Using the 4:1 Technique to Decrease Off-task Behavior

Demonstrating the ability to reduce off-task behavior by using the 4:1 technique

**Key Method**
The teacher makes effective use of the 4:1 technique to decrease student off-task behavior. The ratio of four pieces of praise to one criticism provides encouragement and builds trust. The 4:1 praise technique supports and reinforces good behavior. Praise can be as simple as a high five, a pat on the back, or a verbal compliment to the student.

**Method Components**
*Teacher demonstrates effective use of the 4:1 technique to decrease off-task behavior in the TeachLivE simulator. Teacher must complete all planning stages before demonstration and reflection.*

**What is off-task behavior?**
Off-task behavior is defined as behaviors not related to classroom objectives, rules, or lessons. Typical off-task behaviors might include:

- Texting in class
- Doodling or drawing
- Talking to the person beside you
- Yawning and inattention
- Pen clicking, being distracted
- Cell phone ringing
- Inappropriate laughter

*Counter-examples of off-task behavior:*

- Students actively participating in the lesson in a small-group or whole-group discussion, working independently, or listening and following the teacher’s instructions.

**What is positive praise?**
Positive praise is defined as complimentary teacher statements to students intended to encourage a behavior.

*Examples:*

- I like the way you completed your homework.
- It was great you were on time to class today.

**What is a negative comment?**
A negative comment is a teacher statement to students intended to discourage a behavior.

*Examples:*

Since you did not complete your homework for class today, your grade will drop.
You were tardy to class today. If this continues, you will need to stay after school for detention.

What would the 4:1 technique look like in a classroom?
The 4:1 technique can be used in all classrooms, with every age group, and at every academic level. The teacher will use praise (see definitions and examples above) to create a positive classroom environment and reduce off-task behaviors.

Supporting Research

Research on the importance of managing off-task behavior
- Charlotte Danielson’s Danielsion Framework 2d—Managing Student Behavior
- Teaching Works High-leverage Practice 19—Managing Off-task Behavior
  - “The teacher is anticipating and seeking to avoid students doing things other than the task or activity at hand, or responds to students who are not engaged in that task or activity. This might include students who are engaged in the activity but who are also talking or doing things that diverge from what is expected at that moment.” This could include the following teacher behaviors:
    - Commenting on a specific off-task behavior
    - Commenting on the appropriate on-task behavior of some students
    - Using physical proximity or sounds or gestures to manage students’ attention and engagement (e.g., by moving to stand near a student to keep the student engaged)
    - Removing a student from an activity or stopping an activity to deal with off-task behavior
- Marzano’s Element 24—Noticing When Students Are Not Engaged. The teacher scans the classroom to monitor students’ levels of engagement.
- Marzano’s Element 34—Applying Consequences for Lack of Adherence to Rules and Procedures. The teacher applies consequences for lack of adherence to rules and procedures consistently and fairly.
- Marzano’s Element 35—Acknowledging Adherence to Rules and Procedures. The teacher acknowledges adherence to rules and procedures consistently and fairly.

Research on the use of the 4:1 technique for off-task behavior management
- Becker, Engelmann, and Thomas (1975) report that when criticism was increased, off-task behavior increased from 25.5% to 31.2%, with increases of over 50% on some days.
- Pfiffner, Rosen, and O’Leary (1985) report that an all-positive praise environment is ineffective to control off-task behavior.
- Myers, Simonsen, and Sugai (2011) conducted a study using the 4:1 model and found a trend toward less off-task behavior for teachers using the 4:1 model.

References

Resources
- The PBIS website provides more examples and supporting research for the 4:1 model.
  https://www.pbis.org/
In order to show competency in 4:1, you must plan appropriately, following the steps outlined by TeachLivE. You must complete all five planning steps and respond in writing to part 1 before beginning part 2. Part 2 (Evidence generation) will occur in the simulator, followed by a brief written reflection in part 3. To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing score for all submission guidelines.

Planning for TeachLivE 4:1 Activity
1. Express interest in this micro-credential by emailing TeachLivE at teachlive@ucf.edu with 4:1 Micro-credential Application in the subject line. You will need a Skype address to complete your application.
2. We will email the 4:1 Micro-credential Application from TeachLivE. The application will include part one of the micro-credential process (see below), which you will need to submit prior to your time in the simulator.
3. Complete the application and return it to teachlive@ucf.edu.
4. We will provide you with a lesson in which you facilitate a whole-class discussion and a list of positive praise examples. You do not need to teach the entire lesson, only a 5-minute segment. In this lesson segment, please focus on the off-task behaviors of the class, not instruction of content. Your purpose is to use the 4:1 technique to extinguish off-task behaviors in the class.
5. You will receive a date and time to sign on to Skype for up to four 5-minute periods split over two sessions.
6. For more information about the simulator, please visit http://teachlive.org/.

Part 1. Overview questions
(200-word limit for each response)
- What are typical off-task behaviors in the secondary classroom?
- How can the teacher use the 4:1 (four positives to one negative) praise technique to decrease the off-task behaviors listed above?
  - **Passing:** The candidate responds by listing possible age-appropriate off-task behaviors and describing use of the 4:1 praise techniques to decrease these behaviors.

Part 2. Evidence/artifacts
To earn this micro-credential, the candidate will decrease the frequency of off-task behavior from his or her first session to the last, using the 4:1 praise technique. Each simulation will last approximately 10 minutes. An observer will collect data on the number of successful times 4:1 is used each session, and you will be provided with the number after each session. You will earn your micro-credential after you increase your use of the 4:1 technique from your first session.

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<tr>
<th><strong>Passing</strong></th>
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<td>The candidate must use the 4:1 technique to successfully decrease or eliminate off-task student behavior in the TeachLivE simulator.</td>
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Part 3. Teacher reflection
For the 4:1 technique demonstration described above, please submit a reflection. Use the following questions as guidance (200-word limit for each response):
- To what extent were you effective in decreasing off-task behavior using the 4:1 technique? Please provide specific examples.
- How can this technique benefit you in your classroom setting?
  - **Passing:** The candidate clearly indicates the extent to which he or she was effective in using the 4:1 praise techniques to decrease off-task student behavior and discusses how this technique can be generalized in his or her classroom setting.