

**Verbal Behavior**

**Deb Rauner**

Welcome to the Verbal Behavior Webinar Series. This year we will be presenting two webinars on the verbal behavior topic. Verbal behavior instruction teaches communication using the principles of [Applied Behavior Analysis](https://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism/treatment/applied-behavior-analysis-aba" \t "_blank) and the theories of behaviorist B.F. Skinner. “By design, verbal behavior instruction motivates a child, adolescent or adult to learn language by connecting words with their purposes.

Reports suggest that verbal behavior instruction can help both young children beginning to learn language and older students with delayed or disordered language. It likewise helps many children and adults who sign or use [visual supports](https://www.autismspeaks.org/science/resources-programs/autism-treatment-network/tools-you-can-use/visual-supports" \t "_blank) or other forms of [assisted communication](https://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/resource-library/assistive-technology" \t "_blank)”(Autism Speaks).

Our first webinar is entitled “Teaching Using Verbal Behavior Strategies” presented by Rhonda Ayres, M.A., Autism Interventionist, for the Thompson School District and CDE Autism Specialist. Rhonda will cover behavioral teaching strategies and components of applied behavioral analysis that are incorporated in verbal behavior instruction.

Our second webinar is entitled “Using Verbal Behavior Strategies in Your Classroom” presented by Deb Rauner, M.Ed. Deb is currently an Autism

Consultant and Verbal Behavior Trainer in Nebraska. Deb will address components of verbal behavior instruction including teaching using verbal operants, mixing trials and using verbal behavior strategies to teach a variety of skills. We will also look at several assessment and curriculum guides based on verbal behavior in this webinar.

Join us to see how Verbal Behavior Instruction can improve the success of your students!

Once we identify that a student is demonstrating a pattern of errors, an instructional strategy known as precorrection could be used to reduce the likelihood that academic errors or inappropriate behaviors occur in the future. It requires teachers to anticipate the conditions under which errors or inappropriate behaviors are highly likely to occur, teach the student how to avoid the mistake, and then teach the student what is expected. As a result, more time is spent teaching positive behaviors and less time is spent giving students consequences and reacting to their failures. In addition, students are provided with a new set of academic and social skills as opposed to being punished for their academic and social-skills deficits (Crosby, Jolivette, & Patterson, 2006).

**Tips from the Corner**

**Precorrection: A Strategy To Correct Behaviors Before Errors Occur**

**Pam Sharping, M.Ed., BCBA**

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Precorrection typically involves seven steps (Colvin, Sugai, & Patching, 1993):

1. *Identify the context and the predictable behavior of concern.* For example, a student who frequently runs in hallway bumping into others.
2. *Specify expected behaviors*. An alternative to running should be walking in the hallway while carrying a transition schedule or materials to the next classroom.
3. *Modify the context.* Teachers can modify the context by making instructional, task, or activity accommodations or by altering the mode of instruction, activity scheduling, and seating. For example, visual supports for hallway behavior could be posted in the hallway and by the classroom door to remind the students about walking in hallway with hands to self. In addition, all students should be taught to walk in the hallway and be reminded about hallway behavior prior to any transitions. For the student who runs frequently, give reminders or additional instruction using visual supports prior to transitioning.
4. *Conduct behavior rehearsals.* Behavior rehearsals allow the student to see and hear what is expected. Behavior rehearsals also allow teachers to monitor the expected appropriate behavior for accuracy. A teacher could engage her students in several behavior rehearsals to reinforce how to walk in the hallway while keeping their hands to themselves. First, the teacher could model the desired behavior and allow the student who frequently runs to perform the behavior as modeled. Next, the same behavior could be practiced with a small group of students. Finally, a rehearsal involving the entire class could be conducted. Rehearsals also can be in the form of a teacher question-and- answer session. For example, prior to transitioning outside of the classroom, the teacher could pull the student to the side and provide reminders, “We’re about to go to music. Do you remember how we are supposed to move in the hallway?
5. *Provide strong reinforcement for expected behaviors.* If the new behavior isn’t paired with reinforcement, the child might revert back to inappropriate behavior because the reinforcing value is greater.
6. *Prompt expected behaviors before performance.* Prompting expected, appropriate behaviors serves as a reminder to students of what is expected of them. Thus, the teacher focuses her attention on appropriate student behaviors rather than on inappropriate student behaviors. Providing reminders to students may increase the likelihood that the desirable behavior will occur again and increases the likelihood of success for the student.
7. *Monitor the plan.* Document student performance to determine whether or not the precorrection strategy is effective. The teacher records whether or not the student who engages in hallway running is complying with her prompts. If, after a couple of days, the student does not appear to be responding to prompts, the teacher may alter the nature of the reinforcer and/or the schedule of the reinforcer.

**REFERENCES**

Colvin, G., Sugai, G., Patching, B. (1993). Precorrection: An instructional approach for managing predictable problem behaviors. *Intervention in School and Clinic,* 28, 143-150.

Crosy, S., Jolivette, K., & Patterson, D. (2006, October). Using precorrection to manage inappropriate academic and social behaviors. Retrieved from <http://modelprogram.com/resources/ARTICLE---PreCorrection-2.pdf>

**Video Links:**

<https://louisville.edu/education/abri/primarylevel/strategy/precorrection>

<https://youtu.be/Z0djD0gMgWQ>

**Upcoming Training Opportunities:**Tri-State Autism Spectrum Disorder 2015-2016 Webinar Series

The Tri-State Autism Spectrum Disorder Webinar Series is made available through collaboration with the Colorado Department of Education, Kansas TASN Autism and Tertiary Behavior Supports, and the Nebraska Autism Spectrum Disorders Network.

Anyone with an interest in learning about the characteristics of autism spectrum disorders and evidence- based practices is invited to attend any of our webinars. This may include administrators, general education teachers, specialist teachers (i.e., Music, Art), family members, paraprofessionals, special education professionals, healthcare and related service providers.

All webinars are offered two times on the day scheduled:

2:00pm – 2:45pm MT / 3:00pm – 3:45pm CT  
3:30pm – 4:15pm MT / 4:30pm – 5:15pm CT

To register, select calendar and search date. Click on Survey Monkey link to complete registration for each webinar. [http://ksdetasn.org/](http://ksdetasn.org/" \t "_blank)

**Two Part Series: Verbal Behavior**

Dec 2: Teaching Using Verbal Behavior Strategies

Presented by Rhonda Ayers, M.S.Ed.

Dec 9: Using Verbal Behavior Strategies in Your Classroom

Presented by Deb Rauner, M.S.Ed.

**Five Part Series: The Elements of Structured Teaching**

Dec 16: The Principles of Structured Teaching

Presented by Mary Flory, M.S. Ed.

Jan 13: Physical Structure and Overall Classroom Schedules

Presented by Mary Woodworth, Ed.S.

Jan 20: Assessing Schedules and Work Systems

Mary Woodworth, Ed.S.

Jan 27: Teaching Routines & Strategies

Presented by Mary Flory, M.S. Ed. & Mary Woodworth, Ed.S.

Feb 3: Visual Structure of Tasks

Presented by Mary Flory, M.S. Ed. & Mary Woodworth, Ed.S.

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