



Environmental Support for Positive Behavior Management

Classroom Rules

**Kansas Inservice Training System (1998)
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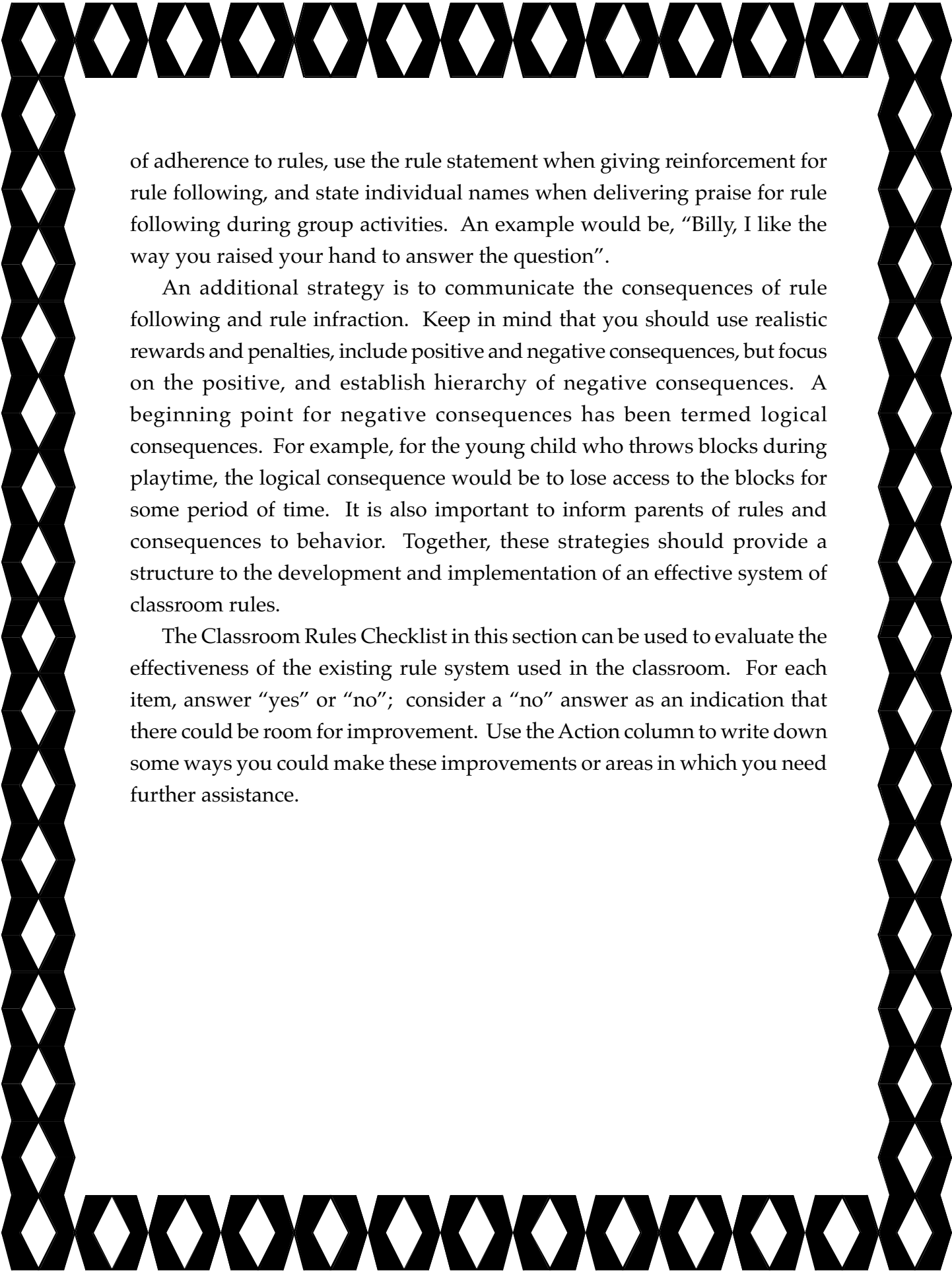


Classroom Rules

Another component of environmental support strategies is the use of classroom rules. Rules aid in regulating behavior by clearly defining the expectations of appropriate child behavior and by establishing the relationship between behavior and the consequences to behavior. They also help the teacher identify which child behaviors should be positively reinforced.

The development of classroom rules involves a few simple steps. Specific behaviors should be identified in a written rule list. Rules should be limited to a small number, such as four or five. Having long lists of rules may confuse children about what is expected, and keeping the list simple will highlight the behaviors that are most important in the classroom. Rules should be phrased in the positive (to do), rather than in the negative (don't do). Simply telling children not to talk does not specify an alternative behavior. A better option is to specify a behavior (i.e., raising hand) that can be substituted for an undesirable behavior (i.e., talking out) which would provide the children with an opportunity to be reinforced. Children should also be provided with an observable definition of the desired behavior. Again, the purpose is to provide clarity about what it is they are supposed to do, and under what circumstances. Another benefit to providing observable definitions of behavior is that anyone else (e.g., substitute teacher, volunteers) will also be able to implement and enforce the rule system if the primary teacher is absent. Posting the rules in a prominent place further enhances this point, by providing children and other staff with a visual cue about the relationship between classroom behavior and its consequences.

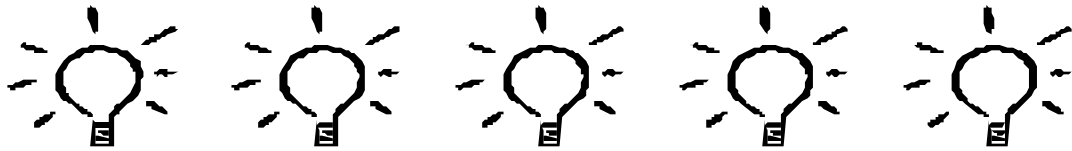
Algozzine & Ysseldyke (1992) suggest strategies to implement a system of classroom rules. The first strategy is to communicate the rules to children. This includes posting the rules to minimize misunderstandings, role-playing rule situations by using examples of rule following and infractions, teaching children your signal for rule infractions, and reviewing rules frequently to ensure compliance. The second strategy is to teach the rules to children. To do this, use an effective teaching model, initially reinforce every occurrence



of adherence to rules, use the rule statement when giving reinforcement for rule following, and state individual names when delivering praise for rule following during group activities. An example would be, “Billy, I like the way you raised your hand to answer the question”.

An additional strategy is to communicate the consequences of rule following and rule infraction. Keep in mind that you should use realistic rewards and penalties, include positive and negative consequences, but focus on the positive, and establish hierarchy of negative consequences. A beginning point for negative consequences has been termed logical consequences. For example, for the young child who throws blocks during playtime, the logical consequence would be to lose access to the blocks for some period of time. It is also important to inform parents of rules and consequences to behavior. Together, these strategies should provide a structure to the development and implementation of an effective system of classroom rules.

The Classroom Rules Checklist in this section can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing rule system used in the classroom. For each item, answer “yes” or “no”; consider a “no” answer as an indication that there could be room for improvement. Use the Action column to write down some ways you could make these improvements or areas in which you need further assistance.



BRIGHT IDEAS



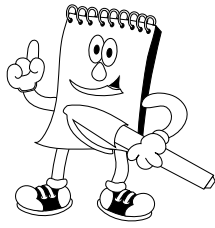
Rules of Thumb

To keep the classroom rules easy to remember, write each rule on a giant hand to display in the classroom. Hanging the hands from the ceiling keeps them visible and easy to point to for reminders. Don't forget to give a big thumbs up when a child remembers to follow a rule!



Picture This

Pictures, either as photographs or line drawings, can easily display the rules to children and serve as reminders for what they should be doing in the classroom. Group pictures on boards and post in a prominent location. This idea could also be used as reminders when there are specific rules for center areas, such as art or play.



Classroom Rules Checklist

Item:	Yes	No	Plan of Action/ Resources Needed:
1. Have you established rules for your classroom?			
2. Does the number of rules exceed five?			
3. Are the rules stated as to what the children should "Do" rather than "Don't do"?			
4. Are the rules posted so that all children may see them?			
5. Have you defined the consequences for rule following and rule violation?			
6. Do you provide teaching to explain and demonstrate rule following behavior?			
7. Are parents informed of the rules or do they participate in their development?			

Adapted from Jack, S. L., et al (1996). An analysis of the relationship of teachers' reported use of classroom management strategies on types of classroom interactions. *Journal of Behavioral Education*, 6, 67-87.

Classroom Rules: Case Study

Description of the child: Zachary is a 4-year old boy with a mild language delay. On occasion, he acts out in the form of taking toys from other children, running away from teachers and is often noncompliant.

Description of the classroom: The preschool classroom has 12 children and two adults, the primary teacher and an assistant. The classroom is a 20 x 20-foot room, in which all classroom activities (except recess) take place.

Problem: Each day at 10:00 is toy time in the classroom. The teachers remove the materials from the work tables, push the tables to the walls of the room, and pull the toys out of the closet. The children are allowed to play all over the room, and do whatever they want to during this time. On some days, Zachary will throw toys at the teachers, and hit the other children.

Solution:

Solution: There needs to be structure added to the play time routine. The boundaries of play time should be set, both physically and with rules. The physical boundaries should include limiting the play area to a specific part of the room. Specific rules should include statements about what is acceptable and unacceptable for play time behavior. Providing guidelines within the framework of a structured play time will help eliminate most problem behaviors before they happen.

Jack, S. L. & Lindeman, D. P. (1998). *Environmental support for positive behavior management*. Parsons, KS: Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities.