

# Table of Contents

<b>About the Author</b> .....	vii
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
Introducing Behavioral RTI .....	3
Defining Behavioral Skills .....	6
Identifying the Importance of Behavioral Skills .....	9
In This Book .....	13
Next Steps .....	14
<b>1 Identifying, Defining, and Making Sense of Behavioral Skills</b> .....	15
Creating a Collaborative Culture of Commitment .....	16
Identifying and Prioritizing Essential Behavioral Skills .....	19
Defining Key Behavioral Skills .....	28
Identifying and Defining Behaviors in Content-Specific Areas .....	31
Conclusion .....	32
Next Steps .....	32
<b>2 Modeling, Teaching, and Nurturing Behavioral Skills</b> .....	35
Focusing on Tier 1 .....	36
Preparing Educators to Model and Teach Behavioral Skills .....	39
Screening Students .....	41
Modeling and Teaching Behavioral Skills .....	44
Nurturing Behavioral Skills .....	52
Conclusion .....	56
Next Steps .....	57

<b>3</b>	<b>Measuring Student Success, Providing Differentiated Supports, and Intervening Appropriately</b>	59
	Formative Assessment of Behavioral Skills	60
	Feedback That Empowers	72
	Differentiation	76
	Follow Up and Follow Through: A Feedback and Differentiation Strategy	89
	Conclusion	91
	Next Steps	92
<b>4</b>	<b>Preparing for Tiers 2 and 3 Behavioral Supports</b>	93
	Interventions at Tiers 2 and 3	94
	Questions to Ask When Designing Behavioral Interventions at Tiers 2 and 3	97
	Tools for Behavioral RTI at Tier 2	99
	Monitoring at Tier 2	116
	Interventions and Monitoring Within Tier 3	119
	Restorative Practices at All Three Tiers	123
	Conclusion	125
	Next Steps	125
<b>5</b>	<b>Navigating the Predictable Challenges and Considerations for Implementation</b>	127
	School Culture	128
	Administrative Support	129
	Schoolwide Implementation	130
	Parents	130
	Time, Staff, and Resources	131
	Data Collection, Management, and Analysis	132
	Beliefs and Expectations	132
	The Need to Teach All Students	134
	Conclusion	135
	Next Steps	135
	<b>Epilogue</b>	137
	<b>Appendix A: Functional Behavioral Analysis</b>	139
	<b>Appendix B: Behavior Support Plan</b>	165
	<b>References and Resources</b>	171
	<b>Index</b>	183

## About the Author



**Chris Weber, EdD**, is an expert in behavior, mathematics, and response to intervention (RTI) who consults and presents internationally to audiences on important topics in education. As a teacher, principal, and director in California and Illinois, Chris and his colleagues developed RTI systems that have led to high levels of learning at schools across the United States.

In addition to writing and consulting, he continues to work in Irvine Unified School District in California, supporting some of the best and highest-performing schools in the country.

Chris has been in service to community and country his entire life. A graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, he flew C-141s during his military career. He is also a former high school, middle school, and elementary school teacher and administrator.

To learn more about Chris's work, visit Chris Weber Education (<http://chriswebereducation.com>) or follow @WeberEducation on Twitter.

# Identifying, Defining, and Making Sense of Behavioral Skills

*If it's predictable, it's preventable.* This core phrase is at the heart of RTI. It allows us to identify, anticipate, and prepare for our students' needs, and to proactively respond to these before frustration and disengagement set in. We as educators predict and take measures to prevent student difficulties in academic skills—but how can this *predict-and-prevent* attitude apply to our model of behavioral RTI?

We can predict that a lack of adequate core instruction in the behavioral skills as the introduction describes will compromise student success—both behavioral and academic. We can predict that not all students will possess the mindsets, social skills, perseverance, learning strategies, and academic behaviors that will lead to success in school and life when they arrive in our classrooms. Thus, we can conclude that if we do not identify, prioritize, and teach these critical skills, there will be some students whose success is negatively impacted. We can prevent this negative impact if we establish behavioral skills as a priority along with key academic concepts.

In this chapter, districts, schools, and teams of educators will discover tools to assess the culture of their districts or schools and the readiness of their staff to proactively and positively nurture

## chapter ONE

*Psychological factors—often called motivational or non-cognitive factors—can matter even more than cognitive factors for students' academic performance.*

—CAROL S. DWECK,  
GREGORY M. WALTON,  
AND GEOFFREY L. COHEN

behavioral skills with and for all students—a necessary precursor to implementing behavioral RTI. They will then consider the first two steps in the behavioral RTI model:

1. **Identify the most critical behavioral skills.**
2. **Define and make sense of these skills.**

Educators will learn to identify those behavioral skills that will most contribute to student success in school, college, career, and life, and define and make sense of what those behavioral skills look and sound like. They will then learn how to prepare both general and content-area-specific behavioral priorities for their classrooms in a manner that emphasizes consistency and prepares them for the next step of teaching behaviors.

So, to begin our journey, let's briefly address school culture.

## Creating a Collaborative Culture of Commitment

The first step in designing a system of supports that nurtures the mindsets, social skills, perseverance, learning strategies, and academic behaviors within students—behaviors that are so critical to their success—is for educators to accept responsibility for this critical but challenging task. Parents and communities can positively shape student behaviors, and schools should complement these supports. Schools, however, have the unique opportunity to nurture behavioral skills that educators can apply and practice when engaging in the intellectual tasks in which schools specialize.

The nurturing of behavioral skills is consistent with innovative learning environments in which student voice, choice, and agency are priorities. Ryan Jackson, executive principal of the Mount Pleasant Arts Innovation Zone and practitioner of behavioral RTI, notes that:

Schools adapting to the Netflix generation mindset, where purpose, passions, and empowerment reign supreme over compliance, standardization, and simple engagement, can be highly successful. These schools are building a sustainable model of behavioral skill success, starting from the ground up with trust and respect as a foundation, and goal setting and commitment as the catalysts. (R. Jackson, personal communication, June 19, 2017)

Creating this sort of staff culture and learning environment starts with a belief in and high expectations for all students' success and a commitment to not letting anything (such as poor attendance, apathy, or deficits in reading skills) get in the way. The central importance of belief and expectations should sound familiar to proponents of PLC at Work (DuFour et al., 2016). They are foundational Big Ideas. A culture of high expectations, of doing whatever it takes, and of recognizing that the only way to ensure that every student learns at high levels is through a commitment to collaborative and collective action has always been at the heart of PLC at Work.

So, how is this nurturing learning environment created? I believe that there exist several foundational principles that educators should address, discuss, and ultimately accept regarding student behavior.

- Behavior is as critical as academics; behavioral skills include the categories of precognitive self-regulation, mindsets, social skills, learning strategies (such as metacognition, cognitive self-regulation, and executive functioning), perseverance, and academic behaviors (such as participation, work completion, attendance, and engagement).
- Students behave and misbehave for a reason, purpose, or function, and educators have a great deal of influence regarding the ways in which students behave.
- Educators must define, model, teach, and nurture the behaviors that they want to see.
- Educators will be most successful nurturing behavioral skills when they align the definitions, steps, and process of *behavioral RTI* to those of *academic RTI*.
- Staff members must assume collective responsibility for nurturing student behaviors.
- Great relationships between educators and educators, educators and students, and students and students lead to better student behavior and greater levels of engagement and learning.
- Great classroom environments with high expectations and clear procedures and routines lead to better student behavior.
- Engaging, rich, and sound pedagogies, strategies, and tasks lead to better student behavior.
- If educators want student behaviors to change, they must be willing to change.

Begin your collective work on building a system of behavioral supports by collaboratively reflecting upon and discussing these foundational ideas, and reference them throughout the process. Do they ring true? Do “yeah, but. . .” and “what if. . .” comments and questions arise? Transparent and courageous dialogue on core principles such as these can help serve as a vision or “North Star” that guides and shapes these critical efforts.

To measure the current realities of your school and the readiness of your staff in creating a nurturing learning environment, consider using the survey in figure 1.1 (page 18) as a preassessment to inform how you will begin your journey. This survey is designed to gauge the current climate and staff attitudes regarding behavior and can be repeated at any time before, during, and after the implementation of the six steps of behavioral RTI.

A colleague was recently appointed principal of a school in which the climate and attitudes, as measured by the survey in figure 1.1, were inhibiting success. Staff were hardworking and capable, but beliefs in all students learning at high levels and a collective commitment to meeting student needs required some attention. This principal courageously and respectfully shared the results with staff and facilitated an open dialogue in which frustrations were expressed. This began a healing process. From this beginning, a grade-level team volunteered to embrace the idea that behavioral skills needed to be taught and time needed to be embedded within the day to do so. The staff members were empowered and supported, and results in the first year, as measured by a reduction in behavioral infractions and increases in attendance, work completion, and reading levels, were dramatic. The momentum and excitement generated from this success inspired other teams to initiate shifts in their practices and a corner had truly been turned; the school now feels different, and student outcomes continue to improve.

Please score with a 1, 2, 3, or 4 each of the following statements:	
<b>1</b> —Strongly disagree	<b>3</b> —Somewhat agree
<b>2</b> —Somewhat disagree	<b>4</b> —Strongly agree
Statement	Score
Staff (teachers, campus supervisors, office staff, cafeteria workers, and so on) know the schoolwide behavioral expectations.	
Staff accept collective responsibility for defining and teaching behavioral expectations.	
Staff consistently model, teach, and nurture behavioral expectations.	
Staff intentionally foster and nurture positive relationships with all students.	
Students know the schoolwide expectations.	
Parents know the schoolwide expectations.	
Follow-through on behavioral infractions is timely.	
Staff clearly communicate follow-through on behavioral infractions.	
Staff view behavioral deficits in the same manner as reading deficits—students lack skills and require supplemental supports.	
After an incident, staff reteach the appropriate behavior skills, ask students to self-reflect, and then guide students toward restitution, in addition to giving consequences.	
Classroom environments promote positive behaviors.	
Lesson designs and topics promote positive behaviors.	
Staff teach the schoolwide expectations to students.	
Staff model schoolwide expectations to students.	
Staff recognize students for displaying desired behaviors more often than they reprimand students for undesired behaviors.	
Staff agree on what type of problem behaviors to refer to the office.	
Staff understand and follow specific steps to initiate intensive supports for vulnerable students.	
The RTI team (principal, administrators, counselors, special education staff, and teachers) uses evidence for making decisions in designing, implementing, and revising behavioral supports.	
The RTI team regularly and efficiently collects evidence of student learning of behavioral expectations.	
Behavior is a focus of schoolwide collaboration discussions and professional development.	

**Figure 1.1: Survey of expectations, readiness, strengths, and needs of staff and stakeholders.**

A commitment to ensuring that all students possess the behavioral skills necessary for readiness in college, a skilled career, and life cannot be fully achieved without providing scaffolded core instruction for every single student, *and* supplemental interventions for students who do not come to school with a mastery of behaviors. We must define, teach, model, and measure mastery of the behavioral skills of all students as part of a core curriculum, both as a distinct and critical part of Tier 1 and integrated into the academic instruction that has far too long represented the totality of a student's school experience. Within the remainder of this chapter, we will describe the process for identifying and defining the behaviors that all students must develop, and give examples of behavioral priorities that schools may consider.

## Identifying and Prioritizing Essential Behavioral Skills

Education should have always been about more than academics. Students may earn acceptance into universities and skilled careers through academic achievement, but college is successfully completed and careers are sustained only through the application of behaviors that are too infrequently prioritized and taught in our schools.

Thus, once you have established in your staff a collective belief that behavioral skills are essential to teach and a commitment to make that happen, you must ask two questions: (1) What are the most essential behavioral outcomes that students must master, in order to give them the best possible social and academic outcomes? and (2) What does your team collaboratively agree it will look and sound like when students master these most essential outcomes? These questions are simple to answer in the academic realm, but have not been considered frequently or systematically enough in the context of behavior. We cannot teach behavioral skills without first clearly identifying, prioritizing, and defining those skills that students must possess.

When it comes to academic content, educators are making a renewed commitment to defining a viable curriculum within a grade level or course that all students will master (Larson & Kanold, 2016; Udelhofen, 2014). Next-generation standards and commitments to deeper learning in states and provinces are, in many ways, providing the motivation and opportunity for these endeavors. Depth is increasingly favored over breadth; quality over quantity; mastery over coverage. Educators are prioritizing the concepts and skills that all students must master, ensuring the most critical learning that students must possess receives adequate time and attention. Teams are also more clearly defining what mastery of prioritized content and skills looks like and sounds like. The work of teachers in my district related to these tasks—in kindergarten through twelfth grade, in mathematics, English language arts, science, and history—social science—is innovative and impactful; both teaching and learning are improving. When articulated horizontally and vertically, this collaboration allows for collective professional preparation and ensures that all students are optimally prepared for the next grade level or course.

These processes are not new. From *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins, McTighe, Kiernan, & Frost, 1998) to curriculum mapping (Jacobs, 2004) to *Rigorous Curriculum Design* (Ainsworth, 2010), schools have long recognized that a guaranteed, viable curriculum (Scherer, 2001) is one of the most critical factors contributing



to high levels of student learning. In light of next-generation standards, the collaborative staff processes of scoping and sequencing prioritized learning outcomes are more important than ever.

We must apply this very same thinking, and complete this very same work, for the behaviors that we want all students to exhibit. Jim Wright, an RTI trainer and consultant to schools and educational organizations, notes that the “communal initial step of defining community behavior norms actually brings educators into alignment about the conduct they want to foster in their classrooms” (J. Wright, personal communication, May 23, 2017). We must identify, prioritize, describe and define, and scope and sequence these behaviors in our teams and with all staff across the school. In fact, defining and teaching behaviors will require even more consistency and collaboration than defining and teaching academic expectations. Here’s why: while collaboration within the third-grade team or high school mathematics department is vital when defining academic priorities for that team, behavioral skills will be expected and practiced within all classrooms on campus. Consistent expectations for appropriate behavioral skills are absolutely critical, no matter a student’s grade, no matter the staff member with whom a student is working, and no matter the environment within the school (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2009, 2010, 2012).

So, how do teachers identify these key behaviors? As a first step, form a representative team from across grade levels and departments to identify your school’s behavioral priorities using the template in figure 1.2. The prioritization, defining, and teaching of behavioral skills must be consistent across the school; students and staff will be frustrated, confused, and less-than-ideally successful if this is not the case. While all staff must ultimately have a voice in the behavioral skills that are identified, this representative team can guide the process, communicating to and gathering feedback from the colleagues with whom they work.

<p>After examining <i>other</i> categories of behavioral attributes, identify those that you believe represent <i>your school's</i> behavioral priorities. Consider specific attributes that represent the greatest need, are most critical to student success, or both.</p>

**Figure 1.2: Template to identify behavioral priorities.**

To help you identify behavioral priorities, table 1.1 compiles an extensive list of behavioral skills and attributes based on our definition in the introduction, popular educational frameworks, research studies, and models from schools that have successfully implemented RTI. You can use any of these, a combination, or make up your own priorities based on your school’s individual needs.