

## Introduction

While managing student behavior can prove challenging in the traditional classroom setting, the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning create additional challenges for student behavior and how teachers manage student behavior remotely.<sup>1</sup> Thus, this research brief aims to support teachers with classroom and behavioral management strategies not only for in-person instruction, but also for the virtual learning environment. The brief synthesizes the secondary literature on best practices for *modeling* positive behaviors, *teaching* student self-monitoring, and *promoting* a supportive classroom environment and positive student behaviors remotely.

## Recommendations

- **Identify which behaviors to teach through modeling and develop a plan for interactive modeling.** Encourage positive behavior using positive language and a strengths-based approach.
- **Develop and clearly display a behavior matrix** to share behavioral expectations for remote learning with students.
- **Collaborate with other grade-level or team teachers to develop a list of strategies** for responding to student behavior remotely that engage rather than exclude the student from remote learning.

## Key Findings

- **Modeling is a strategy for teaching and encouraging positive behavior that offers students the opportunity to see the behavior in context and reflect on the behavior's outcomes.** Interactive modeling is a specific framework where students engage in explicit instruction of the desired skill or behavior, participate in actively learning the skill, and receive teacher feedback on their performance. Effective behavior modeling requires educators to use positive language to reinforce appropriate behaviors and redirect inappropriate behaviors. Additionally, teachers can model a controlled and calm physical presence while verbally de-escalating agitated behavioral situations.
- **Self-monitoring actively engages students in observing and recording their behavior and enables teachers and students to set and track progress towards behavioral**

**goals.** Educators should select behaviors for students to self-monitor that are specific, observable, appropriate, and personal. Implementing self-monitoring with students is a multi-step process where teachers select and define the target behavior, collect student baseline data, determine logistics, teach students the self-monitoring procedures, monitor student performance, and then fade the self-monitoring intervention. Over time, students should be able to monitor their behavior without the formal self-monitoring intervention processes, enabling teachers to reduce the time and effort spent monitoring student behavior.

- **Teachers can support a positive classroom and manage student behavior remotely by setting clear expectations, creating consistent and predictable routines, and appropriately responding to student behavior.**
  - ➔ Teachers should identify and define behavioral expectations, clearly convey expectations to students and ensure students can visually reference them throughout the day, and then teach and monitor new behavioral expectations.
  - ➔ Creating consistency and predictability for students through regular schedules and consistent lesson formats can also help support positive behavior and cooperation.
  - ➔ Teachers can appropriately respond to student behavior by acknowledging and affirming positive behavior and by addressing misbehavior through reflection and engagement strategies, rather than exclusionary discipline.

## Modeling Positive Behavior

Modeling offers an effective strategy for teaching and encouraging positive behavior. When teachers model appropriate behavior, students have the opportunity to see the behavior in context and reflect on the behavior's outcomes.<sup>2</sup> Modeling through a combination of telling students about a behavior and showing it in progress.<sup>3</sup>

**Interactive modeling represents a specific framework for modeling designed to efficiently develop student mastery of desired behaviors.** In addition to engaging in explicit instruction of the skill or behavior, students participate in actively learning the skill and receive feedback from the teacher on their performance.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, in contrast to traditional forms of modeling, interactive modeling “creates a clear mental image of the expected behavior for students, fully engages them in noticing details about it, and immediately gives them a chance to practice and receive teacher feedback.”<sup>5</sup>

Educators can adapt interactive modeling to their students' needs, and interactive modeling works with students in all grades and subjects, particularly with elementary school students.<sup>6</sup> Younger students may benefit from modeling individually before the entire class practices, and older students can respond to sophisticated language and more complex requests.<sup>7</sup> While interactive modeling enables effective teaching of classroom behaviors, schools can also implement interactive modeling to encourage schoolwide behaviors and routines.<sup>8</sup> School leaders can support educators in using interactive modeling in their classrooms by following the practices in for school leaders in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: School Leader's Checklist for Interactive Modeling**

✓	Devote staff meeting time to interactive modeling.
✓	Make sure all adults agree on behavior expectations.
✓	Provide interactive modeling scripts.
✓	Emphasize these to-do's of interactive modeling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Use when there's only one acceptable way (or very few acceptable ways) to do something.</li> <li>○ Use intensely early in the year and then as needed after.</li> <li>○ Model more rather than less.</li> <li>○ Give reminders even after careful modeling.</li> <li>○ Reinforce positive behaviors frequently.</li> <li>○ Hold firm to standards.</li> </ul>
✓	User iterative modeling yourself with students.
✓	Have teachers observe one another's interactive modeling session.

Source: Wood and Freeman-Loftis<sup>9</sup>

**Interactive modeling engages the teacher and students in a cycle of modeling the behavior, requesting student observations, asking students to model the desired behavior, and providing students with feedback on their performance.**<sup>10</sup> Figure 2 below explains each of these steps as well as why they are important to students learning and teacher strategies for successfully executing the step. Notably, while the significance and strategies in the following figure are geared towards younger students, the steps are relevant for all grades and educators can adapt the strategies for older students with more complex skills, routines, or behaviors.

**Figure 2: Steps for Implementing Interactive Modeling**

STEP	IMPORTANCE	STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS
<b>Step 1</b> Say what you will model and why	Students are more likely to do something the way it was taught if they know the reason for it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Plan exactly what you'll say (you may want to write it out).</li> <li>● Keep it brief (a few short sentences at most).</li> <li>● Use positive wording even when the lesson is in response to a problem.</li> <li>● Refer to the class rules if you can.</li> </ul>
<b>Step 2</b> Model the behavior	Hearing how the teacher want them to do something is not enough for most students. They need to see the behavior demonstrates so they have a mental image of exactly how to do it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Practice the behavior yourself first.</li> <li>● Stay silent as you model, unless talking is part of what you are teaching (or if students would benefit from you "thinking aloud").</li> <li>● Avoid spontaneous additions.</li> </ul>
<b>Step 3</b> Ask students what they noticed	Students take in more and remember more if they notice key aspects of the excepted behavior for themselves. Asking students what they notice also enables teachers to quickly assess their understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use open-ended questions.</li> <li>● Ask a follow-up question if needed.</li> <li>● Accept any reasoned and relevant responses.</li> <li>● Emphasize what to do.</li> </ul>
<b>Step 4</b> Invite one or more students to model	Having students repeat the teacher's modeling gives the class multiple images of the behavior, which reinforces exactly how to do it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Select students who will repeat your demonstration (you may even want to practice with them beforehand).</li> <li>● Leave no doubt that students are to model exactly the way you did.</li> </ul>

<b>Step 5</b> Again, ask students what they noticed	This further reinforces the specific details of the behavior and allows to quickly reassess students' understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repeat Steps 4 and 5 for somewhat challenging behaviors.</li> </ul>
<b>Step 6</b> Have all students practice	Practicing is critical to the mastery of any skill, routine, or procedure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spread out this practice if needed.</li> <li>Focus on progress, not perfection.</li> </ul>
<b>Step 7</b> Provide feedback	Students need feedback from their teacher as they practice during a modeling lesson if they are going to truly learn a new skill.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Name the specific, positive actions you notice.</li> <li>Redirect students respectfully but clearly.</li> <li>Invite students to reflect on how they are doing.</li> <li>Provide meaningful feedback: Name concrete behaviors; use a warm, professional tone; and avoid using word of personal approval.</li> </ul>

Source: Wilson<sup>11</sup>

Educators should reframe how students describe what they notice about the modeled behavior to emphasize the appropriate behavior, rather than exclusively enforcing the negative behavior.<sup>12</sup> For example, Figure 3 below highlights sample expressions for how teachers can positively re-phrase student observations of positive behaviors.

**Figure 3: Reframing “You Didn’ts” to “You Dids”**

IF A STUDENT SAYS...	THE TEACHER COULD ASK...
“You didn’t run.”	“So, how did I get there?”
“You didn’t just flip through randomly.”	“What did I do to figure out a good place to start?”
“You didn’t just shove things in your desk.”	“How did I make sure things went in the right place?”
“You didn’t aim at his head.”	“Where did I try to have the ball land?”
“You didn’t let food go everywhere.”	“What did I do to make sure that didn’t happen?”
“You didn’t yell or get rude.”	“So, how did I talk to my partner?”

Source: Wilson<sup>13</sup>

Effective interactive modeling requires planning the lesson and reflecting on potential challenges, positively reinforcing student success, and staying focused on the behavioral goal.<sup>14</sup> As interactive modeling requires a quick pace, advanced planning can help keep the lesson on-track.<sup>15</sup> Interactive modeling is most appropriate to teach behaviors when there is only one or very few ways to acceptably act.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, teachers should only model behaviors they want students to repeat, and should avoid modeling how not to behave, as modeling incorrect behaviors can confuse students by creating two competing mental images.<sup>17</sup>

At the beginning of the year, teachers should start by modeling one or two small, simple behaviors that impact students’ abilities to learn successful throughout the year to build students’ familiarity and confidence with interactive modeling prior to moving on to additional behaviors and skills.<sup>18</sup>

Educators can further support the interactive modeling cycle, particularly for behaviors with complex steps, by creating visual reminders of the strategies or routines.<sup>19</sup> For example, educators could display anchor charts, where “one chart might list all the strategies; another might list a few key details about one of the strategies, such as phrases students could use in their self-talk.”<sup>20</sup> Additional strategies for implementing interactive modeling include:<sup>21</sup>

- Have a clear learning goal;
- Chunk complex processes into bite-sized pieces;
- Choose engaging tasks for practice;
- Repeat Interactive Modeling lessons as needed;
- Make sure Interactive Modeling is the best way to teach a skill; and
- Reinforce success.

Educators can also indirectly model desired behaviors by reading books and through play. Teachers can read-aloud books that demonstrate desired behaviors to students, as students can learn positive behaviors from watching characters in books or other forms of media in addition to watching behaviors from their teachers, peers, and parents.<sup>22</sup> Additional strategies for modeling behaviors, especially to younger students, include dramatic play, show-and-tell, and puppet shows.

**Figure 4: Additional Indirect Modeling Strategies for Younger Students**

<b>DRAMATIC PLAY</b>	Role playing gives students a chance to demonstrate a behavior to others and promote a discussion about it: “Describe how I feel.” “How can I change that?”
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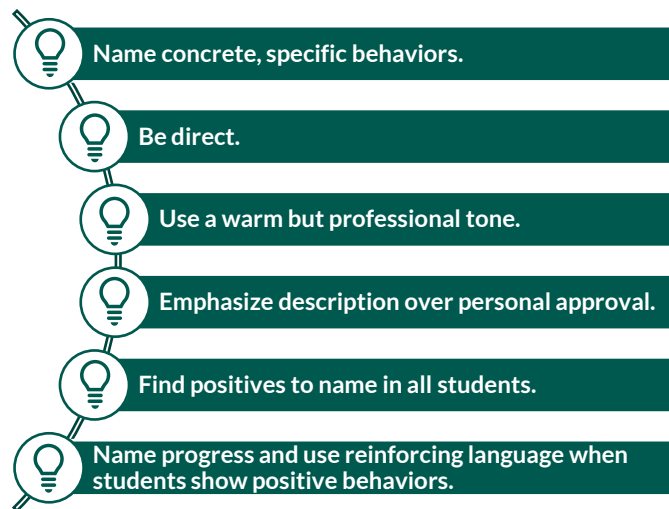
<b>SHOW AND TELL</b>	Students may be asked to show something that makes them feel happy or sad, angry or silly, and then tell about it. They are communicating about their feelings.
<b>PUPPET SHOWS</b>	Puppet shows provide an opportunity for students to assume different roles through the puppet figures. "Lion is being naughty. Here's what he did." "Zebra is being nice. Look what she did." "Let's talk about it."

Source: Pearson<sup>23</sup>

## Using Positive Language

Educators can reinforce the positive behaviors taught by modeling by using positive language. Positive language requires educators to convey a belief that their students can succeed, for "by using positive language to convey [a] belief in children's abilities and intentions, [educators] help them internalize a positive identity and develop more awareness and self-control."<sup>24</sup> Positive language encourages students to choose positive behaviors based on the tone set by the adult's language.<sup>25</sup> Figure 5 presents strategies for engaging in positive language.

Figure 5: How to Implement Positive Language



Source: Responsive Classroom and Wood and Freeman-Loftis<sup>26</sup>

Two components of positive language that support behavior modeling include reinforcing and redirecting language. Educators use reinforcing language to reinforce students' positive behavior, as this type of language supports students' behaviors, shows students that adults have noticed their behavior, and encourages continuation of the positive behavior.<sup>27</sup> Alternatively, educators can use reminding language prior to an activity to remind students that they know the appropriate way to act.<sup>28</sup> Redirecting language similarly reminds students of appropriate behavior when their behavior strays from positive and appropriate.<sup>29</sup> Figure 6, in the following column, displays examples of reinforcing and reminding language.

Figure 6: Examples of Reinforcing and Reminding Language

REINFORCING LANGUAGE	REMINDING LANGUAGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"I saw that you included everyone in your conversations. That helped make lunchtime pleasant for everyone at your table."</li> <li>"You kept going even though the problem is new and you said it was hard." "After your first idea didn't work, you tried another strategy. That shows perseverance."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Before we get started, what are some ideas you have for what to do if you get stuck?"</li> <li>"How can you help a classmate today if they get stuck on the task?"</li> <li>"That's a tricky word. What do you already know about that word?" "Remember what you know about this already? How might that help you?"</li> </ul>

Source: Responsive Classroom and Center for Responsive Schools<sup>30</sup>

Positive language also includes using clear, direct language. Direct language avoids sarcasm and innuendo to focus on the positive components of the behavior and child, rather than judging or shaming students for their behavior. In addition to words, educators can also use tone of voice, body posture, and facial expression to communicate described behavior calmly and respectfully.<sup>31</sup> Figure 7 below describes strategies for adapting indirect, negative language about student behavior into positive, direct language.

Figure 7: Strategies for Using Direct Language for Student Behavior

INSTEAD OF:	TRY:
Manipulating students' behavior by holding up classmates as exemplars,	Telling the students directly what to do.
Phrasing directions as questions,	Phrasing directions as directions.
Using sarcasm,	Pointing the students in the positive direction.
Generalizing about a student's motivations,	Figuring out the root issue causing the negative behavior.
Pulling in negative history,	Remaining in the present moment.

Source: Wood and Freeman-Loftis<sup>32</sup>

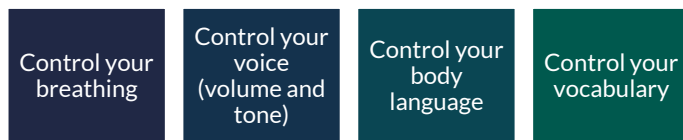
## De-Escalating Challenging Behavior

While de-escalation broadly refers to using effective supports and interventions to intervene in and alleviate conflict to return to an original calm state, verbal de-escalation, specifically, offers a "targeted intervention for use with students who are at risk for aggression" that "uses calm language, along with other communication

techniques, to diffuse, re-direct, or de-escalate a conflict situation."<sup>33</sup> Notably, verbal de-escalation is not appropriate when weapons are present.<sup>34</sup> Verbal de-escalation aims to achieve the following goals:<sup>35</sup>

- Open up clear lines of communication;
- Build trust and validate the individual's situation;
- Get the individual talking about his/her situation;
- Gather the necessary information for a positive resolution; and
- De-escalation is NOT a recipe or formula, it is a flexible, fluid set of options.

While the natural response to an agitated or upset situation is a flight-or-fight response, educators must carefully control their behavior, physical presence, and response to appear calm and in control.<sup>36</sup> Verbal de-escalation thus requires educators to practice and then model how they want the student to behave, including:<sup>37</sup>



Similarly, educators should also model the following components of a physical stance:<sup>38</sup>

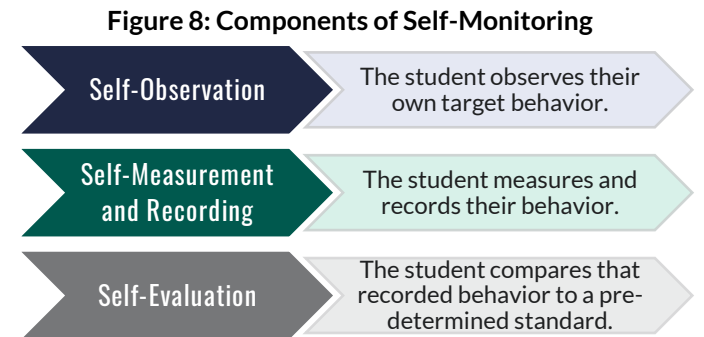
- Never turn your back for any reason.
- Always be at the same eye level. Encourage the student to be seated, but if he/she needs to stand, you stand up also.
- Allow extra physical space between you – about four times your usual distance. Anger and agitation fill the extra space between you and the student.
- Do not maintain constant eye contact. Allow the student to break his/her gaze and look away.
- Do not point or shake your finger.
- Do not touch – even if some touching is generally culturally appropriate and usual in your setting. Cognitive disorders in agitated people allow for easy misinterpretation of physical contact as hostile or threatening.
- Keep hands out of your pockets, up and available to protect yourself. It also demonstrates a non-verbal ally, that you do not have a concealed weapon.

## Self-Monitoring

**Self-monitoring is a strategy for managing and changing student behaviors that teaches students to self-assess behaviors and track their progress and results.**<sup>39</sup> The behavior that the teacher wants students to change is referred to as the "target" behavior. The concept of self-monitoring builds from the behavioral principal that behavioral improvements can result from "measuring

one's target behavior and comparing it to an external standard or goal."<sup>40</sup> By teaching students to self-monitor, educators can teach students to follow new behaviors or increase or decrease the duration, frequency, or intensity of existing behaviors.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, self-monitoring can positively impact students at all grade levels and of differing ability levels.<sup>42</sup>

Self-monitoring comprises the components of self-observation, self-measurement and recording, and self-evaluation, described in Figure 8 below.



Source: *Teaching Exceptional Children and Intervention Central*<sup>43</sup>

**Educators can teach students to self-monitor a variety of different behaviors.** Two common forms of self-monitoring include self-monitoring of attention (e.g., for students who frequently leave their seat during class, fiddle with objects, or distract themselves and other students) and self-monitoring of performance (e.g., monitoring academic performance, such as completing classwork).<sup>44</sup> Additional examples of target behaviors that teachers can address with self-monitoring include social behaviors (e.g., peer communication and play), homework completion, disruptive behavior, attention to task, academic accuracy, and academic productivity.<sup>45</sup>

**In addition to reducing teacher time and effort spent monitoring student behavior, self-monitoring strategies also benefit students' learning experiences by actively engaging students in the new behavior or intervention.**<sup>46</sup> Also, because self-monitoring requires students to first learn the new expectations from the teacher, this "ability of a child or youth to understand and internalize the behavioral expectations of others is a milestone in the development of social skills."<sup>47</sup> Teachers can also gather data on students' self-monitoring behaviors without significant time or cost investments. Figure 9 on the following page presents additional benefits for all students, as well as benefits for students with disabilities, in particular.



**Figure 9: Benefits of Self-Monitoring for Students**

**Benefits for All Students**

- Self-monitoring provides more immediate feedback to students than is possible when teachers evaluate the behavior.
- The strategy clearly depicts improvement over time in behavior for both the student and the teacher.
- The self-monitoring process engages students.
- Self-monitoring facilitates communication between students and their parent.
- Students can avoid competition because of the individual nature of the strategy.
- Self-monitoring incorporates academic and social skills (e.g., counting, reading, classifying, cooperating).
- The strategy increases students' awareness of their own behavior.
- Self-monitoring produces positive results.

**Benefits for Students with Disabilities**

- In addition to the benefits described above, studies on self-monitoring with students with disabilities in inclusive classroom settings have demonstrated positive changes in the following behaviors:
  - Social behaviors and completion of written classroom work at the high school level
  - The ability to follow directions in junior high school classes
  - Less aggressive behavior
  - Academic engagement and fewer disruptive behaviors for elementary-age students
  - On-task behavior, less disruptive behavior, and listening skills for grades 7 through 9
  - Math fluency

Source: IRIS Center, Vanderbilt University<sup>48</sup>

**Teaching Self-Monitoring**

Teachers can use a phased set of steps to teach students to self-monitor their behavior, as described on the following pages.<sup>49</sup> Teachers should focus self-monitoring instruction on one behavior or one set of similar behaviors at a time.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, the ability to self-monitor requires that students possess the following capabilities:<sup>51</sup>

The student must be able to identify when they have engaged in the targeted behavior.





The student must be able to understand that the target behavior is either socially or environmentally inappropriate.

**Step 1: Select and Define the Target Behavior**

The first step in implementing self-monitoring includes selecting and defining a target behavior that students will monitor.<sup>52</sup> Teachers can select either behaviors for students to increase (e.g., focusing on-task, following

directions, completing homework) or decrease (e.g., leaving one's seat, speaking out of turn, calling out).<sup>53</sup> Regardless of whether the goal is to increase or decrease the target behavior, the teacher should identify and define the positive behavior, rather than the negative behavior. When selecting a behavior for students to self-monitor, educators should choose behaviors that are specific, observable, appropriate, and personal (Figure 10), or follow the acronym "SOAP."<sup>54</sup>

**Figure 10: Characteristics of Behaviors Well-Suited to Self-Monitoring**

	<b>SPECIFIC</b>	The teacher can tell the student exactly what behavior(s) he or she will self-monitor.
	<b>OBSERVABLE</b>	The student can readily identify the target behavior.
	<b>APPROPRIATE</b>	The behavior is a good match for the setting and task.
	<b>PERSONAL</b>	The behavior matches to the student's cognitive and developmental levels.

Source: IRIS Center, Vanderbilt University<sup>55</sup>

After selecting the target behavior, teachers should describe what the behavior looks like in the classroom so that both the teacher and student can observe and measure it.<sup>56</sup>

**Step 2: Collect Baseline Data**

Next, the teacher collects baseline data about the behavior over several days.<sup>57</sup> Collecting baseline data "allow[s] the teacher and student to compare the behavior prior to and after the implementation of the self-monitoring strategy."<sup>58</sup> Teachers can measure the target behavior's **duration** (the amount of time a student engaged in the behavior) or **frequency** (the number of times a student engaged in the target behavior).<sup>59</sup>

Teachers and students should also select a method for the student to record self-monitoring data. Notably, students can self-monitor without recording their behavior, though recording can help students remember and track their behavior over time. Three methods for collecting self-monitoring data include using a rating scale, checklist, and frequency count (Figure 11 on the following page).

**Figure 11: Methods for Collecting Self-Monitoring Data**

### Rating Scale

•A rating scale consists of one or more items that a student can use to complete a global rating of a corresponding number of behaviors (e.g., "How well did I: (1) stay in my seat?; (2) participate?; (3) avoid distracting others?; (4) follow directions?"). The rating scale usually has a qualitative, sliding-scale rating format (e.g., "poor...fair...good"). Rating scales are typically completed at the conclusion of a fixed observation period (e.g., after a class period; at the end of the school day).

### Checklist

•A checklist is a listing of behaviors (to be increased or decreased) that the student periodically reviews, checking off those behaviors actually displayed during the monitoring period. For example, a student may have a checklist for independent assignments that contains these 3 work-readiness items: (1) I have all work materials needed, (2) My desk workspace is organized, (3) I understand the directions of this assignment. Before beginning independent work, that student reviews and verifies that these preparatory actions have been carried out. Checklists are helpful for monitoring multi-step behaviors (e.g., the plan-write-revise-edit stages of the writing process) or for monitoring clusters of several related behaviors (e.g., as illustrated in the work-readiness example cited above).

### Frequency Count

•In a frequency count, the student keeps a running tally of the number of times that a he or she displays a target behavior (e.g., number of call-outs or requests for teacher assistance) during an observation period.

Source: *Intervention Central*<sup>60</sup>

### Step 3: Determine Logistics

Additionally, establishing the self-monitoring process requires choosing a self-monitoring schedule, determining a monitoring cue, and obtaining student cooperation:

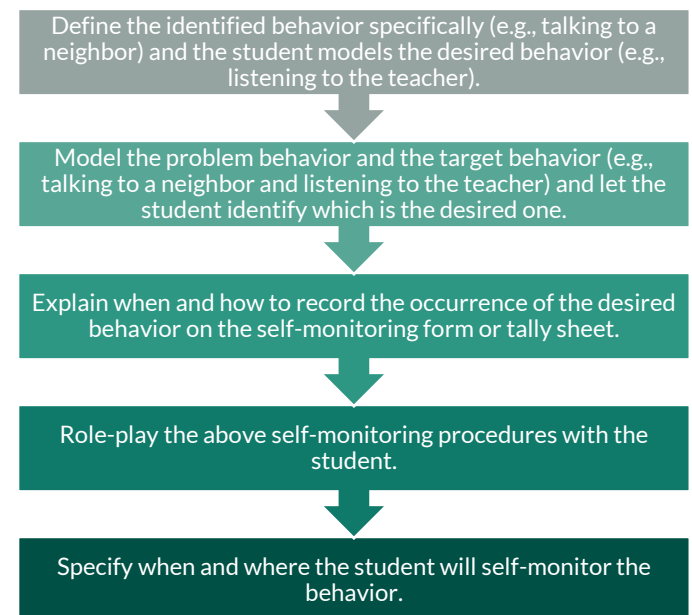
- **Select a Self-Monitoring Schedule:** The teacher should determine how often and when students will self-monitor (e.g., during an activity, after an activity, fixed intervals throughout day, at end of day).<sup>61</sup>
- **Determine a Monitoring Cue:** Teachers should also establish a cue to trigger when students should observe and record their behavior. Cues may be auditory or tactile, and example cues include a timer, pre-recorded beeps at fixed intervals, teacher-delivered cue, and devices that vibrate at fixed intervals.<sup>62</sup>
- **Obtain Student Cooperation:** Finally, as self-monitoring requires students' active participation, educators must convince students to participate willingly. Effective cooperation techniques include being realistic, optimistic, and explaining to students the issue and how self-monitoring could help. Notably,

encouraging students to personalize their self-monitoring observation form can help improve student buy-in and participation.<sup>63</sup>

### Step 4: Teach Self-Monitoring Procedures

After defining the behavior and developing the procedures and materials, the educators teaches students to self-monitor through a combination of direct instruction and modeling. Specifically, the teacher describes the procedures in which students will engage to self-monitor and will explain when and where students should self-monitor.<sup>64</sup> Figure 12 below presents the steps for teaching self-monitoring.

Figure 12: Steps to Teach Self-Monitoring



Source: *IRIS Center, Vanderbilt University*<sup>65</sup>

### Step 5: Monitor Student Performance

While students can self-monitor independently, teachers should monitor and check their progress.<sup>66</sup> In the beginning, teachers may need to remind students about the self-monitoring process and procedures.<sup>67</sup> Then, educators can spot-check students' self-monitoring to make sure students are actually measuring and recording their behavior.<sup>68</sup>

Teachers and students should plot baseline and ongoing behavior data on a graph in order to show progress and help students see that their behavioral improvements.<sup>69</sup> This data can also help the teacher make data-informed decisions, set goals, and determine if re-training is needed.<sup>70</sup>

### Step 6: Fade the Self-Monitoring Intervention

Once students attain their behavioral goals, educators can begin to simplify and reduce the formal self-monitoring procedures. Specifically, educators should aim to "streamline self-monitoring so that it becomes sustainable

over the long term, while maintaining the student's behavioral gains.”<sup>71</sup> Overall, the goal is for students to be able to monitor their behavior without the formal self-monitoring intervention processes.<sup>72</sup>

## Creating a Positive Classroom and Managing Student Behavior Remotely

The uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning create additional challenges for student behavior and how teachers manage student behavior remotely.<sup>73</sup> As such, teachers can use the following strategies of setting clear expectations, creating consistent and predictable routines, and appropriately responding to student behavior to manage behavior and support a positive classroom remotely.

### Set and Teach Clear Expectations

Supporting a positive classroom during remote instruction requires that educators identify clear behavioral expectations and teach new behaviors.<sup>74</sup> Remote learning is a new concept for many students and offers a wide variety of variables and new behavioral conditions that can affect student behavior.<sup>75</sup> Educators can support positive behavior in these new conditions and learning environments by explicitly setting clear expectations for how students should act.<sup>76</sup> Clarifying expectations helps avoid potential negative behaviors and improves cooperation, a positive online environment, and time spent on learning.<sup>77</sup> Expectations also help students adjust to the “new normal” and frequently changing conditions by creating consistently, routines, and behavioral goals.<sup>78</sup> For teachers, clear and consistent expectations not only help create a positive environment, but enable teachers to identify changes in student behavior, set goals for improvement, and implement interventions.<sup>79</sup>

In addition to class-level expectations, schools can also develop schoolwide expectations for student behavior during remote learning. Many schools already have schoolwide expectations for student behavior, which they can adapt and extend to apply to remote learning.<sup>80</sup> This creates consistency in behaviors cross locations, which “will help [students] see that the same systems apply regardless of location (even at home in front of a screen).”<sup>81</sup> Teachers can also use schoolwide behavioral expectations to develop classroom-specific expectations.<sup>82</sup> Accordingly, the Center on PBIS recommends that educators “[b]egin by defining some expectations for the general online classroom, but eventually there might be a need to create expectations for additional routines, such as a breakout room or entering the classroom.”<sup>83</sup>

Expectations can cover social behaviors (e.g., respecting others, not interrupting) as well as logistical behaviors for participating in online learning (e.g., joining zoom classes, muting oneself, and when to use video).<sup>84</sup> However,

educators should also recognize when student behaviors and home conditions are not within their control. For example, conditions such as a student’s learning space, guests, clothing, technology access and ability to stay on-task in an online environment, interruptions, and eating are often beyond the teacher or student’s control, and may be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., food scarcity, multiple family members learning and working from a small space). Expectations and responses to misbehavior should consider these features and the impact of broader home and local contexts.<sup>85</sup>

Once schools and teachers establish expectations, they should clearly convey them to students and make them visible for students to reference throughout the day and over time. Figure 13 below examines three strategies for making expectations clear for students.

Figure 13: Strategies for Clarifying Expectations for Students

<b>POST (OR SCREEN-SHARE) VISUAL CLASSROOM RULES AND EXPECTATIONS.</b>	Refer to expectations before all classroom activities, whether online or in-person. Keep in mind that as expectations change at different points in the day, rules may need to shift as well— it’s okay to have different sets of rules, as long as students understand what they are and know when they’re coming. Include opportunities to discuss the rules and see them modeled, as well as practice time to get used to any new rules.
<b>PREPARE YOUR STUDENTS FOR TRANSITIONS</b>	For example, before a change in activity, begin with a 10-minute warning: “In 10 minutes, it will be time to move on to writing.” Then provide a 5-minute warning, and finally remind your students when there are 2 minutes left before the transition. It also helps to use a visual timer to make things even more predictable and let your students get emotionally ready for that activity change.
<b>USE “WHEN/THEN” STATEMENTS TO CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS.</b>	For example, a teacher can say to one student: “When you complete your math assignment, then you can take a 5-minute break to draw.” This works for bigger groups, too: “When the class finishes the math assignment, then we’ll dance to a GoNoodle.” It’s helpful to remember that alternating between study and something more enjoyable keeps motivation high.

Source: *Transforming School Discipline Collaborative* <sup>86</sup>

Additionally, educators and schools can apply the PBIS strategy of behavior matrixes to expectations for remote learning behavior.<sup>87</sup> A behavior matrix offers a clear method for presenting expectations to students, and is dually applicable to in-person or remote instructional settings. Figure 14 (on the following page) offers an example of an elementary behavioral matrix for remote learning. For an example of a secondary matrix, click [here](#) to view Grandview Middle School’s (MN) distance learning matrix.



Figure 14: Sample Remote Learning Behavior Matrix (Elementary)

WE ARE...	ENTERING CLASS	TEACHER-LED WHOLE GROUP INSTRUCTION	ONE-ON-ONE INSTRUCTION	SMALL-GROUP ACTIVITIES (BREAKOUT ROOMS)
Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose a distraction-free space.</li> <li>Use kind words and faces.</li> <li>Use equipment as intended.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask in chat if you need help.</li> <li>Use kind words and faces.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use kind words and faces.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use “stop-leave-talk” when you hear disrespect.</li> <li>Encourage others to participate.</li> <li>Use kind words and faces.</li> </ul>
Respectful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video optional.</li> <li>Audio off.</li> <li>Use chat with classmates for first five minutes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video optional.</li> <li>Audio off.</li> <li>Answer questions in chat box on cue.</li> <li>Answer polls promptly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video on at all times.</li> <li>Audio on.</li> <li>Listen attentively.</li> <li>Answer questions out loud on cue.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video optional.</li> <li>Audio on.</li> <li>One speaker at a time: wait or use chat to respond when others are talking.</li> <li>Respect others’ cultures, opinions, and viewpoints.</li> </ul>
Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be on time and ready to learn.</li> <li>Start class charged or plugged in.</li> <li>Have materials ready.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask questions (voice or chat) when you have them.</li> <li>Be present – avoid multitasking.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask questions out loud when you have them.</li> <li>Be present – avoid multitasking.</li> <li>Try your best.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage each other to stay on topic.</li> <li>Complete the work together.</li> <li>Use “Ask for Help” button if you have questions.</li> <li>Be present – avoid multitasking.</li> </ul>

Source: Center on PBIS<sup>88</sup>

After defining expectations, teachers should explicitly teach and monitor behavioral expectations.<sup>89</sup> Methods for teaching new behaviors remotely include modeling during synchronous learning, offering examples and non-examples of the expected behavior, and offering students time and space to practice the behavior.<sup>90</sup> Teachers can monitor student behavior by affirming positive demonstrations of the target behavior and using reminding or redirecting strategies for negative or off-task behavior.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, while online learning may look and feel very different than traditional instruction for most students, teachers should “stress that online interactions are just like real-life interactions, with the same positive and negative consequences for behaviors.”<sup>92</sup>

### Create Consistent, Predictable Routines

As consistent expectations help to create a positive virtual class environment and support positive behavior, so do creating and following predictable routines.<sup>93</sup> Accordingly, “[s]ticking to clear schedules and routines is especially important during this time of change and uncertainty. You want to try to provide as much structure and predictability as possible for your students.”<sup>94</sup> Effectively implementing consistent routines requires starting from the beginning of the school year, rehearsing routines with students, and maintaining routines throughout the school year.<sup>95</sup>

Two components of everyday learning and instruction that support consistent routines include schedules and

lesson formats.<sup>96</sup> During a time of heightened uncertainty and student anxiety, providing a consistent schedule and offering advanced warning for transitions helps prepare students for next steps, offers structure to inconsistent learning environments, and can reduce behavioral responses to change.<sup>97</sup> Educators should create and share a visual copy of the schedule and verbally review the schedule at the beginning of the day.<sup>98</sup>

Furthermore, using a consistent lesson format creates consistency and predictability for students, as well as easing the lesson-planning burden for teachers.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, implementing similar lesson formats and learning methods “allow[s] students to focus on your instruction rather than putting cognitive energy into transitioning to unexpected activities or delivery methods.”<sup>100</sup> Figure 15 below highlights a sample lesson format for online instruction.

Figure 15: Sample Lesson Format for Remote Instruction

10 minutes	• Introduction and expectations review
15 minutes	• Whole group instruction
20 minutes	• Break-out room
10 minutes	• Whole group share
5 minutes	• Wrap-up

Source: Michigan’s Multi-Tiered System of Supports Technical Assistance Center<sup>101</sup>

## Appropriately Respond to Student Behavior

As with in-person instruction, creating a positive behavioral environment during remote instruction requires that educators appropriately respond to both positive and negative student behaviors. It is critical that teachers acknowledge, affirm, and encourage students' positive behavior as well as addressing misbehavior, and teachers should aim to acknowledge positive behavior more frequently than negative behavior. Acknowledging positive behavior can increase student positive behavior and supports a positive teacher-student relationship. Notably, teachers should also acknowledge correct student behavior that comes as a correction following a behavioral error or misstep.<sup>102</sup> Strategies to promote positive interactions in an online classroom include:<sup>103</sup>

- Greet each student as they enter the virtual classroom by name.
- Provide behavior specific praise during the session (e.g., "Wonderful job using the chat box when you had a question! This allowed me answer that when I was done explaining the concept" or "You demonstrated good effort on completing all of the pre-learning work when I know that you are helping care for a younger sibling as well").
- Choose five students to individually acknowledge after each session, either in the virtual classroom or with an individual email. Rotate the students who receive acknowledgements.

Educators should also address negative student behaviors and behaviors that conflict with expectations. However, because many expectations during remote instruction are new to students, educators should use gentle but firm language to remind students of behavioral expectations.<sup>104</sup> Additionally, because so many factors are external to the teacher's control, educators should focus on behaviors that align with class expectations and routines rather than "minor inappropriate behaviors that may be out of a teacher's control."<sup>105</sup> Strategies to address disruptive and negative behavior during remote learning include:<sup>106</sup>

Give a warning.

Schedule a virtual conference with the student and family to discuss the behavior, check-in on home life and circumstances that may be contributing to the behavior, and work through a solution together.

Require the student to complete a reflective assignment on their own, without having the student miss synchronous instruction time.

Create a learning module that goes over expected behaviors in the virtual learning environment.

Implement restorative justice practices to reduce recidivism and foster positive relationships moving forward.

Additional considerations for addressing negative behavior include whether the behavior connects to school or has safety implications. While online behaviors that connect to school are appropriate for educators to address, a student's online activity and social media presence that does not connect to school, learning, or the school community extends beyond a teacher's purview for behavior monitoring.<sup>107</sup> However, educators should immediately address any behavior that impacts student or staff safety, such as:

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*"Any communication that is **threatening in nature** within the online class discussion board, chat function in synchronous (Zoom, etc.) instruction, or **online harassment** of classmates on social media should be considered an **immediate concern**. These comments include anything that is harassing, profane, obscene, suggestive, solicitous, indecent, sexually explicit, pornographic, threatening, abusive, defamatory, libelous, derogatory, discriminatory, or hate speech."<sup>108</sup>*

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Furthermore, when addressing behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic, educators and administrators should focus on re-engaging students while also avoiding and ending exclusionary discipline practices. Notably, exclusion from synchronous learning environments such as Zoom or Google meetings is analogous to traditional school suspensions and negatively impacts student outcomes, where "exclusion from the virtual learning environment may be more disruptive to a student's learning and behavior than exclusion from the live classroom."<sup>109</sup> Thus, educators should work to actively engage students displaying negative behavior rather than resorting to exclusionary practices. Additional recommendations include:<sup>110</sup>

- Eliminate or significantly reduce the use of exclusionary discipline during this time, in recognition of the challenges students are facing;
- Revise disciplinary policies to provide flexibility, a safe and supportive environment, and to incorporate a culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and racial equity lens; and
- Focus on re-engaging students rather than removing them from school, whenever possible.

Districts should also collect and monitor data on exclusions from synchronous learning, due to their likeness to typical exclusions and suspensions.<sup>111</sup>



[Click here to access additional strategies for creating a positive classroom environment remotely from the Child Mind Institute.](#)

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