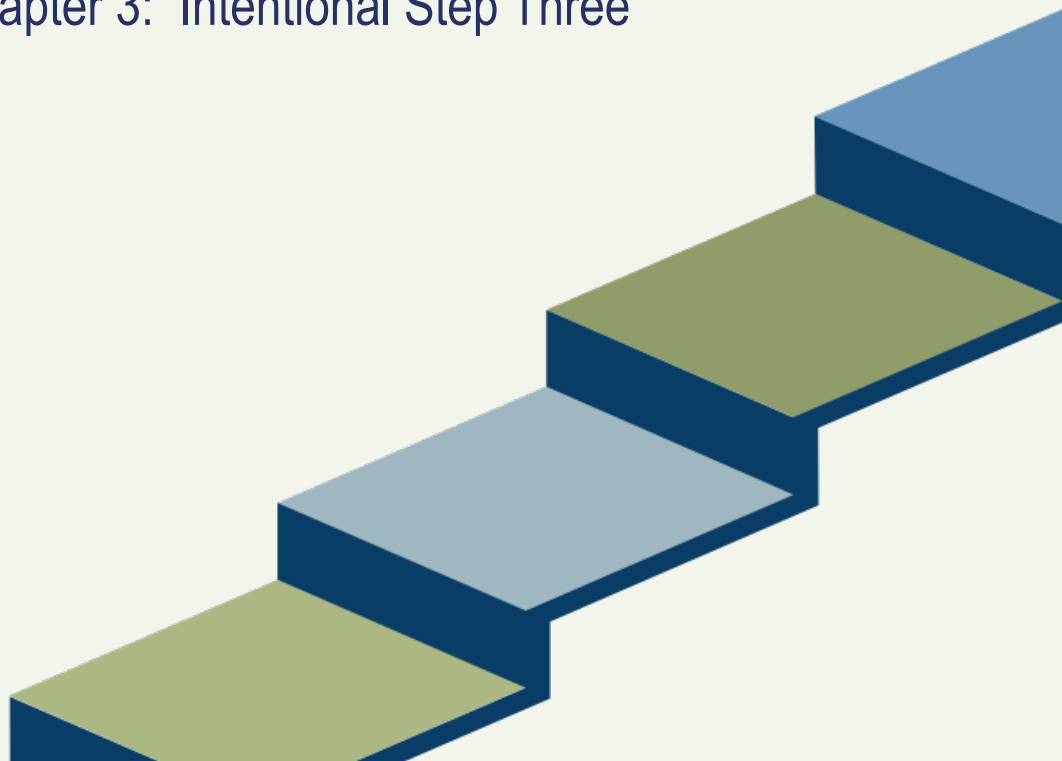


# Intentional Instructional Moves

Strategic Steps to  
Accelerate Student  
Learning

## Companion Guide

Chapter 3: Intentional Step Three



## Chapter 3

### Intentional Step Three: Introduce Classroom Routines and Procedures

Once teachers establish norms and expectations, they should also familiarize students with classroom routines and procedures. Establishing consistent routines helps students feel secure. They will know what's coming and can prepare for how to behave, which minimizes disruptions.

Clearly communicate class routines to students at the beginning of the year. Teach them how to follow the procedures, give them plenty of opportunities to practice, and reinforce these routines throughout the year. Consider the physical environment as well, such as the arrangement of desks, classroom materials, and assigned versus flexible seating. Make sure the teacher can see all students and that all students can see whole-class presentations. Plan for how students will interact with workstations, book cases, storage spaces, and other classroom equipment.

#### Reflection Questions:

- How should students enter the classroom?
- What should they do when they first arrive?
- How will you end class and/or dismiss them?
- How will you handle transitions?
- How will you get students' attention?
- How will you handle bathroom breaks?
- How will students turn in assignments?
- What should students do when they have a question?
- What should they do when they need help?

### Strategy 1: Visual Schedule

The teacher creates a visual representation of the daily and/or weekly schedule and displays it in the classroom. The teacher can remind students about daily events and direct them to the schedule when they have questions (Sager, 2023). For younger students, the schedule can include pictures to help students understand the activities, such as a picture of the class sitting in a circle for morning circle time and a picture of the playground for recess. For older students, the teacher might display a written schedule on the board or using digital tools.

A visual schedule assists students in learning class routines. By referring to the schedule, they can determine what they are doing that day and what's coming next. This can cut down on interruptions, create anticipation, and help students problem-solve and plan. Teachers can also direct students to the schedule when they have questions, building self-efficacy (.92) and independence.

### Strategy 2: Call and Response

The teacher calls out the first part of a chant and students respond with their answer.

Ex. Teacher: *Macaroni and cheese*

Students: *Everybody freeze!*

Teacher: *Hocus pocus*

Students: *Everybody focus!*

Teacher: *Banana split*

Students: *I know how to sit!*

Another common form of Call and Response is “If you hear my voice ...” The teacher begins with this statement, and then students should become quiet and pay attention to what the

teacher is about to say. Ex. *If you hear my voice, touch your nose. If you hear my voice, raise your hand.*

Similar to the strategies for quieting a noisy room, Call and Response chants are a simple but effective way to get students' attention and shift their behavior. These work well for younger students, but can also be helpful in middle and high school classrooms, especially if teachers add more complex directives. This is another way to reinforce class procedures and routines and help students practice self-regulation and reasoning.

### Strategy 3: Blurt Buttons

The teacher gives each student several brightly colored buttons to keep at their desk. If students blurt out during class, they must put a button back in the Blurt Jar. At the end of the day, any remaining Blurt Buttons go into a Reward Jar.

This strategy is fun for students and can minimize students calling out during class and interrupting activities. It also addresses the tendency for certain students to dominate interactions (Sager, 2023). Rewarding desirable behaviors, such as listening respectfully while others are talking, helps reinforce these routines and creates an atmosphere of growth and positivity.

### Strategy 4: Brain Breaks

The teacher gives students Brain Breaks during lessons and activities. During these intervals, students can get up and move around the classroom. This allows them to get their wiggles out, stretch, and prepare to focus again. Brain breaks might also involve meditation or other calming activities, such as games or breathing exercises.

It can be useful to provide students with guidance during these breaks. For example, teachers can create a classroom spinner with suggested break activities (Sager, 2023). Students can spin the wheel and land on a fun movement, like toe touches, jogging in place, jumping jacks, or hopping on one foot.

Building breaks into the daily schedule helps students learn when they need to focus and when they can “take a break.” Many students (and adults) struggle to remain focused for extended periods of time. This strategy acknowledges everyone’s need for periods of rest and transition. Additionally, it teaches students about the importance of self-awareness, stress-tolerance, and self-care.

#### Strategy 5: Hand Signals

The teacher creates a list of pre-assigned hand signals for common occurrences, such as if students need to go to the bathroom, have a question, need a pencil, or want to share a comment. For instance, students can use a thumbs-up to signal if they understand something, an open hand if they have a question, a close fist if they are finished with their work, and cross their fingers if they need to use the bathroom.

This strategy cuts down on interruptions and fosters respectful communication and consideration of others (Sager, 2023). Students of all ages can learn these nonverbal hand signals and quickly communicate their needs to the teachers. In turn, the teacher can acknowledge these signals and help students problem-solve and address their needs.