Understanding and modifying the environment for student success
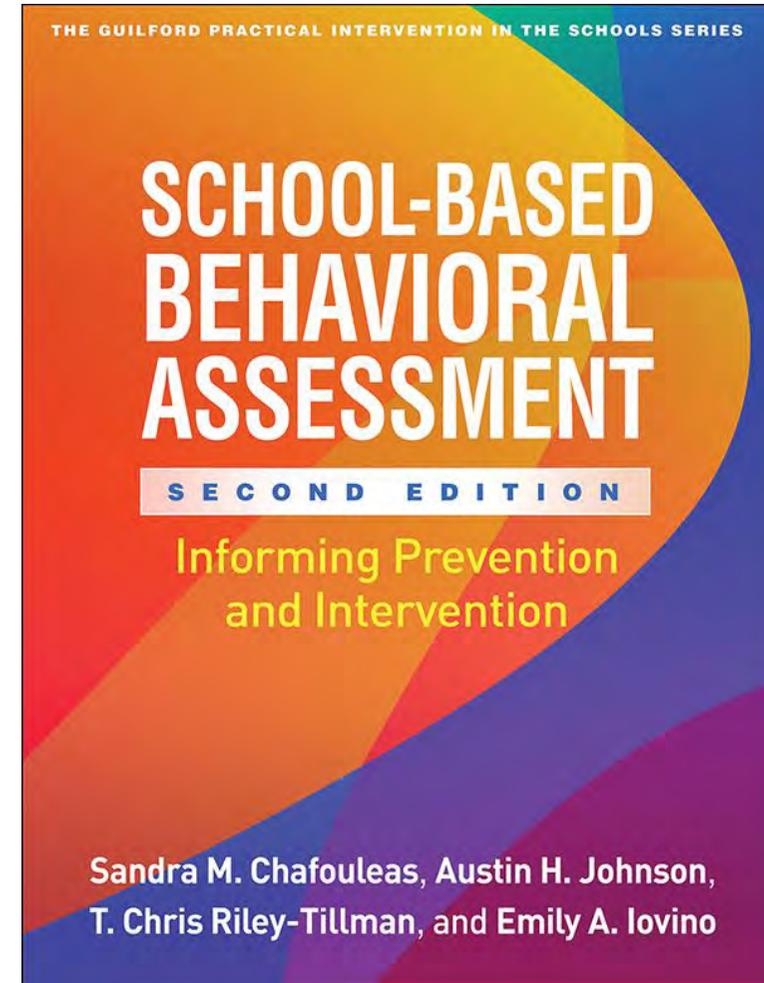
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About me

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Disclosure of conflict of interests

- Dr. Johnson receives royalties on a school-based behavior assessment text published by Guilford Press.

THE GUILFORD PRACTICAL INTERVENTION IN THE SCHOOLS SERIES

SCHOOL-BASED BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT

SECOND EDITION

Informing Prevention and Intervention

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Plan for covering today's topic

- Why does the environment matter?
- What components of the environment might I focus on?
  1. Maximize structure and predictability
  2. Actively engage students in observable ways
  3. Post, teach, review, and monitor expectations
- In an in-person, hybrid, or virtual environment, how would I:
  - Measure what's happening in the environment
  - Work with an educator to help make the environment more supportive

Why does the environment matter?

Why does it matter? Well, we pretty much know why

1. Conceptual
- The environment matters because what happens before the behavior matters!
- Antecedents and setting events affect behavior
  - Is reinforcement available for this behavior? [antecedent]
  - Will the consequence be reinforcing at this point in time? [value-altering and behavior-altering effects]
- If we believe that behavior is controlled by stimuli in the environment, then we must change the environment if we want to change behavior!

Well, we pretty much know why

2. Ethical

- Behavior is learned with reinforcement from others
  - "We taught the student that this was an effective way to get what they need. So, if we now recognize that that learned behavior is not going to serve that student in the long run, then it's on us to change."
- Students deserve to learn in an environment that supports their current and future ability to live a full and happy life.

Helping people understand this isn't easy

- "So, in order to help Xiao Mei scream less when she's given a math assignment, we're going to make her math assignment easier? How will she learn?"

- "We want our class to call out less for attention, so we're going to give them more attention throughout the day? Isn't that just giving in? Won't they turn into attention-monsters?"

- "Life doesn't have a visual schedule. My students need to learn how to do this stuff in their heads."

Which is why consultation skills are so important

- Letting people talk
  - "I'd love to start by learning more about you and your class. You're the expert on these kids and what works for you. What's been great about your class this year, and are there any challenges that you've been having with keeping everyone on track?"

- Normalizing support
  - "So, I find that writing stuff down just really helps me figure out how to structure my day. I still use these strategies all the time. Some of the stuff we're teaching and using here is stuff that adults use all the time in order to meet their goals."

https://youtu.be/QeOAnHV2SYw

Which is why consultation skills are so important

- Focusing on contextual fit
  - "I really love what you're already doing to support your kids. I think that your strategy of having a good solid check-in time with a fun prompt for everyone at the start of class is a great way to bridge the Zoom gap. What if we added one small part to that…do you think that would work with what you're doing? Can I check back in a week and see how it's going?"

- Starting small
  - "This is such a hard time, and the last thing any of us needs is more. We've talked about a few different ideas today; is there one that sounds easiest or most exciting to you that you want to try this week?"

Principles

Environmental modifications

- I'm super-obnoxious with my students: "graduate school is about learning how to think, not what to do"
- If you have a…
    - Framework for decision-making [what steps should I follow], and
    - Principles to guide your actions [how do I understand what questions to ask and what interventions to use]
- …then you're well-equipped for success

Data-based decision-making for the environment

- How do I maximize instructional time?
- How do I arrange activities to maximize engagement and achievement?
- How can I proactively manage behavior?

- You build lasting, trusting relationships with students by showing them:
  - I want you to succeed
  - I see you when you succeed

Four critical features of supportive classrooms

- Simonsen et al. (2008)
- Comprehensive lit review leads to four features:
  1. Maximize structure
  2. Post, teach, review, monitor, and reinforce a small number of positively-stated expectations
  3. Actively engage students in observable ways
  4. Establish a continuum of strategies to acknowledge appropriate behavior and respond to inappropriate behavior.

What are people doing?

To the literature!

- Reddy, Fabiano, Dudek, & Hsu (2013)

- Observed 317 general education teachers (K-5) using direct observation measure
  - Classroom Strategy Scale – Observer Form
  - Observer tallies strategies, rates them on Likert-type scale, and looks for permanent products
- Procedures
  - 67 observers trained using master coded videos
  - Used mean over two 30-minute observations within seven school days of one another

But…COVID?

- People still engage in behavior for understandable reasons
- We can still observe people's behavior, and use that information to make decisions
- What the intervention looks like will change
- But what the intervention does will not
  - Same principles, different packaging!

Strategies for 2021 and beyond

- Developing a complete set of strategies that span:
  - In-person instruction
  - Remote instruction
  - And hybrid instruction
- In order to answer these questions:
  - What strategies can be used to build or support a positive classroom environment?
  - How can I, as a non-teacher educational professional, help support teachers in building or supporting a positive classroom environment?

Giving ourselves permission

- There is not a set of best practices for how to deliver effective behavior support during a global pandemic with constantly-changing modalities of instructions (not to mention our own disruptions to child care, lives, families)

- We must give ourselves permission to modify what our practices traditionally look like in order to meaningfully support students and teachers

- Principles + data-based decision-making + consultation skills = effective services

Consultation right now = patience and understanding

- It's just hard right now
- More than ever, let's try hard to start with and highlight and celebrate what people are doing well
  - This isn't to say that we don't need to advocate for and support practices that will keep students engaged! We absolutely do! Outcomes for kids right now are terrifying!
  - It is to say that every day feels punishing, so effective consultation will likely be characterized by support and kindness coupled with constructive recommendations
    - You catch more flies with honey than vinegar (ugh)

Assessing?

- Obviously, individual-student assessment is a whole other can of worms to unpack
  - Complicated, but again, stick with principles…

- Whole-class assessment is complex even without a global pandemic
  - But, principles! Let's take what we have and interpret it for a new, weird, generally awful pandemic context

Assessing!

- Relying on assessment materials developed by Simonsen et al.
- Three different types of forms provided
  - Easier (to complete)
  - Harder (to complete)
  - Different (in format and use)

Structure and Predictability

Structure and predictability

- Simonsen et al. (2008)

1. I maximized structure and predictability in my classroom.

    1a. I explicitly taught and followed predictable routines.

    1b. I arranged my room to minimize crowding and distraction.

1a. Routines

- If there's anything COVID has completely blown up…

- We know routines are so important during in-person instruction
  - Especially transition times!

- Principle is the same
  - Transition times are hard because expectations are unclear as we move from one context to another
  - Therefore, we use routines (predictable patterns of behavior) in order to make transition times less difficult
  - Behavioral momentum! (small tasks moving us forward)

1a. Routines

- "When you put all your eggs in the basket of technology being the main vehicle for delivering instruction, even in the hybrid model, it takes away that stability of having a human being in the classroom who can deliver instruction no matter what." Lisa Gleason, Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Wall Township Schools in New Jersey
  - https://www.edweek.org/leadership/how-hybrid-learning-is-and-is-not-working-during-covid-19-6-case-studies/2020/11

- Stability is such a big part of what we've lost
- Routines can help bring some of that back

In-person

- Entering class
  - Greet student at door
  - Brief "do now" activity presented
  - At bell, close door
  - Take attendance
  - Review "do now" activity
- Leaving class
  - "Exit task": show assignments in agenda, write brief summary, show notes taken or other assignment

Remote

- Entering class
  - Behavior expectations shown (mute microphone, gather supplies, stretch, do deep breathing)
  - Greeting students as they enter the space
  - Prompt to get started on
    - Silly/fun questions can be great!
    - https://myhealth.alberta.ca/speech-language-hearing/language/for-elementary-school-children/conversation-topics-kids
  - When class time starts, elaborating on prompt and giving a couple more minutes to finish
- Prompt, if done on discussion board, can serve as attendance!

Hybrid

- Designing materials that can be used online and in-person, like previous images
- Tailoring content to modality
  - In-person for new content as much as possible
  - Remote for reinforcing that content as much as possible
- What time/period/activity does the teacher want to focus on?
  - This might not be the period when most problems actually occur, but it may be worth starting small with an area that the teacher is concerned about
    - Buy-in
- Hopefully helpful: if your audio comes through poorly because you're wearing a mask, call into the videoconference and use your phone's audio instead of your computer's

Support common expectations

Support common expectations

- Simonsen et al. (2008)

2. I posted, taught, reviewed, monitored, and reinforced a small number of positively stated expectations.

2a. I operationally defined and posted a small number of expectations (i.e., school wide rules) for all routines and settings in my classroom.

2b. I explicitly taught and reviewed these expectations in the context of routines.

2c. I prompted or pre-corrected students to increase the likelihood that they will follow the expectations.

2d. I actively supervised my students.

Consulting

- Resistance to expectations? Comparison between our response to academic and behavior challenges can be good strategy
  - (Darch & Kame'enui, 2004)

- What do we do when a student is struggling academically?
  - Assume the student has learned the wrong way
  - Assume student has been taught (inadvertently) the wrong way
  - Diagnose the problem
  - Adjust presentation, use effective instructional strategies, provide feedback, practice and review
 - Assume student has learned the skill

Consulting

- Resistance to expectations? Comparison between our response to academic and behavior challenges can be good strategy
    - (Darch & Kame'enui, 2004)

- What do we do when a student is struggling behaviorally?
    - Assume student refuses to cooperate
    - Assume student knows what is right and has been told often enough
    - Provide more negative consequences; withdraw student from normal context
    - Provide more negative consequences; maintain removal from normal context
    - Assume student has learned his/her lesson

Expectations

- This is new for everyone, even if you're a digital native
  - Provides structure for students
  - Increases student academic achievement and task engagement (e.g., Johnson, Stoner & Green, 1996)
  - Provides a common language to use within and across classrooms
- This is a great time to revive, remind, or create behavior expectations
  - Set expectations
  - Teach them (model/lead/test)
  - Remind students before activities
  - Reinforce for engaging in those behaviors

Strategies

- In-person
  - Move, scan, interact
  - Why?
    - Move = proximity
    - Scan = observation
    - Interact = opp. for praise/prompt/connection
- Remote?
  - It's tough, no doubt
  - Break-out rooms
  - Opportunities to respond are super important

Move around the room

Scan student behavior

Interact with students
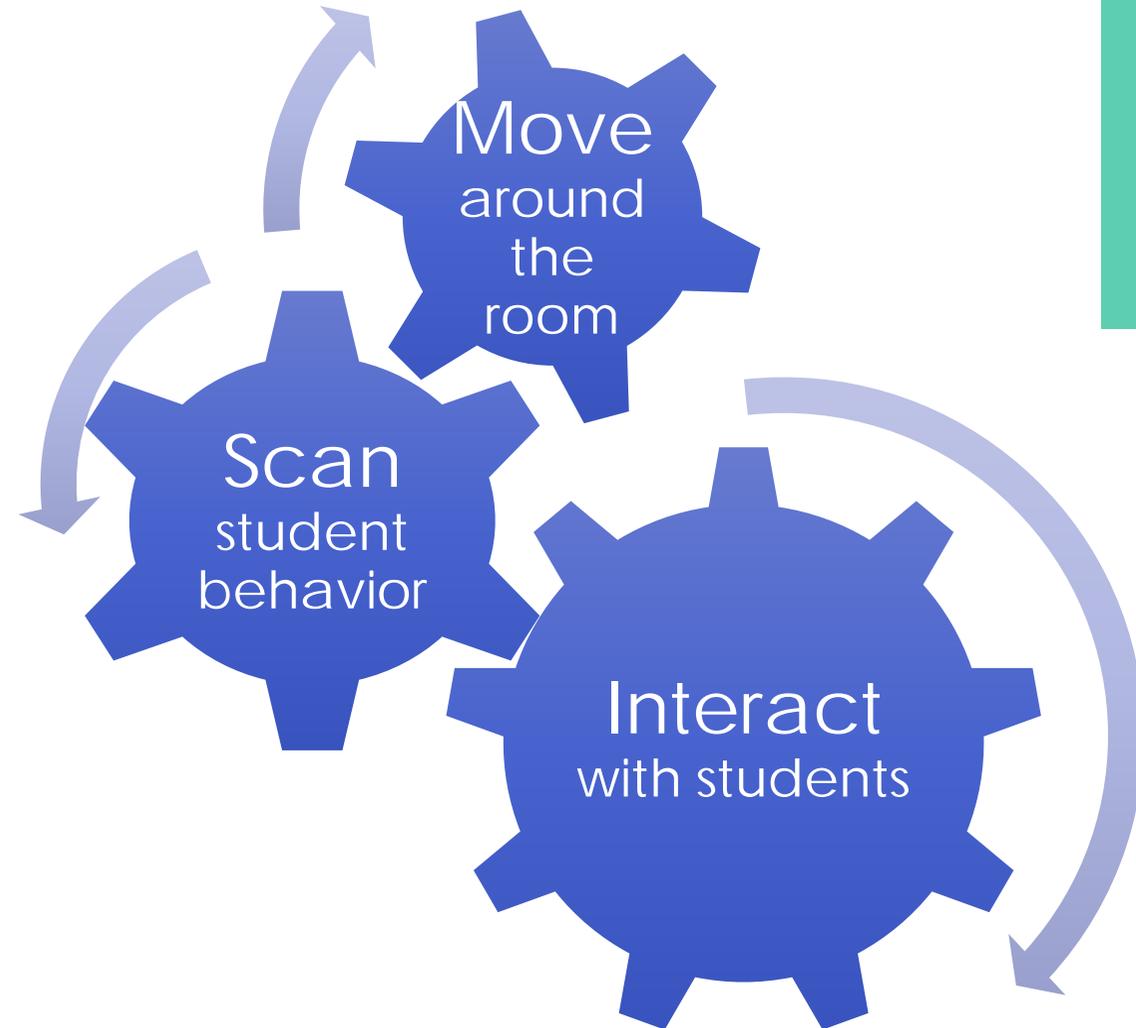
Actively engage students

Actively engage students

- Simonsen et al. (2008)

3. I actively engaged students in observable ways.

    3a. I provided a high rate of opportunities to respond during my instruction.

    3b. I engaged my students in observable ways during teacher directed instruction (i.e., I use response cards, choral responding, and other methods).

    3c. I used evidence-based methods to deliver my instruction (e.g., Direct Instruction).

In-person

- Opportunities to respond!
- When figuring out how to integrate more opportunities to respond into a class or activity, keep three things in mind:

1. Engage them often
2. Engage them in different ways
3. Engage them for a specific outcome
   (what do you want them to remember?)

Remote

- Guided notes
  - Make and integrate into digital classroom
    - https://www.interventioncentral.org/rti2/guided_notes
  - Keep guided notes entries brief (1-2 words)
- Waterfall chat
  - Prepare response in chat, don't hit "send" until teacher says
  - Allows for individual reflection time, then lots for discussion
- Think-Pair-Share
  - Pair up with person below you in the chat (so 2 conversations going to maintain engagement)

Remote

- "How's engagement while you're doing whole-class instruction? Are students asking questions?"
  - Use the "raise hand" feature. Reinforce students for raising their hands!
    - Can do this digitally (e.g., ClassDojo) or the old fashioned way (you've got a huge jar on your desk and you're filling it with marbles)
    - Randomly picking a student's name, not revealing it, if that student raises their hand, everyone earns time towards a digital reinforcer
  - Can use student actions on video (1 to 5 fingers, thumbs up/down, colored cards?)
  - Use polling questions
  - Guided notes!

Finishing up

More resources!

- Classroom Check-Up
  - Free, web-based platform with tons of resources for coaches and teachers
    - Videos, practitioner-friendly cheat sheets, coaching supports!
  - If you want to systematically support teachers in a specific setting with improving their classroom environment, this is an excellent platform for making that happen
  - Strong research support (multiple grants)
- www.classroomcheckup.org

More resources!

- CI3T
  - Free
  - Specific recommendations on behavior strategies for remote/hybrid learning
  - Implementation checklists, infographics, and videos
  - Resources for families in Spanish and English
  - Resources for administrators
- https://www.ci3t.org/covid

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