



## GRAB & GO TRAUMA-INFORMED RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS:

Self-paced Skill-building Activities  
to Further Hone and Refine Tier 1  
Instructional Practices in the  
Classroom

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# Strategic Rapport Building with Students that Appear Hard to Reach

A key building block to learning is that of trusting relationships. While relevant with all students, this is particularly crucial when supporting students who have had limited positive relationships or meaningful connections with others in the past and who may be yearning for someone to appreciate and accept them for who they are as a person. Many students experiencing trauma can have difficulty not only in attempting to make sense of what they have experienced, but also in developing and sustaining relationships with others. Relatedly, students are more likely to become increasingly motivated to learn and perform in your classroom if they understand that you have a genuine interest and care about them as people.

The good news is that there will likely be a large portion of your students with whom building a sufficient degree of rapport comes almost naturally... without any additional effort on your part. However, some students... especially those that have been exposed to higher levels of adversity in their lives ... may require strategic rapport building efforts. In such instances, keep in mind that building rapport is simply about building connection through trust, and a pathway of strategies are available that can assist you in that process. There are two primary considerations when consciously building rapport with a student that appears harder to reach than others: 1) determining the precise steps or actions (observable behaviors on your part) needed to get close with that student, and 2) applying those rapport-building procedures in situations.

The precise actions (behaviors) on your part include the basic elements of positive interactions with others. These steps are often referred to as the mechanics of building rapport and are as follows:

- Demonstrate reasonably close proximity (generally within arm's reach).
- Demonstrate age-appropriate touch (e.g., fist-bump, high-five).
- Demonstrate appropriate facial expressions that reflect the nature of the situation.
- Demonstrate appropriate tone of voice that matches the situation.
- Demonstrate appropriate body language (e.g., appear relaxed, keep arms open, be attentive, look at student).
- Ask open-ended, positive questions (e.g., "What are you doing after school?" "How do you do so well in your track meets?" "What was your favorite part of the movie?"). If you ask questions that require one-word answers, that is what you will likely get from a student with whom you are not already close.
- Listen while the student is speaking. Ideally, talk less than the student (try not to interrupt or abruptly change the topic).

- Use empathy statements. Act like a mirror and reflect the student’s feelings by expressing your understanding and caring.
- Ignore nuisance behavior (if it arises)...let the little stuff slide.
- Appear calm throughout the process, which can be easier said than done.

When strategically building rapport with a specific student there are a few key factors to consider beyond these basic mechanics. Focus on readily available, non-instructional times throughout the school day within your learning environment, such as transition time frames. Look for small windows of time (between 15 – 45 seconds). The key is in the frequency. Be prepared to interact about things that are of interest to the student. Your goal is to proactively invest your time in a non-contingent manner. You are giving your time and attention away for free when strategically building rapport.

In light of the above guidance, provided here is a brief reflective exercise to complete associated with strategic rapport building. Once having completed the following exercise, you are encouraged to apply this approach with particular students in need of targeted rapport-building.

*Ryan is a fifth grader who moved into the school district about 2 months ago. After a brief “honeymoon” period of about one week, Ryan’s academic and behavioral performance has been on the decline. Ryan also appears to be trying to enlist other classmates in a variety of undesired behaviors (e.g., asking you to repeat directions multiple times in a manner that appears ...or at least feels to you to be ....an effort to distract the class from progressing). When redirected, Ryan makes excuses, blames others, and verbally complains about you picking on him (“All you do is tell me I am messing up” and “You pick on me more than anyone else at this school!”).*

*Reflecting on the importance of rapport building, coupled with the deteriorating set of circumstances associated with this situation, please complete the first two columns of the following table to identify and plan some more targeted rapport building strategies with Ryan.*

RAPPORT-BUILDING STRATEGIES	WHEN I COULD IMPLEMENT	RYAN’S INTERESTS
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minecraft</li> <li>• Mario Cart</li> <li>• Laser Tag</li> <li>• Baseball</li> </ul>

# Embedding Social Emotional Learning when Establishing Classroom Behavioral Expectations

**What are the basic points to consider when building a behavior matrix in my classroom ?**

1. Select 3–5 positively stated (broad) behavioral expectations.
2. Identify your highest priority contexts (settings/routines) within which you anticipate the greatest number of student behavioral errors.
3. Operationally define each of your expectations across each context and weave in both compliance type behaviors and SEL. Ask yourself, “What will my students look-like and sound-like when they meet these expectations?”
4. Post your expectations prominently in your learning environment.
5. Provide direct instruction in your expectations.
6. Reinforce your students for meeting expectations.
7. Have clear, consistent, and reasonable redirection procedures and consequences for undesired behaviors.

**Why is it important to embed SEL within my classroom behavior matrix?**

There are generally two-types of student behaviors that tend to be reflected within a classroom behavior matrix. Historically, the first of these two types (compliance behaviors) tend to predominate behavioral expectations. To some degree this is both understandable and desirable in order to establish and maintain a safe learning environment (e.g., keep hands and feet to one-self, follow directions the first time, ask permission before borrowing- items). However, it is equally important to add to such compliance behaviors essential life-skills that reflect social emotional learning that extend beyond simple compliance and self-focused actions to emphasize self-regulatory skills in tandem with concern for others (e.g., I talk to a trusted adult if I am concerned about a classmate). Classroom behavior matrices that reflect a healthy balance of compliance behaviors and social emotional skills is the goal.



## What does this look like in practice?

Expectation	Expanding Compliance Behaviors to Build Social Emotional Skills
<b>Be Safe</b>	Compliance Example: Keep hands and feet to self.
	Aligned SEL Example: I tell an adult when I am worried about my safety or the safety of a friend.
<b>Be Respectful</b>	Compliance Example: Raise hand to ask a public or private question.
	Aligned SEL Example: Make sure everyone gets a turn.
<b>Be Responsible</b>	Compliance Example: Follow directions the first time.
	Aligned SEL Example: Use my self-calming strategies (e.g., deep breathing) and let the teacher know if I feel confused as to what to do next.

Provided below is an opportunity for you to try this on for size. Develop examples of aligned SEL skills to correspond with the provided compliance behaviors.

Prior Expectation to be Enhanced	Aligned SEL Expectation
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Be Safe</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Use your own materials Pick-up clutter from your work area before leaving</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Be Respectful</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">One person speaks at a time Follow directions the first time</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Be Responsible</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Raise your hand if you need help Be on time for class</p>	

## How do I embed SEL in to my classroom behavior matrix?

You are highly encouraged to engage your students in the process of building your classroom behavior matrix. Actively engaging your students can be accomplished in a number of ways including 1) you target the 3–5 broad expectations (e.g., Be Responsible, Be Safe, Be Respectful) as well as 2) you prioritize the routines within which you will operationally define your expectations (e.g., entering and exiting the classroom, during large-group instruction, small-group learning activities). Relatedly, engage your students in creating operational definitions within those routines (contexts) that reflect BOTH compliance behaviors and SEL skills. Engaging your students in this manner accomplishes two important things: 1) empowerment with your students by providing them the opportunity to have a voice and 2) increased degrees of student buy-in (motivation) based on increased locus of control by your students.

On a final note, you are encouraged to refer to [Pennsylvania's Career Ready Skills](#) as they provide a continuum of learning progressions that support the development of student social emotional learning and competence in the following three domains:

- Self-awareness and self-management
- Establishing and maintaining relationships
- Social problem-solving

# Pre-correction for Student Behavioral Errors in the Classroom

Pre-correction is a proactive strategy to increase the likelihood of desired behavior and student success by reducing the chance for undesired behavior. Pre-correction involves reminding (promoting/cueing) the student(s) of the expected behaviors at the onset (prior to) starting a learning activity. Use of this procedure can be employed in any instructional setting, across grade levels as well as content areas with large groups, small groups or in 1-1 instruction.

Providing pre-correction increases transparency and predictability for your students. When delivering pre-correction you identify, in advance, what may be challenging about the upcoming learning activity and explicitly pre-teach correct behavioral responses using action-oriented (behavior-specific) words. Precorrection has been shown to be effective in reducing nuisance-level as well as problem-level undesired behavior.

To illustrate, in group learning activities involving materials or equipment (e.g., 3rd grade cooperative learning activity requiring the development of a product such as poster or an 11th grade chemistry lab), once the teacher identifies those aspects of the activity that are more likely to produce behaviors that may require re-direction (e.g., gathering materials, sharing materials, using materials safely) the teacher would preview with the students the expected behaviors drawing connection to the classroom behavior matrix that has been established. Specifically, this could entail having a volunteer 11th grade student demonstrate for the class under the teacher's supervision the safe handling of materials to be used in the lab experiment while the students describe out-loud the safe procedures prior to actually having the students start the lab experiment.

To further illustrate by way of another example, when providing large group instruction in a content area of the curriculum (e.g., general science, math, language arts or history) the teacher would provide pre-correction prior to starting the presentation of content. When pre-correcting the teacher will draw clear connection to the expectations reflected in the classroom behavior matrix (e.g., briefly explaining how listening and following directions the first time align with being responsible in the classroom).

The use of pre-correction, while provided at the onset of the given lesson, is not limited to a once-and-done occurrence. Rather, it is encouraged that brief, periodic reminders be provided over the course of time during any particular lesson... thus proactively reminding (promoting/cueing) students regarding the desired behaviors and actions required for them to be successful.



The power and efficiency of pre-correction is further enhanced when paired with delivery of behavior specific acknowledgement/reinforcement (e.g., praise) throughout the instructional block. For example, once pre-corrections are provided at the onset of the class session the teacher provides positive reinforcement throughout the ebb and flow of the class period (e.g., “nice work in following directions the first time they were provided”).

Provided here are a few group practice situations for which to generate ways in which you could implement pre-correction. We have provided you with a couple of examples for the initial situation to get you started. Also, beyond the situations depicted in the following table, please remember that you can also employ pre-correction in 1-1 instructional settings.

Broad Expectation Reflected in Behavior Matrix & Context	Pre-correction to be Provided by the Teacher
<p>Example: Being Responsible During Transition to Cafeteria</p>	<p>Sample Pre-correction 1: “In order to line up for lunch, raise your hand if you can tell us the expected behavior as we line-up?” ... “That’s correct, push in your chair, walk to the door, and form a line while keeping your hands and feet to yourself”.</p> <p>Sample Pre-correction 2: “As we get ready to line up to go to lunch, who wants to volunteer to demonstrate responsible behavior when we line-up to go to lunch?” ... “Spot-on, push in your chair, walk to the door, and form a line while keeping your hands and feet to yourself”.</p>
<p>Being Respectful During Small Group Art Project</p>	
<p>Being a Serious Learner During Teacher Presenting Lesson</p>	
<p>Being Safe During Hallway Transitions</p>	

# Achieving the 4 to 1 Ratio with Individual Students that Appear Most Vulnerable/At-risk

## **What is the 4 to 1 Ratio?**

Strive to achieve a four to one ratio (or higher) of positive reinforcement for desired behavior for each instance where you provide direct, corrective feedback (redirection) for undesired/problem-level behavior. The key is to deliver the 4 instances of positive reinforcement/acknowledgment within a reasonable amount of time. To illustrate, Avery engages in problem behavior requiring teacher re-direction ... on average ... one time every 60 minutes through out the typical school day. As such, the teacher(s) should catch Avery engaging in desired behavior and provide positive reinforcement 4 times every 60 minutes throughout the school day in order to achieve the 4 to 1 ratio. Over time, based on Avery's progress, the time interval can be adjusted (e.g., 4 instances of behavior specific positive reinforcement every 90 minutes followed by tapering to every 120 minutes, and so-on).

*How do I determine what is a "reasonable" amount of time... how do I determine a student-specific time interval within which to positively reinforce/acknowledge desired behavior in order to achieve the 4 to 1 ratio?*

Step 1: Accept the fact that some students will require more frequent reinforcement/acknowledgement than others for you to achieve this target.

Step 2: Determine, on average ... in general, the baseline (history of) problem behavior that requires you to stop what you are doing and re-direct the particular student of concern (e.g., once per instructional block/class period per week, once per day, more than one time every class period/instructional block).

Step 3: Using this baseline as your guide, calculate how frequently (within what time interval) you will need to "catch" that student engaging in desired behavior in order to achieve the 4 to 1 ratio.

**What does this look like in real life... in the classroom?**

Baseline Frequency of Redirection for Undesired Behavior	Time Interval within to Acknowledge Desired Behavior
<p>Example: Casey is a first-grade student who requires redirection for problem behavior, on average, 1 time every morning and 1 time each and every afternoon.</p>	<p>Correct Response: At a minimum ... 4 instances of behavior specific positive reinforcement every morning (AM) as well as every afternoon (PM) resulting in ... at a minimum ... 8 instances of behavior specific positive reinforcement every day.</p>
<p>Cam is a fourth-grade student who requires redirection for problem behavior, on average, 2 times every morning and 2 times each and every afternoon.</p>	
<p>Morgan is a seventh-grade student who you have in class 1 period every day – five days per week who requires redirection for problem behavior, on average, one-time each class period.</p>	
<p>Sean is an eleventh-grade student who you have in class every other day for one course (odd days in your six-day schedule), as well as on the even days for another course; thus, you see Sean five days each week who requires redirection for problem behavior, on average, 1 time per week when in your classroom.</p>	

Note: This approach can be used with particular groups of students (as needed).

# Expanding the Breadth and Depth of Opportunities to Respond in Classroom Instruction

One fundamental strategy to enhance engagement of students in the curriculum, which also serves to empower youth through providing them with a voice and choice, is referred to as Opportunities to Respond (OTRs). Any teaching behavior employed that elicits an observable student response, such as posing a question for student responses, presenting a problem for students to complete, or requesting help on an activity or task from your students is considered an OTR. One of the keys with this type of instructional strategy is providing reasonably high rates along with diversity of OTRs throughout the ebb and flow of your instruction. There are four general types of OTRs: individual, group, mixed, and peer-to-peer responding. Further, there are six modes of OTRs: individual verbal, group choral, pre-agreed gestures, response cards, student response systems, and student production responses. These four types and six modes can be clustered ... or chunked ... as follows:

**Say** (Individual and Unison Responses)

**Write** (Paper-pencil, White Board, Dry Erase Board, or virtual Options)

**Do** (Student response Systems such as Clickers, iPads/Laptops/Cell Phone Applications such as Kahoot)

You are encouraged to incorporate in to your lesson planning consideration of how to provide a sufficient number of opportunities as well as different ways in which you will elicit student responses. There is no one general type or mode of OTR that is considered the “best” for all instructional situations. As such, you will need to take in to consideration the nature of the curriculum, your students, and context within which instruction is being delivered (e.g., face-to-face, virtual, or hybrid). Further, there is no one-size-fits-all approach in terms of the minimal number of OTRs to provide during any given lesson.

In light of the above information concerning OTRs, the take-away is to engage your students in your instruction to the greatest degree feasible through OTRs. Your own professional judgment will drive decisions around what types and how many OTRs you will employ during instruction.

Provided here is a brief reflective exercise associated with providing OTRs. Once having completed the following exercise, you are encouraged to deliberately apply this approach with specific students with whom you engage with within your classroom.

*You are co-teaching American History in a 10th grade general education classroom. You and your colleague have been becoming increasingly frustrated in that a large group of your students appear disinterested in the curriculum and less engaged than you desire throughout instruction. While you are not experiencing any major disciplinary problems, at least not right now, you need to find a way to energize and engage your students in the learning experiences within the classroom.*

*Based on this scenario, and based upon your knowledge about OTRs, please complete the middle and right columns of the chart.*

Possible OTR Menu of Options	Listing of ... 1) OTR Strategies We Will Target 2) Brief Description of Implementation	Goal for Frequency for Each OTRs During a Typical Class Period
<p><b>Say</b> (Individual and Unison Responses)</p> <p><b>Write</b> (paper-pencil, white board, dry erase board, or virtual options)</p> <p><b>Do</b> (Student Response Systems such as clickers, iPads/laptop/cell phone applications such as Kahoot, or response cards)</p>	<p><u>Targeted OTR Strategies</u></p> <p><u>Brief Description of Implementation for Each Strategy Noted Above</u></p>	

# Redirecting Student Behavior in a Trauma-informed Manner

It is important to differentiate between nuisance-level undesired behavior that should be addressed through planned ignoring versus problem-level behavior that requires direct intervention. The standard approach to redirecting undesired behavior that is deemed as requiring direct intervention by the teacher typically involves a 3-part sequence of actions by the teacher:

*1) Directly intervening and telling/communicating with the student to cease what they are currently doing (e.g., "Stop X" with "X" representing the problem behavior), this is then followed in close time proximity by delivery of*

*2) a redirection statement/communication (e.g., "do Y" with "Y" representing the determined alternative behavior/action), which is then followed by*

*3) reinforcement of the student for complying with the re-direction (engaging in the "Y" behavior/action ... unless the student does not comply with the re-direction. In this instance, simply re-direct the student again to "do Y" adding additional prompts coupled with wait-time then reinforce compliance with the re-direction).*

Emphasis should be on maintaining a calm, clear and assertive (not passive or aggressive) tone of voice or volume (loudness) when implementing this standard re-direction procedure. Understandably, this is sometimes easier said than done. Focus on self-regulating your own actions despite the fact that you will likely be feeling stressed by the student's behavior of concern.

This standard approach to re-direction is greatly strengthened, of course, given a positive learning environment in the classroom where students receive high levels of positive reinforcement for desired behavior.

Having highlighted this basic 3-step re-direction procedure, one trauma-informed enhancement to the traditional application of the 3-step procedure requires the teacher to re-direct the student of concern to employ their self-calming strategies ... "Y" behavior (e.g., statements such as "take a breath", "stop and think before your next action", "try to use your 4-7-8 breathing technique") to help the student to gain greater self-control at that moment in time BEFORE redirecting that student to a more typical next alternative action (e.g., return to your seat and begin your work). This approach helps to break the escalating nature of the behavioral sequence in which the student requiring re-direction is engaging in at that moment in time.

The above described process should prove effective in most circumstances when applied as described. However, in the event the student of concern has not received guidance about strategies to self-regulate their behavior (e.g., "try to use your 4-7-8 breathing technique") the teacher may need to provide guidance at that moment in time including modeling of the self-calming strategy. Students with whom high patterns of required re-direction emerge are often times students that have been exposed to an array of adverse childhood experiences and/or are experiencing trauma. In such instances the student experiencing these difficulties should receive instruction over-time (but not during that moment in time requiring the re-direction) as to 1) how their Stress Response System operates along with 2) self-calming strategies that they can use across multiple settings.



Provided here are a few scenarios for which to generate your own “do Y” statements redirecting the student of concern to self-regulate their behavior. We have provided you with an example for the initial situation to get you started. Please complete the remaining “do Y” statements beyond the initial example provided.

Problem Behavior	“Do Y” Statement	3-Step Sequence of Redirection
<p>EXAMPLE: Ashton yelling and screaming at a classmate (Sean)</p>	<p>EXAMPLE: “Take a step back and let’s take 3 deep breaths together”</p>	<p>EXAMPLE:            Stop X: “Ashton, stop screaming at Sean”</p> <p>Do Y: “Take a step back and let’s take 3 deep breaths together” Once Ashton calms            Do Y: “Use your words to tell me what’s wrong.”</p> <p>Reinforce: “Thanks Ashton for taking those breathes with me, let’s come back to your seat so we can figure out together next steps”</p>
<p>Cam grabbing preferred toys from classmates during recess</p>		
<p>Casey tearing up work, using profanity and crying to end a work task</p>		