HLP 7:
Establish a Consistent, Organized, and Respectful Learning Environment

High-Leverage Practices
for Students with Disabilities

Teachers and school staff who establish a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment give students maximum advantage for academic and behavioral success.. No student can learn in a chaotic classroom environment, just as no teacher will reach their full potential when constantly dealing with off-task behaviors of varying levels of intensity.. Teachers who take time to explicitly teach students classroom rules and expectations, treat behavioral problems as learning errors, and show students respect are in a strong position to establish positive relationships and help students succeed. Use of this HLP intersects with numerous other practices, including HLPs 16 (Use explicit instruction) and HLP 8/22 (Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior). In addition, the effective special educator collaborates with colleagues (HLP 1 & 2) and uses a range of data sources (HLP 4 & 6) to make decisions about the effectiveness of their environment and make needed adjustments.

This resource is intended to support school leaders looking to embed the HLPs in professional development, implementation, teacher observation and feedback efforts at their school site.

The major source for content within this resource is the chapter by Talida M. State, Barbara S. Mitchell, and Joseph Wehby in *High-Leverage Practices in the Inclusive Classroo*m; the book *High-Leverage Practices in Special Education: The Final Report of the HLP Writing Team*, and content on www.highleveragepractices.org.

Teachers Who Effectively Establish a Consistent, Organized, and Respectful Learning Environment

- Present expectations, rules, and procedures used across school environments in terms that are **observable, measurable, positively stated, understandable**, and always applicable.
- Ensure expectations, rules, and procedures reflect the cultures, values, and beliefs of students and families from various ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds represented in the school.
- Establish and explicitly teach three to five positively-stated expectations (e.g., be respectful, be responsible, and be safe) across school environments, incorporating student and stakeholder input as appropriate.
- Establish and explicitly teach specific behaviors (i.e., set classroom rules) for meeting each expectation across school environments, incorporating student input as appropriate.
- Establish and explicitly teach consistent classroom procedures to support students' ability to accomplish tasks (e.g., lining up, sharpening pencils, accessing missing work, etc.), incorporating student input as appropriate.
- Revisit/reteach expectations, rules, and procedures that have been established across various school environments throughout the school year as needed, maintaining consistent language when doing so.
- Provide students a rationale for the importance of expectations, rules, and procedures.
- Understand that all behavior is communication (i.e., functions of behavior) and take this into consideration when interpreting and responding to student behavior.
- Encourage adherence to expectations, rules, and procedures across all school environments by:
  - Limiting unstructured time;
  - Posting expectations, rules, and procedures in high-visibility areas;
  - Laying out the classroom and other high-traffic areas in a way that maximizes space, has a logical flow, and meets the needs of all students;
  - Using precorrection procedures; and
  - Providing frequent, consistent, positive, and specific feedback to students on their behavior.

Tips for School Leaders to Support Teachers

- Ensure educators have mastered key classroom management practices and can implement such with fidelity across a range of settings.
- Provide feedback on educators' implementation of this HLP across various settings and with specific students.
- Create and maintain a school environment where proactive, positive responses to classroom management are the norm.
- Collectively develop a continuum/hierarchy of response strategies for acknowledging appropriate student behaviors and discouraging problem behaviors to ensure consistency in response across environments.

Questions to Prompt Discussion, Self-Reflection, and Observer Feedback

- Why should we treat behavioral problems the same way we treat academic problems?
- In what ways are addressing behavioral problems and academic deficits similar?
- Why should desired (and, in some instances, undesired behaviors) be explicitly taught and modeled?
- Should data inform teachers' work in the behavioral domain as much as in the academic domain? Why or why not?
- What does [respect, responsibility, best effort, etc.] mean or look like in your classroom?
- Do the classroom's and school's expectations, rules, and procedures reflect the cultures, values, and beliefs of the students and families we serve?
- Why should school staff provide students with a rationale for the importance of expectations, rules, and procedures?

Online Resources

[Supporting and Responding to Behavior: Evidence-Based Classroom Strategies for Teachers](#)
> This document from the Center on PBIS includes an interactive map of classroom PBIS strategies, a self-assessment, examples of critical practices in elementary and secondary settings, non-examples of critical practices, descriptions of supporting evidence, links to resources, scenarios that illustrate implementation, and other guidelines for implementation.

[High-Leverage Practices: A Professional Development Guide for School Leaders](#)
> A downloadable online guide providing school leaders, including administrators, principals, mentors and coaches, with practical tools for engaging staff members in learning about how high-leverage practices can enhance student learning in the school and district.

Journal Articles

Chow, J. C., & Gilmour, A. F. (2018). Designing and implementing group contingencies in the classroom: A teacher's guide. *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 50*(4), 213–219. https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059918757945

Coy, J. N., & Kostewicz, D. E. (2018). Noncontingent reinforcement: Enriching the classroom environment to reduce problem behaviors. *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 50*(5), 301–309. https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059918765460

Myers, D., Freeman, J., Simonsen, B., & Sugai, G. (2017). Classroom management with exceptional learners. *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 49*(4), 223–230. https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059916685064

Nagro, S. A., Hirsch, S. E., & Kennedy, M. J. (2020). A Self-Led Approach to Improving Classroom Management Practices Using Video Analysis. *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 53*(1), 004005992091432. https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059920914329

Sayeski, K. L., & Brown, M. R. (2011). Developing a classroom management plan using a tiered approach. *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 44*(1), 8–17. https://doi.org/10.1177/004005991104400102

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