

Foundational Behavior Terms

Brief Description:

The following are key terms that describe behavioral theory. These definitions provide educators with the background knowledge to understand behavior in relation to reinforcement and punishment. These terms and definitions provide a framework in which educational professionals can increase desired behaviors and/or decrease unwanted behaviors in the classroom.

Key Terms:

Setting event

- Something that increases how likely it is that a specific behavior will happen

Antecedent

- Event that happens before a behavior or response

Behavior

- The target behavior in question

Consequence

- The response that occurs after a behavior
 - Example of how these interact together: Setting event: Student arrives late to school. Antecedent: Teacher asks student to read aloud. Behavior: Student cries and puts head down on his or her table. Consequence: Student avoids reading aloud.

Functions of behavior

- Common functions of behavior in the classroom include students obtaining or getting something (for example: attention from the teacher, attention from peers) and students escaping or avoiding something (for example: undesirable or difficult class work).

Reinforcement

- When a behavior, also known as a *response*, is maintained or increased as a result of another event (*consequence*) that occurs after the behavior
- Positive Reinforcement
 - *Increasing* the behavior by *presenting* a *desired* stimulus dependent (*contingent*) upon engaging in the desired response
 - Example: Teacher praises student for raising their hand.
- Negative Reinforcement
 - *Increasing* the behavior by *removing* an *aversive* stimulus *contingent* upon engaging in the desired response
 - Example: Teacher does not allow student to go to music class until the student has completed his or her spelling assignment

Punishment

- When a response is decreased as a result of a consequence that occurs after the behavior

Extinction

- The steady decrease or halt of a response that occurs when the selected reinforcer is not rewarding anymore or the desired behavior is not reinforced (e.g., through planned ignoring)

Spontaneous recovery

- When a behavior considered extinguished unexpectedly reoccurs

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- Wolfgang, C. H. (2001). *Solving Discipline And Classroom Management Problems: Methods and Models for Today's Teachers*; U.S.A, John Wiley and Sons.