and are better equipped to deal with the next stressful challenges that are sure to come. After all, life and stress go hand in hand. It is how a person deals with that stress that contributes to their success each day. Therefore, the “chill zone” can serve as an effective coping mechanism that promotes self-regulation.

Some may need more overt planning to identify an effective “chill zone” and an effective strategy on how to access that location and when. Knowing their own triggers can help children know when to access the “chill zone.” In school settings, this may be in a pre-arranged area within a classroom or even a specific room, office, or other safe spot on the campus. As with most strategies, the “chill zone” can be more effective if there are calming elements available once they are there. When possible, decorate the “chill zone” with student interests to increase the positive feel to this area. Remember that the “chill zone” is a positive preventive strategy and not a location for a punitive time out. One young student who needed a “chill zone” had an interest in Monster Trucks. Blue Thunder was her favorite, so we found a large box and painted the wheels, doors, lights, and windshield so that she could get inside Blue Thunder to retreat, calm down, and then emerge with a positive outcome. That is the purpose of the “chill zone,” after all.

## Chill Passes

Data on students will help to make decisions about how many chill passes are provided for each day or portion of the day. For instance, if an individual is having difficult moments five times a day, then the teacher might provide six or seven chill passes to the student to ensure success. Over time, the data should help make ongoing

decisions about how many chill passes are necessary for success. As much as possible, include the student in making these decisions.

Another feature that you may add to the chill pass is that of different times. Some chill passes might indicate that the time in the chill zone is limited to 3 minutes, while others might indicate longer times of 5, 10, or even 15 minutes. By providing different amounts of time on the chill pass, the student can make choices about how to best self-regulate their emotions and the coping strategy itself.

## Literature

When having story time with your students, try to incorporate situations in which the main characters get frustrated. Work together with your students to decide how the characters in your story will respond to various negative situations. For example, if the main character is mad at their friend, you can suggest that this character takes a few deep breaths before taking any action. This will help children learn to take others’ perspectives and to think about how to react in various difficult situations. You could also read stories specifically written to help with the exploration of children’s negative emotions:

- *Anh’s Anger* by Gail Silver. Age range: 4+.
- *When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry* by Molly Bang. Age range: 3–7.
- *Hands Are Not For Hitting* by Martine Agassi. Age range: 2–8.
- *Teeth Are Not for Biting* by Elizabeth Verdick. Age range: 2–5.

Once the child has resumed a complete feeling of calm, then the teacher or parent can debrief the situation in an objective and rational way. In addition to reviewing what happened verbally, it is often beneficial to use some kind of visual tool to help have this conversation. This will increase the clarity of details and also keep the story objective as it is being told collaboratively and on paper. The process can unfold through a story grid or graphic organizer

or a comic strip format. The use of pictures/drawings and speech bubbles helps to re-tell the situation as factually as possible. The child's perspective is heard in addition to that of the adult.

The most important part of the process then focuses on the point where a poor or unsafe behavior took place. Draw a line or arrow indicating that this was where the problem caused someone to get hurt, either physically or emotionally. Now, draw or write out several possible alternatives for a more positive and safe response. This becomes the child's plan for a better response next time, building positive momentum for positive behaviors.

### Summary

Thompson (2001) states that self-confidence, relationship skills, self-management, and emotional and attentional self-regulation are among the social-emotional competencies necessary for successful participation in group learning situations.

Moreover, Kaiser *et al.* (2000) found that preschool children with deficits in these critical social skills and those who exhibit challenging behavior are more likely to have language deficits than do their typically developing peers.

Helping children to regulate their emotions doesn't necessarily happen overnight. Science tells us that the parts of the human brain that are critical to handling emotions continue to develop into adulthood. When given the right tools and supports by teachers and parents, young children can take important steps toward learning how to regulate their feelings in the face of challenging situations...a lifelong skill.

### BEHAVIOR K: DIFFICULTY FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS

Listening is the core ingredient in a child's ability to follow directions. However, there are many parts to the listening process. The child not only has to hear what is being said (auditory acuity and perception), they also have to understand the meaning of the sounds and words (auditory comprehension) and interpret them into a sequence of events they must then actuate. When

considering the complexities of listening, it's no wonder children struggle to follow our directions.

### Positive Feedback

Teach children how to follow directions by building momentum with positive responses to preferred or fun activities. Children may be more eager to follow the direction of "cleaning up" if they have a novel job in the process. Children may be more eager to follow the direction of "staying in line" if they have a fun way to do so.

Be sure to follow with specific feedback that will provide positive reinforcement for following directions.

### Positive Behavior Flip Book

A classroom where children are actively learning means there is a lot happening in many different ways. Teachers want children engaged and interacting with each other and this means that children might need help to focus on directions when given. In addition to attention grabbers, which is an auditory cue, a positive behavior flip book can provide additional support through a visual cue. With the pairing of both modalities, children can be more responsive and successful in following directions. Include pictures of your most common directives and you will always have a quick and handy tool to guide children toward building positive momentum toward this positive behavior.

### Jobs and Responsibilities

Jobs and responsibilities can build on a child's need for attention and feeling successful. Create jobs that can be assigned daily, weekly or even randomly. For example, a particular student is especially struggling with following directions. Rather than give a directive that may be one more not followed, give a directive that is positive and empowering: "Jordan, you are the 'Brain Break Caller' today. Which brain break would you like to choose for the class? The monkey dance, the crazy kangaroo, or the superstar slide?"

Other fun jobs that build positive momentum toward following directions include:

- classroom greeter
- assistant teacher
- water bottle manager
- door holder
- light helper
- plant care manager
- librarian
- backpack buddy
- reporter
- star student
- pet helper
- photographer
- levels of talking manager.

### Narratives or Stories to Teach Directions

Carol Gray (1994), the developer of the world-renowned, evidence-based Social Stories™ teaching strategy, outlines what is unique about this specific type of narrative. Gray states that a Social Story™ describes a situation, skill, or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives, and common responses in a specifically defined style and format. The goal of a Social Story™ is to share accurate social information in a patient and reassuring manner that is easily understood by its audience. She continues to remind teachers and parents that half of all Social Stories™ developed should affirm something that an individual does well. Although the goal of a Social Story™ should never be to change the individual's behavior, that individual's improved understanding of events and expectations may lead to more effective responses.

Gray has written many wonderful books further clarifying the development and implementation of this very specific strategy, which I highly recommend. In striving to write narratives that adhere to her guidelines as much as is possible, I have found certain elements to be extremely effective:

- Incorporate photos of the children themselves in the narrative. When relevant, include photos of family members, always acquiring permission first.
- Focus on the desired behaviors without drawing attention to the problem behaviors. Those problems do not need any more highlighting and may even inadvertently serve as reminders of undesired responses.
- Provide choices of possible ways to deal with a situation or complete a task.
- Be sure to review the narrative during calm and pleasant times so that they can be useful as a form of prevention.
- Include a rationale about why the desired behavior or skill is important.
- Review prior to a situation where the child is sure to need the skill or reminders outlined in the narrative.
- Connect with children's interests when possible.
- Make the narrative fun and be positive throughout.
- At the end of the day, the narrative may be read in order to debrief how the child did that day. Self-evaluation can be a powerful reinforcer for building positive momentum.

### Power Cards

Another pioneer in the world of social skill development is Elisa Gagnon, who has written about a specific type of narrative called "power cards." A power card is a brief scenario or character sketch describing how the hero solves the problem. The power card then

recaps how the person working through a problem can use the same strategy to solve a similar problem.

I am often asked what the difference is between a power card and other types of narratives. While there are many similarities, I would describe their differences by saying that a power card is usually very brief and always incorporates a student's interest within the narrative. As an example, this power card helps a student to transition from a highly preferred activity to a less preferred activity using one of his favorite characters, Curious George.

#### POWER CARD EXAMPLE

Curious George loves to fly a kite. Sometimes, he has to stop flying a kite and do some work. Curious George wants to keep flying his kite, but he knows that he will have another chance to fly his kite later.

When it is time to stop flying a kite, Curious George will try to:

- Stop and say, "That's OK."
- Ask for one more minute.
- Ask for two more minutes.

I will try to be like Curious George and stop working on the computer when it is time to do something else.

The power card may be decorated with illustrations of the favorite character or any other positive feature, such as the student performing the desired behavior(s). As with most strategies, review the power card during calm times so that it can be effective when more stressful times occur. For another student with an interest in pirates, this power card proved highly successful after doing some research online about pirates and their code.

#### POWER CARD EXAMPLE: LIFE OF A PIRATE

Pirates are seen as outcasts, lawlessly sailing seas. Yet, research shows pirates made a code, rules, laws, or articles. These guidelines are shown in pirate films such as *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Let's look at some of the articles of their code.

- ARTICLE 1—None shall strike another on board the ship.
- ARTICLE 2—Each man will take care of his mate with good deeds and words.
- ARTICLE 3—Each man will do his share of work so that the ship can stay on course.

Power cards may be developed to teach almost any behavior and address most situations. The key to a power card being effective is that the brief narrative uses a preferred character or interest of the student as the central figure.

Using power cards to teach children how to follow directions can focus on those areas that the student struggles with the most. A power card to promote following directions might read as follows:

Wall-E is a great worker and does his best to listen to his boss. I will do my best and try to listen to my teachers. I will try to listen and follow these directions:

- Walk quietly in the hallways.
- Stay with my class.
- Touch others gently.

I can do this just like Wall-E!

A power card can also help deal with stressful situations, as you will see in Figure 3.6. The power card can include additional strategies such as breathing charts on the back for quick and easy access.

### Being Late Is OK

Most of the time, buses run on time. It feels good when I am on time, just like the buses.

Sometimes, things happen to make us not be on time. Busy traffic or a broken motor might make a bus be late. That is OK.



Sometimes, things at school might make us not be on time or be late. If this happens, I can:

- Use my breathing cart
- Hold my surprise card
- Flip through my books

Remember, running late is OK. This happens to everyone. Time can be flexible and so can I.



Figure 3.6 Power Card

I once worked with a very positive and creative teacher who decided to have each child in her class write their own power card. Recognizing that we all have something we can get better at, she presented the strategy to the children, taught them how to write one and then gave them time to work either in groups or by themselves to write and decorate their power cards. When children participate in the development of strategies, they are more meaningful and effective when needed. The following power card helped a particular student with a real problem.

Mario and Luigi work well together. They are good friends and want to give other students a chance to answer questions. They might have the right answer too and this will make them feel happy. When the teacher calls on someone else in class, Mario and Luigi want you to remember that you can do one of these things:

- Wait and listen to their idea.
- Take one or two deep breaths.
- Write your answer down on a wipe off board.

At the end of the day, the class can reflect on their power card goal and self-evaluate as a way to provide positive reinforcement and specific feedback for building positive momentum toward positive behaviors.

I will create a power card to support the development of the following behavior/skill:

**My power card to develop...**

### BUT THAT'S NOT FAIR!

*Equality: the quality or state of being equal; the quality or state of having the same rights, social status, etc.*

*Equity: fairness or justice in the way people are treated.*

## So, What's the Difference?

*Equal* is when things are exactly alike, whereas *fair* is when decisions are made based on individual needs.

### Home Example

It is equal to put all the kids to bed at the same time, and fair when parents decide on bedtime based on the age and activity level of the child.

### School Example

It is equal to have all the students sit on the carpet at circle time, and fair when the teacher gives a chair to one or two students who need that to stay focused and learn.

In most cases, adults anticipate the “unfair” comment more often than children actually express this kind of thinking and feeling. And when they do, adults have an opportunity to teach the lifelong lesson of fair not always meaning equal or the same.

Possible teacher responses:

- “I can see how you might feel that, but I am making sure that everyone gets what they need to learn in our classroom.”
- “Let’s read a story about how you’re feeling and then we will talk more about it.”
- “Yes, my job is to make sure that everyone gets what they need at school and that might not always feel fair. Please let me know if there is something that you need and I will do my best.”