



Environmental Support for Positive Behavior Management

Adult Attention and Proximity

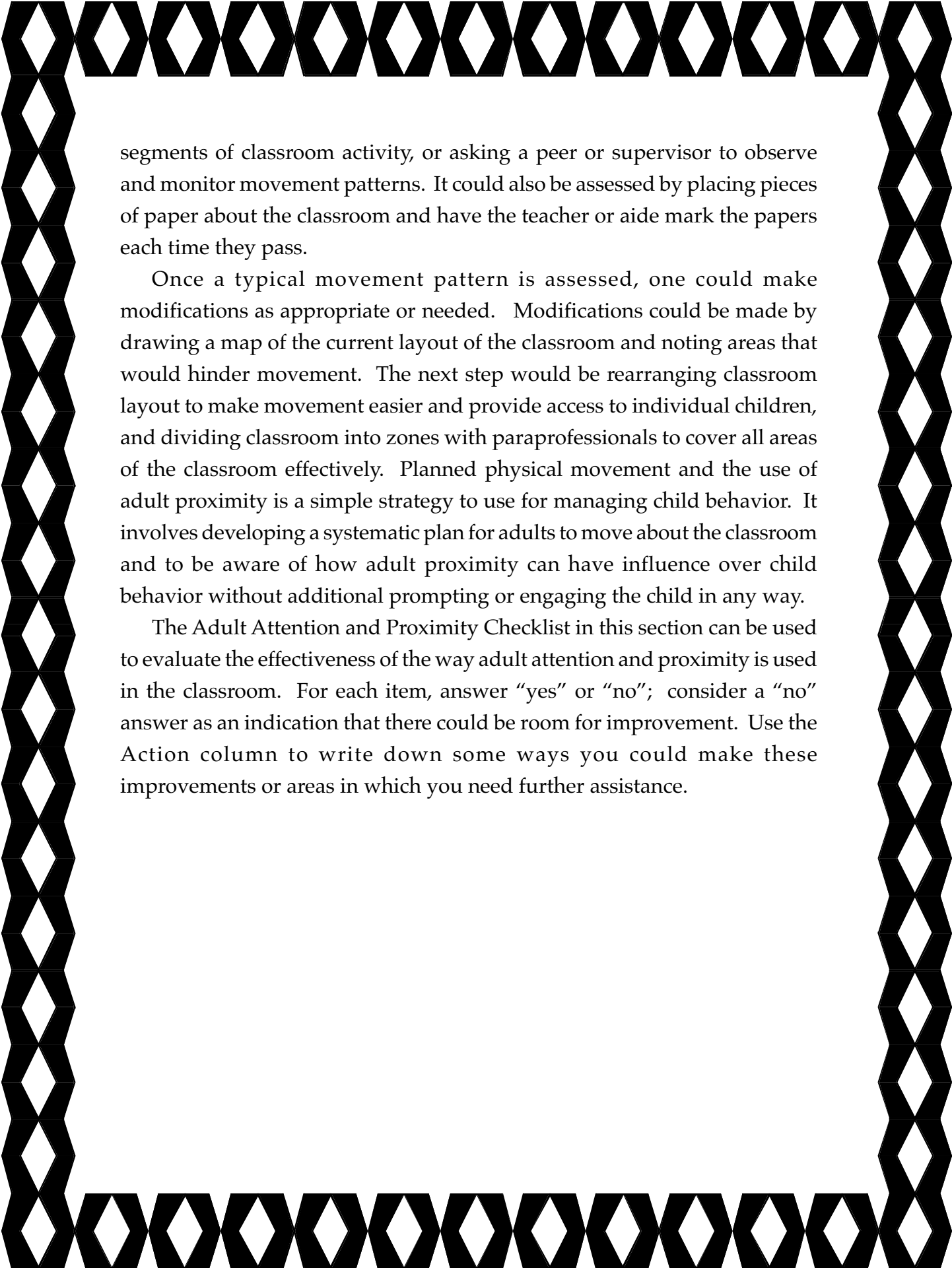
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Adult Attention and Proximity

Positive adult attention and proximity can affect child behaviors in a number of ways. They can increase child engagement, increase the amount of positive teacher-child interactions, and decrease the frequency of child disruptive behaviors. Positive attention can be in the form of pleasant teacher-child interactions, physical contact, and physical proximity between teacher and child. For most young children, adult attention is one of the most influential reinforcers available. They will often go to great lengths to get adult attention, in whatever form they can obtain. The *proactive* approach is to provide positive attention to children on a regular basis, rather than to *react* when they misbehave by providing negative attention.

One simple way to provide positive attention is to use verbal praise when children engage in appropriate behavior. Verbal praise is one of the most important techniques of teaching and can be a powerful reinforcer for child behavior. But praise needs to be something more than the same few phrases repeated over and over. Praise should be given freely, sincerely, and accompanying other reinforcers. It should also be used to praise effort and improvement. There are several advantages to using verbal praise: 1) it is transportable - it can be given most any place and at most times, 2) it is economical - it requires small effort on behalf of the teacher, 3) it can be trained - anyone can be taught to use praise effectively, and 4) it can gain power over time when paired with other types of reinforcers. With these considerations in mind, the use of verbal praise can be a valuable tool in establishing and maintaining positive behavior in the classroom. See the table on the following page to find "50 Ways to Praise and Encourage a Child".

Another way to use positive adult attention is with adult proximity and teacher movement in the classroom. By rotating attention among children on a regular basis, say every five minutes, teachers and aides can influence children's interactions with others, improve their attention to tasks, and decrease the likelihood that children will misbehave. The first step in planning a movement strategy is to determine the current movement patterns by the adults in the classroom. This could be accomplished by videotaping



segments of classroom activity, or asking a peer or supervisor to observe and monitor movement patterns. It could also be assessed by placing pieces of paper about the classroom and have the teacher or aide mark the papers each time they pass.

Once a typical movement pattern is assessed, one could make modifications as appropriate or needed. Modifications could be made by drawing a map of the current layout of the classroom and noting areas that would hinder movement. The next step would be rearranging classroom layout to make movement easier and provide access to individual children, and dividing classroom into zones with paraprofessionals to cover all areas of the classroom effectively. Planned physical movement and the use of adult proximity is a simple strategy to use for managing child behavior. It involves developing a systematic plan for adults to move about the classroom and to be aware of how adult proximity can have influence over child behavior without additional prompting or engaging the child in any way.

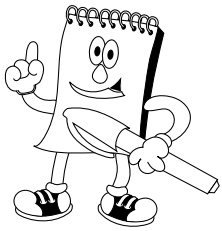
The Adult Attention and Proximity Checklist in this section can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the way adult attention and proximity is used in the classroom. For each item, answer “yes” or “no”; consider a “no” answer as an indication that there could be room for improvement. Use the Action column to write down some ways you could make these improvements or areas in which you need further assistance.

50+ Ways to Praise and Encourage a Child

Wow! • Way to Go • Super • You're Special
• Outstanding • Excellent • Great! • Good
for You • Well Done • Remarkable • I Knew You
Could! • I'm Proud of You • Fantastic • Nice Work
• Looking Good • Now You've Got it • You're
Incredible • Bravo • You're Catching On • Hurray for
You • You're on Target • You're Smart • Good Job
• Hot Dog • Dynamite • You're Beautiful • You're
Unique • Nothing Can Stop You Now • Much Better
• I Like You • I Like What You Do • I'm Impressed
• You're Clever • You're a Winner • Spectacular
• You're Precious • You're Terrific • Atta Boy • Atta
Girl • Congratulations • Hip, Hip, Hooray! • I
Appreciate Your Help • You're Getting Better • I Trust
You • You're Very Creative • You Are Fun • You Did
Good • I Like How You're Growing • I Enjoy You
• You Tried Hard • You Are So Thoughtful • You're
Important • You're a Treasure • You Are Wonderful
• Awesome • You Made My Day • I'm Glad You're My
Kid • Thanks for Being You • I Love You!

ALSO: A Pat on the Back • A Big Hug • A Kiss
• A Thumbs Up Sign • A Warm Smile

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Adult Attention and Proximity Checklist

Do you use adult attention and proximity effectively?	Yes	No	Plan of Action/ Resources Needed:
1. Do you provide positive attention to children on a regular basis?			
2. Do you have a systematic classwide reinforcement system?			
3. Do you use some form of tokens (e.g., stickers, points, checks) in your reinforcement system?			
4. Do you use a variety of precise statements throughout the day?			
5. Do you have a planned way of moving about your classroom?			
6. Do you place students close to you to aid in your ability to control their behavior?			
7. Have you designed a plan for movement with your assistant or paraprofessional?			
8. Do you have zones in the classroom that you and your assistant cover?			
9. Do you monitor your movement patterns?			

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.

Adult Attention and Proximity: 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: During circle time the classroom teachers, Mrs. Reed and Miss Casey, alternate responsibility for leading the activity. Mrs. Reed, the primary teacher, leads circle on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; she often does large motor activities such as parachute, and movement and dance songs. Miss Casey leads circle time on Tuesday and Thursday, and usually reads stories or sings songs. Zachary typically has a difficult time during circle. Mrs. Reed usually has Zachary stand near her to be her "helper" and often praises him for participating in the activity appropriately. During story time, Zachary wiggles around, sits on his knees, or picks on the other children. Miss Casey often pulls him from the group and sits him in the "time out" chair along the wall.

Solution:

Solution: There appears to be two types of problems with the circle time activity. One problem is that there are two very different types of circle activities taking place in the same area on different days. On some days, the children are able to dance around, while on others the children are expected to be quiet and still. To avoid confusion about what behavior is expected during circle time, it would be best to keep the routine consistent, regardless of the person leading the activity. Another problem is in the way the adults respond to Zachary. One is proactive, in that she keeps him close to her side and provides frequent feedback about his behavior during the activity. The other person is reactive to his behavior. That is, she responds to him when his is misbehaving, but does not attend to him when his is acting appropriately. Again, consistency will be the key to solving Zachary's problem behavior during circle time. Both adults should respond in the same way each time he behaves appropriately and inappropriately. The proactive method is certainly more positive for both the teachers and the child—praise and other positive consequences are provided on a regular and frequent basis when Zachary is participating in circle—and it is the method of choice in most instances.

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