



## RTI for Behavior at Tier 1: Establishing a Shared Building-Wide Framework for Positive Behavior in 5 Steps

Schools implementing RTI for behavior teach appropriate behavior explicitly at Tier 1—as its own curriculum. Educators typically refer to these guidelines for conduct as “behavioral expectations”. They are derived from the school community’s larger values and sum up the positive attributes we wish to see displayed by all of our students.

Schools that successfully introduce a positive behavioral approach across all classrooms and settings follow a 5-step process: (1) develop school-wide behavioral expectations; (2) from those expectations, draft specific rules for classrooms and other locations; (3) teach students these behavioral expectations and rules; (4) reinforce students for displaying positive behaviors; and (5) monitor staff buy-in and behavioral outcomes across the building. Those steps are explained below:

**Step 1: Develop School-Wide Behavioral Expectations.** To establish its “behavior curriculum”, the school first develops a general set of universal behavioral expectations that apply in any setting. This set should be:

- brief enough to be easily remembered by both students and adults. Try to limit your list to between 4 and 8 individual expectations.
- broad in focus. Because these expectations must apply across numerous situations and settings, state them in general, student-centered terms (e.g., “I take pride in my work”).
- phrased in positive terms whenever possible. In crafting your expectations, state what the student is expected to do (e.g., “I concentrate on doing my best work.”), rather than actions that the student should *not* do.

In framing these behavioral expectations, then, your school is establishing the foundation for your behavioral curriculum. Here are additional tips for drafting your school-wide expectations for student conduct:

- *Cover the “Big 4”.* Schools can write expectations to cover any kind of behavior. The good news, however, is that expectations can be narrowed to 4 manageable categories that apply to most if not all student behaviors: (1) SCHOOLWORK: self-management and engagement in schoolwork; (2) COMPLIANCE: complying with adult directives; (3) PEER INTERACTIONS: ability to get along with and work productively with peers; and (4) RULE-FOLLOWING: obeying school rules (Farmer, Reinke & Brooks, 2014).
- *Link Expectations in an Acronym.* Since our goal is for both students and adults to easily remember your list of school-wide behavioral expectations, consider turning them into a simple, easy-to-memorize acronym if possible. Here is an example:

S: I support my classmates. [PEER INTERACTIONS]

O: I obey school rules. [RULE-FOLLOWING]

A: I achieve to the best of my ability. [SCHOOLWORK]

R: I respect my teacher and other adults. [COMPLIANCE]

**Step 2: Translate School-Wide Expectations into Site-Specific Rules.** Students encounter constantly changing situations and settings throughout the school day. In these different settings, they will need site-specific rules to guide their conduct. So, in this step, the school (1) identifies the range of different settings in which students are expected to function, (2) determines the adult(s) responsible for managing behavior in each of these settings, and (3) enlists these supervising adults to translate building-wide expectations for behavior into more detailed site-specific rules. Here are details about how this process unfolds:



1. *Identify the Range of Site-Specific Settings.* While each room or area of the school has its own unique properties, there are two main types of settings: classrooms and common areas. The school consults a building map and lists each space appearing on that map. The school then lists the identified spaces as 'classrooms' or 'common areas'. Classrooms are spaces for instruction overseen by one or more teachers. Common areas (e.g., hallways, cafeteria) serve non-academic functions for students across the school.

Occasionally, schools encounter a mixed-use space (e.g., a cafeteria that the science teacher uses in the afternoon for instruction). In such cases, the school categorizes the mixed-use space as a common area for specific times during the day and lists that same space as a classroom for other times during the day.

2. *Determine Who Manages Behavior in Each Setting.* The school next lists the adults responsible for behavior management in each of the classroom or common-area settings. In common areas where supervision changes in shifts, the school can list supervising personnel by shift. In common areas where supervision is fluid (e.g., hallways) the school may identify all staff as potential behavior managers.
3. *Enlist Supervising Adults to Create Specific Rules.* Once identified, those adults responsible for managing students in various settings will be asked to translate the general, building-level behavioral expectations into site-specific rules. For example, if a school-wide expectation is "I respect my teacher and other adults", a 5<sup>th</sup>-grade teacher or cafeteria lunch monitor will translate that statement into specific rules describing what "respect" looks like for their respective settings.

It is recommended that rule-sets for both classrooms and common areas be few in number (e.g., between 4 and 8); stated in simple, clear language; and framed whenever possible as desired behaviors rather than as behaviors to avoid.

To encourage consistency, teachers at each grade level should work together to come up with these classroom rules. Special-area teachers (e.g., physical education, art, music, etc.) will typically generate their own rules to accommodate their unique activities and materials. For common-area spaces such as the cafeteria, support staff and para-professionals who help to maintain order should be enlisted to assist in generating behavioral rules. In areas overseen by *all* adults (e.g., hallways), the school may want to elicit feedback from the entire staff to establish specific rules of conduct.

**Step 3: Teach Expected Behaviors to Students.** With school-wide behavioral expectations completed and rules written for each building location, the school is ready to introduce them to students. Schools are reminded that these rules for conduct make up a sizable and explicit behavioral curriculum. Because students must master behavior-rules for a variety of settings, the initial instruction of rules across the building should be coordinated and completed within a week.

As a kick-off to this behavioral training, the collection of school-wide behavioral expectations can be efficiently presented in a multi-grade assembly.

Site-specific rules will then be presented by the educators overseeing each building location. (Essentially, the educator creates and delivers a behavior-training lesson plan.) For each rule, the educator describes and demonstrates the rule and connects it to the relevant school-wide behavioral expectations. For example, a 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade teacher may present the class rule: "I raise my hand to be recognized before answering a question." The teacher then links that class rule to the school-wide behavioral expectation: "I respect my teachers and other adults."



The educator next reviews examples of student behavior that conform to the site-specific rules, then asks students to give additional examples. The educator reviews these rules on a daily basis until students can clearly and easily identify them.

Both the school-wide and site-specific rules should be posted in every setting for easy reference. After the initial training, the educator reinforces the rule-set by frequently acknowledging and praising students who observe the rules, citing their positive behavior in specific terms.

**Step 4: Reinforce Positive Behaviors.** After students have been taught school-wide behavioral expectations and the related rules that apply to each school location, educators will want to regularly acknowledge and reinforce positive behaviors. While reinforcement of behaviors could be left to individual teachers, schools are likely to see greater behavioral improvement when they coordinate a consistent, building-wide reinforcement system consisting of praise, positive-behavior tickets, and rewards:

- *Praise.* At a minimum, staff should use frequent praise that describes the positive behavior observed and links it to the relevant rule. These praise statements function as a positive coaching tool, as they highlight exemplary student performance. Because students find praise reinforcing, its regular use will accelerate their adoption of positive behavior.
- *Tickets/Rewards.* While optional, schools can increase student investment in a positive-behavior program through use of a school-wide ticket/reward system. Here is a description of how your school might set up such a system:
  1. **Create Positive-Behavior Tickets.** The school designs paper slips ("tickets") to be awarded to students recognized for positive behaviors. The tickets can include blanks for the adult to write in the student name, time, location, and/or an account of the positive behavior that was observed.
  2. **Train Staff to Use Behavior Tickets.** Adults who supervise locations throughout the school receive a supply of tickets, which are to be awarded to students displaying examples of exemplary behavior. When awarding a ticket, the adult is trained to praise the student, explicitly name the positive behavior that earned the ticket, and link that behavior to the rule/behavioral expectation that it supports. Adults are also given a recommended quota of tickets to award within a class period or school day, to encourage their use.
  3. **Link Tickets to Reinforcement.** Each school location supervised by specific educators will have a reinforcement system in place to allow positive-behavior tickets to be redeemed for rewards. Staff are encouraged to be creative, developing reward procedures that fit their circumstances.

For example, a classroom teacher may promise a desirable activity such as extra recess when the class earns a certain number of tickets. Each day, the teacher collects and tallies all tickets earned by students and adds that figure to a publicly displayed cumulative graph, so that students can monitor class progress toward the goal. Once the goal is earned, the teacher selects a new prize activity for the students to work toward.

Or a special-area instructor, such as the art or physical education teacher, may award tickets during their classes, deposit all earned tickets in a jar, and at the end of class draw one or more tickets randomly to award modest prizes or privileges.



Students awarded tickets by adults other than the teacher (e.g., in common areas such as hallways) can turn them in to the classroom instructor to be included in the class ticket total.

4. **Leverage Reinforcement Across the School.** The school can further increase the reinforcing power of positive-behavior tickets by adding building-wide incentives. For example, the school might set a goal for students across all classrooms to earn a certain number of positive-behavior tickets. That goal might be paired with an incentive, such as having a school pizza party or scheduling an entertaining assembly. Each day, classrooms would report their ticket totals to the main office, which would maintain the running tally of earned tickets. The school could strengthen the reinforcing power of behavior tickets by creating a colorful chart in a public area of the school to display the building's cumulative progress toward the ticket goal, announce that progress on morning or afternoon announcements, and honor several randomly chosen students each day for their positive behaviors.

**Step 5: Monitor Program Implementation and Impact.** The defining, teaching, and reinforcing of positive behaviors represents the rolling-out of a "behavioral curriculum". The final step is to evaluate its implementation and positive impact.

- *Staff Implementation.* Success of a building-wide behavioral program is reliant upon those adults who supervise locations across the school to actually carry out the procedures outlined above.

Staff implementation can be measured directly through onsite observations—for example, viewing cafeteria personnel's instructing a group of 5<sup>th</sup> graders in expected lunch-room behaviors. Staff participation in the program can also be monitored by collecting daily tallies from each supervised school location of the number of positive-behavior tickets awarded. If a location is identified as giving out substantially fewer tickets than expected, the educator(s) in charge of that space could be encouraged to increase participation or --if necessary—even be re-trained in reinforcement techniques.

- *Program Impact.* A hoped-for outcome of a positive behavior program that impacts all classrooms is that student academic performance will increase as behavioral interruptions to classroom instruction decrease. If RTI/MTSS academic screenings or state academic assessments show improvement after implementing a behavior program, this can be regarded as indirect evidence of its impact.

More directly, the school can monitor data on Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODRs) to judge whether the teaching and reinforcement of positive behaviors results in fewer students being removed from the classroom.



**ACTIVITY: Step 1: Develop School-Wide Behavioral Expectations.** PART 1: Review the list of positive ‘values’. Circle those that you feel are MOST important values for your school. PART 2: Draft a set of behavioral expectations to apply across all settings at your school. Consider creating an acronym to make them easier to remember.

SCHOOLWORK: \_\_\_\_\_

COMPLIANCE: \_\_\_\_\_

PEER INTERACTIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

RULE-FOLLOWING: \_\_\_\_\_

Behavioral Expectations: “Values” Terms. Review the terms below for ideas in phrasing your set of school-wide behavioral expectations.					
Acceptance	Courage	Fortitude	Making a difference	Realism	Sympathy
Accomplishment	Courtesy	Friendship	Mastery	Reason	Synergy
Accountability	Creativity	Generosity	Maturity	Reflection	Teaching
Accuracy	Credibility	Giving	Mindfulness	Reliability	Teamwork
Achievement	Curiosity	Grace	Modesty	Resilience	Thankfulness
Attentiveness	Dependability	Gratitude	Motivation	Resolution	Thoroughness
Awareness	Determination	Growth	Obedience	Resourcefulness	Thoughtfulness
Belonging	Devotion	Guidance	Openness	Respect	Tidiness
Calmness	Dignity	Happiness	Optimism	Responsibility	Tranquility
Camaraderie	Diligence	Harmony	Order	Restraint	Trustworthiness
Candor	Direction	Health	Organization	Reverence	Understanding
Capability	Discipline	Heart	Originality	Rigor	Uniqueness
Care	Discovery	Helpfulness	Partnership	Sacrifice	Unity
Carefulness	Diversity	Honesty	Patience	Sagacity	Utility
Challenge	Drive	Imagination	Passion	Satisfaction	Valor
Change	Duty	Independence	Peace	Self-control	Vigor
Charity	Effectiveness	Individuality	Perceptiveness	Selflessness	Virtue
Commitment	Efficiency	Industry	Perseverance	Self-reliance	Vision
Community	Empathy	Inquisitiveness	Persistence	Self-respect	Volunteering
Compassion	Encouragement	Insightfulness	Pleasantness	Sensitivity	Warmth
Competence	Endurance	Inspiration	Practicality	Serenity	Watchfulness
Composure	Enthusiasm	Integrity	Pragmatism	Service	Willingness
Concentration	Excellence	Inventiveness	Precision	Sharing	Wisdom
Confidence	Excitement	Involvement	Preparedness	Significance	Wonder
Connection	Expertise	Joy	Presence	Silence	Zeal
Consistency	Exploration	Judiciousness	Pride	Sincerity	
Contentment	Expressiveness	Justice	Proactivity	Skillfulness	
Continuity	Fairness	Kindness	Professionalism	Spirit	
Contribution	Fearlessness	Knowledge	Prudence	Stability	
Control	Flexibility	Leadership	Punctuality	Strength	
Cooperation	Fluency	Learning	Rationality	Success	
Cordiality	Focus			Support	



**ACTIVITY: Step 2: Translate School-Wide Expectations into Site-Specific Rules.** List the separate classroom and common-area locations in your school. For each entry, record location, supervising staff, and [optionally] the time(s) when the location is used. Remember to include hallways and special-area classrooms. See examples below:

Location	Supervising Staff	Time [Optional]	Location	Supervising Staff	Time [Optional]
Cafeteria	Principal, Assistant Principal, Psychologist, Lunch Monitors	11:00 am- 1:15 pm	Classrooms-Grade 5	Abel, Smith, Renard, LaBelle	

Location	Supervising Staff	Time [Optional]	Location	Supervising Staff	Time [Optional]



**ACTIVITY: Step 2: Translate School-Wide Expectations into Site-Specific Rules.** Take one or more of the school-wide behavioral expectations you created (Step 1) and translate them below into site-specific rules for a typical classroom in your school.

**School-Wide Expectation 1: Schoolwork:** \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Rule 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Rule 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Rule 3: \_\_\_\_\_

**School-Wide Expectation 2: Compliance:** \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Rule 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Rule 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Rule 3: \_\_\_\_\_

**School-Wide Expectation 3: Peer Interactions:** \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Rule 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Rule 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Rule 3: \_\_\_\_\_

**School-Wide Expectation 4: Rule-Following:** \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Rule 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Rule 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Rule 3: \_\_\_\_\_



**ACTIVITY: Step 4: Reinforce Positive Behaviors.** This step requires that school staff consistently recognize, acknowledge, and reinforce positive behaviors through praise, awarding of positive-behavior tickets, and delivery of earned rewards.

What are possible obstacles in your school to the timely, regular, and consistent reinforcement of positive behaviors? For each obstacle, what are solutions?

School-Wide Reinforcement of Positive Behaviors	
Obstacle	Solutions





**ACTIVITY: Create an Action Plan.** Appoint a recorder. Use the organizer below to develop a 5-step action plan for the current school year to establish a shared framework for positive behavior at your school. For an explanation of what each step entails, review the guide *RTI for Behavior at Tier 1: Establishing a Shared Building-Wide Framework for Positive Behavior in 5 Steps*.

RTI/MTSS for Behavior: Tier 1: Teaching Positive Behaviors				
Step 1: Develop School-Wide Behavioral Expectations.				
Task #	Task Description	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Resources Needed
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				



RTI/MTSS for Behavior: Tier 1: Teaching Positive Behaviors				
Step 2: Translate School-Wide Expectations into Site-Specific Rules.				
Task #	Task Description	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Resources Needed
1				
2				
3				
4				
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6				
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8				
9				
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RTI/MTSS for Behavior: Tier 1: Teaching Positive Behaviors				
Step 3: Teach Expected Behaviors to Students.				
Task #	Task Description	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Resources Needed
1				
2				
3				
4				
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RTI/MTSS for Behavior: Tier 1: Teaching Positive Behaviors Step 4: Reinforce Positive Behaviors.				
Task #	Task Description	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Resources Needed
1				
2				
3				
4				
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6				
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RTI/MTSS for Behavior: Tier 1: Teaching Positive Behaviors



Step 5: Monitor Program Implementation and Impact.				
Task #	Task Description	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Resources Needed
1				
2				
3				
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