

PRECISION REQUESTS

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Many students do not respond to teacher requests or are actively non-compliant. Non-compliance is associated with off-task behaviour and may have a negative impact on academic and social behaviour.

PROPOSED SOLUTION/ INTERVENTION

Although most successful interventions for non-compliance have several components, delivering clear requests in a consistent format is likely to be necessary.

Precision requests are delivered in clear, simple, positive language. The teacher introduces the first request with the word "Please ..." then waits for 5 seconds. If the student complies, the teacher provides a positive consequence such as praise or a small reward. If the student does not comply, the second request is introduced with "You need to ...", and if the student complies the teacher provides a positive consequence. If the student is still non-compliant, a negative consequence is delivered such as removing an earned reward. Requests are delivered one at a time in a calm voice while the teacher has eye contact with the student. The teacher should be close, but not invading the student's personal space. Ideally the requests are related to classroom or school rules that the student is familiar with.

The strategy may sound obvious, but in practise may not be used as often as is warranted.

THE THEORETICAL RATIONALE – HOW DOES IT WORK?

If students are to be compliant, they must have a clear understanding of what constitutes acceptable

behaviour. The consistent wording of the requests clearly signals that the teacher is making a request, and the use of simple, positive instructions helps students understand what to do. When clear requests are combined with rewards for compliant behaviour and mildly negative consequences for non-compliance, behaviour change is likely.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY? WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE FOR ITS EFFICACY?

Several studies have demonstrated the positive effects of precision requests or similar request strategies on student behaviour and compliance. They have been effective for typical students, for students with behaviour disorders and people with intellectual disability and have been used successfully by both teachers and parents. Teachers report they are easy to use and have been very satisfied with the results. They are not time-consuming and require no specialised materials or equipment.

CONCLUSIONS

Precision requests are a low-cost antecedent strategy that are likely to be effective when combined with other positive antecedents and consequences. Mild negative responses to non-compliance may be needed for some students.

THE MUSEC VERDICT: WORTH A TRY

Key references may be found at:

http://www.musec.mq.edu.au/co_brief.aspx

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