Tip Sheet: Compliance Strategies

Rationale
The use of positive behavior supports (PBS) is mandated by federal law (IDEA, 2004). Within PBS, there are three tiers of support with corresponding goals and activities:

(Levis & Sugai, 1999)
- Tier 1 - Prevent academic and behavior problems: school wide academic & behavior interventions;
- Tier 2 - Prevent the development of more serious problems and improve problem behavior: target interventions for students not responding to Tier 1;
- Tier 3 - Decrease impact of antisocial behavior on a student’s daily functioning: develop individualized intervention to meet the unique needs of student.

Using effective compliance strategies can facilitate the goals at all three tiers of PBS, especially at Tiers 1 and 2.

Give Effective Commands

Definition of Noncompliance: There are four types of noncompliance (Walker et al., 2004)
- Passive noncompliance: student simply does not to perform requested behavior but is not overtly noncompliant (simply ignores directive – not angry or hostile).
- Simple refusal: student acknowledge the direction but indicates via words or gestures that he/she does not intend to comply – not angry unless command persists or there are adult attempts to force the issues.
- Direct defiance: student displays hostility, anger, overt resistance and attempts to intimidate.
- Negotiation: student attempts to bargain, compromise; proposes alternative solutions.

By addressing noncompliance at the early stage, teachers can prevent the escalation of more serious behaviors.

Strategies (Walker et al., 2004)
- Only give as many commands as needed (decreased compliance occurs with increases in the number of commands given)
- Obtain student attention and eye contact
- Use more “initiating: (or “start”) commands versus “terminating (or “stop”) commands
- Deliver one directive or command at a time – for tasks with multiple steps, give a separate command for each step
- Use clear, concise, and specific language (“alpha” commands)
- Allow time for student to comply
- Only give the command two times – if not followed after second time, provide consequence for noncompliance
- Give direction from a distance of three feet.
- Use a matter-of-fact and nonemotional tone of voice (do not yell, plead or threaten)
- Reinforce compliance!

Literature to support the use of effective commands (Neef et al., 1983; Walker, 1995; Walker, et al., 2004; Walker & Walker, 1991)
Use Precision Requests

Definition: A method for delivering teacher directions to prompt compliance and consistently follow up noncompliance (Jenson & Reavis, 1997).

Steps (Jenson, & Reavis, 1997)
1) 1st request for compliance using “Please” and characteristics of effective commands
2) Wait 5 seconds – if there is compliance: REINFORCE!
3) Noncompliance: Repeat request using signal words: You need to …”
4) Compliance: REINFORCE!
5) Noncompliance: mild preplanned negative consequence (e.g., loss of opportunity to earn token for that time period)

Evidence: DeMartini-Scully et al., 2000; Kehle et al., 2000; Mackay et al., 2001; Musser et al., 2001; Neville & Jenson, 1984

Note: Consider using Precision Requests in combination with other strategies as part of a multicomponent intervention (e.g., Kehle et al., 2000)

Engage in Active Supervision

Definition – “those behaviors displayed by supervisors designed to encourage more appropriate student behavior and to discourage rule violations” (Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin, 2000; p. 110)

Implementation (Lewis, et al., 2000)
• Monitor large, common areas (e.g., gym, hallway, playground)
• Move and interact with students
• Scan: correct inappropriate behavior and reinforce appropriate behavior

Evidence: Colvin et al., 1997; De Pry & Sugai, 2002; Lewis et al., 2000; Schuldheisz & van der Mars, 2001

Offer Choices

Definition: Offering a student two or more options and allowing student to independently select an options

• Choice can provide students an opportunity to have control over their environments
• Choice can be used to encourage and support appropriate behaviors and academic growth in a variety of ways for students without disabilities and with high incidence and severe disabilities:
  o Choice of routine activity and steps within activity (Dibley & Lim, 1999)
  o Choice of academic task (Dunlap et al., 1994)
  o Choice of task sequence for students with EBD (Jolivette et al., 2001)
  o Choice of math intervention for general education students (Carson & Eckert, 2003)
  o Choice of task and reinforcement for students with severe disabilities (Cosden et al.,
1995)

- Also see Morgan (2006) for classroom application.

Evidence: see above

Use High Probability Request Sequence (HPRS)

Definition (Oliver & Skinner, 2003):
- The presentation of a series of directions that a student is likely to perform (i.e., high-p command) delivered immediately before a request that a student is less likely to perform (i.e., low-p command)
  - “High-p” teacher commands = 80% or better compliance
  - “Low-p” teacher commands = 40-50% or less
- Using a series of high-p requests to build behavioral momentum in order to increase the probability of compliance with the low-p request.
- The high probability request sequence establishes a learning history.

Steps (Davis, 1995)
1) Deliver a series of three to five high-p commands at a rapid pace
2) Provide praise for each performance of the high-p command
3) Deliver a low-p command
4) Provide praise for the performance of the low-p request

Example: A teacher can ask a student to give me five, touch your nose, clap your hands (high-p commands) just before directing the student to get out her textbook (low-p command).

Evidence:
Demonstrated effectiveness across academic settings (inclusion and special education classrooms) and across different disabilities, including students with severe disabilities as well as young children without disabilities (e.g., Lee, 2005; Davis et al., 1993; Davis & Brady, 1994; Davis & Reichle, 1996; Jung et al., 2008; Wehby & Hollahan, 2000).

References


Wehby, J. H., & Hollahan, M. S. (2000). Effects of" high-probability requests on the latency to