

Three Approaches to the Trust Level System

The Trust Level System (TLS) provides teachers with ways to:

- clearly identify behaviours that are appropriate & inappropriate for the school setting,
- indicate the degree of intervention necessary for a particular misbehaviour,
- identify guidelines that describe the proper and improper behaviours for each Trust Level for a variety of classroom situations.

Identifying the Severity of Misbehaviours

The TLS can be used to identify the type & severity of misbehaviours found in the classroom and school setting - ranging from continuous talking at inappropriate times (Trust Level 2) to bullying (Trust Level 4). The table below shows how inappropriate behaviours can be categorized using the Trust Levels.

Trust Level System – Identifying Severity of Misbehaviours			
Trust Level 1	Trust Level 2	Trust Level 3	Trust Level 4
Students are following and exceeding classroom expectations. Students are practicing beneficial character traits, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustworthiness • Self-discipline • Responsibility • Respect • Honesty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not follow directions the first time they are given • Difficulty in maintaining good work habits • Minor instance of treating others with disrespect • Difficulties in settling conflicts appropriately • Does not move properly in classroom/building • Continuous talking at inappropriate times • Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disrespect • Spitting • Disobedience • Dishonesty • Physical Aggression • Throwing Objects • Acts of Exclusion • Unsafe Play • Swearing • Too many repeat offenses from Trust Level 2. • Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rude Defiance • Fighting • Extortion • Ganging up • Vandalism • Verbal Threat(s) • Physical Threat(s) • Truancy • Too many repeat offences from Trust Level 3. • Other

Whereas Trust Levels 2 through 4 reflect those behaviours teachers and students agree are detrimental to maintaining a safe, effective learning environment, Trust Levels 3 and 4 in particular focus on those behaviours that require an immediate response by either the teacher or school principal. In addition, the Trust Levels can be used to distinguish between behaviours that will be dealt with by the classroom teacher and those that should be referred to the school principal. Severe examples of Trust Level 4 misbehaviours, for instance, need disciplinary intervention from school administration.

How do you choose what behaviour corresponds with each Trust Level for your classroom? Since teachers may have differing ideas as to what constitutes meeting and not meeting behavioural expectations, particularly in the context of

their own classroom experiences, it is not easy to reach consensus. For this reason, I don't believe all classrooms need to have the same expectations for each Trust Level. As long as each teacher can categorize inappropriate behaviours into each Trust Level, and is able to justify her reasons for doing so, she will be more comfortable in using the TLS and, therefore, be able to use it more effectively.

Identifying Intervention Strategies

The behaviour intervention strategy a teacher uses when an incident occurs is usually dependent on the severity of the misbehaviour. A hierarchical system like the TLS can help identify for the teacher and student what kind of response is necessary for a particular incident. An incident involving Trust Level 2 behaviours, for example, will be dealt with differently than a confrontation involving Trust Level 4 behaviours.

The TLS can distinguish, and offer a balance between, the importance of teaching proper behaviours according to classroom expectations and still allowing teachers to intervene immediately when offensive behaviours occur. The TLS can present classroom expectations in a way that students may see, not only to what degree of severity an inappropriate behaviour is considered in the classroom, but also how much opportunity for self-reflection and change is given before consequences are implemented – or what behaviours have immediate consequences. In addition, using the levels allows students to see at what point their parents will be notified. The table below shows only a few possible behaviour interventions.

Trust Level System – Intervention Strategies			
Trust Level 1	Trust Level 2	Trust Level 3	Trust Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal or non-verbal reminder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal or non-verbal reminders • Trust Level System Reprimand Card • Trust Level System Behaviour Reflection Cards • Time out • Drop to Trust Level 2 • Conferencing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust Level System Behaviour Reflection Cards • Parent notification • Drop to Trust Level 3 • Conferencing • Restitution • Prohibited from participating in High-Risk Field Trips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop to Trust Level 4 • Parent notification • Conferencing • Restitution • In-School Suspension • Out-of-School Suspension • Graduated Attendance • Prohibited from participating in Field Trips

Trust Level Descriptions

The Trust Levels can be used to describe the qualities or character traits students should demonstrate to meet with more success during various classroom procedures and practices.

Providing descriptions for the Trust Levels can help identify the most desirable behaviours for students to practice in the classroom, especially those that are not necessarily easy to identify. The table below is a sample of how the Trust Levels can be used to distinguish behaviours for completing and not completing assignments.

Trust Level System – Trust Level Descriptions	
Sample - Completing Assignments	
Trust Level 1	Work is completed and demonstrates grade level effort (or reasonable output expected from the student). Attitude towards work demonstrates an understanding for learning concepts related to the assignment.
Trust Level 2	Completes his work, but done with minimal effort or no real thought put into learning or knowing why it was important to finish the assignment. The work was done just to get it done – learning objectives have not been internalized.
Trust Level 3	Does not complete his work, but lets the teacher know that it is not complete. At least honesty is being shown, but this does not necessarily demonstrate a desire to improve or accomplish the goal – completing assignments – therefore the proper motivation for completing assignments is still questionable. While the behaviour demonstrates some honesty and accountability, the responsibility for practicing the concepts covered in the assignment is lacking.
Trust Level 4	Does not complete his work and then tries to deceive himself and others by avoiding the issue, copying someone else's work quickly, lying that they have it done or lying about it being at home or something else. The behaviour could demonstrate a lack of honesty, responsibility, respect and accountability.

Topics such as citizenship, work completion, cooperative learning, classroom cleanliness, etc. can be described in terms of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. But what about making distinctions with those students who are in Trust Level 1 because they don't do anything wrong – however, have they done everything right? For example, a distinction can be made between a student who picks garbage off the floor (especially if it isn't his) because it is the right thing to do, and students who need to be told to pick up the garbage. The first example demonstrates a student who is acting intrinsically, while the other is externally motivated to pick up the garbage, either in needing reminders, or in the

expectation of receiving praise or rewards. Both students may be excellent citizens and hard working, but are they equal in what motivates them? Is it important for students to be intrinsically motivated – to do the right thing because it is the right thing to do? I have found that in discussing these guidelines, and the distinctions between them, students have become leaders rather than followers, active citizens rather than bystanders.

While reviewing behavioural expectations with students is essential, it is even more effective if the lists of desirable (and undesirable) behaviours related to common classroom practices are created by students. Students are more likely to follow expectations that they have laid out for themselves and developing these descriptions for each Trust Level is a powerful teaching tool. In this way, students are able to see and reflect how their current behaviours match each Trust Level. Students can then set goals to follow character traits and work habits to reach Trust Level 1.

Creating and posting the described behaviours can help teachers be more effective if behaviour intervention is necessary. Rather than immediately reprimanding students for disruptive behaviours, a teacher can refer students to the described Trust Levels and ask them which Trust Level their current conduct demonstrates. As the student identifies in which Trust Level he is currently behaving, the teacher can ask the student to review what proper behaviours (outlined in Trust Level 1) need to be followed. Again, the student can see and set a goal to choose better behaviours.

The three approaches to the Trust Level System offer teachers a visible and effective way to clearly identify the behavioural expectations, intervention strategies, and guidelines to help students meet with success in the classroom.