Teaching Online in Culturally Diverse Settings: Classroom Management

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Abstract

Classroom management is essential for creating a learning space online which is conducive to learning. A behaviour scale is a successful classroom management tool to use when teaching children and youth in a K-12 school. A behaviour scale is a visual support tool which can be used to stop problematic behaviour from escalating. It is an easily accessible tool which can be implemented quickly and safely. A behaviour scale highlights acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and helps to keep everyone on track to reach their learning goals in the classroom. When a student is displaying an action which should not be done, the teacher can point to the red stoplight. The student will know to stop the action and that consequences will begin if the action is not stopped. When a student is on-task and showing good behaviour, the teacher can point to the green light and add to a student's rewards chart. A stoplight behaviour scale will help when students are struggling to follow instructions or are misreading nonverbal interactions. This tool is especially helpful when integrating students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the K-12 classroom setting. This tool can also be easily implemented when teaching students online in a culturally diverse setting.

Keywords: Classroom management, online learning, virtual learning, culturally diverse setting, behaviour management scale

During the Covid-19 pandemic, K-12 teachers around the world moved their classrooms online. Working with students in culturally diverse settings can be challenging in an in-person context. Working with students in culturally diverse settings in an online environment adds a layer of adversity that must be overcome. In an urban city setting, students may speak many different languages other than English. It is important to build a welcoming and inviting classroom environment to ensure that a rapport of trust is established. By implementing effective classroom management tools, such as the behaviour scale, a community of trust can be established in an efficient manner at the beginning of a school year or semester. Classroom management in an online virtual setting is much more than simply using the mute button or checking in on students with the use of a camera. It is possible to build a classroom community in an online setting. Specific tools, rules, and community guidelines are necessary in an online or virtual classroom setting to ensure that the classroom runs smoothly. This paper is an in-depth look at one particularly useful tool for the use of classroom management in a culturally diverse setting: a behaviour scale. This paper includes a reflective narrative about the author's experiences transitioning from in-person learning to virtual learning in an urban city setting in the Greater Toronto Area.

<p style="text-align:center">Review of the Literature</p>

In a study conducted at the University of Florida, a team of graduate researchers used an Individualized Behaviour Rating Scale Tool as part of a classroom management plan in a second grade classroom in a K to 5 school in a suburban area of a large city (Martinez, 2016). The results of the study show that the use of a behaviour scale in the classroom led to positive student behavioural outcomes when the use of the classroom management tool was monitored by the teachers regularly. The study also shows that parental involvement is also key when the goal is

improving on-task behaviour in the classroom. When the teachers connected with the parents about student progress and shared positive results, the use of the behaviour scale was deemed successful in the classroom.

Classroom management with a culturally responsive approach has been the focus of many studies recently. Gaias, Lindstrom, Bottiani, Debnam, and Bradshaw (2019) conducted a study which highlights the concept that cultural responsiveness can be used as an extension of other classroom management strategies. In their study, they used a person-centered approach with data from 103 middle-school teachers in a Maryland school district in the United States to explore classroom management practices and culturally responsive classroom management techniques. The goal of the study was to examine how teachers can be better prepared during their training in teacher education programs in the area of culturally responsive classroom management. The results of the study indicate that most teachers would improve their practices by implementing culturally responsive approaches to classroom management and meaningful reflective participation. For example, teachers can become more aware of the everyday realities of their students' lives through surveys and by opening up discussions about cultural practices or family traditions. By including the students' cultural perspectives as part of classroom management, the classroom can become a welcoming and inviting place for learning to occur.

According to Ateh and Ryan (2023), classroom management is multifaceted. They state that "Classroom management is a complex and multifaceted endeavor beyond simply establishing rules, rewards, and penalties to control students' behavior" (p. 1). They conducted a study at a teacher's college in the Northeastern region of the United States with two teacher educators and a cohort of 31 teacher candidates which had them reflect about cultural diversity and how to implement classroom management strategies in ways which are culturally

responsive. The results of the study were that it is important that teacher educators explicitly teach teacher candidates "strategies that can enhance teacher candidates' awareness of their identities and how these affect the perspectives of respect and their behaviors in the classroom" (p. 7). Teaching classroom management strategies explicitly so that teachers can implement them in the classroom is important for paving the way to a successful classroom management plan and creating an environment which is conducive to learning. The study goes on to conclude that the concept of respect is especially important in teacher education courses when looking at issues of diversity and inclusion in the classroom.

<center>The Behaviour Scale: An Effective Classroom Management Tool</center>

A behaviour scale can be a successful classroom management tool to use when teaching children and youth in a K-12 school. A behaviour scale is a visual support tool which can be used to stop problematic behaviour from escalating. It is an easily accessible tool which can be implemented quickly and safely. A behaviour scale highlights acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and helps to keep everyone on track to reach their learning goals in the classroom.

The purpose of a behaviour scale is to stop behaviour from escalating and to help students who struggle with following social cues recognize when they need to self regulate. A particularly effective example of a behaviour scale was created based on a model from The Geneva Centre for Autism (2020). See Appendix A for an example of a behaviour scale. Its main purpose is to stop behaviour from escalating and to help students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) recognize when they need to self-regulate. Behaviour scales are used to help students recognize different levels of stress. An effective behaviour scale includes a visual display of emotions alongside each colour. This helps students with ASD recognize what each stage of the scale really looks like and feels like. For example, when a student is displaying an action which

should not be done, the teacher can point to the red stoplight on a behaviour scale. The student will know to stop the action and that consequences will begin if the action is not stopped. When a student is on-task and showing good behaviour, the teacher can point to the green light and add to a student's rewards chart. By effectively implementing a visual behaviour scale, the teacher can confidently manage the classroom and create a positive environment conducive to learning.

<div align="center">Applications in the Classroom for Student Success</div>

A stoplight behaviour scale will help when students are struggling to follow instructions or are misreading nonverbal interactions. This tool is especially helpful when integrating students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the kindergarten through grade 12 classroom setting. One of the characteristics of students with ASD is not being able to recognize social cues. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2013), "People with ASD tend to have communication deficits, such as responding inappropriately in conversations, misreading nonverbal interactions, or having difficulty building friendships appropriate to their age" (p. 1). The stoplight behaviour scale will help with misreading nonverbal interactions. For example, when teaching, the teacher may use eye contact, or move closer to a student's desk when they are displaying challenging behaviour. Students with ASD may not pick up on these nonverbal cues. If the teacher points at the red or yellow lights on the spotlight behaviour chart when a student with ASD is beginning to display challenging behaviour, the student knows to look at their chart for strategies to use to help to calm down, destress or redirect their behaviour. This tool can help challenging behaviour from escalating, and can help students to find strategies to de-escalate and return to on-task behaviour quickly.

Visually representing classroom expectations can help children learn what behaviour is acceptable, what behaviour is unacceptable, and what consequences are likely to follow certain

behaviours. Meaden, Ostrosky, Triplett, Michna and Fettig (2011) have found that visually

representing classroom expectations can help children learn what behaviour is acceptable, what

behaviour is unacceptable, and what consequences are likely to follow certain behaviour (p.32).

This tool can help challenging behaviour from escalating, and can help students to find strategies

to de-escalate and return to on-task behaviour quickly. For students with ASD, the teacher can

make individual copies of the stoplight behaviour chart that includes cues with PECs (Picture

Exchange Communication System) for each colour. This stoplight behaviour scale would be

taped to the student's desk where they can access it during the school day. A visual behaviour

scale highlights acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in a clear manner.

<div align="center">Implementing the Behaviour Scale Effectively</div>

To begin implementing the stoplight behaviour scale, teachers can use a "Looks Like,

Feels Like, Sounds Like" chart with every student in the class. See Appendix B for an example

of a "Looks Like, Feels Like, Sounds Like" chart. The teacher can spend time writing in each

section so that all students can recognize what the three levels of behaviour would look like in

the classroom. For students with ASD, the teacher or teaching assistant can work one-on-one

with them to write strategies to use for each level of the behaviour scale. The teacher would go

over the cues for each level of the scale on their individual behaviour scales too. When students

with ASD are struggling with challenging behaviour, it is important to point to the appropriate

level of the behaviour scale (red or yellow) and begin suggesting the strategies discussed ahead

of time. This might mean taking a break, having a time out, doing some deep breathing exercises,

doing some exercise, or using sensory items such as Play Doh. Having a behaviour scale as part

of a teacher's classroom management toolkit can help to make the classroom a more inclusive

learning environment and using a behaviour scale can help to increase the amount of productive, on-task learning activity in a classroom.

<div align="center">Including Cultural Perspectives in Classroom Management</div>

The use of a "Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like" chart is one way that students' cultural perspectives can be included in classroom management. Students can create their own chart based on what each section looks like, sounds like and feels like to them. See Appendix C for an example of a blank chart that students can use to fill in for each section of the "Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like" chart. For some students, the yellow light or green light zone of the chart may include listening to music as this would help them to concentrate. Students may want to listen to music that reminds them of their culture to help them focus. For other students, this may mean wearing noise canceling headsets because, for them, working in a quiet space is important for concentration.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

By giving students a voice in creating the parameters around an inclusive learning space, students' cultural perspectives can be included in a successful classroom management plan. The behaviour scale and the "Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like" chart are effective tools for classroom management in culturally diverse settings because the tools allow students to design the parameters around what an effective classroom management plan is based on their perspectives and viewpoints. The behaviour scale is also easily transferable from in-person learning to virtual learning. Creating culturally responsive classroom management tools will help pave the way for students to do their best work and learn new skills. By creating a safe learning environment, students will be encouraged to collaborate in meaningful and respectful ways in settings which go beyond the walls of the classroom.

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Appendix A
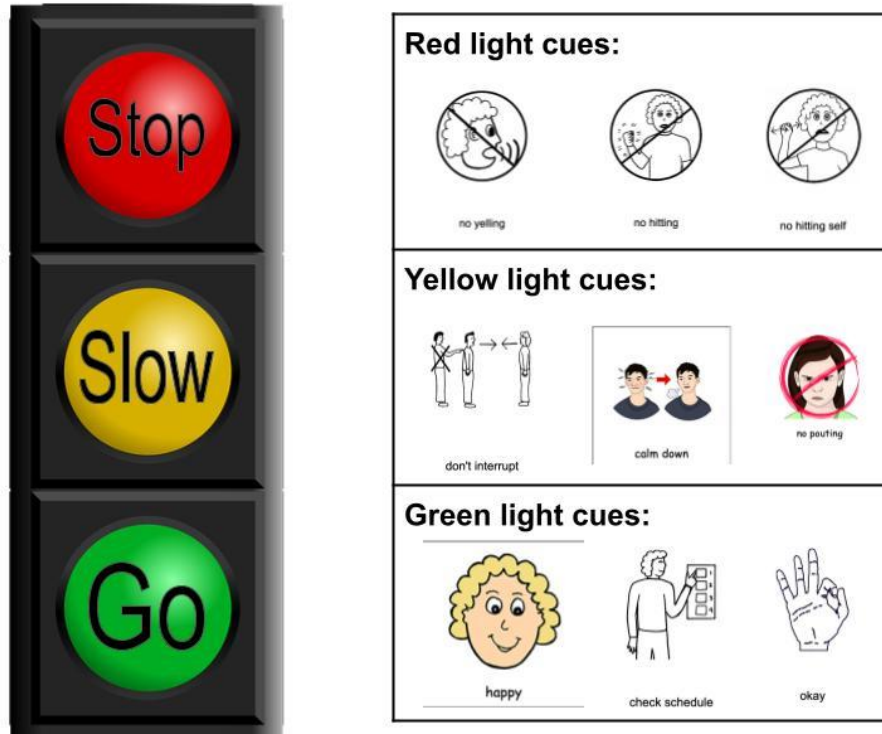
Appendix A. Example of a behaviour scale from The Geneva Centre for Autism.

Appendix 2

Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like

	Draw How This Feels	Looks like, sounds like	Strategies I can Use
Red light:		Anger, hitting, kicking, pushing, yelling, running, throwing things, loud	Ask for help, calm down, take a break, stop, time out
Yellow light:		Anxious, unsure, don't know, confused, tired, unhappy, grumpy, grumbling, unkind	Deep breaths, check schedule, exercise, ask for a break, ask for help, sensory toys, stretching
Green light:		Thumbs up, smiling, happy, singing, praise, good work, way to go, sitting properly, learning	Rewards chart, visual schedule, thumbs up, check in with the teacher, ask what's next

Appendix B. Example of a Behaviour Scale and a Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like Chart

Appendix C

Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like

	Draw How This Feels	Looks like, sounds like	Strategies I can Use
	Red light:		
	Yellow light:		
	Green light:		

Appendix C. Example of a Template for "Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like" Chart