

# WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE

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# Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom

## **Jill Constantine**

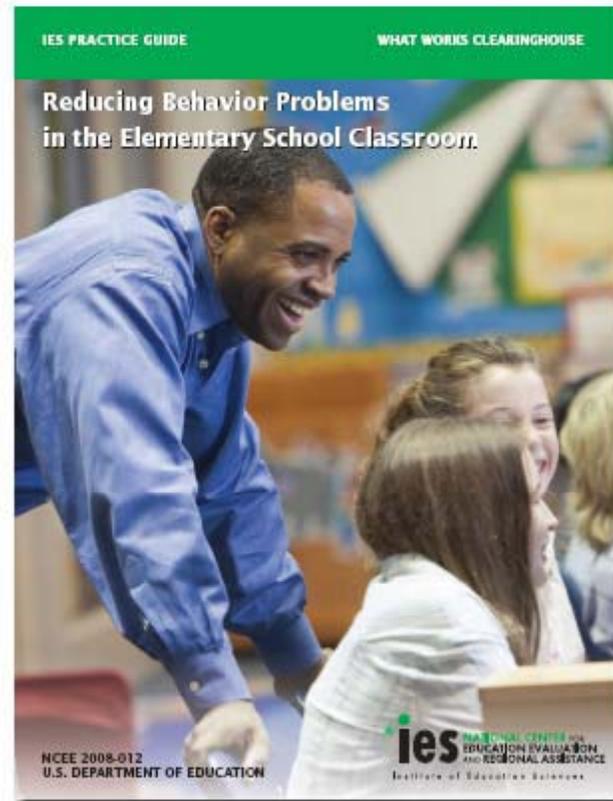
Associate Director of Research,  
Mathematica Policy Research and  
WWC Deputy Director

## **Michael Epstein**

Professor, University of  
Nebraska-Lincoln

## **Robin Weaver**

Principal, Harmony Hills  
Elementary School



## WWC at a Glance

- Established in 2002 to provide educators, policymakers, researchers, and the public with a central and trusted source of scientific evidence of what works in education
- Sets standards for education research on effectiveness
- Website ([whatworks.ed.gov](http://whatworks.ed.gov)) offers information on education interventions and the quality of research on their effectiveness
- Take the new site tour at [ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/help/](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/help/)

# Practice Guides

## Evidence-based recommendations and strategies for classrooms and schools



**Recommendation 2. Modify the classroom learning environment to decrease problem behavior**

Many effective classroom interventions to decrease problematic behavior address factors that trigger the behavior. Triggers can result from between the classroom academic demands and strengths, preferences, Teachers can reduce the frequency of inappropriate behavior and reinforcing classroom expectations; rearranging classroom environment learning activities to meet needs; and/or individualized instruction to promote student engagement and on-task behavior.

**Level of evidence: Strong**

**Checklist for carrying out the recommendations**

**Recommendation 1. Identify the specifics of the problem behavior and the conditions that prompt and reinforce it**

- Concretely describe the behavior problem and its effect on learning.
- Observe and record the frequency and context of the problem behavior.
- Identify what prompts and reinforces the problem behavior.

**Table 2. Recommendations and corresponding level of evidence to support each**

Recommendation	Level of evidence
1. Identify the specifics of the problem behavior and the conditions that prompt and reinforce it. Observe and record the frequency and context of the problem behavior. Identify what prompts and reinforces the problem behavior.	Medium
2. Modify the classroom learning environment to decrease problem behavior. Many effective classroom interventions to decrease problematic behavior address factors that trigger the behavior. Triggers can result from between the classroom academic demands and strengths, preferences, Teachers can reduce the frequency of inappropriate behavior and reinforcing classroom expectations; rearranging classroom environment learning activities to meet needs; and/or individualized instruction to promote student engagement and on-task behavior.	Strong
3. Use positive behavior supports to decrease problem behavior.	Strong
4. Use individualized instruction to decrease problem behavior.	Medium

## Practice Guides at a Glance

- Recommend ways to address educational challenges, based on what the strongest research says is effective
- Include recommendations and how-to steps
- Rate the strength of evidence for recommendations
- Suggest solutions for common roadblocks

## Levels of Evidence

- ***Strong:*** High confidence (several strong studies in a variety of contexts)
- ***Moderate:*** Some evidence (may not work in all settings)
- ***Low:*** Hasn't been proved with strong research (but panel still thinks it is important)

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## PRACTICE GUIDES

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Practice guides provide practical recommendations for educators to help them address the everyday challenges they face in their classrooms and schools. Developed by a panel of nationally recognized experts, practice guides consist of actionable recommendations, strategies for overcoming potential roadblocks, and an indication of the strength of evidence supporting each recommendation. IES practice guides are subjected to rigorous external peer review.

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OVERVIEW

**Table 2. Recommendations and corresponding level of evidence to support each**

Recommendation	Level of evidence
<p>1. <i>Identify the specifics of the problem behavior and the conditions that prompt and reinforce it.</i> Every teacher experiences difficulty at one time or another in trying to remedy an individual student's behavior problem that is not responsive to preventative efforts. Because research suggests that the success of a behavioral intervention hinges on identifying the specific conditions that prompt and reinforce the problem behavior (i.e., the behavior's "antecedents" and "consequences"), we recommend that teachers carefully observe the conditions in which the problem behavior is likely to occur and not occur. Teachers then can use that information to tailor effective and efficient intervention strategies that respond to the needs of the individual student within the classroom context.</p>	<p><b>Moderate</b></p>
<p>2. <i>Modify the classroom learning environment to decrease problem behavior.</i> Many effective classroom-focused interventions to decrease stu-</p>	

# Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom

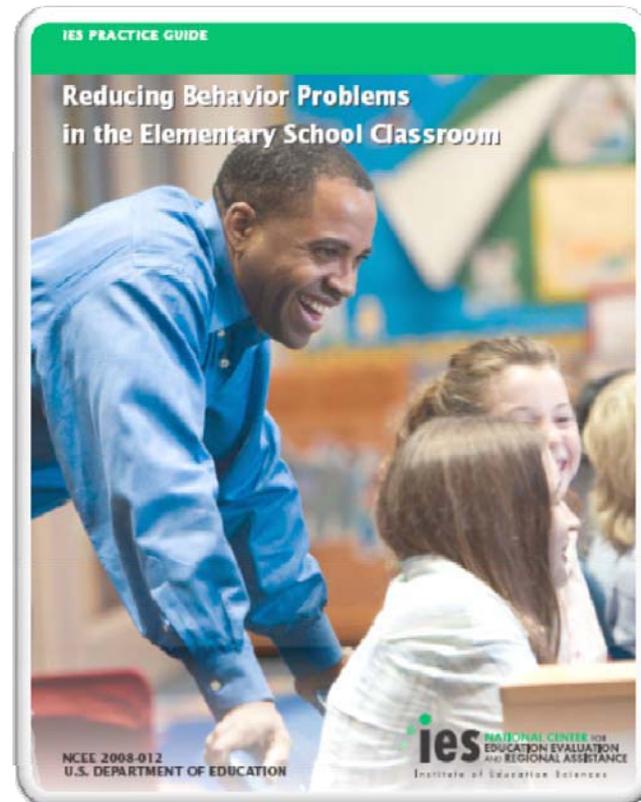
**Dr. Mike Epstein**



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What Works Clearinghouse  
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# Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom

Focus today  
is on results  
from this  
Practice Guide



# Why a Practice Guide on Behavior?

- Gallup poll results
- 20% of children at risk of behavior problems
- Relationship between behavior and academic performance
- Principals (70%) believe teachers ill-prepared to maintain classroom order
- Less than 15% of staff development is devoted to behavior management

# Recommendation 1

- Identify specifics of problem behavior & conditions that prompt and reinforce it.
  - Level of Evidence: **Moderate**
  - Implementation Guidelines
    - **Concretely describe** the behavior problem and its effect on learning.
    - **Observe** and **record** frequency and context of the problem behavior.
    - Identify what **prompts** and **reinforces** the problem behavior.



## Potential Roadblocks and Solutions

- Cannot collect data and teach at same time
  - Keep it simple, number of behaviors, time, and frequency
- Class has too many problems
  - Focus on one priority behavior
  - Record antecedents and consequences
- I tried and failed
  - Give the interventions time to work
- Behavior travels into my classroom
  - Teachers monitor “trouble spots”
  - Calm and focus students

## Recommendation 2

- Modify the classroom learning environment to decrease problem behavior.
  - Level of Evidence: **Strong**
  - Implementation Guidelines
    - Revisit, re-practice, and reinforce **classroom expectations.**
    - **Modify the classroom environment** to encourage instructional momentum.
    - Adapt or vary instructional strategies to **increase opportunities** for academic success and engagement.



## Potential Roadblocks and Solutions

- Teachers do not want to disrupt routines
  - Time used to practice new routines will increase quality of instructional time in the end
  - Prepare students well for change; ask students to model new behaviors as reward for appropriate behavior
- Do not have time to rethink classroom
  - Make one change in one setting

## Recommendation 3

- Teach and reinforce new skills to increase appropriate behavior and preserve a positive classroom climate.
  - Level of Evidence: **Strong**
  - Implementation Guidelines
    - Identify where the student needs **explicit instruction** for appropriate behavior.
    - Teach skills by providing **examples, practice, and feedback** (McGinnis & Goldstein, 1997).
    - Manage consequences so that reinforcers are provided for appropriate behavior and withheld for inappropriate behavior (Akin-Little et al., 2004; Brophy, 1982).



## Potential Roadblocks and Solutions

- Teachers fear extrinsic rewards undermine student motivation (Akin-Little et al., 2004; Cameron et al., 2001)
  - Tie reinforcement to student competence
  - Reward students with behavior-specific praise
- Teaching behavior is beyond my responsibilities
  - Integrate behavior skill building into curriculum

# Recommendation 4

- Draw on relationships with colleagues and families for guidance and support.
  - Level of Evidence: **Moderate**
  - Implementation Guidelines
    - **Collaborate** with other **teachers** for continued guidance and support.
    - Build **collaborative** professional partnerships with **school**, district, and **community behavior experts** who can consult with teachers when problems are serious enough to warrant help from outside the classroom. (Martens & DiGennaro, 2007; Hughes, Lloyd, & Buss, 2007).
    - Encourage **parents** and **other family members** to participate as active partners in teaching and reinforcing appropriate behavior.

## Potential Roadblocks and Solutions

- Faculty meetings can be a waste of teachers' time
  - Administrators should encourage a culture of professional learning
  - Use time together productively to joint problem-solve
- Behavior consultants expect too much
  - Focus on what is doable
- Parents won't participate
  - Communicate regularly with parents

# Recommendation 5

- **Implement schoolwide strategies to reduce negative and foster positive interactions.**
  - Level of Evidence: **Moderate**
  - Implementation Guidelines
    - Address schoolwide behavior issues by involving a school improvement **team**.
    - **Collect information** on the **hot spots** throughout the school, such as the frequency of particular schoolwide behavior problems and when and where they occur.
    - Monitor implementation and outcomes using an efficient method of data collection and allow ample time for the program to work.
    - If warranted, adopt a packaged intervention program that fits well with identified behavior problem(s) and the school context.



## Potential Roadblocks and Solutions

- Packaged programs may be too costly
  - Consider evidence-based programs that meet school needs
  - If too costly, encourage school staff to observe patterns of problem behavior to assist in formulating an intervention
- Nothing will work in our school
  - School administrators involved and support effort
  - Secure 80% staff commitment

# Principles

- Trusting and supportive **relationships** lay the foundation for positive behavior.
- There is increased need for building **cultural competence** among school communities.
- Collecting **data** is critical in targeting resources and changing strategies to improve behavior.

# Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom

**Harmony Hills Elementary School  
Montgomery County Public Schools  
Maryland**

**Robin Weaver, Principal**



# Harmony Hills Elementary School

## School Profile

Head Start through Grade 5  
Urban-Suburban  
Home School Model

## Demographics

<b>African-American Students</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Asian Students</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Hispanic Students</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>White Students</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>FARMS</b>	<b>85%</b>
<b>Special Education</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>ESOL</b>	<b>50%</b>

# Harmony Hills Elementary School

## Title I Schoolwide Program

### Title I Funds Used to Support

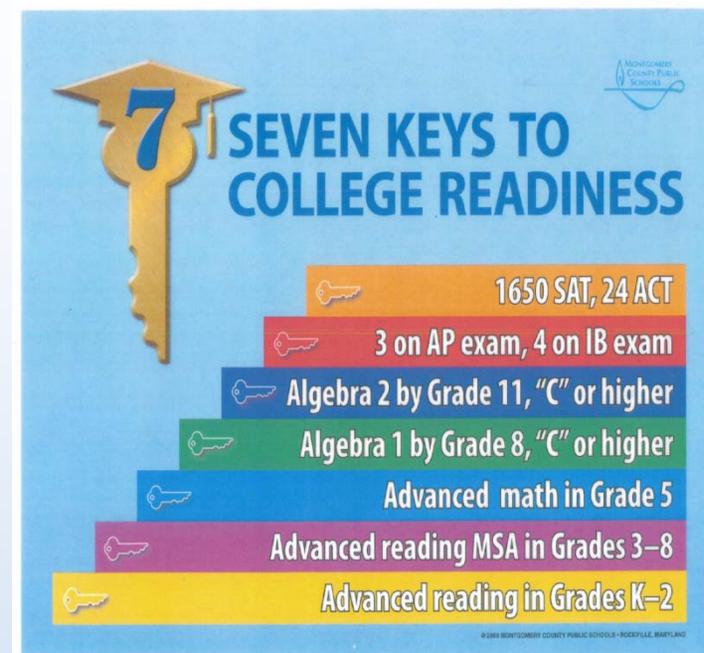
- Teachers and Paraprofessionals
- Team Planning and Professional Development
- Family Learning Opportunities
- Extended Day and Year
- Technology



# Harmony Hills Elementary School

## High Expectations

- Relationships
- Rigor
- Relevance



# Harmony Hills Elementary School

## Recruiting, Selecting, and Retaining Staff

- Highly qualified
- Diverse
- Bilingual/bicultural



# Connecting to the Practice Guide

## Recommendation #1 Identify the problem behavior

- The classroom teacher is the key to students' success.
- Teachers can no longer work in isolation.
- Building teachers' capacity and repertoire includes:
  1. Training on how to describe, observe, and record behavior
  2. Providing the teacher with data collection tools
  3. Connecting the teacher with the student's parent



# Connecting to the Practice Guide

**Recommendation #2 Modify the classroom environment**

**Recommendation #3 Teach new skills to increase positive behavior**

At Harmony Hills, these two recommendations are fluid with much trial, error and changing. Keys to implementing these recommendations are:

- Anticipate when the behavior will occur
- Be proactive and implement the strategy before the behavior occurs
- Don't give up or give in... stay the course (over time)
- Continue to give the student the 3 Key Messages:
  1. This is hard work.
  2. I know you can do it.
  3. I won't give up on you.



# Connecting to the Practice Guide

## Recommendation #4 Involve colleagues, families, and outside experts

- Providing TIME for teachers to learn together, look at data, and discuss strategies is key to reducing behavior problems.
- The principal's role here is critical by:



- Setting the tone and expectations
- Carving out the time during the duty day
- Participating, celebrating, and monitoring progress

# Connecting to the Practice Guide at Harmony Hills

## Time – Professional Learning Communities

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:55-9:20			Grade 4-Reading Mtg. 9:05-10:05		
9:20-10:15	SIT – Various Dates 9:20-3:20 Team Meetings follow SIT	Grade 3-Reading Mtg. 10:10-11:10		Grade 4 Math Mtg. 9:20-10:05	OSET 10:00-10:45 2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday
10:15-10:45			Paraeducator Prof Dev 10:30-11:30 (2 x per mo.)	Grade 3 Math Mtg. 10:10-10:55	
10:45-11:15	LTL Case Management 11:00-11:45		Grade 5 Mtg. 11:00-12:00	Coaches Mtg. 11:00-11:45 1 <sup>st</sup> Thurs each month	Grade 5 Math Mtg. 11:00-11:45
11:15-11:45		HS/PreK Reading Mtg 11:25-12:10	HS/PreK Math Mtg 11:25-12:10		
11:45-12:15		Grade 5 CAP Mtg 11:45-12:30 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesdays	Grade 4 CAP Mtg 11:45-12:30 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Wednesdays		Grade K Math Mtg. 11:45– 12:30
12:15-12:45		Arts Team 12:15-1:15		School CAP Planning Mtg. 12:30-1:00 Weekly	Grade 3 Class Mtg. 12:25-12:45
12:45-1:15				Grade 1 Math Mtg. 1:15-1:55 School CAP/IEP Meetings 1:00-4:20	
1:15-1:45				Grades 2 and 3 CAP Mtg 1:00-1:45 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Thursdays	
1:45-2:15	Rdg Spec. Meeting w/Admin 2:00-2:30	MCC Meeting with Admin. 2:00-2:30	SDT Meeting with Admin. 2:00-2:30		Focus Inclusion Coach Meeting w/Admin 2:00-2:30
2:15-2:45					Grade 2 Class Meeting 2:15-2:45
2:45-3:15	ILT Mtgs.* 3:00-4:20	Grade 2-Reading Mtg 3:15-4:15		Grade 2 Math Mtg. 2:45-3:25	Class Meetings Grade 5, 4, 1, Kindergarten (Q2) 3:00-3:25
3:15-4:20	Ext Faculty Meetings 4:00-5:15	Grade 1 CAP Mtg 3:35-4:20 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesdays	Grade K-Reading Mtg. 3:15-4:20	Grade K CAP Mtg 3:35-4:20 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesdays Grade 1 Reading Mtg. 3:15-4:20	ESOL Mtg. 3:15-4:00

# Connecting to the Practice Guide

Recommendation #4 Involve colleagues, families, and outside experts

- **Roadblock**

“Meeting with other teachers will just be a waste of time, like all our faculty meetings.”

- **Maximizing Meeting Time:**

- Setting *Ground Rules*
- Starting and ending on time
- Providing the agenda in advance
- Soliciting and responding to feedback from participants

# Connecting to the Practice Guide

## Collaborative Action Process or CAP

### Classroom Level

- Recommendations 1, 2, and 3
- Remember to include the parent

### Grade Level CAP Meetings

- Meet twice a month for 45 minutes each meeting
- Facilitated by general education CAP Coach from the team

### School CAP Meetings

- Meet twice a month for a half day
- Facilitated by administrator
- Participants may include psychologist, reading specialist, etc.

# Collaborative Action Process

<i>4 Steps</i>	<i>Tasks</i>
<b><i>Problem Identification</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Prioritize</i> concern(s)</li> <li>• <i>Define</i> problem(s) in observable/measurable terms</li> <li>• <i>Discuss</i> relevant academic &amp; behavioral information</li> <li>• <i>Examine</i> relevant academic history/trends (individual, group, school-wide)</li> </ul>
<b><i>Problem Analysis</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use relevant data to <i>confirm</i> the identified problem</li> <li>• <i>Collect/Discuss</i> baseline data</li> <li>• Explore <i>Factors that Influence Student Learning &amp; Behavior</i> (worksheet)</li> <li>• Analyze <i>why</i> the problem is occurring</li> <li>• Explore the relationship between academics &amp; behavioral/attentional issues</li> </ul>
<b><i>Intervention Planning &amp; Implementation</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine <i>baseline</i> summary statement</li> <li>• Identify what changes in the factor areas can be made to support student success</li> <li>• Set specific <i>goals</i></li> <li>• Design intervention based on analysis, data, &amp; goals</li> <li>• Design data collection system to monitor intervention plan</li> </ul>
<b><i>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor intervention plan</li> <li>• Monitor progress</li> <li>• Analyze results</li> <li>• Revise plan as necessary</li> </ul>

**CAP is a Fluid Process: You May Move Back & Forth Between Steps**

# Connecting to the Practice Guide

**Recommendation #4** Involve colleagues, families, and outside experts



Parents and Families

School District Supports

Montgomery County Partners

# Connecting to the Practice Guide

## Recommendation #5 Schoolwide Strategies

School-wide strategies are consistent and pervasive.

- Incentive programs (Blue Slips and Character Blocks)
- Classroom meetings and town meetings
- Debugging strategy



# Connecting to the Practice Guide

## What are our results?

- Adequate Yearly Progress  
Met NCLB expectations for the past 6 years
- Suspensions  
Reduced from 6 per year to none this year
- Discipline Referrals  
Reduced to 1-2 per week during instruction  
Continue to have difficulty in lunch and recess
- Special Education Screenings

# Please Submit Your Questions to the Panelists

If you have any questions for our panelists, please submit them through the Q&A chat box at the lower right corner of your screen.

If we do not have time for your question today, please email it to [pmurray@commworksllc.com](mailto:pmurray@commworksllc.com) and we will try to provide a written response from one of the panelists.

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[www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/harmonyhills/](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/harmonyhills/)