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Classroom Interventions: What We Can Learn From Speeding

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students.

Classroom Interventions: What We Can Learn From Speeding

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Most educators want their students to be successful. When problem behaviors arise in the classroom, unfortunately, they may revert to familiar strategies. For example, a teacher may yell at their students, or particular students, to gain control of the classroom. Sometimes teachers may return to ineffective strategies because they are not aware of what else to do. Or they might think that being “positive” is somehow “babying” their students. Yet, these teachers feel frustrated when they see their students struggling to be successful. Just like aspirin will not cure every headache, no one intervention can solve every issue. However, some strategies can increase the chance students will be successful.

As a teacher and parent, I can see when my interventions have worked and when they have not. When interventions have not worked, it may have been that they did not match the underlying reason

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not condone or support speeding – even though my wife thinks I drive too slowly). What were some of the reasons for going beyond the speed limit?

Here are a few possibilities for why speeding might have occurred, according to the purpose of the behavior.

Access to something tangible: You were trying to reach the shopping center to be first in line for a new technology gadget.

Attention: Your car was in the shop, and the only rental car available was a red Porsche.

Escape: You were in a car with a screaming child who had a wet diaper and needed to be changed.

Avoiding: You were trying not to be late for work.

Overstimulated: You drank a double shot espresso on the way to work, and you were listening to the classic rock song “[I Can’t Drive 55](#)” (a reference to the former national speed limit of 55 MPH in the United States).

Understimulated: You *did not* drink your usual double shot espresso on the way to work (or have any caffeine), and you were listening to [Kenny G’s Greatest Hits](#).

While these sample purposes may not explain every reason a person might drive too fast, they highlight the connection between purpose and behavior. As we think about the classroom, a teacher might notice that a didactic content presentation has gone on for a long time, and students are now off-task. A good hunch would be that the students are off task because they are understimulated. In response, the teacher could provide students with more [opportunities to respond](#) (e.g., turn to your neighbor and share), or move to a [guided practice](#) activity.

Now, let’s apply function-based thinking to your teaching strategies.

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Application

Below you will find a table that includes suggestions for intervention strategies that can be used classwide based on the purpose of students' behaviors (from the list above). We took these ideas from our book *Implementing Systematic Interventions: A Guide for Secondary Teams*.

[Table-15-Matching-Intervention-Strategies](#) [Download](#)

Now that we have provided a few examples, please take a moment to identify a class setting where you think you have a sense of the purpose (e.g., escaping, avoiding) of the problem behaviors. Identify one strategy, preferably classwide, that you might use to match the purpose behind the problem for the students. If you have time, try one of the strategies we have listed (or one you have identified) this next week, and reflect on how well this worked for your teaching.

What we have described in this blog is a [classwide function-based approach](#) to instruction. When using this approach, teachers can think about why their students (individual or groups of students) are engaging in problem behavior and respond based on the perceived purpose behind it. Certainly, a classwide function-based approach to teaching will not help you address every student's need. In some cases, [a more intensive, individualized approach](#) based on the student's function of behavior is needed. However, strategies based on the possible purpose of your students' needs may increase the likelihood of success of your classwide interventions.

By implementing strategies for students based on the purpose of the behavior, you may find:

- A better match between your interventions and the students' needs
- Students needs are more likely to be met through appropriate behaviors
- Your sense of effectiveness as an educator increases as you develop an understanding of students' needs

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Additional Resources

For more information on classwide strategies, check out chapter 15, Improving Academic and Behavioral Performance) in our book: *Implementing Systematic Interventions A Guide for Secondary Teams* ([check out the book here](#)).

As you think about classwide interventions, I suggest reviewing the [National Center on Intensive Intervention's](#) (NCII) module on behavior intervention. Specifically, take a look at module three, called [Antecedent and Instructional Strategies](#). Many of the strategies they identify can be implemented regardless of the purpose of the student's problem behavior. However, you may find that you need to focus on a specific area based on your hunch around the purpose of the problem behaviors for your students.

Also, NCII's [module on explicit instruction](#) can help you develop classwide instruction to prevent problem behavior from occurring in the first place. For example, what you will learn from these modules will be helpful if your students are escaping or avoiding work because they are frustrated academically. Or you might develop strategies to help students who are understimulated because they lack opportunities to respond and engage in the class. Each of these modules provides helpful information on preventing and addressing problems with both behavior and instruction.

Additionally, I think the Classwide Function-Related Intervention Teams model ([CW-FIT](#)) is valuable for applying function-based interventions to the classroom level. Check out [this article](#) for more information about the process in secondary settings.

I hope these suggestions to think about the purpose of students' behavior, even as you think about groups of students, will help improve your instruction. I would love to hear about strategies you are using classwide to support your students' learning. Please take a moment to respond with your ideas in the comment section below.

Twee

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