



*RTI Toolkit: A Practical Guide for Schools*

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# Building an RTI/MTSS System for Mental-Health: Guidance for School Teams

## **SESSION 3: Supplemental Handout**

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Workshop Downloads at: [http://www.interventioncentral.org/MTSS\\_behavior](http://www.interventioncentral.org/MTSS_behavior)

## MTSS-Behavior: Selecting Programs to Provide Tier 2/Strategic Support

Schools implementing MTSS for behavior will want to establish several intervention options at Tier 2 for those students whose emerging behavioral for social/emotional concerns negatively important aspect(s) of their school experience. Students targeted for MTSS Tier 2 interventions show current evidence of problem behaviors and/or negative social/emotional symptoms that impact school success but have manageable mental-health needs that can still be appropriately addressed through efficient 'standard-treatment' approaches such as social-skills training or mentoring. The goal of Tier 2 services is to address students' emotional difficulties to permit them eventually to drop back to Tier 1/school-wide supports— rather than escalating to require Tier 3 resource-intensive, individual treatment plans (Mitchell et al., 2011).

A building-wide system of Tier 2 social-emotional/behavioral assistance offers intervention options that students can access quickly (e.g., within 1-2 weeks of referral), use data periodically to determine which students should enter or exit Tier 2 services, and are able to accommodate up to 10-15 percent of the school population in Tier 2 programming at any one time (Mitchell et al., 2011).

Schools used a variety of sources to identify students who qualify for Tier 2 services, including Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODRs), attendance, grades, teacher/administrator referrals, and brief norm-referenced behavior-rating questionnaires (Mitchell et al, 2011; Rodriguez et al, 2016).

Below are descriptions of 5 types of support most frequently defined by schools as Tier 2 MTSS-behavioral services. For each of the program options listed, it is expected that students will be taught behavioral expectations and given opportunities to practice desired behaviors with adult performance feedback. Furthermore, parents should receive regular communications about their child's Tier 2 progress (Rodriguez et al, 2016).

Behavior Education Program/Check In-Check Out
<p><i>Description.</i> The Behavior Education Program/Check In-Check Out (CICO) connects at-risk students to assigned educators. CICO includes individualized student contact, behavior training, data collection, and parent communication (Mitchell et al, 2011). The student starts and ends each day by briefly checking in with their CICO educator contact. During the day, teachers working with the student complete a progress report rating that student's classroom behaviors. A goal of CICO is consistently to teach and reinforce positive student behaviors.</p> <p><i>Considerations.</i> When selecting educators to serve as CICO contacts, schools should strive to recruit adults who project warmth and caring.</p> <p><i>Resource.</i> <i>Responding to Problem Behaviors in Schools: The Behavior Education Program</i> is an excellent manual written by the BEP/CICO program creators and available through booksellers (ISBN-13: 978-1606236000).</p>
Mentoring
<p><i>Description.</i> School-based mentoring programs match educators or other adult volunteers with at-risk children or youth. Through the mentoring relationship, the mentor can help the student to avoid risky activities or behaviors and to increase school engagement. In a typical mentoring relationship, the mentor and student meet for about an hour per week, during or after school (Bernstein et al., 2009).</p> <p><i>Considerations.</i> A mentoring program is most likely to be successful when the school (1) designs it to meet the needs of a specific student risk profile (e.g., academic disengagement), (2) trains mentors in techniques to build effective relationships with their mentees, (3) makes available a welcoming space and activity materials (e.g.,</p>

board games) for mentoring sessions, and (4) provides close supervision of the mentoring program and regularly evaluates program effectiveness (Smith & Stormont, 2011).

*Resource.* The National Mentoring Resource Center: <https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/index.php>. This website, sponsored by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), contains links to resources for setting up peer and adult mentoring programs.

## Solution-Focused Brief Counseling

*Description.* Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) is a brief-counseling format that school mental-health professionals can use with students whose social/emotional needs are mild-to-moderate but interfere with school or social functioning (Jones et al, 2009). The counselor helps the student to identify a key goal that will be the focus of counseling (e.g., to reduce anxiety during academic activities; to improve peer relationships). Counselor and student formulate a plan to achieve the goal and schedule a fixed number of sessions (e.g. 4-6) to accomplish that goal. Throughout the sessions, the counselor encourages the student to tap into their own past experience to find solutions to attain their counseling goal.

NOTE: Although 1:1 counseling is usually seen as an intensive form of intervention delivery, SFBC can be considered a Tier 2 intervention because it addresses emerging social-emotional concerns, is of short duration, and follows a consistent 'standard protocol'.

*Considerations.* SFBC requires that the student have the cognitive and language ability to reflect, select goals, and self-monitor progress toward those goals. Therefore, it is generally best-suited for students in grades 3 and higher (Jones et al, 2009).

*Resource.* An article (Jones et al., 2009) that provides a helpful introduction to SFBC can be found at: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ878370.pdf>

## Social Skills Training

*Description.* Social skills training programs target those competencies necessary for social interactions such as communication, peer relations, and problem-solving (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Typically, social skills are taught in small-group format. Depending on the program, the adult instructor may be a teacher or a counselor, social worker, or school psychologist.

*Considerations.* Social-skills programs are most frequently used in elementary-school settings and—to a lesser extent—in middle schools. They are little-used in high schools. A challenge cited for social-skills programs as a Tier 2 support is that students' often fail to generalize social-skills gains to the classroom setting and to maintain them over time (Rodriguez et al., 2016).

*Resource.* NASP Social Skills Page: [http://www.naspcenter.org/factsheets/socialskills\\_fs.html](http://www.naspcenter.org/factsheets/socialskills_fs.html). The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) provides a useful overview of social-skills training in schools.

## Behavior Contracts

*Description.* A behavior contract is developed with the participation of student and educator (e.g., teacher; mental-health professional; administrator) (Rodriguez et al., 2016). It outlines goal behaviors the student will work toward, reinforcers that can be earned for attaining behavior goals, and [optionally] consequences for display of problem behaviors (Downing, 1990).

*Considerations.* Behavior contracts are most likely to be successful when the student has received explicit instruction in the goal or expected behaviors, that student has a voice in the construction of the contract, and the behavior contract is weighted more toward positive than negative consequences.

*Resources.* Below are descriptions for preparing and using behavior contracts from two national educational organizations:

- National Education Association: Behavior Contracts: How to Write Them  
<http://www.nea.org/tools/behavior-contracts-how-to-write-them.htm>
- National Center on Intensive Intervention: Behavior Contracts:  
[https://intensiveintervention.org/sites/default/files/Behavior\\_Contracts\\_508.pdf](https://intensiveintervention.org/sites/default/files/Behavior_Contracts_508.pdf)

## References

- Bernstein, L., Dun Rappaport, C., Olsho, L., Hunt, D., and Levin, M. (2009). *Impact evaluation of the U.S. Department of Education's student mentoring program*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20094047/pdf/20094047.pdf>
- Downing, J. A. (1990). Contingency contracts: A step-by-step format. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 26*(2), 111-113.
- Jones, C. N., Hart, S. R., Jimerson, S. R., Dowdy, E., Earhart, J., Renshaw, T. L., Eklund, K., & Anderson, D. (2009). Solution-focused brief counseling: Guidelines, consideration, and implications for school psychologists. *The California School Psychologist, 14*(1), 111-122.
- Mitchell, B. S., Stormont, M., & Gage, N. A. (2011). Tier two interventions implemented within the context of a tiered intervention framework. *Behavioral Disorders, 36* (4), 241-261.
- Rodriguez, B. J., Loman, S. L., & Borgmeier, C. (2016). Tier 2 interventions in positive behavior support: A survey of school implementation. *Preventing School Failure, 60*(2), 94-105.
- Smith, C. A., & Stormont, M. A. (2011). Building an effective school-based mentoring program. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 47*(1), 14-21.
- U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, What Works Clearinghouse. (2013, February). *Early childhood education interventions for children with disabilities intervention report: Social skills training*. Retrieved from <http://whatworks.ed.gov>.

## Worksheet: MTSS-B Tier 2 Intervention Resources

School/District: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Person(s) Completing Survey: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Use the form below to survey resources in your school or district that can be used to support behavioral/social-emotional interventions at Tier 2.

### 1. Personnel Resources

**Personnel/Flexible Time.** List the names of any personnel available in your school/district with flexibility in their schedule to allow them—with appropriate training—to support MTSS-B in various ways (e.g., serving as mentors; participating in Check In/Check Out, assisting in a customized intervention plan, etc.) Check the 'Availability/Access?' box next to any name if you are unsure of how to access the person for MTSS support. After completing the survey, follow up to answer any availability or access questions.

Availability/ Access?	Name	Position
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____

**Personnel/Expert Knowledge.** List the names of those personnel in your school/district with formal training or experience in behavioral or social-emotional interventions, behavioral consultation, or related MTSS topics who can serve as counselors, consultants, coaches, or trainers to other staff. Check the 'Availability/Access?' box next to any name for which you are unsure of the *availability* of that person or of how to *access* the person for MTSS support. After completing the survey, follow up to answer your availability or access questions.

Availability/ Access?	Name	Position	Area(s) of Expertise
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____

## 2. Intervention Programs/Services

**Existing Tier 2 Programs/Services.** List all programs or services that your school or district currently has in place to address Tier 2 behavioral or social/emotional needs. If you are unsure whether a particular program or service qualifies as research-based, list it and follow up to verify that it is supported by research. TIP: Be sure to list counseling services offered by any staff in your school/district on this inventory.

Tier 2 Intervention Program or Service	Grade Level(s) Served	Area(s) of Behavior or Social-Emotional Functioning Addressed	Person(s) Delivering This Intervention Program

### 3. Data Sources

**Data to Recruit for Tier 2 MTSS-B Services.** Review the listing of data sources below (archival sources and staff/parent referral) to identify students qualifying for Tier 2 programming. Check off those that your school plans to adopt. For each selected source, discuss (and record) details about contact person, team that will review the data, etc.

Archival Data Source:	Contact Person. Who would be responsible for compiling this data source?	Frequency. How frequently would this data be compiled and reviewed?	Team. Who would review this Tier 2 behavioral data to determine eligibility and placement in Tier 2 services?
<input type="checkbox"/> Grades			
<input type="checkbox"/> Attendance			
<input type="checkbox"/> Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODRs)			

Staff/Parent Referral Source	Contact Person. Who would be the contact person for this referral?	Team. Who would review this Tier 2 referral to determine eligibility and placement in Tier 2 services?
<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher		
<input type="checkbox"/> Support Staff (e.g., Counselor)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Administrator		
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent		



## How To: Manage Problem Behaviors: Check-In/Check-Out

Students can be motivated to improve classroom behaviors if they have both a clear roadmap of the teacher's behavioral expectations and incentives to work toward those behavioral goals. This modified version of Check-In/Check-Out (CI/CO) is a simple behavioral intervention package designed for use during a single 30- to 90-minute classroom period (Dart, Cook, Collins, Gresham & Chenier, 2012). The teacher checks in with the student to set behavioral goals at the start of the period, then checks out with the student at the close of the period to rate that student's conduct and award points or other incentives earned for attaining behavioral goal(s).

**Preparation.** In preparation for using CI/CO, the teacher:

- selects 3 to 4 behaviors to be targeted during the intervention. Whenever possible, these should be stated positively as DO behaviors (e.g., "Promptly and quietly follow teacher requests") rather than DON'T behaviors (e.g., "Don't dawdle or talk back when given a teacher request").
- creates a Behavior Report Card (BRC) that incorporates the 3-4 target behaviors. A Behavior Report Card is a rating scale that the teacher uses to rate the student's behavior at the end of the class session or other evaluation period. A generic BRC suitable for use in check-in/check-out appears elsewhere in this document. Teachers can also create customized BRCs for free at:  
<http://www.interventioncentral.org/teacher-resources/behavior-rating-scales-report-card-maker>
- decides on a daily reward/incentive that the student will earn if successful in displaying positive behaviors (e.g., 5 minutes of free time; 3 'positive behavior points' to be redeemed in future for rewards from a prize box; parent phone call praising student).
- sets a minimum rating on the BRC items that the student must attain to earn the selected reward/incentive.
- meets with the student to explain the intervention, review behavioral expectations, demonstrate how the Behavior Report Card is to be filled out, and explain how the student can earn a daily reward/incentive.

**Procedure.** During any class session or evaluation period when CI/CO is in effect, the teacher follows these 3 steps:

1. **Check-In.** At the start of the class session, the teacher meets briefly with the student to review the behavioral goals on the Behavior Report Card and to provide encouragement. The teacher also prompts the student to set a behavioral goal on at least one of the target behaviors (e.g., "Today I will not leave my seat once without permission.").
2. **Monitoring/Evaluation.** During the session, the teacher observes the student's behaviors. At the end of the session, the teacher rates the student's behaviors on the Behavior Report Card.
3. **Check-Out.** At the end of the session, the teacher again meets briefly with the student. The student reports out on whether he/she was able to attain the behavioral goal(s) discussed at check-in. The teacher then shares the BRC ratings. If the student has earned a reward/incentive, the teacher awards it and praises the student. If the student fails to earn the reward, the teacher provides encouragement about success in a future session.

### Reference

Dart, E. H., Cook, C. R., Collins, T. A., Gresham, F. M., & Chenier, J. S. (2012). Test driving interventions to increase treatment integrity and student outcomes. *School Psychology Review*, 41, 467-481.

## CHECK-IN/CHECK-OUT: BEHAVIOR REPORT CARD

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Person Completing This Report Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: At the end of each school day, please rate the student on the behaviors below. Write your ratings into the appropriate box on the right of the page and record the *date* of each rating. You may also write daily comments about the student's behavior on the back of this sheet.

Student Behaviors	MON _/_/_	TUES _/_/_	WED _/_/_	THURS _/_/_	FRI _/_/_
<i>The student got along with classmates and used socially appropriate behaviors.</i> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-weight: bold;"> <span>1</span><span>2</span><span>3</span><span>4</span><span>5</span><span>6</span><span>7</span><span>8</span><span>9</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-size: small;"> <span>Never/Seldom</span><span>Sometimes</span><span>Most/All of the Time</span> </div>					
<i>The student was respectful to the teacher and other adults and complied with their requests in a timely manner.</i> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-weight: bold;"> <span>1</span><span>2</span><span>3</span><span>4</span><span>5</span><span>6</span><span>7</span><span>8</span><span>9</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-size: small;"> <span>Never/Seldom</span><span>Sometimes</span><span>Most/All of the Time</span> </div>					
<i>The student paid attention to teacher instructions and classroom lessons and focused on his/her work assignments.</i> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-weight: bold;"> <span>1</span><span>2</span><span>3</span><span>4</span><span>5</span><span>6</span><span>7</span><span>8</span><span>9</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-size: small;"> <span>Never/Seldom</span><span>Sometimes</span><span>Most/All of the Time</span> </div>					
<i>The student completed and turned in classwork and homework assignments.</i> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-size: small;"> <span>0-19%</span><span>20-39%</span><span>40-59%</span><span>60-79%</span><span>80-100%</span> </div>					
(Optional Behavior)  _____  _____  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-weight: bold; font-size: small;"> <span>1</span><span>2</span><span>3</span><span>4</span><span>5</span><span>6</span><span>7</span><span>8</span><span>9</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-size: x-small;"> <span>Never/Seldom</span><span>Sometimes</span><span>Most/All of the Time</span> </div>					

Parent Sign-Off (Optional): I have reviewed this Behavior Report Card and discussed it with my child.

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Check-In/Check-Out: Behavior Report Card: Progress-Monitoring Chart

Directions: Plot daily teacher DBRC ratings and summarize notable teacher comments on the progress-monitoring charts below.

Student Name: _____																			
Start Date: Wk 1: ____/____/____ Wk 2: ____/____/____ Wk 3: ____/____/____ Wk 4: ____/____/____																			
M T W Th F					M T W Th F					M T W Th F					M T W Th F				

*The student got along with classmates and used socially appropriate behaviors.*

Usually/Always		9	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	9	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	9	Usually/Always		
		8	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	8	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			8
		7	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	7	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			7
Sometimes		6	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	6	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	6	Sometimes		
		5	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	5	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			5
		4	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	4	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			4
Never/Seldom		3	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	3	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	3	Never/Seldom		
		2	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	2	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			2
		1	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	1	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			1
M T W Th F					M T W Th F					M T W Th F					M T W Th F														

*The student was respectful to the teacher and other adults and complied with their requests in a timely manner.*

Usually/Always		9	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	9	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	9	Usually/Always		
		8	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	8	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			8
		7	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	7	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			7
Sometimes		6	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	6	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	6	Sometimes		
		5	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	5	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			5
		4	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	4	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			4
Never/Seldom		3	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	3	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	3	Never/Seldom		
		2	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	2	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			2
		1	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	1	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			1
M T W Th F					M T W Th F					M T W Th F					M T W Th F														

*The student paid attention to teacher instructions and classroom lessons and focused on his/her work assignments.*

Usually/Always		9	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	9	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	9	Usually/Always		
		8	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	8	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			8
		7	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	7	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			7
Sometimes		6	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	6	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	6	Sometimes		
		5	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	5	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			5
		4	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	4	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			4
Never/Seldom		3	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	3	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	3	Never/Seldom		
		2	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	2	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			2
		1	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	1	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			1
M T W Th F					M T W Th F					M T W Th F					M T W Th F														



## How To: Calm the Agitated Student: Tools for Effective Behavior Management

Students can sometimes have emotional outbursts in school settings. This fact will not surprise many teachers, who have had repeated experience in responding to serious classroom episodes of student agitation. Such outbursts can be attributed in part to the relatively high incidence of mental health issues among children and youth. It is estimated, for example, that at least one in five students in American schools will experience a mental health disorder by adolescence (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). But even students *not* identified as having behavioral or emotional disorders may occasionally have episodes of agitation triggered by situational factors such as peer bullying, frustration over poor academic performance, stressful family relationships, or perceived mistreatment by educators.

Since virtually any professional working in schools might at some point find him/herself needing to 'talk down' a student who presents as emotionally upset, all educators should know the basics of how to de-escalate the agitated student. The advice offered in this checklist is adapted for use by schools from research on best practices in calming individuals in medical or psychiatric settings (Cowan et al., 2003; Fishkind, 2002; Richmond et al., 2012). These strategies are intended to be used in a flexible manner to increase the odds that an educator can respond efficiently and effectively to students who present with a wide range of emotional issues.

**CAUTION:** The guidelines presented below are intended for use with a student whose agitated behavior is largely verbal, shows no signs of escalating beyond that point, and does not present as potentially physically aggressive or violent. Educators who suspect that a student may present a safety risk to self or others should *immediately* seek additional assistance. Schools should also conduct Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs), assemble appropriate Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs) and--if needed--create Crisis Response Plans to manage the behaviors of students who show patterns of escalating, potentially violent behaviors.

- ☐ *Create a 'safe' setting.* An educator attempting to calm an agitated student cannot always select the setting in which that interaction plays out. When a student outburst occurs in the classroom, however, the educator should attempt to engage the student in a semi-private conversation (e.g., off to the side of the room) rather than having an exchange in front of classmates. As part of the protocol for conducting a de-escalation conference, adults should also ensure that they are never left alone with agitated students.
- ☐ *Limit the number of adults involved.* Having too many educators (e.g., teacher and a teaching assistant) participating in a de-escalation conference can be counter-productive because of possible confusion and communication of mixed messages to the agitated student. If more than one adult is available in the instructional setting, select the one with the most experience with de-escalation techniques to engage the student one-to-one, while the additional educator(s) continue to support the instruction or behavior management of other students.
- ☐ *Provide adequate personal space.* Stand at least 2 arm's length of distance away from the agitated student. If the student tells you to 'back off' or 'get away', provide the student with additional space.
- ☐ *Do not block escape routes.* When individuals are agitated, they are more likely to experience a 'fight-or-flight' response that can express itself in the need to have escape routes available. When engaging a student in a de-escalation conference, do not position yourself between the student and the door. If the student says, "Get out of my way", step back to give that student additional personal space and reposition yourself out of his or her potential escape path.
- ☐ *Show open, accepting body language.* Convey through stance and body language that you are calm and accepting of the student--and will treat that student respectfully and maintain his or her safety. Stand at an angle



rather than facing the student directly in a 'confrontational' pose. Keep hands open and visible to the student. Stand comfortably, with knees slightly bent. Avoid 'clenched' body language such as crossing arms or balling hands into fists.

- ☐ *Keep verbal interactions respectful.* It is natural for educators to experience feelings of defensiveness, embarrassment, anxiety, or irritation when attempting to talk down a student from an emotional outburst. However, you should strive to appear calm and to treat the student respectfully at all times. Avoid use of teasing, reprimands, or other negative comments and abstain as well from sarcasm or an angry tone of voice.
- ☐ *Communicate using simple, direct language.* When people are emotionally upset, they may not process language quickly or with complete accuracy. In talking with the student, keep your vocabulary simple and your sentences brief. Be sure to allow sufficient time for the student to think about and respond to each statement before continuing. In particular, if the student does not respond to a statement, avoid falling into the trap of assuming too quickly that the student is simply 'ignoring you'. Instead, calmly repeat yourself--several times if necessary. So long as the student's behavior is not escalating, give him or her the benefit of the doubt and use gentle repetition to help the student to focus on and respond to you.
- ☐ *Coach the student to take responsibility for moderating behavior.* At the point in an encounter with an agitated student when you feel that you have established rapport, you can use a positive, assertive tone to prompt the student to take responsibility for controlling his or her own behavior (e.g., "John, it is hard for me to follow what you are saying when you raise your voice and pace around the room. If you sit down and calmly explain what the problem is, I think that I can help.").
- ☐ *Reassure the student and frame an outcome goal.* You can often help to defuse the student's agitation by reassuring the student (e.g., "You're not in trouble. This is your chance to give me your side of the story") and stating an outcome goal ("Let's figure out how to take care of this situation in a positive way" ; "I want to understand why you are upset so that I can know how to respond"). Also, if you do not know the agitated student whom you are approaching, introduce yourself and state both your name and position.
- ☐ *Identify the student's wants and feelings.* Use communication tools such as active listening (e.g., "Let me repeat back to you what I thought I heard you say ...."), open-ended questions (e.g., "What do you need right now to be able to calm yourself?"), and labeling of emotions ("Rick, you look angry. Tell me what is bothering you") to better understand how the student feels and what may be driving the current emotional outburst.
- ☐ *Identify points of agreement.* A powerful strategy to build rapport with an agitated student is to find points on which you can agree. At the same time, of course, you must preserve your professional integrity as an educator and therefore cannot falsely express agreement on issues that you in fact disagree with. Here are suggestions for finding authentic common ground with the student in response to different situations. (1) Agreement with student's account: If you essentially agree with the student's account of (and/or emotional reaction to) the situation, you can say so (e.g., "I can understand why you were upset when you lost your book on the field trip. I would be upset too."); (2) Agreement with a principle expressed or implied by the student: If you are unsure of the objectivity of the student's account, you might still discern within it a principle that you can support (e.g., If the student claims to have been disrespected by a hall monitor, you can say, "I think everybody has the right to feel respected."); (3) Agreement with the typicality of the student response: If you decide that the student's emotional response would likely be shared by a substantial number of peers, you can state that observation (e.g., "So I gather that you were pretty frustrated when you learned that you are no longer sports-eligible because of your report card grades. I am sure that there are other students here who feel the same way."); (4) Agreement to disagree: If you cannot find a point on which you can agree with the student or validate an aspect of his or her viewpoint, you should simply state that you and the student agree to disagree.



## References

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# RTI/MTSS for Behavior: District-Wide Planning Tool: 'Next Steps' Activity

**Directions:** Create a plan listing the key next steps that your school or district should take between now and the end of this school year to advance the RTI/MTSS model for behavior and social-emotional support. Be prepared to report out.

	Goal Number(s) from Planning Tool/ Description of Task	Person(s) Responsible	Proposed Completion Date	Additional Resources Needed
E x a m p l e	<b>[B.1.3] Teach Expected Behaviors to Students.</b> <i>The school trains students in expected behaviors—treating those behaviors as a formal curriculum to be taught.</i>	School Psychologist/ RTI/MTSS Behavior Team	March 2019	Half-Day during Supt Conf Day in February for staff;  2-hr Principal Assemblies to train students
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				