

Tech Solutions for Classroom Management



It's no secret that behavioral disruptions can hinder teaching and learning. My school, Billingsville Elementary School in Charlotte, North Carolina, is a neighborhood school that is one of the most impoverished schools in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools district. In the past, we faced many behavior challenges. In fact, at one point, student behavior was so disruptive that administrators had difficulty conducting teachers' classroom observations.

We knew we needed to help our teachers get a better handle on classroom management, but where could we start? We didn't have a framework for behavioral expectations, or a common platform with which to track student behavior. As a result, we didn't have a consistent way to document behaviors of any kind, much less recognize students for positive behaviors.

While on a trip to New York to visit family, I noticed "paychecks" on the kitchen table. When I asked my young cousins what the checks were for, they explained that they had earned them for positive behavior at their elementary school, such as listening to their teacher and doing their work on time.

I visited the website listed at the bottom of the checks (kickboardforteachers.com), researched the initiative,

and called other schools to ask about their classroom management experiences. After careful evaluation, our school launched Kickboard in February 2014. Kickboard is an instructional management system that can track both behavior and academics, but we started tracking just behavior, since that was our significant area of need.

Establishing Schoolwide Expectations

Whenever a new technology is introduced, some teachers worry it will add even more work to their incredibly busy days. So, when we introduced Kickboard, we began by explaining what it could do for them. Once teachers understood it wasn't going to create more work for them, we launched a series of weekly meetings to communicate our expectations and

to provide small, manageable training sessions.

We added each of Billingsville Elementary's "Family Expectations" into the system. These include behavioral expectations for classrooms, hallways, the playground, the cafeteria, restrooms, and buses. For example, our classroom expectations are:

- Follow directions;
- Respect adults and classmates;
- Respect space and property;
- Participate in your learning; and
- Be prepared for learning.

Recognizing Positive Behaviors

Next, we worked with teachers to assign a dollar value to each behavior expectation. In Kickboard, teachers can, with the click of a button, recognize students for doing the right thing and automatically award "dollars" to them. At the end of each week, students are given a "paycheck" they can use to shop in a virtual store for school supplies, toys, or treats such as lunch with a favorite teacher.

This reward system has had a huge impact on student behavior. Case in point: One of our students tore pages out of another student's book. When we told him he'd have to "pay" for the book with his Kickboard dollars, he was very upset. When he thought his *parents* would have to pay for the book, he didn't care about his actions. But, when he realized *he* would have to pay for the book with his paycheck, he realized he cared a lot. It helped him learn a valuable lesson about respecting space and property.

Supporting Data-Driven Instruction

After seeing improvements in our school culture, we began to use the instructional management system to track academic performance as well. We've found that tracking academics and behavior in one system saves teachers time. We also purchased Elmo document cameras for every classroom, so teachers can now instantly grade multiple-choice assessments using their computer's Web

camera, and the scores are immediately available in the system.

With this data, we can check students' mastery of our academic standards and see how each class is performing. This data also helps us initiate conversations with teachers about what we need to do differently and why. For example, we recently saw that one of our second grade classes scored almost 90 percent on a geometry assessment, while the others scored 40 or 50 percent. We used that data to discuss the resources and strategies the teacher used to successfully teach the standard.

Our teachers also discuss their data when they meet in professional learning communities three times a week—once for literacy, once for math, and once for behavior. It helps them to identify interventions to put in place.

Increasing Parent Involvement

Thanks to our use of technology to track behavior and academics, our

communication with parents has improved 95 percent.

Before, our teachers communicated with parents through quarterly progress reports and report cards—but they didn't often communicate between those times unless there was an issue to be resolved. Now, each week, teachers provide parents with progress reports on their child's grades, standards mastery, behavior, and rewards. We require parents to sign their child's paycheck each week before the student can shop in the school store. Plus, students are rewarded with ten Kickboard dollars when their parents attend Curriculum Night at our school, so they make sure their parents come.

Seeing Results

Our tech-enhanced behavior and academic performance system has helped teachers quickly establish consistent practices for effective classroom management and build stronger rela-

tionships with their students. It's also changed the way we view data across our school. Teachers are excited they have one system for behavior and academics; they are empowered with the information they need to make sound instructional decisions. I can stay on top of what's happening in every classroom and drill down into the data to get more specific information about our school's needs. It helps our staff create more meaningful conversations with each other, as well as with students and parents.

Thanks to our focus on positive behavior, we've seen a decline in discipline referrals and our school culture has improved. This is helping us create an environment in each classroom that's more conducive to learning, which we believe will lead to improved academic outcomes. 

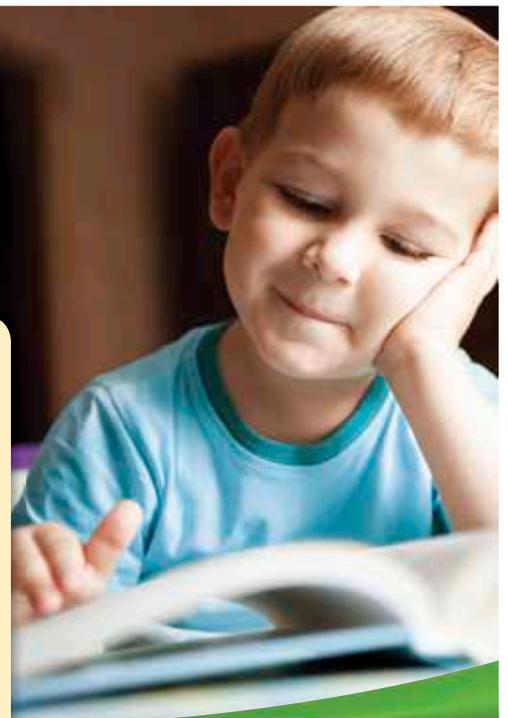
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