Positive Behavior Intervention and Support on the Playground

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Positive Behavior Intervention and Support on the Playground

An Action Research Report
By Teri M Miller
Positive Behavior Intervention and Support on the Playground

By Teri M Miller

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In fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree
St. Catherine University
St. Paul Minnesota

Advisor __________________________ Date:_____________
Abstract

The purpose of this action research project was to implement the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model on the playground environment and determine the effects on student behavior observed during recess. The study was conducted at an elementary school with first grade teachers and students. Data collection methods included surveys, student goal sheets, and a web-based application, School-Wide Information System (SWIS), used to document referrals on playground behavior. Results from the eight-week study yielded positive results, showing a dramatic decrease of problematic behaviors on the playground. Recommendations based on the results of the investigation include creating Active Recess (AR) zones that support the PBIS tier-support plan. To continue to provide students with opportunities to be successful with the PBIS model, it is suggested the playground be divided into activity zones. The results of this research indicate that positive behavior management will continue to be an integral part of our school-wide plan.
Observation and documentation of student behavior in elementary school environments has shown that recess on the playground is an area where many problematic behaviors occur. Managing student behavior is one of the biggest challenges educators face at the elementary level. In an effort to reduce problematic behaviors, schools implement character education to teach students behavior expectations. Many schools chose to implement Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), a “framework that guides implementation of evidence-based behavioral practices for improving important behavior outcomes for all students” (Center of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2010, p. 79).

The school focused on in this study is currently in the process of implementing a new Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) model. Although successful in the implementation of this behavior model, staff has discussed the difficulty in monitoring behavior during unstructured, high-energy times throughout the day. The data shows that the highest area of concern is the playground.

Over this past school year, the first grade team worked with a group of students who demonstrated impulsive and violent behavior during unstructured recess. There were several “tier two” students who displayed positive behavior during class time, yet they demonstrated problematic behaviors daily on the playground. One significant factor to these issues is the lack of resources. These students showed, on more than one occasion, their impulsivity and need of an
outlet for their energy. High-energy in close quarters proved to be a challenge for all students.

Classroom teachers, recess supervisors, and PBIS team were aware of behavior issues these students were experiencing. Continued research for successful intervention techniques was focused on throughout the 2012-2013 academic year. In order for the PBIS model to continue to build on its success, it is vital that resources and interventions be implemented before students experience difficulty controlling their behaviors during recess. Ninety-six first grade students, 55% males and 45% females, from four different classrooms are a part of this study on integrating PBIS on the playground. Five students (three males and two females), from the entire grade, are chosen to receive the Check In/Check Out intervention during the duration of this study.

The target setting for this project was the playground, during the first recess period, which consists of first grade students and is about 25 minutes long. Three staff members provided supervision during each recess period, with at least two supervisors being present on the playground with the students. All staff is currently trained in using common language, morning meetings have been implemented into the daily schedule of each grade level, and teachers and students understand how the individual and group contingencies work. Data for this action research project is gathered from the fall of 2013 first grade recess period. The data gathered will show the impact common language, morning meetings, and reward systems have on student behavior on the playground.
Baseline data was collected from the fall of 2012 first grade playground behavior documentation. Throughout the 2012-2013 academic year, teachers and recess supervisors took part in training procedures to learn the common language, morning meetings were implemented, and an individual and group contingency was set for positive reinforcement. “Training procedures for implementation of recess behavior intervention include (a) introducing the recess intervention to the school administration, (b) educating faculty and staff as a whole group on the components of the interventions, and (c) sequentially training each grade-level teacher to implement social skills training”

Following the training, as part of the implementation process, classroom teachers are expected to teach school rules, playground expectations, and social skills. All staff must consistently participate in order for the PBIS model to be successful in the school-wide setting, including non-classroom areas. The PBIS team and classroom teachers collaborate to create social skill lessons to be taught in the classroom. “Lessons were designed to (a) define the rules, (b) provide examples of the rules, (c) model the expected behavior, (d) have students practice the expected behavior, and (e) review and test”.

Recess staff also plays a large role in PBIS on the playground. Playground supervisors are trained on common language, pre-correction techniques, and active supervision strategies. During training, “playground monitors were instructed to increase (a) rates of reinforcing rule compliance, (b)
error corrections for rule violation, and (c) physical movement and visual
scanning of the playground” (Lewis, Colvin, & Sugai, 2000, p. 111-112).

This action research project examines the impact of implementing
morning meetings, common language, as well as an individual and group
contingency (reward systems) on student behavior on the playground and asks the
following question; How will the implementation of the Positive Behavior
Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model decrease problematic behaviors on the
elementary playground?

Description of Research

I chose to center my research on the effects of using the Positive Behavior
Intervention and Support (PBIS) model on the playground. Based on the past two
years of collecting behavior data, the playground location has been our area of
highest behavioral concern. Implementation of morning meetings and reward
systems, as well as the use of common language by all staff, are the main focuses
of this project. Social skill instruction during morning meetings, the use of
consistent common language, and the implementation of individual and group
contingencies will be used as tools to help decrease the occurrence of problematic
behavior on the playground.

Teachers and support staff were trained to use common language and to
incorporate the matrix into their morning meetings during the 2012-2013 year.
Individual and group contingencies were also introduced over the past academic
year. Although we began to see improvement with behavior in classroom settings, the playground was still considered the location with high behavioral concern. This fall, 2013, is the first year all staff is starting the school year trained and ready to implement effective morning meetings that teach behavior expectations through social skills. This action research project should demonstrate that, through the use of morning meetings, common language, and reward systems, we should witness a significant drop in problematic behavior on the playground, specifically with physical contact and aggression.

Research will take place during an eight-week period, beginning on September 3, 2013 and concluding October 21, 2013. Data collection procedures will include (1) a web-based information system, School-Wide Information System (SWIS), (2) Check In/Check Out (CICO) daily tracking plans, (3) an online teacher survey, and (4) a student survey.

In addition to the use of common language and the implementation of morning meetings and reward systems, a Check In/Check Out (CICO) group-intervention is being created. This intervention is designed specifically for students who are unresponsive to Tier One practices but do not require individualized behavior plans. Students receiving the CICO intervention meet with an advisor for pre-recess check-in. Behavioral goals and expectations are reviewed with social skills training. Throughout the day, these students will receive positive reinforcement and frequent feedback on meeting their behavioral goals. After recess, the students will visit with their CICO advisor to review their goals and behavior on the playground. A tracking sheet, based on behavior
expectations from the matrix, will document their progress toward meeting their behavior goals (see Appendix A).

The online survey for educators includes seven questions regarding the use of morning meetings, common language, and reward systems (see Appendix B). Four surveys were given to teachers who teach first grade. The teachers who were surveyed ranged from three to thirty years of teaching experience. The student survey was given on paper to students during their morning meeting. This survey included six questions regarding morning meeting in their classroom, how many reward slips they receive, and their knowledge and understanding of the matrix and common language (see Appendix C).

First grade teachers involved in this study begin their mornings with a 30-minute morning meeting. This time slot includes social skills instruction that incorporates behavior expectations from the matrix as well as the common language students hear in every location of the school (see Appendix D). The pillars of character are also taught at this time. Students learn how to meet each pillar expectation in every location of the school. During the duration of this project, teachers will focus their morning meeting social skill instruction on the playground location. Lessons will integrate each pillar of character; respect, responsibility, citizenship, trustworthiness, fairness, and caring.

Beginning this school year, in the fall of 2013, students will also take part in social skill instruction on the playground. Each class is provided with the opportunity to use the playground during non-recess times to practice and model behavior expectations. Teachers can film their students and create their own
“training videos” where students act out appropriate behavior on the playground. These training videos can then be used for whole-class review or with students who are in need of individual redirection.

All staff involved in this project, first grade teachers, the CICO advisor, and recess supervisors, used consistent common language when redirecting or rewarding student behavior. The term “body basics” refers to students having their hands to themselves, lips quiet, ears listening, eyes watching, and their brain thinking (see Appendix E). Staff uses the term body basics in both classroom and playground settings. Students are also aware of the term “voice levels”. Voice level zero is silent, voice level one is whispering, voice level two is table talk, voice level three is a loud speaking voice, and voice level four is an outdoor voice (see Appendix F). Students learn when and where to use each voice level during morning meetings. Voice levels are also referred to outside during recess.

Character slips are given to reward student behavior (see Appendix G). Students receive reward coupons once they collect a total of 25 individual character slips. School wide group contingencies are also rewarded. Every class records each time their class receives 50 character slips total. These class totals are documented as the entire school works towards receiving their group reward. Fix-it plans and Behavior Intervention Reports (BIRs) are used to review and document problematic behavior. Students are familiar with each term and all staff uses the same documentation forms. Fix-it plans are used to document minor indiscretions (see Appendix H) and BIRs are used to document major
indiscretions (see Appendix I). Data for this project was gathered using both major and minor referral documentation.

In the following section, I will analyze baseline data as well as each of the four data sources collected, with the focus being to determine whether implementing Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports decreases the number of problematic behaviors documented on the playground during recess.

Analysis of Data

To acquire baseline information, data was collected from the fall of 2012 first grade recess using the School-Wide Information System (SWIS). Documentation showed that physical contact and aggression was the highest occurring behavior on the playground. Throughout an eight-week period in the fall of 2012, 22 out of 26 referrals documented physical contact (M-Contact) and aggression (pAgg) as the main problematic behavior (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Problem Behaviors on the Playground, First Grade Recess, Fall 2012
Every teacher, myself included, started integrating morning meetings into the morning routine after a time slot was created to accommodate for social skill instruction. Because this instruction had been implemented at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year, the students could initiate this current year understanding these guidelines. A teacher survey was given during the first week of school to determine the use of morning meeting and common language in the classrooms. The survey included the following questions: 1. Prior to PBIS implementation, how often did you have morning meetings with your students? 2. Now that the daily schedule accommodates time for morning meetings, how often do you have morning meetings with your students? 3. How often do you focus on the PBIS matrix during morning meetings? 4. How often do you refer to the common language on the matrix (i.e. "body basics", "voice levels")? 5. Does the use of common language help behavior management in your classroom? 6. On any given day, how many reward slips do you give out to students? 7. Do your students know and understand the behavior expectations on the playground?

All four first grade teachers have implemented morning meetings into their daily schedule five days a week, although only one teacher focuses instruction to fit with the PBIS matrix every day of the week. Two teachers stated that the behavior matrix gets reviewed three times a week, and one teacher uses the behavior matrix twice a week during morning meeting instruction. However, every first grade teacher answered to using common language, such as “body basics” and “voice levels”, several time throughout each day.
Other commonalities found with this survey included that the use of common language has had a positive impact on behavior management in every first grade classroom and each teacher responded that all their students understand the behavior expectations for the playground. Other data that differed between the teachers was the amount of reward slips given out daily. Three out of the four teachers surveyed stated they give out 5-10 reward slips to their students throughout the day, one teacher stated she gives out 0-4 reward slips daily.

Results of this survey are shown in Figure 2.
A student survey was also administered in each of the four first grade classrooms during the second week of school. This survey focused on student
understanding of the PBIS model. Students who took the survey did provide their name. The survey included the following questions: 1. Are you a boy or a girl? 2. How often do you have morning meetings in your classroom? 3. How many character slips do you receive each day? 4. Do you know and understand the PBIS matrix? 5. Do you know and understand “body basics” and “voice levels”? 6. Do you know and understand the expectations for the playground?

Eighty-seven of ninety-six first graders completed the survey, 60% were male and 40% were female. The majority of the students (95%) stated that they had morning meeting their classroom five days a week. Discrepancies in the answers regarding the number of days morning meetings are held may be from students being out of the classroom during morning meeting. Some students attend small-group social skills, occupational therapy, or have speech in the morning during the morning meeting block.

The amount of reward slips received by students differed greatly, with “one a day” being the most common answer. One factor I noticed regarding the number of character slips is that the majority of students who receive four or more character slips each day are also students who take part in small-group social skills or are receiving interventions for behavior in the classroom or on the playground.

The majority of the students (96% or higher) stated that they understand the matrix, common language, and the expectations of the playground. Students
that demonstrated confusion about certain aspects of the PBIS model will receive additional support and intervention to re-teach specific parts of the behavior plan.

Results of this survey are shown in Figure 3.

![Figure 3. Student Survey Results](image)

After school had been in session for three weeks, data was collected from SWIS to review first grade playground behavior. A drop in referrals was already noticed. During the first three weeks of school, four behavior referrals were documented, three of which were for physical aggression (pAgg). The amount of referrals was lower than the past fall, but not significantly. However, the level of
physical contact was documented as more aggressive in the referrals from the fall of 2012. During the first three weeks of school in the fall of 2012, six referrals were documented, four of which were for physical aggression. A comparison of this data is displayed in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Data Comparison of Fall 2012/2013 Playground Behavior.

Data from 2012 helped identify tier two students who had shown to have behavior issues on the playground. These students were observed through SWIS, and their behavior was closely documented. Five students (three boys and two girls) began demonstrating problematic behavior on the playground at the beginning of this year. Two of these boys received minor referrals, and all five students were involved in teachable moments and tier one support.

These five students were chosen to participate in Check In/Check Out (CICO) daily tracking plans. These plans helped students identify a place on the playground they could make safe decisions, choose a peer to play with, and set a skill they would work on (i.e. keeping hands to self, sharing and taking turns,
listening and following directions, etc.). Depending on observation from recess supervisors, each day the tracking sheet would show whether or not the plan was successful for each student involved. Each student participated in CICO for five weeks. Data was documented to show the number of days of each week a student’s CICO plan was successful or if their plan failed. The following data, shown in Figure 5, represents the outcome of the CICO plans.
Student #1 is a boy who struggles with exhibiting physical aggression on the playground. He has shown impulsivity and reacts violently. During the five weeks of CICO, his skill to work on was keeping his hands to himself. Every day that he did not physically hurt another student was considered a success. Any day that there was a physical altercation was considered a nonsuccess/failure. This student misses school frequently, so some weeks less data was gathered than others. Although not every week was a success for this student, participating in CICO has been useful for data collection and documentation of intervention techniques.

Student #2 is a girl who had been receiving referrals for defiance and disobedience. The skill she worked on during CICO was taking turns and sharing. After having the plan in place, this student showed great improvement. Having a friend selected to play with during recess along with a set plan of what and where to play helped this student have success with her social skills. She’s continued to improve throughout her participation with CICO.

Student #3 is a boy who has also been demonstrating physical aggression on the playground. Although not as violent as Student #1, Student #3 was receiving referrals almost daily due to aggressive contact with other students. His participation in CICO started having a positive affect on his behavior during weeks three through five.
Student #4 is a girl who had also been receiving referrals for defiance and disobedience. She had a tendency to ignore the whistle for line up at the end of recess. Her skill to work on was listening and following directions. Throughout the five weeks, there were only two days this student did not experience success with her CICO plan. The reminder during Check In and the follow up during Check Out had a positive impact on this student’s behavior.

Student #5 is a boy who struggles with sharing and taking turns on the playground. He has the tendency to push or shove others when he does not get a turn or does not want to share. Although this student hadn’t received any major referrals, he had received a few minor referrals for aggressive contact with his peers. We focused his CICO on taking turns and coming up with other solutions he could use, instead of physical contact, to solve his problems during recess. This student has shown success during his participation in CICO.

At the conclusion of my study, after eight weeks of documentation, SWIS data was reviewed for final documentation. The following data, shown in Figure 6, depicts conclusive data regarding behavior on the playground for the fall of 2013.
Data collection shows a dramatic decrease of problem behaviors on the playground this fall as opposed to last fall. During this eight-week study, nine referrals were documented, six of which were from physical contact (M-Contact) and only one incident of major physical aggression (pAgg). The conclusion of this study showed a 37.5% decrease in problem behavior referrals from the playground, and a 7% decrease in physical aggressive behavior.

Action Plan

The study demonstrates encouraging results from incorporating Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) on the playground setting during recess. The success of this study is directly linked to the implementation of
morning meetings, the use of common language, and having set individual and group contingencies for positive reinforcement. The biggest success was documented when the intervention program on the playground included two components, social skills instruction and PBIS. Social skills instruction focused on teaching rules, routines, and expectations. The second component, PBIS, focused on common language as well as individual and group reward systems. Maintaining success will be contingent on staff remaining consistent with PBIS and continuing to use the model in their classroom.

The teacher survey depicted that staff using the PBIS plan in this project had a good understanding of the model and incorporated it into their morning meeting instruction consistently. The student survey showed a high understanding of the PBIS plan and behavior expectations for the playground. Both of these results correlated with the success shown in the conclusive data.

The Check In/Check Out (CICO) program also had positive effects on the students involved. These goal sheets were implemented with five tier-two kids. Teachers and students used these individual Check In/Check Out (CICOs) goal sheets to track positive reinforcement (i.e. character cards, pillar awards) as well as minor and major incidents (i.e. Fix-it plans, Behavior Incident Reports). This process included the student reviewing playground expectations, working on particular skill goals, and discussing behavior choices he/she made on the playground. Students showed motivation to meet their established skill goals, and the CICO goal sheets provided teachers with documentation of student behavior
on the playground as well as interventions attempted to correct or improve behavior during recess.

Positive behavior management and the tier-support plan will continue to be integral parts of our school-wide plan. Tier one is the largest group and consists of all students. Every student will take part in school-wide teaching of expectations to prevent misbehavior. Tier two is a specialized group for students who have demonstrated at-risk behavior. Rapid response interventions are implemented with these students, as well as the continuation of social skills teaching and support. Tier three consists of students who have demonstrated high-risk behavior. Specialized individual systems for tier three include individualized social skill activities and one-on-one interventions.

As our school moves forward with our implementation of PBIS on the playground, we are working on creating Active Recess zones. Netzel & Eber (2003, p. 77) saw the biggest drop in problematic behaviors when students were provided with structured activities and games on the playground. To better observe student behavior, as well as provide students with opportunities to be successful with the PBIS model, it is suggested the playground be divided into activity zones (Franzen & Kamps, 2008, p. 153). Zones can include playground equipment, structured games, running/walking tracks, or other recreational equipment. Rules and expectations fit to specific zones.
These zones will also support the PBIS tier-support plan. For example, if a student has received two referrals during recess and is beginning to show a pattern of unsafe behavior on the playground, teachers and recess supervisors can limit his/her choices in the activity zones. This student would be given the opportunity to pick from two zones, instead of any zone on the playground. He/she still gets free choice of what to play and where, but from those particular areas. Limiting choices that were elements of his/her problem behavior should help decrease the amount of referrals he/she was receiving during recess. If problematic behavior continues, this student would be limited to one recess zone and possibly assigned to a recess supervisor for one-on-one active supervision. Our goal is not to have the playground be taken away as a consequence, but have options limited instead. We want all students to stay active and involved in recess. As student behavior improves, he/she can re-earn choices and regain access to other zones on the playground.

Our PBIS team is currently working with the Wellness Committee to raise funds and order recreational equipment for the playground. This equipment will include sport balls, hula-hoops, beach pails and shovels, walking cups, cones, and Frisbees. A mesh storage bag will also be purchased. The tentative plan is to purchase bags and equipment in the six different colors that represent the pillars of character. Each grade level (K-5) is assigned a color. For example, first grade represents the “respect pillar”, which is yellow. All of the first graders’ equipment would be yellow and be
stored in a yellow bag. This will help keep track of each grade level’s equipment and ensure that equipment is not lost or misplaced. Our goal is to have the equipment and implement Active Recess in the fall of 2014.

The conclusive data from this action research project provided evidence that our PBIS model is successful and useful in other areas of the school, as well as in the classrooms. We will continue to work on implementing PBIS in other areas, such as in the lunchroom and on the bus, as well as maintain consistent use of the model in the classrooms. This action research project was beneficial to the entire school. It encouraged certain questions to be asked, meaningful results to be gathered, and reflection on best practice for the entire school environment. As I continue to work in education, life long learning and active research will be a firm foundation for growth and change.
References


Appendix A

Check-In/Check Out Goal Sheet
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Recess Zones Where will I play?</th>
<th>Friend Who will I play with?</th>
<th>Skill What will I work on?</th>
<th>Did I follow the plan?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>• Big Equipment</td>
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<td>🧐 Yes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Walking Path</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
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<td>Friday</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Teacher Survey

**PBIS on the Playground**

1. Prior to PBIS implementation, how often did you have morning meetings with your students?
   - 1 day a week
   - 2 days a week
   - 3 days a week
   - 4 days a week
   - 5 days a week

2. Now that the daily schedule accommodates time for morning meetings, how often do you have morning meetings with your students?
   - 1 day a week
   - 2 days a week
   - 3 days a week
   - 4 days a week
   - 5 days a week

3. How often do you focus on the PBIS matrix during morning meetings?
   - 1 day a week
   - 2 days a week
   - 3 days a week
   - 4 days a week
   - 5 days a week

4. How often do you refer to the common language on the matrix (i.e. "body basics", "voice levels")
   - Several times throughout the day
   - A few times throughout the day
   - Once in a while
   - Never
Appendix C

Student Survey

5. Does the use of common language help behavior management in your classroom?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

6. On any given day, how many reward slips do you give out to students?
   ☐ 0 - 4
   ☐ 5 - 10
   ☐ 11 - 15
   ☐ 16 - 20
   ☐ 20 +

7. Do your students know and understand the behavior expectations on the playground?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No
1. I am a 

[Images: girl, boy]

2. How many days does your class have morning meeting?

1  2  3  4  5

3. About how many character slips do you receive each day?

0  1  2  3  4+  

4. Do you understand the PBIS matrix?

[Images: thumbs up, thumbs down]

Yes  No
5. Do you know what “body basics” and “voice levels” mean?

Yes  No

6. Do you understand the expectations on the playground?

Yes  No
Appendix D

PBIS Matrix
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Voice Level</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Hallway</th>
<th>Restroom</th>
<th>Lunchroom</th>
<th>Playground</th>
<th>Bike Rides</th>
<th>Bike Rides</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Communicate to others and adults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Compliment others</td>
<td></td>
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<td>- Tell the truth</td>
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<td>- Do your own work</td>
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<td>- Take turns</td>
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<td>- Keep your place in line</td>
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<td>- Return materials to proper place</td>
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<td>- Be on time</td>
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<td>- Ask questions when you need help</td>
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<td>- Produce quality work</td>
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<td><strong>Citizenship</strong></td>
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<td>- Keep hallways clean and free from obstructions</td>
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<td>- Keep desks and supplies in their proper place</td>
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<td>- Be polite</td>
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**Appendix E**
Body Basics

BODY BASICS

HANDS AND FEET TO SELF

LIPS ARE ZIPPED

EARS ARE LISTENING

EYES ARE WATCHING

BRAIN IS ON
Appendix F

Voice Levels
Appendix G

Character Slips

Appendix H

Behavior Intervention Report (BIR)
Appendix I

Fix-It Plan
# Rossman Elementary

## Fix-It Plan

*Grades K - 2*

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name:</strong> ____________________</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher:</strong> __________________</td>
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<td><strong>Grade:</strong> ____________________</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minor Behavior Incident:</strong></td>
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<td>☐ Inappropriate Verbal Language</td>
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<td>☐ Defiance/Disrespect/Noncompliance</td>
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<td>☐ Other: ______________________</td>
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(Filled out by student)

**Problem:**

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**Solution:**

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*☐ I will try to make a better choice next time.*

_____________________

*Student Signature*

*☐ I have had a conference with this child about this “fix-it plan”.*

_____________________

*Teacher’s Signature*  
**Date**