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IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

The Color Wheel: Implementation Guidelines

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TARGET STUDENTS AND BEHAVIOR

Color Wheel (CW) procedures were designed as one component of a comprehensive program for classrooms serving students with emotional/behavioral disorders across all grade levels (Centennial School, 1986). The two studies presented in this issue demonstrate that CW procedures can be adapted and integrated into general education elementary classrooms to reduce inappropriate talks (Choate, C.H. Skinner, Fearington, Kohler, & Skolits, in press; Fudge, Reece, C.H. Skinner, & Cowden, in press). Formal and informal observations and teacher reports from these and other studies suggest that CW procedures may reduce other inappropriate behaviors, increase academic achievement by allowing for more and higher quality instruction and learning time, reduce teacher frustration and burnout, and improve the classroom climate (Below, A.L. Skinner, C.H. Skinner, Sorrell, & Irwin, in press; Hautau, C.H. Skinner, Pfaffman, Foster, & Clark, in press; Saecker, Sager, C.H. Skinner, Williams, Luna, & Spurgeon; in press; C.H. Skinner & A.L. Skinner, in press). The implementation procedures described below are minor adaptations from the Centennial School Training Manual (Centennial School, 1986).

MATERIALS CHECKLIST

1. Color Wheel - Red, yellow, and green construction paper, poster board, tape/paste, and tacks.
2. Rules - Three pieces of colored poster board (red, yellow, and green), a broad tipped marker and tape, paste, or tacks.

*PROCEDURES**Step I: Preparation*

1. Develop three lists of rules (Red, Yellow and Green).
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Example of Rules

<u>Red</u>	<u>Yellow</u>	<u>Green</u>
a. In seat	a. Raise hand to speak	a. Use inside voices
b. Desk cleared	b. Raise hand to leave seat	b. Hands and feet to self
c. Eyes of speaker	c. Eyes on speaker or work	c. Follow directions
d. No talking	d. Hands and feet to self	
	e. Follow directions	

2. Write rules in abbreviated (brief) fashion on colored poster board.
3. Keep rules to a minimum (e.g., 3-6 per color).
4. Construct your color wheel or traffic light.

Step II: Teacher Training and Practice

CW procedures appear simple. However, in order for CW procedures to become part of a daily routine, teachers must break their previous routines. Thus, initial teacher training and practice with CW procedures should not be neglected. Teachers should practice implementing CW procedures in their classroom when students are not present. Using demonstration, role playing, immediate feedback, discussion, and repeated practice consultants can work with teachers to increase the probability that teachers will implement CW procedures correctly and consistently.

1. When students are not present, post the wheel and rules in classroom. The wheel and rules should be posted in front of the room where the teacher typically provides group directions.
2. Practice implementing CW procedures with consultants providing demonstrations, descriptions, explanations, and immediate corrective feedback. Practice implementing transitions from Yellow to Red and from Green to Red with appropriate 2-minute and 30-second warnings. Also practice moving from Red to Yellow, and from Red to Green (no warnings needed). During the practice sessions remind teachers to answer questions or address student concerns after the wheel is turned from Red as they cannot talk while it is on Red.
3. Remind teachers not to go from Yellow to Green or Green to Yellow when they first use these procedures as Red sets the stage for students to stop whatever they are doing and allows teachers to introduce the next activity without interruption.
4. After each practice session remove the rules and the color wheel from the classroom.

Step III: Student Training and Practice

When the procedure is first applied, it is important for teachers to post, teach, and re-teach the rules. As it takes students time to learn and acclimate themselves to CW rules and transition procedures, the first few days the CW procedures are implemented in the room should be treated as practice days for both the teacher and the students. Thus, no serious consequences for rule breaking behavior (e.g., loose chance to earn group rewards) should be established until students have a better chance to earn rewards. Occasionally teachers will make mistakes (e.g., call on someone to respond when the wheel is on Red). Mistakes made by both teachers and students should be treated lightly. Finally, when CW procedures are first implemented it would be useful for consultants to be present so that they can provide private feedback to teachers regarding their implementation procedures.

1. After at least two practice sessions across 2 days post the wheel and rules in the classroom before students enter.
2. Begin the day by describing the CW procedures and goals (e.g., more efficient transitions, clarify rules so behavior expectations are clear to all, including the teacher).
3. Next describe the rules, provide a rationale for each set of rules (Yellow will make it easier for you to learn without disruptions), and finally provide an explanation for what each specific abbreviated rule means (give examples).
4. Describe the function of the wheel. Specifically, tell the students the wheel will help them know which rules are in place at any moment in time.
5. Describe the transition procedures. Focus on the warning being given to increase student success with rule following.
6. Have students read, re-read, recite, and repeat the rules numerous times.
7. Practice implementing the procedures in a fun format. For example, you could ask the class what the rules for Red are while the color wheel is on Yellow, Green, and Red. If students raise their hands while the wheel is on Red, the teacher would a) say "put your hands down, no hand raising or talking on Red", b) move the color wheel to yellow and c) ask the same question, and d) call on a student raised her/his hand.
8. Remember on the first couple of days you want to teach and re-teach the rules and procedures. However, do not provide any strong consequences for rule-breaking or rule-following behaviors as students must become acclimate to the new procedures.

Step IV: Implementation Guidelines for Continued Use

CW procedures can be modified after students and teachers have become acclimated to these procedures. Some modifications we observed are inappropriate and others are useful. Below are guidelines for continued application of CW procedures.

1. Keep rules brief and use words and terms appropriate for the class.

Rationale. Rules need to be learned. Thus keeping them brief is critical. You can give provide long operational definitions of the rules when they are taught but the posted rules should be a brief easy to learn form of these operational definitions. Using idiosyncratic language that students are familiar with such as "use your inside voices" is appropriate.

2. Use Red frequently but keep time on Red brief.

Rationale. Red is useful for most activity transitions, so use it frequently. However, Red rules are the most difficult to follow. Keep time on red brief as you want successful rule-following behaviors.

3. Time on Red should never be used for punishment.

Rationale. Because the rules are strict, it is hard to get successful rule follow on Red. It is even more difficult when the entire class is being simultaneously punished, even those students who did not misbehave.

4. Time on Green can be use as a group reward.

Rationale. This may be an efficient and effective group reinforcer.

5. Consistently give time warnings before switching to Red.

Rationale. Warnings increase probability of rule-following behavior.

6. If all members of the class are ready, you can change colors before the time limit elapsed.

Rationale. Dead time may occasion rule breaking. Only change early when all are ready (e.g., all have material put away and in seat looking at you).

7. Fade rule recitations and praise.

Rationale. While over-learning is good, too much repetition wastes time.

8. Teachers turn the wheel, not students.

Rationale. Efficiency is the goal. Some students may resent classmates "telling them what to do".

9. Before beginning, decide how rule breaking will be addressed. Initially we recommend group-prompts, (e.g., "remember class on Red you need to be looking at me") as opposed to an individual prompts (e.g., "Ben you are supposed to be looking at me").

Rationale. Individual attention may be reinforcing and repeating rules for entire class helps all learn.

10. If a student consistently breaks rules you may have to do some individual programming (e.g., punishment system), **but never use group punishment.**

Rationale. You should never punish students for classmates' behavior (C.H. Skinner, Cashwell, & Dunn, 1996).

11. CW procedures can be reactive. For example, if students are getting too loud on Green, the teacher could return the class to their seats (turn wheel to Red) and remind them that Green requires them to use their inside voices.

Rationale. Preventing problems before they become too serious via stimulus control is often preferable to punishing inappropriate behaviors after they have occurred (C.H. Skinner, Cashwell, & A.L. Skinner, 2000).

POSSIBLE UNDESIRE SIDE EFFECTS

Although CW procedure appears to be effective at preventing and remedying many problems we have noticed several undesirable side effects that may occur.

1. *Messy desks.* Particularly when CW procedures are first introduced, students may rush to put materials away prior to the wheel going to Red.
2. *Rules do not fit all situations.* As the students become more acclimated to rules you can adjust them with directions. For example, while the CW is on Red the teacher may announce "I am going to change the color wheel to Yellow, but I am going to allow you to call out answers".
3. *May increase tattling.* This is especially likely with younger elementary students. Two solutions appear to work. First, ignore tattling (extinction). Second, interdependent group-rewards can discourage tattling as all students are *less* likely to get if they make teachers aware of peers inappropriate behaviors (C.H. Skinner et al., 2000).

A BRIEF QUIZ ON COLOR WHEEL IMPLEMENTATION

1. The students are doing independent seatwork and you have given both the 2-minute and the 30-second warnings. As you walk to the color wheel you notice Ben rushing to put his materials away. You should

- a) quickly turn the wheel to Red to catch Ben breaking rules
- b) turn your back to the class to change the wheel, fumble with the wheel a bit until you hear Ben's desk shut, turn around to observe all students following the rules.

Answer: B - Educators often spend too much time and energy focused on catching and punishing inappropriate behaviors (C.H. Skinner et al., 2000). The goal is successful rule

following. Allowing Ben, who is trying to follow the rules, a few more seconds to be successful is appropriate.

2. You are frustrated with your students because they behaved poorly at the cafeteria. When the students return to the classroom is it appropriate for you to turn the wheel to Red, reprimand the students, and then tell them that you are going to keep it on Red for 20 minutes as punishment?

Answer: No, this would be inappropriate. Your goal is to occasion rule-following behavior and it is difficult for students to follow Red rules. Because Red rules are difficult to follow, long intervals on Red will likely occasion rule breaking behavior. Additionally, you are punishing all students, even those who behaved well at the lunch.

REMEMBER THIS

High expectations for rule-following behavior are more likely when rules are clear, known, and reasonable. Keep expectations high and do all you can to help students succeed as opposed to putting your time and energy into catching rule-breakers.

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