

Active Supervision: A Step-by-Step Guide for Virtual Learning Environments

What is active supervision?

Active supervision is an effective strategy where teachers use intentional behaviors to support students to engage in expected behaviors. Active supervision can be used in the virtual classroom by monitoring students during learning activities to facilitate expected behaviors and minimize challenges. Active supervision involves setting expectations, frequently scanning, engaging in positive interactions (precorrections and reminders), reinforcing expected behaviors, and, when necessary, using correction to help students learn the expected behavior.

How do I use this strategy in the virtual classroom?

In the table below, we provide steps for how to get started with active supervision in a virtual learning environment. Following the steps are a few quick tips and two illustrations, one for an elementary age student and for a middle and high school age student.

Steps	Description
1	Identify the virtual activity or transition that would benefit most from active supervision.
2	Ensure that the routine for the target activity is familiar and understood by students. If not, virtual learning routines and expectations must be established.
3	Provide the cue or prompt to begin the activity.
4	As the activity unfolds, scan across the video view of each student and monitor their video, and verbal and non-verbal responses (e.g., written words, virtual responses such as thumbs up or down).
5	Signal your awareness of students' actions through virtual non-verbal cues, verbal acknowledgements, chat communications, and prompting as needed.
6	Manage infractions and off-task behavior efficiently, privately, and discretely and with opportunities for positive interactions.
7	At appropriate intervals and at the end of the activity or transition, reinforce students' behaviors meeting the virtual learning environment expectations using positive comments, gestures, and virtual reactions.
8	Provide students with an opportunity to give feedback.

Quick Tips for Success:

- Have your virtual learning expectations visible to students using a shared slide or as your virtual background.
- If utilizing break-out rooms, drop in regularly to ensure student success in working independently or with peers and broadcast messages to remind students of tasks, give updates on time, praise, etc.

- If problem behaviors occur, promptly talk with students privately in a separate breakout room or individual chat message using a neutral, calm tone.
- To reinforce students, use positive comments in the chat box (privately or to everyone) at appropriate intervals and at the end of the activity or transition in addition to verbal praise, as appropriate for each child.
- To provide students an opportunity to give feedback, consider using social validity forms from www.ci3t.org/pl.

Using Active Supervision in a Virtual Learning Environment

Example: With an elementary-age student...

Step 1. Caleb’s teacher, Mr. Lopes, was eager to see more participation from him during the virtual learning math class. Mr. Lopes gave more behavioral feedback to students during this time. Mr. Lopes was confident in Caleb’s ability to participate in math class but thought active supervision could help Caleb be successful in participating more frequently and would be helpful for the whole class.

Step 2. Caleb and Mr. Lopes met in a breakout room to talk about the importance of participating in the math lesson. Mr. Lopes wanted to ensure Caleb understood the routines and expected behaviors. Mr. Lopes showed him specific ways to participate using the chat and an online response tool the often used in math to show their work. He practiced with Caleb (e.g., using the chat to provide an answer, using the virtual “raise hand” option, logging into the online math practice platform and submitting his work).

Step 3. The next day during math class, Mr. Lopes reminded Caleb in a private chat message to raise his hand to participate by asking a question or offering an answer or idea, and to log in to the math platform and submit his work the end of the virtual math class.

Step 4. Mr. Lopes taught the math lesson and watched for Caleb to participate and submit his work. When Caleb submitted his first answer of the day in the practice platform, Mr. Lopes immediately provided behavior specific praise to Caleb, “Thank you for sharing your answer, Caleb. I appreciate you showing your work!”

Step 5. Mr. Lopes reviewed the expectations before beginning the math lesson and regularly prompted students to participate during the math lesson. As the lessons and days progressed, Mr. Lopes made sure to acknowledge Caleb’s participation in the virtual classroom often both verbally and through the chat function (e.g., “Thank you for providing your answers in the chat during our class today, Caleb!”) This helped Caleb stay on track and increase his participation.

Step 6. Caleb forgot to submit his work one day, so his teacher sent him a friendly – yet direct – prompt. Mr. Lopes intermittently reminded Caleb about the expectation of participation during math class. He reminded Caleb of the ways he could participate in the virtual learning environment.

Step 7. When Mr. Lopes noticed that Caleb raised his hand, submitted his work, or participated in the chat or online platform, his teacher offered behavior specific praise and encouragement. For example, “Caleb, I notice that you are submitting your work after each session- thank you for prioritizing your learning.” or “Caleb, thank you for offering your ideas to our class discussion in the chat- you contributed to the learning of our whole class!”

Step 8. After the first week, Mr. Lopes asked Caleb if it was helpful to have him monitor his participation so he could provide regular reminders and encouragement. Caleb said, “Yes! I think I am doing better in math, being reminded if I forget helps me get my work done.”

Using Active Supervision in a Virtual Learning Environment

Example: With a middle school or high school student...

Step 1. Peyton was a sophomore in high school, and he had been missing spending time with his friends since the need for social distancing started, so he had been eager to talk and socialize, even during instruction. His teacher, Ms. Marcus, noticed Peyton and other students talking more often during math class when they were doing independent practice, so his teacher thought it would be a good idea to set planned cooperative groups during math instruction to provide Peyton and all students the chance to interact within a structured learning topic.

Step 2. Before implementing the cooperative math group, Ms. Marcus discussed with Peyton what would be expected from him (in a private breakout room). Ms. Marcus explained to Peyton that during math collaborative groups, he would have to ask questions, listen to others when they share, and stay on task to complete the assigned activity. Ms. Marcus also let the whole class know about the expectations for collaborating respectfully with each other, and that they would be allowed to share their screen for the purpose of showing their work.

Step 3. When it was time for cooperative math groups, Ms. Marcus provided a visual prompt of the expected behaviors and the task and asked assigned students to breakout rooms to begin their work. She reminded Peyton of the expectations using the private feature on the chat.

Step 4. Ms. Marcus visited each breakout room to greet everyone and check they understood the directions and were making progress on their work. She joined the group, listened for a couple of minutes, and acknowledged students as they were working appropriately by sending them a chat or using reactions like a thumbs up or a clap, before moving to the next room.

Step 5. Ms. Marcus visited Peyton’s breakout room a few extra times and provided private feedback on the chat: “I liked how you worked through that problem on the screen! Thank you for sharing 😊.” She also publicly acknowledged everyone for staying on task. The teacher monitored the chat to make sure all comments were also appropriate and respectful.

Step 6. Ms. Marcus noticed during one visit to the breakout room that Peyton was talking over people about off-task topics and interrupted someone who was sharing their work with the

group. Ms. Marcus sent him a private message reminding him about the expectations for staying on task and collaborating respectfully before leaving the breakout room.

Step 7. Ms. Marcus thanked Peyton for being so responsive to feedback during and even after the cooperative math group. “Thank you, Peyton! I appreciate how you worked with your friends respectfully and how your group completed the math assignment on time.”

Step 8. The next day, Peyton’s teacher asked if he was comfortable with the way his teacher had provided feedback during the math groups. Peyton responded, “Yes, I am glad you reminded me privately in the chat —thank you for not doing it in front of my friends that would have been embarrassing.” Peyton’s teacher also emailed him a social validity form for additional information to confirm the active supervision strategy was appropriate for supporting his behavior.

Watch a brief introduction to active supervision [here](#) and watch the updated video for virtual learning environments [here](#).

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