

Time-out Guidelines for New Brunswick Schools

November 2002

Time-out is used when a student needs to be temporarily separated or removed from the environment where he/she is behaving inappropriately until he/she can demonstrate appropriate behaviour. Time-out lies within a continuum of behavioural interventions to assist students to self-regulate and/or control their behaviour. Time-out can range from quiet time in the regular classroom to a time-out room in the school at the most restrictive end of the continuum. It is a pro-active strategy to support self-monitoring, student self-reflection and self-calming. All behavioural interventions should assume a regard for the well-being and dignity of students and staff.

Time-out should not be used as a punishment, to threaten students, to humiliate them or make them feel afraid. The practice of using time-out must comply with the Province of New Brunswick's Policies 701 and 703.

TIME-OUT

When students are continually disruptive in a classroom, and after the teacher has exhausted all other means of classroom management, the teacher might have to remove the student from the immediate environment. This may be as simple as asking the student to put his/her head down on the desk, to sit in a special area of the classroom, or to move to an area out of the room. The concept of pro-active time-out should be dealt with in a positive way. The teacher should tell a student that s/he requires a few minutes of quiet time in order to regain control. Time-outs should be of short duration, with the student being welcomed back to the main classroom area as soon as the student has regained self-control.

Primary students

- 1 to 2 minutes in class or 3 to 5 minutes supervised elsewhere.
- A timer (sand or kitchen) might be set to help visualize time passage.

- Times can be longer depending on the state of the student. If the individual is very angry, hurt or upset they may need more supervised time alone.
- Time out can have different names (eg. thinking place, quiet room).

Intermediate or Secondary student

- An arrangement can be made with a teacher, librarian, administrator, or other personnel for a quiet space to allow a student time out.
- There should be a known criterion and an agreed upon time period between student and teacher for what is expected.

Pro-active time-outs should occur in a classroom whenever possible. The main benefit of this procedure is to provide students with a quiet period to regain control. In some situations, the student may initiate the quiet time.

PROCEDURAL AND PRACTICE CONSIDERATIONS

1. Use of time-out is a standard management practice. Use of time-out rooms requires strict adherence to the student's rights (privacy and safety), and should be educationally beneficial to the student.
2. If time-out is used, it must be systematically planned, delivered, supervised, and evaluated to determine its effectiveness with individual students.
3. The use of a time-out room should be continually evaluated, by keeping accurate records of:
 - frequency of use;
 - identification of the behaviors that led to the use of time-out;
 - behaviours observed in the time-out room;
 - duration of time that the student was placed in time-out; and
 - level of supportive physical assistance that was used.
4. Regular time-out procedures can be used at the school/teacher's discretion. If a student is going to time-out frequently, the school student services team should be consulted to possibly formalize a behaviour plan.
5. Other techniques or strategies for teaching alternative behaviours must be available and used prior, and in addition, to using a time-out room. The use of these techniques/ strategies should be documented.

EFFECTIVE TIME-OUT STRATEGIES

The effective use of time-out is contingent on a number of factors. The strategies listed below are designed to provide guidance to schools and school communities as they refine, develop and implement time-out procedures.

When implementing time-out, consider the following questions:

- Does the student understand the reason for the time-out?
- Does the student have the ability, as well as an opportunity, to stop the misbehaviour and demonstrate appropriate behaviour?
- Does the student have an opportunity to demonstrate responsibility for his/her own behaviour and have opportunities to practice self-control?
- Does the student understand what the expectations are for a successful return to the classroom or classroom activities?
- Is the length of time in time-out reasonable and appropriate for the student's age and/or ability?
- Is the time-out space reasonable, safe and respectful of the needs of all students?
- Is data routinely collected and reviewed to evaluate the effectiveness of time-out?

Student refusal to engage in or to go to time-out room:

Plan what you are going to do if a child refuses to engage in or go to a time-out room ahead of time. Some choices are:

- Give the child a choice of which time-out is the least aversive. "You can go to time-out or you will have to stay 30 minutes after school, ..."
- Refusal to go to time out can result in a request to the parent to remove the student from the school and having to return to school after hours to make up some of the lost time. (This requires parental cooperation).
- If the student refuses to comply with a request to move to a time-out room, the teacher may want to remove the rest of the class from the room and contact other school staff members and/or parents to deal with the student in the short term.
- In the case of student non-compliance, it may be necessary for the teacher to physically move the student to the time-out area. In this case, it

is important that non-violent crisis techniques be used, and verbal defusing of the situation as much as is possible.

- If the parent is not available and the student refuses to comply with a request to move to a time-out room, the principal may choose to contact other staff members, district office personnel, or if necessary, police and request their assistance.

MONITORING

There must be a documented attempt to establish the cause of the behaviour leading to time-out. This documentation will also guide future education and programming decisions. Through the analysis of documentation and data collected, more effective prevention programs may be established.

PHYSICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Time-out rooms must provide for the safety and security of the student and be shown to be effective in the reduction of dangerous behaviours and the promotion of appropriate behaviour. For example, time-out rooms must:

- Have prior approval of the Facilities Branch Manager of the Department of Education
- Meet Fire Marshall standards (consult the Assistant Fire Marshall in your geographic region)
- Not be locked from either the outside or the inside Be supervised at all times
- Not contain items or fixtures that may be harmful to students
- Be well ventilated, clean and well lit
- Be conducive to self quieting behaviours and not overly stimulating or busy
- Allow students to exit should there be an emergency
- Provide the means by which adults can monitor the student, both visually and auditorily, at all times.

NOTE OF CAUTION

Time-out may not be effective for all children. Each child is unique and may require alternate strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviours.

REFERENCES

Alberta Learning. *Guidelines for Using Time-out in Schools*. December 2001, Special Programs Branch.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. *Teaching Students with Learning and Behavioural Differences; A Resource Guide for Teachers*.
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Manitoba Education, Training and Youth. *Towards Inclusion: From Challenges to Possibilities, Planning for Behaviour*. 2001.

Province of New Brunswick- Policy 701 .

School District 10 – Time-out Guidelines, revised August 2002

School District 14 – Time-out Guidelines, September 2002

Vermont Department of Education. *Preventing and Responding to School Disruption and Violence*. www.state.vt.us/educ