**Tutor Strategies**

**Student Motivation and Management**

**Acknowledge Good Choices**

Motivation and management

Situation:

If your student’s behavior is challenging, this strategy to “catch them being good” might offer you both a different way of looking at things and of responding to your student.  
After being consistently reprimanded, some children become increasingly discouraged. They begin to believe that they are the “bad kid” who can’t do anything right. Why try when everything you do seems to be wrong?  
To counteract this notion, make your student aware of the positive behavior she does exhibit. This will help her to not only realize that she is capable of making good choices, but it should also encourage her good behavior to continue.

Step 1:

**Watch for good behavior.**  
Even the most difficult to manage children will exhibit positive behavior from time to time. If you start watching for it, you might be amazed at how often this is true. Be on the look out for good behavior, especially when it is behavior that you want to see continue.

Step 2:

**Respond with praise.**  
To reinforce the positive behavior, praise your student *immediately* after you see it happen. Be specific and describe exactly what your student did that you liked, so she’ll know what behavior she should continue to repeat in the future. Include an explanation of why this type of behavior is desirable and how it will be helpful to her.  
You might say, “I really like the way you thought about the answer before writing it down. That’s what good learners do.”  
You could also say, “You did a great job listening to me while I explained the directions. That made me feel appreciated and it will help you understand how to do this activity.”  
Be sure to say these comments with a smile and in a positive tone! Words mean little without the appropriate expressions and voice tone.

Step 3:

**Use nonverbal reinforcers.**  
Good behavior can also be reinforced with nonverbal gestures. Your student might appreciate a big smile or an encouraging wink from you. A thumbs-up or a quick high-five are all ways to make children feel great about their good choices. These gestures can be combined with praise or in replace of it when your student is repeating good behavior in which you’ve already made her aware.

**Helping students feel comfortable making mistakes**

Motivation

Situation:

Does your student get overly frustrated with himself when he makes a mistake? Does he not want to try because he is fearful of not being correct?  
This strategy should help your student feel more comfortable about making mistakes as he begins to understand himself as a learner.

Step 1:

**Discuss the learning process.**  
It's important that your student understands his role as a learner. He needs to know that learning is a process that takes time. It might be obvious to you, but your student might need to know and need to hear from you that it’s okay when he makes mistakes or does not know everything all at once.  
You might say, “It takes time for anybody to learn something new. It’s okay that you don’t know everything. I definitely don't know everything. Nobody does. Some things will be easier for you to learn and other things will be more challenging. That’s how it is for everybody. You already know a lot about reading and you’ll learn this too.”

Step 2:

**Share your experiences.**  
We are all learners. Sometimes it is easy to forget the rewards and struggles of learning when you are in the middle of learning something new. Share your own experiences as a learner. Encourage your student to share about an occasion when he was learning something for the first time.  
You might say, “I remember the time when I was learning how to ride a bike for the first time. It was hard balancing on two wheels without training wheels. I kept falling over for weeks! It took a lot of tries before it started to become easier. Do you remember a time when you were learning something new?”  
Be sure to look for opportunities when your student does accomplish something he was struggling to learn and may have even originally thought he could not learn.  
You might say, “Do you remember when you first started doing this? You didn’t think you could do it. Now look at you! Alright!”

Step 3:

**Praise Effort & Improvement.**  
Remember to praise your student for showing effort and improvement and not just when he does something correctly. This will help him to understand that his effort and good behavior are important too.  
You might say things like, “Wow, you are really using what you know about letter sounds while you are reading. I love the effort you put in to reading those words!”

**Responding to Misbehavior**

Management

Situation:

Are you struggling with what to do when your student misbehaves? This strategy gives you some ideas on responding effectively to your student’s misbehavior.  
*Here’s the key to remember:* Focus on responding in ways that motivate your student to permanently change her behavior, rather than simply punishing her misbehavior.

Step 1:

Ask yourself, "Are my expectations for my student reasonable?"  
Reasonable expectations are ones that are appropriate to your student’s age and ability. If the expectations you establish are reasonable for your particular student, then she will be able to be successfully follow them. If they are not, then both of you will probably end up feeling frustrated. If you're unsure as to whether your expectations are reasonable, please ask for feedback from your supervisor.

Step 2:

**Establish clear and consistent expectations.**  
When children know exactly what is expected of them, they are more likely to comply. Avoid telling your student what she should *not* do. Instead, clearly state what behavior you want from your student and be consistent with your expectations.  
Don’t say unspecific or negative things like: “Stop, doing that.” “Behave yourself.” “Don’t yell at me!” “Why can’t you just pay attention?”  
Do say things like (without yelling): “Keep your hands to yourself.” “Use kind words when talking with people.” “Talk to me when you’re upset.” “Pay attention to my directions.”   
Remember to be consistent with what you expect from your student’s behavior. It can be confusing to her if a certain behavior is allowed one time and not another time.

Step 3:

**Take action.**  
All children misbehave from time to time. However, the circumstance can be exasperated when they are put in a difficult situation. If your student is playing with a toy instead of doing her homework, put the toy away. If she keeps talking with somebody next to her, find another place to work. Think about how the setting or the situation might be making things worse and try to find ways to make it easier for your student to succeed.

Step 4:

**Use logical consequences.**  
Children learn from consequences that make sense. Consequences make sense when they have a direct connection to their wrongdoing. If your student has been unkind to someone else, have her apologize to that person and/or perform a kind deed for them. If your student has pushed others out of her way to find her favorite seat at the table, then ask her to walk back to where she started and try again to do it correctly. If your student has mistreated school property, she should not be able to use the materials again for awhile. Determining logical consequences can take more thought, but the result is usually well worth it.

Step 5:

**Seek help.**  
If you continue to have difficulties with your student’s behavior, ask for help from your site’s supervisor and explain to your supervisor what you've already tried and your student's reactions to your attempts.  
If it’s possible, it might also be helpful to observe your student in her classroom. This way you can see firsthand how another adult manages your student’s behavior.  
Remember to focus on finding solutions to change her behavior and not on how to punish her misbehavior.

Step 6:

**Respond to changed behavior with praise.**  
Immediately praise behavior that meets your expectations. In the same way you specified what behavior you expect, be specific with your praise of that behavior. Don’t forget to praise your student’s efforts to change her behavior too.  
You might say things like, “I really appreciate that you followed my directions the first time I asked that of you.” “You are really showing improvement on paying attention to what you are learning.”

**How to get your student to stop doing something he shouldn’t be doing**

Management

Materials & Resources:

* Your calm, non-threatening voice

Situation: Do you feel like you’re always saying, “No, stop doing that,” to your student? This strategy suggests another way to stop your student’s misbehavior.

Step 1:

**"You can't \_\_\_\_, but you can \_\_\_\_."**  
  
Try to find a way to turn your student’s misbehavior into an appropriate behavior. If your student is misbehaving, clearly state the behavior she needs to stop, describe why the behavior is inappropriate, and then suggest a suitable alternative.  
Here are some examples of possible situations:  
  
- “You can’t doodle on the desk because it’s damaging to school property, but you can use this piece of paper instead.”  
  
- “The voice level you are using is too loud for the other students working nearby. Talk just loud enough so I can hear you.”  
  
- “Now is not the time to play with that game because you have to complete your homework. When you finish your homework, we can take a few minutes for you to show me your game then. “   
  
Believe it or not, if you provide your student with an alternative in this way, there truly is a great chance that your student will take you up on your suggestion and change her behavior to an appropriate one. Depending on the situation, she might also decide to just discontinue the misbehavior all together. If this happens, make sure she understands that stopping is an appropriate choice too.

Step 2:

**Reminder:**  
  
No matter how frustrated you become with your student, never use reading as a punishment, such as making your student read for misbehaving *or* taking away your student's reading privileges. Using reading as a punishment may lead your student to foster negativity and resistance towards reading. Keeping students' reading experiences positive is important so that they'll want to become better readers.

**Important questions to ask yourself**

Why do you think your student behaves inappropriately?

Can you change the environment, program, timeline or your response to the behavior?

Have you set clear expectations? Are these expectations reasonable for the student?

How many times have you said no? Can you say yes without saying no?

**Limited Choices**

It is important for a student to have a say in his or her own learning. As a tutor you can give limited choices. Rather than “what would you like to work on today?” Try, “would you like to write about this or that?”

They get to have a say in what they are doing but they also will complete the activity that you want to get done.

**Motivation**

Many students learn for their teacher or their parents. In order to be motivated to learn they need to want to learn for themselves.

Try explaining why you are working on the activity that has been assigned. What real-world skills will it help them with?

Give students a choice in their learning. If they do not want to write about a topic, let them choose the structure or topic to write about instead.

Make sure materials are not too challenging or too easy.

Share your own writing or books you are reading to show the student that these are skills that they will use in the future.

Smile, be excited and be patient. It will happen!