

Traffic Lights in the Classroom: Implementing Innovative Management Strategies to Foster Positive Student Behavior

Ahllen Marie P. Siscar
Alitagtag Senior High School
ahllenmarie.siscar@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Traffic Lights Strategy as an innovative classroom management approach designed to foster positive student behavior at Alitagtag Senior High School, under the Schools Division Office of Batangas. Specifically, it aims to determine how this color-coded system, green for appropriate behavior, yellow for caution, and red for misbehavior, can influence student discipline, engagement, and self-regulation. The study utilized an action research design employing both quantitative and qualitative methods. A total of 40 senior high school students were purposively selected as participants. Data were gathered through behavioral checklists, classroom observations, student reflections, and teacher journals. Descriptive statistics such

as mean and percentage distribution were used to measure improvement levels, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically to capture behavioral changes and perceptions. Findings revealed that the implementation of the Traffic Lights Strategy resulted in a notable improvement in classroom behavior and participation. Students demonstrated increased awareness of their actions, greater accountability, and enhanced engagement during class discussions. It is concluded that the Traffic Light Strategy serves as an effective behavioral management tool that supports a positive, structured, and motivating learning environment. It is recommended that this system be integrated into classroom routines and further explored across various grade levels to sustain positive discipline and enhance student outcomes.

Keywords: *Classroom management, Traffic Lights Strategy, student behavior, visual cues, action research, self-regulation*

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary educational landscape, effective classroom management serves as the bedrock of successful teaching and learning. For Senior High School (SHS) educators, managing student behavior presents unique challenges and opportunities. Students at this stage are navigating critical transitional years, requiring a learning environment that balances structural discipline with autonomy and self-regulation. Traditional, reactive disciplinary measures often fall short of fostering long-term behavioral growth. Consequently, there is an urgent need for proactive, visual, and easily understandable management systems that empower students to take ownership of their actions.

A positive classroom climate directly correlates with heightened academic engagement and emotional well-being. When behavioral expectations are ambiguous, instructional time is frequently compromised by minor disruptions. To mitigate this, innovative pedagogical interventions must be

introduced—strategies that transform behavior management from a teacher-centered enforcement mechanism into a collaborative, reflective process. One such innovation is the adaptation of visual cues to guide student conduct in real time.

The Traffic Lights Strategy addresses this need by introducing a simple yet powerful color-coded framework into the daily classroom routine:

- *Green*: Signals appropriate, positive behavior and active engagement.
- *Yellow*: Serves as a visual caution, prompting students to pause and self-correct.
- *Red*: Indicates significant misbehavior requiring immediate reflection and intervention.

By utilizing these universally recognized symbols, the strategy aims to cultivate a structured environment where student accountability is subtly but consistently reinforced.

Within the Schools Division Office of Batangas, Alitagtag Senior High School continually strives to optimize student outcomes through innovative practices. However, empirical localized data on how structured visual management tools impact senior high school learners remains limited.

This action research seeks to bridge that gap by evaluating the effectiveness of the Traffic Lights Strategy among senior high school students at Alitagtag Senior High School. By examining its influence on student discipline, engagement, and self-regulation, this study aims to provide educators with an evidence-based approach to sustaining positive discipline, maximizing instructional time, and fostering a nurturing, motivated learning community.

A well-managed classroom serves as the foundation of effective teaching and learning. When students feel safe, guided, and supported, they are more likely to participate actively and take ownership of their learning. However, many classrooms still rely on traditional disciplinary methods that focus on punishment rather than promoting self-regulation and engagement.

The Traffic Light Classroom Management Strategy offers an innovative and visual approach to managing behavior and fostering student accountability. This strategy uses a color-coded system, green for positive behavior, yellow for warning, and red for misbehavior, to provide real-time feedback on student conduct. The visual nature of the system encourages students to be aware of their actions, reflect on their behavior, and take corrective steps independently.

At Alitagtag Senior High School, some teachers have observed challenges in maintaining consistent student discipline and engagement during lessons. These behavioral issues often disrupt learning and affect classroom dynamics. By introducing a traffic light system, teachers can create a more structured and visually engaging environment that promotes self-awareness and motivation.

This research supports the DepEd Research Agenda under Teaching and Learning, specifically “the role of learning spaces in enhancing student engagement.” The study recognizes that the physical and visual arrangement of a classroom directly impacts how students interact, behave, and participate in learning activities. The innovation aims to transform the classroom into a behaviorally guided learning space that fosters focus, discipline, and active participation.

Proposed Innovation, Intervention, and Strategy

The Traffic Light Classroom Management Strategy serves as the central innovation of this study, designed to foster positive student behavior through a visual, inclusive, and proactive approach to classroom discipline. This strategy utilizes a color-coded behavioral feedback system that enables both learners and teachers to monitor and regulate conduct in real time. By using simple yet powerful visual cues, it enhances self-awareness, accountability, and student engagement, while minimizing verbal reprimands and disruptions during class instruction.

The color system is composed of three levels that represent distinct behavioral cues:

- **Green Light** – symbolizes positive behavior, respect, cooperation, and active participation in class activities.

- Yellow Light – serves as a gentle reminder or warning for minor off-task behavior, prompting the student to self-correct.
- Red Light – indicates persistent or serious misbehavior that requires reflection, teacher intervention, and a behavior improvement plan.

The implementation of this strategy aims to cultivate self-regulation and intrinsic motivation among students, consistent with the Department of Education’s goal to promote learner-centered and inclusive classrooms (DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019). Instead of relying solely on punitive measures, the Traffic Light approach integrates positive discipline and restorative practices, ensuring that behavior management becomes a tool for growth and learning rather than punishment.

The innovation will be implemented through a structured process that includes:

1. Setting up a visible traffic light chart within the classroom to ensure transparency and consistency in behavior monitoring.
2. Orienting students on the meaning of each color and the behavioral expectations aligned with school and DepEd policies.
3. Reinforcing positive behavior through praise, recognition, and privileges for those who consistently maintain a “Green” status.
4. Conducting weekly reflections for students who reach the “Yellow” or “Red” levels, encouraging self-assessment, peer feedback, and goal setting.

This strategy directly supports the DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, also known as the Child Protection Policy, which advocates for positive and non-violent forms of discipline in schools. By emphasizing visual communication, immediate feedback, and positive reinforcement, the Traffic Light Classroom Management Strategy nurtures a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment where every student is given equitable opportunities to correct mistakes and demonstrate improvement.

Moreover, the intervention aligns with the principles of the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030, which underscores the importance of creating learner-friendly environments and enhancing teacher capacity in classroom management. Its simplicity, sustainability, and adaptability make it an ideal low-cost yet high-impact innovation for public schools in Batangas Province.

Ultimately, this strategy seeks to transform classroom behavior management into a collaborative and reflective process, where students actively participate in their own behavioral growth. By integrating this system, teachers are empowered to manage their classrooms more efficiently, students are guided toward responsible citizenship, and schools move closer to realizing the vision of “Matatag na Bayan, Matatag na Paaralan.”

Action Research Questions

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Traffic Light Classroom Management Strategy in promoting positive student behavior and engagement among senior high school learners. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the current state of student behavior and engagement in the selected classes prior to the implementation of the Traffic Light Classroom Management Strategy?
2. How does the Traffic Light Classroom Management Strategy influence student behavior in terms of participation, discipline, and self-regulation?
3. In what ways does the implementation of the Traffic Light Strategy affect students’ motivation and classroom engagement?
4. What challenges and facilitating factors do teachers and students encounter during the implementation of the strategy?
5. How can the Traffic Light Classroom Management Strategy be improved or institutionalized to foster a more positive, inclusive, and engaging learning environment?

METHODS

Participants and/or Other Sources of Data and Information

The participants of this study consist of Grade 12 students enrolled in the Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM) strand at Alitagtag Senior High School during the First Semester, School Year 2025-2026. The participants are selected using purposive sampling, as they represent a group where classroom behavior management is essential for effective learning and instructional delivery.

Other sources of data and information include:

- Classroom observations to monitor student behavior before and after implementing the traffic light strategy.
- Teacher's reflective journals documenting challenges, successes, and observations regarding student engagement and classroom discipline.
- Student self-assessment forms or feedback surveys to gauge perceptions of the traffic light management strategy and its influence on their behavior.
- School records, such as attendance logs, behavioral reports, or disciplinary actions, to provide supplementary evidence on behavior trends.

The participants' confidentiality and anonymity are strictly maintained throughout the study. Participation is voluntary, and informed consent are secured from both students and their parents or guardians.

Data Gathering Methods

The following methods are employed to collect comprehensive and reliable data:

1. Classroom Observations:
 - Conducted systematically using a behavioral checklist that corresponds to the traffic light system (green for appropriate behavior, yellow for warning, red for inappropriate behavior).
 - Observations are recorded daily over a period of 4 weeks, before and after the implementation of the traffic light strategy, to assess changes in student behavior.
2. Teacher Reflective Journals:
 - The teacher-researcher documents reflections on the implementation process, student responses, and personal insights regarding classroom management challenges and improvements.
3. Student Self-Assessments or Surveys:
 - Structured questionnaires were administered to gather students' perceptions and attitudes toward the traffic light system and its impact on their behavior and motivation.
 - Likert-scale items and open-ended questions will provide both quantitative and qualitative insights.
4. Document Analysis:
 - Relevant school records such as attendance, behavioral incidents, and disciplinary referrals are analyzed to supplement observational and self-reported data.
5. Focus Group Discussions:
 - Small groups of students are engaged in guided discussions to explore deeper insights into their experiences with the traffic light strategy.
 - Discussions are audio-recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed.

The combination of these methods ensures triangulation of data, enhancing the reliability and validity of the research findings. The collected data are analyzed using both quantitative methods, such as frequency counts, percentages, pre-post behavior comparisons, and qualitative methods, thematic analysis of journals, and open-ended responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. *Baseline Student Behavior and Engagement Before Implementation*

Indicators	Always (5)	Often (4)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)	Mean	Interpretation
Students follow class rules consistently.	6	10	12	2	0	3.67	Often
Students participate actively during discussions.	5	8	15	2	0	3.53	Often
Students demonstrate self-control during activities.	4	9	13	4	0	3.43	Often
Students complete tasks on time.	7	10	10	3	0	3.70	Often
Students show respect toward peers and teachers.	8	12	8	2	0	3.87	Often
Overall Weighted Mean						3.64	Often Observed

Before implementing the strategy, student behavior and engagement were generally “often observed” ($M = 3.64$). While most learners followed class rules and showed respect, inconsistent participation and self-regulation were noted. This suggests the need for a structured and visual system to reinforce positive behavior. According to Brophy (2019), effective classroom management begins with clear behavioral expectations and consistent feedback mechanisms.

Table 2. *Post-Implementation Behavior and Engagement of Students*

Indicators	Always (5)	Often (4)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)	Mean	Interpretation
Students follow class rules consistently.	15	10	5	0	0	4.33	Always
Students participate actively during discussions.	14	9	6	1	0	4.20	Always
Students demonstrate self-control during activities.	13	10	6	1	0	4.17	Always
Students complete tasks on time.	16	8	6	0	0	4.33	Always
Students show respect toward peers and teachers.	17	8	5	0	0	4.40	Always
Overall Weighted Mean						4.29	Always Observed

After implementing the Traffic Light Strategy, there was a significant improvement in student behavior and engagement ($M = 4.29$). The clear visual cues encouraged accountability and positive reinforcement. Learners became more mindful of their behavior, striving to maintain “green” status. This aligns with Gage et al. (2018), who emphasized that proactive classroom management systems significantly enhance behavioral regulation and participation.

Table 3. *Comparison of Pre- and Post-Implementation Mean Scores*

Behavioral Indicators	Pre-Implementation Mean	Post-Implementation Mean	Difference	Interpretation
Following class rules	3.67	4.33	+0.66	Improved
Participation in discussions	3.53	4.20	+0.67	Improved
Self-control	3.43	4.17	+0.74	Improved
Task completion	3.70	4.33	+0.63	Improved

Respect toward others	3.87	4.40	+0.53	Improved
Overall Mean	3.64	4.29	+0.65	Significant Improvement

All behavioral indicators improved after the implementation of the strategy, with an overall gain of +0.65. The most notable change occurred in self-control, which increased by +0.74, reflecting those students learned to regulate their behavior proactively. This supports Kern & Clemens (2017), who emphasized that antecedent-based interventions help students internalize behavioral expectations.

Table 4. *Challenges Encountered During Implementation*

Challenges	Frequency	Rank
Initial resistance from students	12	1
Misinterpretation of color codes	9	2
Need for constant monitoring	8	3
Limited materials and classroom space	6	4

The primary challenge was initial resistance from students ($f = 12$), particularly those who felt uneasy being visually identified with “yellow” or “red” status. However, resistance decreased as students began to associate the system with fairness and improvement. Doyle and Carter (2023) similarly observed that new management systems may encounter short-term resistance before learners adjust and benefit from structured feedback.

Table 5. *Facilitating Factors During Implementation*

Facilitating Factors	Frequency	Rank
Clear communication of expectations	14	1
Teacher consistency in applying the system	12	2
Student cooperation and peer support	10	3
Administrative encouragement	8	4

Clear communication of expectations ($f = 14$) and teacher consistency ($f = 12$) were identified as key facilitators. These ensured fairness and reinforced trust in the system. This supports Simonsen & Myers (2021), who noted that effective classroom management depends on clarity, consistency, and collaboration between teachers and learners.

Table 6. *Suggestions for Improvement and Institutionalization*

Suggested Improvement	Frequency	Rank
Integrate a digital version of the Traffic Light system	11	1
Conduct teacher training on consistent implementation	9	2
Include recognition for consistently “green” students	7	3

Participants suggested incorporating a digital version of the system ($f = 11$) for wider application, especially in blended or online classes. Teacher training and student recognition were also recommended to sustain long-term positive results. This is consistent with Gorospe (2020), who advocates for innovative and adaptive teaching strategies that enhance engagement in modern classrooms.

The findings affirm that the Traffic Light Classroom Management Strategy is a simple yet powerful tool in fostering discipline and engagement among senior high school students. The researcher realized that visual cues, when paired with empathy and consistency, can transform classroom dynamics into a more collaborative and respectful environment. The strategy not only improved behavior but also strengthened teacher-student relationships, promoting mutual accountability.

As Barrett et al. (2017) noted, a well-designed learning environment, whether physical or behavioral, plays a critical role in enhancing student motivation and performance. This experience deepened the researcher's commitment to implementing inclusive, evidence-based management strategies that support holistic learner development.

Action Plan

Phase	Activities	Timeline	Persons Involved	Expected Output
Phase 1: Preparation and Orientation	Conduct a coordination meeting with the School Head and research committee; secure approval for implementation	Week 1	Researcher, School Head, Research Committee	Approved implementation plan
	Prepare and design classroom traffic light materials (charts, cards, visual aids)	Week 2	Researcher	Ready-to-use classroom management materials
	Orient participating teachers and students on the Traffic Light System (rules, expectations, color meanings)	Week 3	Researcher, Teachers, Students	Oriented participants and agreed-upon behavior standards
Phase 2: Implementation	Implement the Traffic Light Strategy in selected classes	Week 4–8	Researcher, Teachers, Students	Active use of the visual behavior system
	Monitor and record student behavior daily using the color-coded system	Week 4–8	Researcher, Teachers	Documented behavioral observations
	Provide positive reinforcement for consistent “green” behavior and guidance for “yellow” or “red” cases	Week 4–8	Teachers, Students	Reinforced positive behaviors and improved conduct
Phase 3: Evaluation and Reflection	Conduct student and teacher feedback sessions on the strategy's effectiveness	Week 9	Researcher, Teachers, Students	Collected qualitative feedback and reflection data
	Analyze quantitative and qualitative data from observations and feedback	Week 10	Researcher	Summary of findings and insights
	Present results to school administrators and faculty	Week 11	Researcher, School Head, Teachers	Presentation of results and recommendations for wider adoption
Phase 4: Enhancement and Dissemination	Refine the strategy based on feedback and results	Week 12	Researcher	Improved and validated classroom management strategy
	Submit final action research report and proposal for school-wide implementation	Week 12	Researcher, School Head	Completed report and proposal for DepEd Batangas Province

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