An investigation of the classroom teachers needs to help students with challenging behaviors in the general education setting

Benjamin C. Morgan

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An Investigation of the Classroom Teachers Needs to Help Students with Challenging Behaviors in the General Education Setting

Benjamin C. Morgan

A Special Project Submitted to the faculty of the office of the Graduate School in Partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Science in Education with a Major in Special Education in the Department of Professional Studies

Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne

May, 2013
Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University – Purdue University Fort Wayne, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education with a major in Special Education.

Special Project Committee:

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Rama Cousik, PhD
Abstract

This research paper investigates the need for behavior management strategies for classroom teachers who have students with challenging behaviors. The study involved participants who teach in the public education setting grades sixth through eighth at Angola Middle School, located in Northeast Indiana. Teachers participated in an anonymous survey to address the needs for behavior management strategies that can be implemented in the general education setting. The research indicated a need for strategies to assist general education teachers with students who display challenging behavior. At the conclusion of the research, a behavior management strategies handbook was created for teachers in the general education setting.
Acknowledgements

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Chapter One

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Classroom teachers are constantly being challenged by student behaviors that have a direct impact on their ability to create a safe and productive learning environment. Educators are faced with an increased emphasis on high-stakes testing, emphasis on evidence-based practices, and response to intervention models have added to the demands on teacher resources (MacSuga & Simonsen, 2011). As most recent education policies trend toward the inclusion of students with disabilities, teachers have experienced an increase in the numbers of students with emotional disabilities (ED), attention-deficit hyperactivity disorders (ADHD), autism spectrum disorders (ASD), and behavior disorders in the classroom (Lee, Vostal, & Lylo, 2011). General education teachers will continue to be challenged by students with challenging classroom behaviors and meeting the high academic standards.

Purpose of the Study

“Classrooms are complex societies. Teachers are the leaders of these societies and the way they exercise their leadership abilities greatly affects the interactions that take place between teachers and students as well as interactions between the students themselves” (Ratcliff, Jones, Costner, Savage-David & Hunt, 2010, p16). As leaders of these societies, teacher’s leadership styles and abilities greatly impact the quality of interactions of those in the classroom. These interactions have a vast impact on the educational and social growth of the students within a specific classroom (Ratcliff, Jones, Costner, Davis, & Hunt, 2010). Teachers are required to manage challenging behaviors
and are simultaneously being held to high standards for student learning and progress. Because student behaviors (off task, refusal, disrespect, hyperactivity, etc) in the classroom can be a distraction to both students and teachers; teachers in all subject areas can benefit from strategies to manage these behaviors for all student types. The purpose of this study was to investigate classroom management strategies that can be or that are currently being used in the general education system for students. This study gathered information from a variety of middle school classroom teachers and the information was used to create a useful collection of classroom strategies for working with students with difficult behaviors in the general education setting in the form of a handbook.

Increase in Behavior Issues

Recent trends show an increase of inclusion of students with all disabilities, including emotional disabilities (ED), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and behavior disorder (BD). Students with ED and BD now spend at least 40% of their day in the general education settings (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2009). Disruptive behaviors include task avoidance, inattentiveness, hyperactivity, aggression, and refusal. When these behaviors are seen in the classroom they often impede other students’ ability to learn. Challenging behaviors often cause teachers to lose focus on academic progress for their classrooms. “Even minor disruptive behaviors have been shown to sap teachers’ energy, cause teacher stress, and increase the likelihood of burnout” (Clunies – Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008). There are many strategies available to educators to manage challenging behaviors, but common teacher responses to discipline problems include punishment type systems, i.e. detentions, suspension, or expulsion (Thomson & Webber, 2010).
Definition of Terms

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Autism spectrum disorder is a developmental disability that includes autistic disorder, Asperger's syndrome, and other pervasive developmental disorders. The disability affects spoken, nonverbal, or practical communication and social interaction skills.

Emotional Disabilities (ED): “Emotional disability” means an inability to learn or progress that cannot be explained by cognitive, sensory, or health factors. The student exhibits one (1) or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects educational performance:

(1) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

(2) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.

(3) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships.

(4) Inappropriate behaviors or feelings under normal circumstances.

(5) Episodes of psychosis. (511 IAC 7-41-7 Emotional disability)

(Indiana Department of Education, 2008)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): A neurological based medical condition. Students are characterized by having difficulty with attention span, impulse control and hyperactivity.

Behavior Management: System used by educators to manage their classroom learning environment.
Social Skills: Social behaviors necessary to work at part of a team, make good decisions, communicate well with others, and engage in problem solving to handle conflict in a peaceful way.

General Education or Classroom Teacher: An educator in a public school setting who teaches any core or elective (art, physical education, cooking, technology, etc) subject to general education or special education students.

Research Approach

The research investigation for this project began with a needs assessment survey that was uploaded to an online survey tool called SurveyMonkey®. To participate in the anonymous survey, teachers were emailed a link to the SurveyMonkey® with an accompanying letter detailing the purpose of the research. The guidebook that was created draws from data collected in the needs assessment survey. Current Angola Middle School (AMS) teachers played an essential role in identifying the needs for behavior management strategies. AMS teachers were chosen to be part of this research project due to the close proximity to the researcher and the necessity for behavior strategies for challenging students. At the end of the research project, the handbook was created for AMS teachers to actively use in their classrooms. The needs that were discovered through the survey directly correlate to the handbook and will be a useful tool for AMS teachers specifically because the data has been collected from their classrooms, but other middle school teachers may also find the handbook useful.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

Students with emotional and behavioral disabilities are most successful when solid classroom organization and behavior management techniques are applied; however, most general education teachers suggest they do not feel sufficiently prepared to handle challenging behaviors. Many theories have been proposed to explain classroom management strategies and, although literature covers a wide variety of such theories, this review focuses on managing and responding to challenging behaviors. Focus is placed on basic classroom management and behavior expectations, types of student behaviors and their functions, ways to analyze these behaviors, and teacher response to challenging behaviors both short term and long term.

Basic Classroom Management and Behavior Expectations

While classroom management definitions can vary from school to school and even from teacher to teacher, a few of the same fundamental principles apply to most. General principles for positive and effective classroom management: teach and encourage good social skills, compliment genuinely, encourage risk taking, model tolerance, help students feel valuable and recognize effort (Dougherty, 2002). Generally academics are stressed in our education system; however, middle school students are developing socially and emotionally and require guidance to develop positively. Students need to be treated like people and middle school students are aware when a teacher is not being truthful in their compliments. Students need to be educated on how to take appropriate risks. Many children do not understand the concept of risks because they constantly
sheltered and many difficult decisions are made for them. Teachers have the ability to model appropriate risk taking through modeling and personal experiences. Failures and success are all learning moments (Dougherty, 2002). Modeling is an effective way for students to understand tolerance; everyone has the right to have their own views. Teachers, along with school personnel have the ability to make students feel valuable to the classroom or school, which creates a feeling of trust and belonging. The result is, “Students learn to take responsibility for their actions, acknowledging misbehavior and taking consequences (Dougherty, 2002, p.14). Finally, recognizing student effort has a large impact on students. When teachers recognize effort students may strive for more recognition.

The general principles of classroom management play a large part in a successfully managed classroom. There are additional elements to effective classroom management. “Classroom rules and procedures should not only be expressed and posted, they must be taught because students’ knowledge of them must not be taken for granted. Teachers have various expectations and rules” (Dougherty, 2002, p.15). Rules are often posted in the classroom, but are rarely reviewed after the first few days of class because these rules are generally expectations that not all students may understand. Generally speaking, while a solid classroom management system does not necessarily guarantee effective instruction, the most important element is that it sets the appropriate tone in the classroom for effective instruction to take place, free of behavioral disruptions. Behavior management needs to be an ongoing development for first year through veteran teachers (Emmer & Stough, 2001).
Teacher Expectations of Student’s Classroom Behavior

Students from all grade levels are expected to meet classroom teachers’ expectations regarding: academics, behavior, and social interaction while demonstrating self-control and group cooperation skills. Although a large number of students begin their academic experiences with the required skills for being successful in a structured classroom environment, where as other students are less prepared to meet teacher expectations (Lane, Wehby, & Cooley, 2006). Three reasons students are not successful in meeting teacher expectations: first, students are unaware of teacher expectations because they have not been taught school/classroom expectations at home or teachers are unsuccessful in communicating clear and consistent expectations; second, teachers are unaware of their expectations for classroom and student behavior; third, expectations vary from transitioning teacher to teacher and the transitions from school to school, i.e. elementary to middle school (Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004). For example, many students have not been taught proper expectations at home: communication skills with adults or respect for authority figures. Teachers can also struggle helping students meet their classroom expectations if the rules and expectations for their individual classroom are not defined and clearly displayed.

At the middle school level students with ED and ASD are for first time switching to multiple classrooms. The result is teachers are now facing higher amounts of behavior issues within their classroom. For the first time students are transitioning from a self-contained setting to inclusion classrooms. This requires students to plan ahead, gather appropriate materials for school tasks, prioritize steps to complete assignments and keep track of their work (McMullen, Shippen & Dangel, 2007). With students with disabilities
and challenging behaviors in the general education setting, the classroom environment is changing for teachers. Classroom teachers are being faced with challenging and disruptive behavior from students that requires additional behavioral management strategies to effectively run their classrooms.

**Types of Student Behaviors and Their Functions**

Student behavior can easily interfere with the best plans or teaching practices. Understanding the function of a behavior allows for teachers and administrators to effectively modify challenging behaviors, behaviors occur for a purpose. Common behaviors seen in classrooms include: escape, sensory and attention motivated behavior.

**What is the Function of the Behavior?**

“Behavior happens for a reason and is a form of communication” (Rapport & Minahan, 2012, p.19). Deciphering behavior is not always straightforward, but Rapport and Minahan (2012) created an acronym: FAIR to assist in deciphering the behavior. F is for understanding the function of the behavior, A is for accommodations, I is for interaction strategies, and R is for responses. The first step to understanding the function of the behavior is understanding what type of behavior is being observed. There are several frequent observable behaviors seen in classrooms: escape motivated behavior, sensory behavior, and attention motivated behavior.

FAIR is a purposeful tool that can be used in the general education setting to help teachers understand and effectively teach students with challenging behaviors. Educators need to assess the function of the behavior before trying to create any solution for the student. “When working with challenging students it’s important to avoid power
struggles that may escalate the consequences and inadvertently reinforce the negative behavior” (Rapport & Minahan, 2012, p.19).

**Escape Motivated Behavior**

The escape motivated behavior occurs most often when a student attempts to avoid people, homework, request, or situations. Avoidance or escape behaviors can often be easily observed, i.e. the student getting in trouble right before reading class because he/she struggles in reading class. The direct result is the student not being able to attend the reading class due to the behavior. Escape behaviors are often rewarded by the school systems discipline procedure. The student is reinforcing the behavior by getting out of what she does not want to complete (Rapport & Minahan, 2012).

Escape behaviors are often displayed in students who visually or verbally “don’t care.” There are various contributors to students who do not care. “I don’t care,” is made up of a variety of instructional, social, developmental and psychological factors. Walsh (2006) describes 11 contributing factors to students who “don’t care”: student self-efficacy (feeling of capability, teacher competency (teacher’s personal instructional ability), task complexity (level of task difficulty), past school or subject experiences (history or positive/negative school-related events in student’s life), classroom complexity (where learning, teaching and group dynamics converge), current emotional state (what is going on in the student’s life right now), the social context (peer relationships and peer pressure), self–identity (how the student sees him/herself), interest in subject matter (level of intrinsic desire to study content), teacher/student relationship (level of compatibility, personal communication & trust), student maturity (emotional and psychological stability) (p.10). Students who display attitudes of “I don’t care” are
generally for a specific reason(s). Classroom teachers need to understand that this is not a quick fix and there must be time spent investigating the behavior cause, getting to know the student, and displaying true concern for the students’ feelings.

**Sensory Behavior**

Sensory behaviors are motivated by a sensory input. If something feels good, tastes good or looks nice the behavior is continued, i.e. the student likes the feel of his/her tongue while he hums. Sensory behaviors can cause disruptions in the educational process for the student and/or their peers (Rapport & Minahan, 2012). There are eight areas where sensory overload can occur: smell, movement, balance, muscular feedback, taste, hearing, vision, and oral. These behaviors can be distracting and difficult to understand in the general education setting. Educators need to provide intervention strategies that include compensatory strategies to decrease sensory overstimulation during everyday educational activities, social skills training which should include relationship building and problem solving strategies (Foss, Iverson, & Gilbert, 2004).

**Attention Motivated Behavior**

Some students can struggle finding acceptable ways to gain adult and peer attention. Attention seeking behavior can be seen as acting out, yelling, or any behavior that draws attention to the student. Attention motivated behavior can generally be seen in both positive and negative situations (Rapport & Minahan, 2012). “Studies have shown that the predominant teacher response to disruptive student behavior is reactive and punitive rather than proactive and positive” (Thompson & Weber, 2010, p.72). These attention seeking behaviors are predictable and preventable. “If teachers can identify environmental predictors, they can generally manipulate them to prevent undesirable
behaviors” (Landrum, Lingo, & Scott, 2011, p.31). Preventing these negative attention seeking behaviors requires teachers to carefully observe and analyze the problematic behaviors, along with the environment in which the behaviors are taking place. Common traits of students with problematic behavior are academic deficits. Students with academic and behavioral concerns do not view the classroom as an opportunity for discovering successes, instead they view school as a place to avoid and sometime seek out negative attention (Landrum et al., 2011).

**Analyzing the Behavior**

According to Rapport and Minahan (2012), “Kids may prefer negative attention because it’s dramatic, efficient, predictable, and more obvious than positive attentions” (p.12). It is difficult to understand children who would prefer to have negative attention over positive attention. Students with social deficits can struggle to understand or recognize the delicate praises that come with positive attention. Students can easily recognize the attention they are receiving when teachers are spending one on one time lecturing or redirecting; this in turn continues the cycle of attention seeking behaviors.

**Understanding Behavior**

Behaviors are complex and unique thus collecting data to help understand patterns is important. Documenting behaviors is particularly useful with middle school students as their behaviors can be more difficult to understand than other age-levels. ABC Notes is one useful method in collecting data on student behavior. The acronym ABC stands for: A- antecedent (before the behavior), B- description of the behavior, C- consequence. By documenting observable behaviors it allows for teachers and staff to analyze the students’ behaviors and recognize any patterns that may not have been previously seen. Solving
behavior problems with exclusionary discipline does not typically work for students with challenging behaviors, but rather understanding the cause of the behavior before reacting typically yields better results. “Teachers and administrators alike hold erroneous notions about discipline that do not serve us well when we seek solutions to behavior problems in schools. Unless we adequately define the problem, we won’t be effective in our attempts to solve it” (Boyd, 2012, p.63)

**Teacher Response to Behavior**

All teachers have students with challenging behaviors in a classroom and it is important for teachers to understand the fundamentals when dealing with student’s who display difficult classroom behaviors. First, teachers must be respectful; actions and words that display respect are more likely to reach the student than actions of anger, frustration, or fear. All students have positive characteristics and it is the responsibility of the educator to point out student’s positive attributes. Doing so will help build meaningful relationships. Remembering that students generally act out in a classroom because of outside influences or academic struggles is important and thus teachers need not take behaviors personally, but rather understand that the behaviors are like a means of communication for outside problems (Tomlinson, 2012). Finally, teachers need to take the role of teaching students with difficult behaviors how to act appropriately in tough situations.

**Recognizing the Expectations and Giving Praise**

With several demands placed on teacher’s time such as high-stakes testing, classroom observations, and the RISE rubric, it often becomes difficult to remember small things such as praise. The RISE rubric is an evaluation tool to measure teacher
effectiveness. The rubric measures: purposeful planning, effective instruction and teacher leadership. Teachers are evaluated based on these domains. Teachers need to recognize the need for praise for both student achievement and achievement of daily classroom expectations. One simple method that is shown to increase academic and behavioral outcomes is teacher’s praise. How often do classroom teachers recognize that students are following the rules and expectations or are they simply just expected? Recognizing students through verbal praise allows teachers to provide immediate feedback on specific behaviors and praise is highly effective in building student self-esteem, providing encouragement, and promoting positive teacher/student relationships (Haydon & Musti-Rao, 2011).

**Social Skills Training**

Students must understand how to interact with authority figures, adults and peers and it must be a practiced behavior. Self monitoring and student/teacher matching interventions leads to increases in targeted social skill behavior and decreases off task behavior (Peterson, Young, Salzberg, West, & Hill, 2006). By the time students reach middle school, it is often expected that strong social skills are possessed, however, for some students, adequate socials skills are not ever taught nor are they modeled in home life. In light of this, teachers must understand the challenges these students face and take the time to praise good social behavior and teach the correct behaviors when a student does not exemplify good social skills. Teaching the skills and the desire for the skills does not require a large amount of time, but rather, attention to the issue and a small effort on the part of the teacher.
Many teachers believe that today’s students frequently have a lack of socially acceptable values and morals. These students lack even basic social skills; they come from homes with few models of what it is to live in a civil society. Social skills need to be stressed in the classroom which will in turn create a climate of cooperation and respect for others. The result will be fewer discipline problems and less negative behaviors (McArthur, 2002).

**Zero Tolerance Behavior**

Since the mid-1990s to present in many schools zero tolerance policy have been in effect and used to enact disciplinary consequences on a variety of school behaviors. “Zero tolerance policies have also been applied to behaviors like truancy, tardiness, and vague catch-all categories such as "insubordination" and "disrespect”” (Brownstein, 2006, p.24). Zero tolerance policies were put into place to make schools a safe place. These policies have resulted in predetermined consequences for rules that are broken. The zero tolerance policies generally result in exclusionary policies, in school suspension, out of school suspension and/or detentions. “Studies of school suspension have typically found that 30-50% of those suspended will be suspended again…students who were suspended at the sixth-grade level were more likely to be referred to the office or suspended in eighth grade…suspension functions as a “reinforcer” rather than a punisher" (Brownstein, 2006, p25-26). In general half of all elementary and middle school referrals are for repeat offenders. “Even when the disciplinary action is escalated to an in-school suspension, that punitive approach generally has been unsuccessful in curbing maladaptive behaviors” (Smith, Bicard, S., Bicard, D. & Casey, 2012, p175).
Summary

Effective classroom management skills develop a strong foundation for students’ academic success. The basis for creating a structured classroom environment is clearly posting rules and expectations. Expectations for student behavior must be taught to all students and needs to be reviewed frequently.

Understanding the cause or function of the behavior allows for teachers to effectively assess the behavior issues. Challenging behavior is a form communication for a need; teachers must understand what the student is attempting to communicate. Once teachers have identified the function of the behavior an effective plan can be implemented to modify or replace the challenging behavior.

The response a teacher has for a challenging behavior can often influence the outcome. It is easy for teachers to react quickly and punitively when students continue to repeat challenging behaviors. Building meaningful relationships through respect and tolerance for behaviors can create a strong rapport between the student and teacher. Students with challenging behavior will respond more appropriately more often to teachers they have built strong relationships with. The role of a teacher is to teach students how to act appropriately in tough situations, not punish or remove the student from the environment.

Research Question

The purpose of this research project is to investigate the challenging behaviors that are within general education classrooms and the behavior management strategies that current classroom teachers are using at the middle school level. Through this process there was an investigation of the strategies and the need for additional resources to assist
classroom teachers. The research question is: What strategies do general education teachers use in their classrooms to assist students who struggle behaviorally in the general education setting?
Chapter Three

Methodology

Participants and Setting

Thirty-nine classroom teachers at Angola Middle School were sent a recruitment letter (see Appendix D). Angola Middle School teachers are split up into three grade levels, sixth, seventh and eighth grade. There are nine sixth grade academic teachers, eight seventh grade academic teachers, eight eighth grade academic teachers and there are two emotional disabilities teachers, two learning disabilities teachers and one functional skills teacher. The remaining nine teachers teach unified arts classes which include: physical education, health, art, family and consumer science, technology and music. Twenty-one teachers participated in the survey. Participation in the survey was completely voluntary and all information was anonymous. The participants were chosen due to their close proximity to the researcher. The goal for the project was to create a guidebook to help assist classroom teachers who have students with challenging behaviors in their classroom. Classroom teachers at Angola Middle School participate in inclusion and have both general and special education students in their classroom, these types of classroom typically have higher percentages of behavior issues. Angola Middle School (AMS) is located in Steuben County in Angola, Indiana. AMS is one of six schools in the Metropolitan School District of Steuben County. There are four elementary schools that feed into this school. AMS is a sixth, seventh, and eighth grade building. Current enrolment at AMS is at 689, 91% of the students are Caucasian, 3% are Hispanic, 3% Multiracial, 1 % African American, and approximately 2% are varying ethnicities. Students receiving free and reduced lunch represent 44.0% of the student
population. More than 15% of students at AMS are diagnosed as needing special education services. (www.ams.msdsteuben.k12.in.us/)

Outline for Development of the Special Project

The special project began with a needs assessment that was distributed to classroom teachers at Angola Middle School. The needs assessment contained eighteen multiple choice and three open ended questions. The assessment identified a need for a comprehensive guidebook with behavior management strategies and techniques to assist classroom teachers. The project is titled, *A Guidebook for Classroom Teachers who have Students with Challenging Behaviors in the General Education Setting*.

An application for a research exemption request was sent to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) on September of 2012. The IRB application was approved in October and the recruitment letter with an attached link to the needs assessment/survey was sent to teachers on January 8, 2013. The final date to complete the needs assessment was on January 21, 2013. All surveys were collected, the data was analyzed and the creation of the guidebook began on January 26, 2013. A rough draft of *A Guidebook for Classroom Teachers who have Students with Challenging Behaviors in the General Education Setting* was completed and will continue to be revised from February 19, 2013 to March 15, 2013. The guidebook will be completed on April 1, 2013. See *Appendix B* for the project timeline.

Narrative of Description of the Special Project

Many teachers have background knowledge and/or experience regarding behavioral issues that impact the general education classrooms, but there is a need for a guidebook for teachers to turn to who are dealing with difficult behaviors in the
classroom. The special project titled, *A Guidebook for Classroom Teachers who have Students with Challenging Behaviors in the General Education Setting*, was created to assist classroom teachers at Angola Middle School. Many teachers in the middle school setting deal with behavioral issues on a regular basis that interrupt the educational process for both students and teachers. The process of this investigation took place with current middle school classroom teachers working at Angola Middle School. The current research group has a variety of experiences from second year to veteran teachers. The research process started by Angola Middle School teachers taking part in a confidential survey through SurveyMonkey®. The first chapter of the handbook has detailed information about common behavioral issues in the general education setting. Because general education teachers are facing more and more behavioral issues in their classrooms and general education students along with special education students are all being serviced in the same classroom, new skills must be obtained by general education teachers to assist in handling behaviors exemplified by special education students. Chapter two explores the components of understanding behavior through including function and consequence of behaviors. Chapter three focuses on specific challenging behaviors: Off task and refusal, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and special education. Chapter four of the handbook details specific classroom strategies for challenging behaviors that includes repetition, social stories and praise, see *Appendix C*.

**Data Source**

The goal of this project was to gather evidence that there is a need for a guidebook for classroom teachers to assist in behavioral support systems for general education teachers. An explanation of the survey and recruitment letter was sent to all
middle school teachers. Data was collected through analysis of the survey that was completed by willing classroom teachers from Angola Middle School. The focus of the 21 question survey was on student behavior, classroom management and the use of behavior strategies. Questions from this survey were carefully constructed to help assist in discovering an accurate need for behavior management strategies for classroom teachers. Three questions focus on specific subjects taught, years of experience, and highest degree earned. There are three yes/no questions: My rules and expectations are clearly stated and posted so all students understand, Students who most commonly have behavior issues have a behavior improvement plant, and Would you like to have more training/strategies for dealing with behaviors that occur in your classroom? The open ended questions gave participants the opportunity to respond with specific problems, strategies and needs for students.

The first six questions of the survey gathered generalized information about the teacher’s classroom and his/her teaching experience. Questions seven and eight are in regard to student behaviors that are seen in the classroom and the frequency of the challenging behavior. The ninth question refers to social skills training and the frequency of teaching social skills in the classroom. Question ten refers to the use of praise and frequency in the classroom. Questions 11-15 in the survey gathered information on the cause and predictability of student behaviors. The last multiple choice questions refer to the use and need of behavior strategies for their classrooms. The goal for the survey was to discover what the classroom teachers needs are teaching students with challenging behaviors in their classrooms at Angola Middle School.
Chapter 4

Results and Discussion

Introduction

In January 2013, a survey, “Challenging Behaviors in the General Education Classroom” was sent out to all teachers at Angola Middle School (AMS). The recruitment letter and link to the survey hosted on SurveyMonkey® was emailed out on January 8, 2013, one week before the end of the first semester, see Appendix A. The follow-up email was sent out four days prior to the end of the survey window as a reminder due to the planned teacher work day on January 18, 2013. There are a total of 39 classroom teachers at Angola Middle School and 21 teachers participated in the survey.

Demographics

The school is split up into three grade level teams and one unified arts team (music, cooking, sewing, art, technology, and physical education) that teaches all grade levels. Of the 21 participants 51.4% have been teaching for more than 15 years and 47.6% have earned a Masters degree, see Figure 1.

As of January 2013, Angola Middle School serves 692 students. Teachers responded that they have class sizes that range from 15 to 31 or more. 71.4% of the participants responded that they have class sizes that are from 26 – 30. The survey did not specify what classes they taught with their class size. Due to the responses the data indicates that academic (reading, math, science and social studies) classes tend to have 26 – 30 students per class, but special education and unified arts classes, which include physical education classes, result in the outlier responses (Table 1).
Figure 1

What subject or subjects do you teach?

![Bar chart showing percentages for Math, Reading, Science, Social Studies, Special Ed. Unified Arts]

Table 1

On average how many students are in your class?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 or More</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered Question 21
Skipped Question 0

Classroom Behavior

Teachers reported that they have minimal behavior issues on a daily basis (Table 2). Based on the total amount of discipline referrals given during each quarter, the researcher believes that the data collected might not accurately reflect reality. Participants may also have felt an obligation to answer the question with minimal behavioral issues.
due to the fact that it may reflect on their teaching abilities and/or classroom management strategies. The results indicate low number of behavior issues, however, due to the wording of the questions the results may vary. The goal was to gather the amount of behavior issues per class period, but it can be difficult to group seven periods and average the amount of behavioral issues. From the data collected the researcher does believe that 33.3% of the participants who responded with two behavior issues / concerns per class period more accurately reflect the actual classroom behavior issues per period.

Table 2

During a regular class period how many behavior issues/concerns do you have?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or More</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered Question 21
Skipped Question 0

Teachers continued to report across the board, but with significantly higher results in the category of interfering behaviors during instructional time. Thirty-three percent of the participants responded that student behaviors interfere with their instruction on a daily basis. Only nine and half percent of the teacher respondents reported that they have behaviors that interfere with their instruction hourly (Table 3). The correlation between the amount of behavior issues and interference with instruction does not accurately reflect the data. Only nine and a half percent of teachers reported that they have students who interfere with their instruction on an hourly basis, but 76.2% participants reported
behavior issues or concerns one or more times per class period. If the majority (76.2%) of teachers are having behavioral issues during a regular class period, but 90.5 percent of the staff responded that behavior interferes with their instruction less daily or less. Are teachers not identifying behavior issues with behavior that interferes with instruction? Teacher responses to the survey may not be completely accurate when assessing behavior because they were aware that the researcher teaches in a classroom for student’s with emotional disabilities where there can be extreme behaviors. Despite variation in results the area of behavior issues within the classroom at AMS needs to be addressed.

According to Thompson and Weber (2010) one student’s challenging or disruptive behavior can impeded other student’s academic progress. Challenging behaviors have an effect on more than the teacher; other students within the classroom and even the student who is displaying the behavior are subjected to a more challenging learning environment.

**Table 3**

**Student behavior interferes with my instructions.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hourly</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Answered Question** 21

**Skipped Question** 0

There were four specific behaviors that were targeted in the survey: not following directions, sleeping, foul language, disrespect and other behaviors. Almost sixty-seven percent of teachers reported that students’ not following directions was the most common behavior that they had to deal with in their classrooms (Figure 2). There were an equal
amount of participants who responded with disrespect and other behaviors. Participants, who chose other, were required to specify what that behavior was. Other behaviors that were listed as the most common challenge were: “Talking and/or being disruptive to others,” “Being prepared for class,” “Most don’t deliberately disobey—they just get distracted,” “Talking or not following directions” and “Special education students.” The majority of the other responses fall into the category of not following directions. If students are not coming prepared for class, talking, being disruptive or distracting others the researcher believes that they are not following directions, but this may also be a result of not clearly defining classroom rules and having students understand expectations.

Figure 2

What student behaviors cause you challenges in your classroom?

![Bar chart showing percentages of different behaviors causing challenges in the classroom.]

One participant responded that the other behaviors that are most commonly seen in his/her classroom was, “Talking at inappropriate times; Not working well with others; Staying on Task; Being responsible and respectful.” These are common challenging
behaviors seen in middle schools across the country. In a study conducted by Mustafa Durmuscelebi (2010) in 2006-2007 participants responded that the most common misbehaviors within their classrooms were, “Complaints about friends,” “Talking without permission,” “Studying without a plan,” “Not listening to the teacher,” “Doing other things during the lesson,” and “Fighting with friends” (p.377). How can educators face these behavior issues? “Fairly simple analyses consistently show that behavior – positive and negative – generally occurs quite predictably in relation to objects or events in the environment” (Landrum, Lingo & Scott, 2011, p.31). The survey indicates that there is a common theme in challenging behavior in the classroom. All behaviors will receive a response, but it is the job of the classroom teacher to help indentify problematic behavior and provide an opportunity for alternative behavior, hopefully a desired behavior, that will increase the potential for student success.

Not all participants responded with a troubling or difficult behavior. One participant stated, “It varies by the class and the student. Generally, it is when a student becomes a distraction to others that we have to address the situation. Often times, with consistency and repetition, students come to know what to expect and thrive in the environment.” Teachers who respond to disruptive behavior with a punitive approach have little to no change in behavior when compared to proactive and positive approach (Thompson & Weber, 2010).

How can these common behaviors that are observed by teachers at Angola Middle School be changed? Teachers need to have training in identifying specific problematic behaviors. Antecedent, behavior, consequence (ABC) analyses is a process of determining the cause and consequence of specific behaviors. All behaviors cannot be lumped into one
category. To be able to effectively decrease undesirable behaviors teachers need to identify specifics of the challenging behaviors.

Potential Causes of Behavior

Participants were asked, “Why do you believe you see students having behavior issues in your classroom?” Participants were given five options, (1) students are bored, (2) students do not care, (3) academic material is too hard, (4) students enjoy trouble, and (5) other. Teachers were allowed to pick multiple reasons for student behavior. Ninety-three percent of the respondents reported that the reason they see behavior issues in their classroom is because students do not care. The data shows that twenty percent of the teachers feel that the students are bored or academic material is too difficult. Seventy-three percent of teachers believe that there are other factors that cause student behavior (Table 4). Teachers responded that other causes for student behavior are for seeking attention, outside influences (including home life), learned behaviors, and lack of knowledge of how to act. The high percentage of teacher belief that students do not care is alarming. Bucalos and Lingo (2005) state that “Students perform best when they feel good about themselves, what they are learning, and the classroom environment” (p.9). Students do not prefer to fail, but due to our teacher perceptions and current practices it can easily be observed that students purposefully have behavior issues because they do not care about their academic success.

Almost sixty-two percent of participants responded that challenging behaviors in the classroom are highly predictable (Figure 3). Rappaport and Minahan (2012) outline four functions of behavior: escape, obtain, engage, and seek attention. There was an overwhelming response from the participants; more than 90% of teachers
Table 4

Why do you believe you see students having behavior issues in your classroom?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students are bored</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students do not care</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic material is too hard</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students enjoy trouble</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered Question: 15

Skipped Question: 6

Figure 3

Challenging behaviors in the classroom are highly predictable.

There was an overwhelming response from the participants; more than 90% of teachers (Figure 4) as educators and problem solvers, this is an alarming statistic. What are current educators implementing to reduce disruptive student behavior? Many teachers
are not educated on evidence-based classroom management practices. It is suggested that schools need to help support teachers classroom management through comprehensive training. Effective practice or techniques from the classroom management checklist include: greeting students, posted schedule, positively stated expectations, actively engaging students, acknowledge appropriate behaviors and quick, calm, direct, explicit corrections/ redirection (MacSuga & Simonsen, 2011). The researcher believes that there is a deficit in implementing effective behavior management strategies. The survey indicates that over sixty-one percent of the teachers believe that both special education and general education students most commonly have behavior issues (Figure 5).

**Figure 4**

**Students who display disruptive behaviors often repeat the behavior.**

There are 14.3% of teachers who believe that students who most commonly have behavior issues are special education students. Teachers agree that the behaviors are predictable, but students often repeat the challenging behavior. There needs to be a
change in how educators respond to students who have challenging behaviors because current practices indicate that it is not working.

**Figure 5**

Students who have behavioral issues in my classes are mostly:

![Pie chart showing percentages of general education, special education, and both students with behavioral issues.]

**Current Strategies**

Teachers at Angola Middle School report using positive behavior strategies. Seventy percent of the teachers responded that they use positive behavior strategies three or more times in their classroom throughout a regular school day. Participants were given an open response question: "What strategies do you use most often to deal with behavior issues in your classroom?" Of the 21 responses 57.1% stated that they used some type of removal or punishment for their strategies for dealing with challenging student behaviors, see (Figure 6). Responses included: detention, timeout in hallway, removal from class, discipline referral, and separation from class or group. Removal or punishment have little effect on increase student’s appropriate classroom behavior and can often lead to a cycle
or repeatable of unwanted behaviors (Emmer, Evertson, & Worsham, 2003). The survey information have contradictory results due to the high response for teacher use of positive behavior strategies, but when asked what specific strategies teachers are using, an overwhelming amount of the responses include punitive strategies.

**Figure 6**

*How often do you use positive behavior strategies in your classroom per day?*

On the short answer 33.3% of the participants responded with a positive behavior strategy: Positive encouragement, positive reinforcement, relearning different behaviors, and reward system. Praise is an effective positive behavior management strategy. Thirty-eight percent of teachers at Angola Middle School acknowledge and praise appropriate behavior (Figure 7). The data appears to have inconsistencies between the short response and multiple choice questions. Based on the results from answers to the short response question, “What strategies do you use most often to deal with behavioral issues in your
classroom?" There is a need for teachers to be more informed of effective positive behavior strategies that can be effectively implemented into their classrooms.

Figure 7

During a typical class period I acknowledge and praise appropriate behavior

When given five choices, 83.3% of the teachers responded that they use positive reinforcement when working with students who have challenging behaviors (Figure 8). Forty-four percent of the teachers responded that they use time outs as a strategy for working with students who have behavioral issues. Again, there is a high variation in responses when given similar questions or opportunities to respond about positive reinforcement. When given the opportunity to respond in short response question teachers tend to respond with discipline type consequences opposed to other types of positive reinforcement strategies.

One type of positive behavior strategy is the use of social skills as a learning tool. The staff at AMS reported that more than 71.4% of teachers use social skills in their class
on a daily basis see Figure 9. This is a surprisingly high number of staff members using social skills. The question does not specify the skill set that is trying to be taught.

**Figure 8**

**What strategies do you most commonly use to help with students who have behavioral issues?**

After analyzing all of the short responses to the question, “What do students need to be successful in your class?” the responses indicated a high need for social skills with many responses containing students need: “organization, listening skills, to follow directions, respect and to prepared.” Teachers need to be using effective social skill training to assist students with the indentified needs stated above. Social skills can be taught in a minimal amount of time and can help students obtain the skills that necessary to be successful in an educational setting.

Question five of the survey was a statement question with a yes or no answer, “My rules and expectations are clearly stated and posted so all students understand.”
expectations clearly posted in their rooms. Classrooms that have clear rules and expectations should have the rules posted in the classroom for student success.

**Figure 9**

**During my class I teach social/behavioral skills:**

Students may have difficulties in classrooms where the teachers have set expectations that have not been taught or mastered to the students who have challenging behaviors. Establishing a plan is an important step in reducing the amount of classroom disturbances.

The staff at AMS reported that 23.8% of students who have behavior issues have a behavior improvement plan (BIP), 52.4% do not have BIP, and 23.8% of staff was unsure if the student had a BIP. Not all students will have a BIP, but teachers need to be aware of the students who have BIPs. There is a clear need for more training to the AMS staff on BIPs because almost a quarter of teachers were unsure of whether or not a student with challenging behaviors has a BIP. Teachers need to be more involved with
the students who currently have a BIP and be part of writing and implementing the BIPs. If the general education teacher is not aware of their role or plan of action for the BIP it will be difficult for the student to be successful in meeting their behavior goals.

When asked, “Would you like to have more training/strategies for dealing with behaviors that occur in your classroom?” less than 62% of the participants responded that they would like to have additional training. As educators learning should never stop, there will always be new strategies and techniques. More than 50% of participants at AMS have taught for more than 15 years, due to this high percentage, it appears to have a potential connection between the lack and desire to have additional training. Behavior issues are a growing concern throughout the educational community. Inclusion of students with disabilities including behavior and emotional challenges requires general education teachers to perform tasks that were not given to them years ago (Lee, Vostal & Lylo, 2008). However, younger teachers may feel that they have all of the up and coming trends for dealing with classroom management and behavior issue. Teachers who are early in their career report high levels of anxiety about their ability to maintain order in their classrooms. Teachers who attempt behavior management through “trial by fire” experiences result in managing behavior through frustration (Bucalos & Lingo, 2005). There is a high need for teachers to be trained or at a minimum to have access to the current trends in behavior management strategies for students with challenging behaviors.

**Conclusion**

Based on the data collected and current research there is a need for the strategies to help assist classroom teachers manage students with challenging behaviors. General education teachers need to have a better understanding of the causes of the behaviors that
are the root of disturbances in the classroom. Based on the data collected, the participants believe that challenging behavior is predictable; unfortunately the methods and techniques that are being used for working with students with challenging behavior are dated and seem to be more punitive or reactive instead of proactive. The result of the research indicates a need for a guidebook for classroom teachers who have students with challenging behaviors.
References


A Guidebook for Challenging Behaviors In the General Education Setting

Created By Benjamin C. Morgan
Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne
"Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

ALBERT EINSTEIN
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guidebook is to help assist classroom teachers who have students who display challenging behaviors. Challenging behaviors can have a negative impact on both students and teachers. Understanding the cause of the behaviors and having effective strategies can reduce challenging behavior in the classroom.

About the Author

My name is Ben Morgan and I am a graduate student at Indiana Purdue University at Fort Wayne, Indiana. I work with students who have emotional disabilities at Angola Middle school, grades sixth through eight. I am also a trainer for Crisis Prevention Intervention, CPI. For the past five years I have worked with students who have emotional disabilities both in the high school and middle school setting. I have a passion for working with students who have behavioral and emotional disabilities. I believe that as educators it is our responsibility to understand that fair is not always equal.

Purpose of the Handbook

Classroom teachers are continuously being challenged by student behaviors that have a direct impact on their ability to create a safe and productive learning environment. Educators are faced with an increased emphasis on high-stakes testing, emphasis on evidence-based practices, and response to intervention models have added to the demands
on teacher resources (MacSuga & Simonsen, 2011). As most recent education policies trend toward the inclusion of students with disabilities, teachers have experienced an increase in the numbers of students with emotional disabilities (ED), attention-deficit hyperactivity disorders (ADHD), autism spectrum disorders (ASD), and behavior disorders in the classroom (Lee, Vostal, & Lylo, 2011). General education teachers will continue to be challenged by students with troubling classroom behaviors and meeting the high academic standards.

“Classrooms are complex societies. Teachers are the leaders of these societies and the way they exercise their leadership abilities greatly affects the interactions that take place between teachers and students as well as interactions between the students themselves” (Ratcliff, Jones, Costner, Savage, David & Hunt, 2010, p16). As leaders of these societies, teacher’s leadership styles and abilities greatly impact the quality of interactions of those in the classroom. These interactions have a vast impact on the educational and social growth of the students within a specific classroom (Ratcliff, et al., 2010). Teachers are required to manage challenging behaviors and are simultaneously being held to high standards for student learning and progress. Because student behaviors in the classroom can be a distraction to both students and teachers, teachers in all subject areas can benefit from strategies to manage these behaviors for all student types. The purpose of this handbook is to provide teachers with useful collection of behavior management strategies, resources and tools for students with challenging behaviors.
Current Research

Students with emotional and behavioral disabilities are most successful when solid classroom organization and behavior management techniques are applied; however, most general education teachers suggest they do not feel sufficiently prepared to handle challenging behaviors. Focus will be placed on basic classroom management and behavior expectations, types of student behaviors and their functions, ways to analyze these behaviors, and teacher response to challenging behaviors both short term and long term.

While classroom management definitions can vary from school to school and even from teacher to teacher, fundamental principles apply to most. General principles for positive and effective classroom management: teach and encourage good social skills, compliment genuinely, encourage risk taking, model tolerance, help students feel valuable and recognize effort (Dougherty, 2002). Generally academics are stressed in our education system; however, middle school students are developing socially and emotionally and require guidance to develop positively.

Modeling is an effective way for students to understand tolerance; everyone has the right to have their own views. Teachers, along with school personnel have the ability to make students feel valuable to the classroom or school, which creates a feeling of trust and belonging. The result is, “Students learn to take responsibility for their actions, acknowledging misbehavior and taking consequences (Dougherty, 2002, p14). Finally, recognizing student effort has a large impact on students. When teachers recognize effort students may strive for more recognition.
Students from all grade levels are expected to meet classroom teachers' expectations regarding: academics, behavior, and social interaction while demonstrating self-control and cooperation skills. A large amount of students begin their academic experiences with the required skills for being successful in a structured classroom environment, other students will be less prepared to meet teacher expectations (Lane, Wehby, & Cooley, 2006).

“Behavior happens for a reason and is a form of communication” (Rappart & Minahan, 19, 2012). There are several frequent observable behaviors seen in classrooms: escape motivated behavior, sensory behavior, and attention motivated behavior.

The escape motivated behavior occurs most often when a student attempts to avoid people, homework, request, or situation. Avoidance or escape behaviors can often be easily observed, i.e. the student getting in trouble right before reading class because he/she struggles in reading class. The direct result is the student not being able to attend the reading class due to the behavior.

Sensory behaviors are motivated by a sensory input. If something feels good, tastes good or looks nice the behavior is continued, i.e. the student likes the feel of his/her tongue while he hums. Sensory behaviors can cause disruptions in the educational process for the student and/or their peers (Rappart & Minahan, 2012). There are eight areas that sensory overload can occur: smell, movement, balance, muscular feedback, taste, hearing, vision and oral. These behaviors can be distracting and difficult to understand in the general education setting.

Students can struggle finding acceptable ways to gain adult and peer attention. Attention seeking behavior can be seen as acting out, yelling, or any behavior that draws
attention to the student. Attention motivated behavior can generally be seen in both positive and negative situations (Rappart & Minahan, 2012). “Studies have shown that the predominant teacher response to disruptive student behavior is reactive and punitive rather than proactive and positive” (Thompson & Weber, 2010, p.72). These attention seeking behaviors are predictable and preventable.

Students must understand how to interact and it must be a practiced behavior. Self monitoring and student/teacher matching interventions leads to increases in targeted social skill behavior and decreases off-task behavior (Peterson, Young, Salzberg, West, & Hill, 2006). By the time students reach middle school, it is often expected that strong social skills are possessed, however, for some students, adequate social skills are not ever taught nor are they modeled in home life. In light of this, teachers must understand the challenges these students face and take the time to praise good social behavior and teach the correct behaviors when a student does not exemplify good social skills.

Since the mid-1990s to present in many schools zero tolerance policy have been in effect and used to enact disciplinary consequences on a variety of school behaviors. “Zero tolerance policies have also been applied to behaviors like truancy, tardiness, and vague catch-all categories such as "insubordination" and "disrespect"” (Brownstein, 2010, p24). Zero tolerance policies were put into place to make schools a safe place. These policies have resulted in predetermined consequences for rules that are broken. The zero tolerance policies generally result in exclusionary policies, in school suspension, out of school suspension and/or detentions. In general half of all elementary and middle school referrals are form repeat offenders. “Even when the disciplinary action is escalated to an
in-school suspension, that punitive approach generally has been unsuccessful in curbing maladaptive behaviors” (Smith, Bicard, S., Bicard, D. & Casey, 2012, 175).

Teachers will face challenging behavior during their careers. When dealing with students who display challenging behavior it can be physical and emotionally draining on the teacher. Understanding strategies that work with challenging students can assist in minimize the frequency of challenging behavior in the classroom. The goal for teachers is to help reduce behaviors by understanding the cause of the challenging behavior and then teaching the students expected behaviors.
CHAPTER TWO

UNDERSTANDING COMPONENTS OF BEHAVIOR

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Functional Behavior Assessment

To be able to effectively help students with challenging behaviors, educators first must understand the function of the behavior. What is the function of a behavior? The term functional behavior assessment (FBA) has probably been thrown around if you have dealt with specifically challenging students. The purpose of understanding the function of a behavior is to understand why problem behavior is occurring. An FBA is a formal process that is often completed by a member of the multidisciplinary team. However, the process of conducting an FBA can be conducted informally and is a simple manner. If general education teachers are having an issue with challenging behaviors my first two questions are: What specific behavior do you want to target (challenging behavior) and what do you think is causing the behavior? The next step for an educator who has a
student with challenging behavior is to dig deeper into the causes/function of the behavior.

**An FBA has four goals:**

- To describe specific behavior
- To predict when and where the behavior will occur
- To identify possible reasons for why the child behaves the way she or he does
- To develop intervention support that strategies to help reduce target behavior

The next two pages contain a form for completing an FBA, but the main concepts can still be used in any setting (http://mfba.net/forms.html).
FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT

Student Name: ___________________  ID: ___________  DOB: ___________  Case Manager: ___________________

Data Sources: □ Observation  □ Student Interview  □ Teacher Interview  □ Parent Interview  □ Rating Scales  □ Normative Testing

Description of Behavior (No. ___):

Setting(s) in which behavior occurs:

Frequency:

Intensity (Consequences of problem behavior on student, peers, instructional environment):

Duration:

Describe Previous Interventions:

Educational impact:
FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function of Behavior (No.  )</th>
<th>Specify hypothesized function for each area checked below.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Affective Regulation/Emotional Reactivity</td>
<td>Identify emotional factors; anxiety, depression, anger, poor self-concept; that play a role in organizing or directing problem behavior:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Cognitive Distortion</td>
<td>Identify distorted thoughts; inaccurate attributions, negative self-statements, erroneous interpretations of events; that play a role in organizing or directing problem behavior:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Reinforcement</td>
<td>Identify environmental triggers and payoffs that play a role in organizing and directing problem behavior:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antecedents:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Modeling</td>
<td>Identify the degree to which the behavior is copied, who they are copying the behavior from, and why they are copying the behavior:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Family Issues</td>
<td>Identify family issues that play a part in organizing and directing problem behavior:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Physiological/Constitutional</td>
<td>Identify physiological and/or personality characteristics; developmental disabilities, temperament; that play a part in organizing and directing problem behavior:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Communicate need</td>
<td>Identify what the student is trying to say through the problem behavior:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Curriculum/Instruction</td>
<td>Identify how instruction, curriculum, or educational environment play a part in organizing and directing problem behavior:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A FBA is not a requirement for general educators to use in the classroom, but it is a tool that can assist teachers to break down behaviors and begin to understand the function of the student’s behavior. Key components to a FBA and understanding the behavior are indentifying target behavior, setting in which the behavior occurs, frequency of the behavior, duration and educational impact. Becoming effective in determining the functions of behavior begins with understanding these concepts.

**Cause of Behavior**

The purpose of a FBA is to find the cause of the behavior, but what really causes of the behavior? The most common methods for managing students with challenging behavior ultimately result in the student succeeding with the function of their behavior: lecturing a student in the hallway or pulling him/her aside to discuss behavior (student receives attention) or refusing to comply to adult directions because the student does not want to complete an assignment which results in being sent to the office (student escapes from the work).
As educators it is important to understand the cause of the behavior before attempting to modify the challenging behavior. In the handbook we addressed seven most commonly seen disruptive behaviors:

- **To get attention or a reaction from peers and adults**
- **To get something tangible**
- **To get power or control**
- **To communicate feelings, wants, and needs**
- **As a result of a lack of understanding**
- **To escape or avoid something**
Frequent behavior interventions that have been commonly used to address and decrease specific challenging behaviors can result in increasing undesirable behaviors. For example, many students who struggle academically and do not participate in extracurricular activities receive little or no attention from their home environment; the end result is negative attention from a teacher can be obtained more easily and is better than no attention.

**To Gain Attention or Reaction**

The power to ignore or overlook is a powerful tool that can often be difficult for teachers to use. Teachers feel like they are giving in to the student or letting them get away with a behavior that they want to reduce. Students are constantly seeking attention from their peers and adults; it does not always have to be positive attention. When teachers pull a student out of the classroom to lecture them on a behavior or removes them from a group the student is actually being negatively reinforced and being provided with attention and the behavior will often times continue and possibly even increase.

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To Gain Something Tangible

- Students can often obsess over certain objects or even interests (Foods, smells, materials, toys, books, etc.
- Obsession can easily result in disruptive behavior
- Student may attempt to fulfill obsession no matter the situation or setting

A middle school student struggled to control herself in the cafeteria because of her obsession with food; she would repeatedly take food from other students’ trays. If food was present in the classroom it would be a constant distraction until she fulfilled her “obsession;” she wanted to try the food.

To Gain a Sense of Power

- Students are often categorized as manipulative, oppositional-defiant, stubborn and non-compliant
- Students do the opposite of what ever an adult requests
- Student wants to feel the power of control and make their own decisions

For Example:
If a teacher requests for a student to go to the office he or she may go to the office, but go see the guidance counselor or nurse. This type of behavior is also seen when students argue over simple tasks; when you say black, they say white.
To Meet a Sensory Need

- Difficult to understand or Recognize
- Behaviors that can be exhibited to meet sensory needs include:
  - Rocking
  - Tapping
  - Humming
  - Putting objects in their mouth
- Behaviors can be distraction
- Goal is to help student develop or find more socially acceptable alternatives

To Communicate Feelings

- Communication is both verbal and nonverbal
- Communicating feelings can be observed as behavior issue

Students often struggle to communicate their feelings. Humans are constantly communicating their feelings both verbally and nonverbally. Students with behavioral challenges struggle to understand these key clues that many students and adults take for granted.

When a student is extremely angry he or she may have no other skills to express the anger than through a tantrum or melt down.
Lack of Understanding or Skill

Challenging kids are displaying challenging behaviors because they are lacking the skills.

- Developmental delays in crucial cognitive skills:
  - Flexibility and adaptability
  - Frustration tolerance
  - Problem solving

- Challenging behaviors occur because students have a difficult time understanding and predicting behavior

- Students who lack these skills often struggle to gain these necessary skills in life

- Students *NEED* these skills taught

To Escape or Avoid

- Challenging students are often behind academically, which result in the student struggling to understand or keep up with the rest of the class.

- Students struggle to be in a social environment because they do not understand situation

- Difficult behavior can be displayed because the student does not have the skills and knowledge base to cope with the situation

- Students will act out, refuse or cause other distractions to get out of a task or situation
Consequence of Behavior

All behaviors receive a response – responses can be negative, positive or neutral. The action that a teacher takes can greatly influence the behavior that a student displays.

For example:

If a student is acting out because they are attempting to seek attention and the teacher responds to the behavior by giving attention to the student the behavior will likely be repeated even if the student receives negative attention. Teachers need to be aware of their reactions to a behavior.

Teachers have the keys to control and manage behaviors; however it is difficult to know which key fits. Teachers must understand the cause of the behavior to effectively manage difficult behaviors and increase appropriate behaviors.

Students who display challenging behaviors are often removed from the class by either placing them in the hallway or sending them to the office. The result of these types of behavior management strategies only cause students to fall farther behind educationally and can also reinforce undesirable behavior. Teachers need to ask themselves, why is this current behavior occurring and what can I do to help the student?
It is easy for teachers to fall into the trend in believing that students are displaying inappropriate behaviors because they simply don’t care. Why would a student choose to fail due to their challenging behaviors in the classroom? Students are not choosing to fail; these students do not have the skills that are necessary for them to be successful in a structured academic environment. Educators believe in differentiation for students with academic needs, but these same educators are using a one size fits all discipline policy.

Challenging behaviors cause students to fall behind academically. Challenging behaviors increase teacher burnout. Challenging behavior affects both the student and the teacher.

"THE GREATEST DANGER FOR MOST OF US IS NOT THAT OUR AIM IS TOO HIGH AND WE MISS IT BUT THAT IT IS TOO LOW AND WE REACH IT."

MICHELANGELO

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CHAPTER 3

CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS – What do they look like and what can I do?

Challenging behaviors are going to be part of teaching in any setting. Today there are an increasing number of students who display behavioral challenges, between 1976 and 2004; the number of school aged students who are served under the category of emotional disability has increased from 283,000 to 489,000. Students who are severed under the educational autism category has increased from 22, 664 in 1994 to 211,610 in 2006 (Otten & Tuttle, 2011). A variety of other students, both special and general education students, are being serviced together in the general education setting where all types of challenging behaviors are occurring.

Off Task & Refusal

Off task behavior or refusal to follow directions tend to be link together when observed. What is the cause for students to not follow directions or to continue to be off task? Should these students be given referrals or sent to the office? If we want to effectively change the behaviors we need to get away from our “old fashioned” ways. If we have sent a student to the office four times in the past month are we changing their behavior? When students tell a teacher, “I don’t care,” the answer to the problem is not simple and cannot be solved by simply actions. Teachers who have students with challenging behaviors and react with “old fashion” methods see behaviors continue and the patterns continue with minimal or no success in changing the behavior.

"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." ~ Benjamin Franklin
When students are off task or refuse teachers need to ask themselves, why is this behavior occurring? To understand the problems teachers need to:

- **Get to know your students**
- **Take time to talk to students**
- **Do not take behaviors personally**

Teachers have been placed under high demands with current standards for academic success. It can be difficult to find extra time, but by taking the time to understand your students you will be able to unlock their true learning potential.
Get to Know Your Students

- **Student Index Cards**: Have students fill out personal information including:
  - Phone#, address, family size, birth order, living situation, nick names, hobbies or activities of interest

- **Subject-related Questionnaires or Interest Inventories**: Have questions regarding favorite subject, least favorite subject, how often do you read, what is your most difficult subject? Questions can be used to attempt to understand students feelings and attitudes towards specific content.

- **Parent Questionnaires**: Get in touch with parents to have them give you insight. Ask parents’ for their perspectives and suggestions for the best way to engage their son or daughter.

- **Learning Style**: Have students take interests inventory to find out their specific learning style.

- **Reading Fluency**: Look into their records to find their current reading level or use a common tool such as STAR reader to assess their reading level. When teachers have accurate information about a student’s reading ability a more accurate expectation can be placed onto the student.

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The important thing is not so much that every child should be taught, as that every child should be given the wish to learn.

John Lubbock
Take Time to Talk to Your Students

How often do teachers struggle with students who refuse or simply state, “I don’t care.” What does it truly mean when a student doesn’t want to participate in an activity or responds to your request with a simple, “No, I do not care.” There is not one specific reason or answer for why a student does not want to participate in a lesson or refuses to do a task that was directed to him or her by a teacher. Discovering what a student needs is not black and white, however, the first steps in helping a student who refuses in your classroom is to simply talk to them and get to know their personalities, educational backgrounds and personal interests. On the following page is an example, provided by Foster Walsh, the author of A Middle School Dilemma: Dealing with “I don’t care,” for factors that may contribute to a student’s disengagement.

As educators it can be easy to get caught up in the task of every day teaching requirements. Teachers need to remember to treat students as people with feelings and emotions. All students are not created the same and it is the job of the teacher to take the time to get to know their students. When teachers and students begin to build rapport with each other powerful and effective relationships are built. These relationships are crucial for students who display challenging behaviors because the behaviors are generally difficult to understand. Students who display challenging behaviors in the classroom also struggle to build relationships with their peers. Teachers can be easily frustrated due to these difficult behaviors, resulting in teachers who isolate students because of their behaviors.
CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION SETTING

I DON'T CARE

Student Self-Efficacy
(Feeling of capability)

Student Maturity
(Emotional and psychological stability)

Teacher/Student Relationship
(Level of compatibility, personal communication & trust)

Interest in Subject Matter
(Level of intrinsic desire to study content)

Teacher Competency
(Teacher's person and instructional ability)

Task Complexity
(Level of Task Difficulty)

Past School or Subject Experiences
(History of positive/negative school-related events in a student's life)

Classroom Complexity
(Where learning, teaching and group dynamics converge)

Current Emotional State
(What going on in the student's life right now)

Self-Identity
(How the student sees him/herself)

The Social Context
(Peer relationships and peer pressure)

Adapted from:
A Middle School Dilemma: Dealing with "I don't care" by Foster Walsh
Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Attention deficit / Hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common childhood behavior disorders, it affects five percent of the population (Martinussen, Tannock & Chaban, 2011). Common symptoms associated with ADHD are inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. Children with ADHD experience difficulties in many or all of the skills needed for academic success including:

- Starting and finishing tasks and organizing multi-step tasks due to lack of organizational skills
- Waiting turns and staying seated due to impulsivity and hyperactivity
- Staying on task due to inattention
- Making transitions: behavior in lunchroom, hallway or different classroom due to difficulties with change in expectations
- Following through on multi-step directions due to problems with short term memory retrieval
- Producing work consistently due to intermittent inability to retrieve information from memory
- Learning new material (needs lots of opportunities to master basic skills)
- Getting along with peers
Environmental and Instructional Considerations

Students who are diagnosed with ADHD or who have symptoms of ADHD do not all display the same behaviors. It is important to treat each student as an individual. However, there are some strategies that have been identified as being successful for students with ADHD.

The following information on ADHD strategies was adapted from a pamphlet (National Association of School Psychologist) created by Stephen E. Brock, *Special Needs: Helping the Student with ADHD in the Classroom*

Task Durations

To assist with student’s limited attention span, academic assignments or tasks should be brief and feedback (accuracy of assignment or quality of writing, etc) needs to be immediate.

Direct Instruction

Students with ADHD have improved attention to a task when the activity is teacher directed as opposed to independent work. Teaching note taking skills result in greater comprehension of material and on-task behavior during direct instruction.

Scheduling

Research indicates that the on-task behavior of students with ADHD progressively worsens over the course of the day. If possible it there can be advantages to providing academic instruction in the morning. During the afternoon problem solving skills decrease.
Novelty

When students are presented with material in a unique and interesting format attention improves. Increasing novelty and interest level of tasks through the use of increased stimulation (color, shape, texture, etc) reduces anxiety levels and enhances attention.

Structure and Organization

Lessons need to be carefully structured and important points clearly identified. Students with ADHD show improved memory when material is structured in meaningful layout. For example, providing an outline for a lecture is helpful in pointing out key points and increases note taking skills.

Rules: Needs Reminders & Visual Cues

Rules in the classroom need to be clearly defined, specific and frequently reinforced. Rules need to be reinforced visually – role play or real life experiences. Well-defined rules with clear consequences are essential for the success of students with ADHD. Visual cues need to be placed throughout the classroom. Rules and expectations change from setting to setting or can even be forgotten. Reviewing rules allows for students to have teacher expectations fresh in their minds.
Pacing of Work

If possible, it is helpful to allow students with ADHD to work at their own pace for task completion. Problematic behaviors associated with ADHD are reduced when students are allowed to work at their own pace, compared to situations where work is paced by others (peers or teachers).

Instructions

Students with ADHD have difficulty following multiple step directions. It is essential for directions to be short, specific and direct. It is beneficial for both the student and the teacher to make sure there is understanding of the directions. Have students rephrase directions in their own words. Teachers also must prepare themselves to repeat directions frequently without becoming agitated or offended because the student was not paying attention.

Productive Physical Movement

Students with ADHD have difficulty staying on task and sitting still. Teachers need to effectively plan for physical movement throughout the class period or lesson. It is appropriate to allow students who struggle to sit still or focus for controlled movement. Movement can include anything from getting up to sharpen a pencil, allowing students to stand at their desk or counter to complete assignments or making a trip to the office to pick up items. Educators need to recognize that everyday will not be the same. Some days students may have a more difficult time sitting still or staying focused, teachers need to be flexible and modify instructional demands according to the students needs.
Being Informed

Knowledge of ADHD and common symptoms is helpful for teachers to anticipate difficult situations in the classroom setting. Teachers need to anticipate issues that may arise with students who have ADHD. When presenting a task that the teacher suspects might exceed the student’s attention span, it is appropriate to reduce assignment length and emphasize quality opposed to quantity.

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Special Education

Inclusion is common practice among general education classrooms. The concept of full inclusion is that students with special needs can and should be educated in the same settings as their peers with support services. "Recent trends toward the inclusion of students with disabilities mean that a majority of students with emotional and behavioral disorder now spend 40% of their day in general education settings" (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2009). Students in the general education setting are also being identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). ASD in the past has commonly been misdiagnosed or overlooked because educators are not familiar with characteristics/symptoms. Due to the increased awareness on the part of special education staff, students have been identified in larger numbers. These students remain in general education classrooms for various lengths of time; it is beneficial for teachers to recognize specific idiosyncrasies of students with ASD. Students who are served under a special education label are frequently involved in general education classes, however this guidebook is going to focus on students with emotional disabilities (ED) and ASD.
Autism Spectrum Disorder

There are many benefits associated with educating students with ASD in inclusive educational settings. However, the inclusion of students with ASD has created considerable challenges for general education teachers, especially when they display challenging behaviors (Strain, Wilson & Dunlap, 2011). “Due to atypical neurological development, students on the spectrum are affected by a range of issues on a daily basis – physical pain, confusion about requests, difficulty communicating wants and needs and sensory issues – that might trigger behavior that interferes with teaching and learning” (Fisher, 2011).

Characteristics

The following signs and symptoms of Autism have been adapted from a pamphlet produced by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. The main signs and symptoms of ASD involve language, social behavior, and behaviors concerning objects or routines:

- **Communication** – Both Verbal and non-verbal

- **Social Interactions** – Such as sharing emotions, understanding how others think or feel and holding conversations

- **Routines or Repetitive Behaviors** – often called stereotyped behaviors – repeating words or actions, obsessively following routines or schedules, playing with toys or objects in repetitive and sometimes inappropriate ways or having very specific inflexible ways of arranging items.
Students with ASD struggle to understand thoughts and feelings of themselves and others. The result is teachers struggle to understand the needs of the student. For example, a student covering his ears might be experiencing auditory overload cause by “white noise” (buzzing of air conditioners, computer fans, or other sounds that many people have the ability to tune out), loud noises at a school assembly, or even excessive verbal instruction for a teacher. When a student with ASD pushes or hits another student, he or she may be expressing that they need more space, would like to get their attention or is in some type of physical pain (as minor as a headache or sickness). Educators must recognize the fact that ASD student’s behaviors are an attempt to communicate a need.

**Strategies and Tips for Students with ASD**

Throughout the school environment, students with ASD:

- May have difficulties working in groups
- May perceive themselves as the class policeman
- May prefer to work alone

**Group Work**

Tips for ASD students when using group work:

- Assign to small, dependable group
- Provide visual copy of each group member’s role
- Vary groups (size, job) as student becomes more comfortable
- Use social stories – Stories that provide examples of students working in a group
Transitions

Change is difficult for everyone, students with ASD:

- May have difficulty making transitions
- May communicate resistance to change by displaying acting out behaviors

Strategies to assist students with ASD transition and reduce inappropriate communicative behaviors:

- Have a predictable schedule
- Use a visual schedule to communicate transitions clearly
- Establish and use visual cues to support appropriate behaviors
- Give warnings/verbal cues about how much time is left before the activity ends or for approaching transitions
- Use timers for predictability
- Forewarn students in advance of any known changes
- Visually demonstrate when a task is considered “done”
- Discuss expected behavior ahead of time for special events

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Perceptions are not all the same, students with ASD:

- May appear to be a perfectionist
- May not want to "try" for fear of failure
- May over-react to situations
- May demonstrate "behaviors" to communicate feelings
- May appear to have low motivation for school tasks

Difficulties understanding the big picture, students with ASD:

- May not understand "assumed" basic knowledge or expectations
- May not see grades as important
- May view adults as equals
- May have difficulty understanding another perspective

Strategies to help students with ASD understand the big picture:

- Use social stories to help explain big picture events – i.e. cause & effect
- Show grade book or permanent folder as visuals to explain
- Draw hierarchy to teach chain of command (ex. Superintendent, principal, assistant principal, teacher, and student)
- Intentionally teach about emotions using visuals, body language, spoken word (Student may not "pick up on" social cues automatically)
Building skills that are expected

"Expected" skills may not have been acquired yet, students with ASD:

- May demonstrate a lack of organizational skills
- May not be able to plan for long-term projects
- May not demonstrate acquired skills due to poor performance on tasks and tests

Strategies to assist students with ASD build skills:

- Teach organization through visuals, practice and social stories
- Establish daily system for support to monitor organization
- Use visual supports such as color coding, calendar use, lists, step by step guides
- Teach self monitoring skills specific for organization (check list, visual cues)
- Use calm, reassuring tones of voice for directives
- Tell students what you want them to DO, rather than what you don’t want (Ex. “Write your assignment in your agenda,” instead of “Don’t forget to write this down”)
- Show students what you want – provide visual cues whenever you can
Social Concerns

Students with ASD seem to be difficult to get along with, they:

- May appear argumentative
- May display rigid thinking patterns
- May want to use only one path to solve a problem
- May not make connections that are obvious to others

Strategies to help students with ASD:

- Use a patient and calm voice
- Be firm and consistent
- Use fewer words to make your point clear
- Provide student check-list or step-by-step guides
- Refrain from joining the argument
- Use visuals to show another solution or to make a connection
- Recognize that students may be responding from developmental age rather than chronological age
- Provide additional breaks
- Break assignments into small parts
Anxiety

Anxiety can be seen in a variety of forms, Students with ASD:

- May function with a high level of stress
- May quickly overload over seemingly small things
- May become agitated with excess stimuli
- May resist homework

To help reduce stress and anxiety in students with ASD:

- Be predictable in responding to students
- Provide necessary support and structure to create a “comfort zone”
- Watch for signs of escalating stress level and intervene with preventative steps (Change activity, take a break, etc)
- Offer alternatives
- Consider reducing quantity to increase quality

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**Emotional Disabilities**

Indiana special education law defines emotional disability (ED) in Article seven as the following:

"Emotional disability" means an inability to learn or progress that cannot be explained by cognitive, sensory, or health factors.

The student exhibits one (1) or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects educational performance:

1. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.
2. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
3. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships.
4. Inappropriate behaviors or feelings under normal circumstances.
5. Episodes of psychosis. (Indiana Department of Education, 2008)

Students with ED can be very challenging students to work with academically for general education teachers. In the general education setting classroom teachers are often driven by the standards and having students show adequate academic progress for their specific subject. According to the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY) there is no specific cause for emotional disabilities, however several factors have been suggested to be related to or cause emotional disabilities: heredity, brain disorder, diet, stress and family functioning. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 8.3 million children aged 4-17 years have parents who have discussed with a doctor or school staff about their child’s emotional or behavioral difficulties. The U.S. Department of Education reported that in the 2003-2004 school year more than 484,000 students received services under the label for ED (www.cdc.gov).
Characteristics of Students with Emotional Disabilities (ED)

Students with ED are often judged and feared based on their special education label before teachers even meet them. All students are different, but ED students do not need to be feared. Characteristics often vary from place to place; Kauffman (2005) indicates that it is difficult to determine a reliable definition of ED because it becomes socially unacceptable behaviors that are determined by authority figures. Culture and environment play a significant role in determining socially acceptable behaviors. Students labeled with ED typically have endured experiences outside of school beyond their age. It is important to understand there are generally many outside influences that affect students with ED. Students with ED may experience:

- Drug abuse by parents
- Experimentation with drugs at early ages
- Sexual abuse
- Missing parents
- Limited financial resources
- Transient life style (Not having a place to call home)

These are only a few of the circumstances that can typically be related to students with ED. As educators it is important to remember that students with ED tend to have difficult outside factors that influence their behaviors. Teachers need to not look at specific
behaviors as the problem; there are antecedents that lead up to the challenging or disruptive behavior that needs to be addressed. Punishing a challenging behavior is not the answer and it will not solve the problem that caused of the challenging behavior.

Behaviors and Characteristics displayed in the classroom related to Emotional Disabilities:

- Hyperactivity (short attention span, impulsiveness)
- Aggression / Self-injurious behavior (acting out, fighting)
- Withdrawal (Failure to initiate interaction with others; excessive fear or anxiety)
- Immaturity (inappropriate crying, temper tantrums, poor coping skills)
- Learning difficulties (academically below grade level)
- Inappropriate attention seeking behavior (refusal, defiance, jokes)
- Low self-esteem

Adapted from: www.naset.org/fileadmin/user_upload/.../emotional_disturbance.ppt

Strategies & Tips for Students with Emotional Disabilities (ED)

First thing, as teachers we must understand that we do not get to decide if we have students with challenging behavior in the classes we teach, however we do have the ability to make the choice of how we respond to students. Teachers are the adults in the situation; please do not take offensive behavior personally. Often times students are so used to having adult figures in their lives disappear, it is difficult to create bonds and their defense mechanism is to try and make you dislike them or “leave” their life. The greatest tool you can have with ED students is creating positive rapport.
Teachers need to:

- Show respect for all students – actions and words that originate from respect are more likely to be productive than those that come from anger, frustration or fear.
- Find positive attributes – all students have positive and redeeming characteristics. Point out these positive traits and also remember them during times when students are displaying challenging behaviors.
- Don’t ignore behaviors – students who display disruptive behavior generally have outside influences – attempt to solve the true source of the problem through investigation.
- Don’t take it personally – many behaviors are attention seeking – Why are you going to take negative comments personally? Forget the comments and remember what life might be like in their shoes.
- Be fair – treat challenging students the same as you treat your best students.
- Strategies that will be suggested throughout this handbook may be used for any students who are displaying challenging behaviors.
- For more behaviors strategies please refer to classroom strategy section in Chapter four.
CHAPTER FOUR

CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

It is important to understand that there is not one specific handbook or strategy that will solve all of your problems when it comes to challenging behavior. Challenging and disruptive behavior is difficult and requires individualized strategies to meet the behavioral needs of specific students. The strategies that will be discussed in this section are not specific for students with emotional disabilities, autism spectrum disorder or general education students. Challenging behaviors can come in all forms and from all types of students. These strategies can be used with all students.
The following strategies adapted from *Cracking the Behavior Code* by Nancy Rappaport and Jessica Minahan

**Oppositional Behaviors**

Students with oppositional behaviors are difficult for teachers. Behaviors are often viewed as challenging all authority and disagree with everything.

**Accommodations:**

- Modify schedule – allow student to alternate between classes he/she enjoys and those they do not like as much
- Embed choice – allow student to pick the order of assignments, the materials used or the place to work
- Give open-ended, flexible assignments
- Offer hands-on experimental lessons
- Encourage daily self-calming practices

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FOR A FAIR SELECTION EVERYBODY HAS TO TAKE THE SAME EXAM: PLEASE CLIMB THAT TREE

www.joebower.org
Interaction strategies for students who display oppositional behaviors:

- Positively describe students – students are not stubborn, instead think that they are good at standing up for themselves
- Avoid power struggles
- Avoid yes-or-no questions
- Give request and let the student process – do not hover over student or wait for response
- Give indirect demands – ex. Some of the students still need to turn in your homework assignments

Response Strategies:

- Use natural consequences as a motivator
- If a student asks a challenging question – set limits
- Set limits that are enforceable, reasonable, clear and simple
- Use incremental rewards throughout the class period
Withdrawal behaviors

Students with withdrawal behavior often appear to lack communication skills. Withdrawal behavior can also be seen as depressed. Students tend to lack friendships with peers; they are viewed as “loners.”

Accommodations:

- Initiate a buddy system during passing periods or lunch time
- Use visuals
- Teach positive-thinking skills
- Relate the students own interests in the curriculum

Interaction Strategies:

- Be cautious when using humor – it can be misinterpreted as sarcasm
- Give positive feedback
- Offer evidence to dispute negative perceptions – in response to “I am stupid,” the teacher can say “half of the class got that same problem wrong, are they stupid too?”
- Photograph or video tape positive social interactions
Response strategies for students with withdrawal behaviors:

- Avoid one-on-one talks
- Avoid over helping or over prompting
- When a student misperceives a social situation, help him or her understand the situation through replaying (modeling) or comic strips
Anxiety Related Behavior

Anxiety can be seen in many different forms, but may also be difficult to recognize. Anxiety is an inner feeling that can stress or even fear for individuals.

Accommodations:

- Provide a safe space in our out of the classroom for the student to go to when feeling anxious
- Schedule regular breaks
- Modify assignments and tasks – don’t overwhelm with quantity
- Encourage daily self calming practices – such as taking a break, deep breathing, reading, coloring, etc

Interactions Strategies:

- Use concise language – don’t be too wordy
- Use leadership-building and self-esteem building activities
- Apply non-contingent reinforcement
- Work on building relationships
Response strategies for anxiety related behavior:

- Avoid responses that reinforce escape motivated behavior – ex. Timeouts
- Allow student to earn rewards for exhibiting appropriate behaviors
- Recognize and praise student when they demonstrate a self regulation skill
- Help student recognize his or her level of anxiety when signs are shown
Understanding Behaviors: Collaborative Problem Solving Technique

The information from this section has been adapted from a webinar by Ross W. Greene, Ph.D. Dr. Greene is an Associate Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and the originator of a model of psychosocial treatment for challenging kids titled, Collaborative Problem Solving.

Important Questions:

- Why? (Why are challenging kids challenging?)
- When? (When are challenging kids challenging?)
- What? (What do challenging kids do when they’re challenging?)

Educators often feel that challenging students display challenging behaviors because they choose to be difficult. Does a student who constantly gets sent to the office enjoy being sent to the office, is he/she getting what they want? It can be difficult to understand, yes they are getting what they want, but why do they want to be out of a class so bad that they display challenging behaviors?

Students have challenging behaviors because they lack the skills not to be challenging. Challenging behaviors are related to skills, not motivation. For years we have been trying to give incentives to help students be successful – motivation is not the problem. Challenging behavior develop when the demands that are placed onto the student outweigh the skills or abilities to adapt in the given environment.
If a student is unable to communicate a need (ex. communicating the need that an assignment is too difficult) because the student lacks communication skills problems develop and can be seen in some type of challenging behavior – refusal, acting out, etc.

When attempting to identify lagging skills (cause for behavior) in challenging students the main focus from educators is “Dead-End Information”:

- He has bi-polar disorder
- Her mother is crazy
- She just wants attention
- He has a mental illness
- She is from that neighborhood

If educators focus on these causes for a student’s challenging behavior then there will never be a solution to the unsolved problem. The above information cannot be changed – we need to start worrying about the things we can change. Behavior issues are caused by unsolved problems – students do not act out when there is not a problem.
Challenging Episodes Are Highly Predictable

If challenging behavior is predictable then educators need to be responding with a proactive response, not a reactive response. The problems occur because we do not fully understand the problem behavior, because we are not specific about the challenging behavior.

Example:

- He is impulsive → this is not very specific
- He is impulsive in social studies class → better when now understand the setting
- He has a hard time raising his hand when answering discussion questions during social studies class → The best way to understand behavior, it is the most descriptive

Even if specific challenging behaviors are predictable, if we are not being specific when identifying the “What” and “When” there will be a struggle to identify “Why” the behavior is occurring.

Once the “What” and the “When” are identified educators have three common approaches to handling the unsolved problem or lagging skill.

- Option A: Impose adult will (unilateral problem solving – generally results in consequences) – causes challenging kids to have challenging behaviors
  - Based on rewards and consequences
  - Provides no information about the factors making it difficult for the student to meet a given expectation
Option B: Collaborative Problem Solving

- Begins with a neutral observation – “Recently I have noticed that…”
- Put yourself in the shoes of involved parties:
  - What does it feel like to be this kid, parent, classroom teacher, other?
- The goal for Option B is to solve the problem with the student instead of doing something to the student.
- Option B takes time – teachers need to build rapport with the student. During this process teachers often rush to find a solution.
- Ask questions:
  - What are you thinking during this issue?
  - Who, What, When, Where & Why?
  - How so, can you say more?
  - I don’t understand
- What happens if the student is not talking?
  - It is okay – Don’t Freak!
- Don’t give up – attempt to figure out what type of silence you are receiving from the student:
  - Doesn’t know
  - Maybe never thought about problem before
  - Maybe you have never asked
  - The problem needs to be broken down into components
  - Needs time to process and think
  - Last step: Educated guess for possible solution
- Beginning to solve the problem
  - Brainstorm solutions that will address the concerns of both parties (student & teacher)
  - Give students the first opportunity to generate solutions – resolution of the problem is a collaborative effort (all parties involved)
- The goal is not to come up with a solution for the next time - The goal is to create a solution so the problem does not happen again

Plan C: Drop it for now

- Does the behavior need to be handled now?
- It is okay to temporarily drop expectations – this is difficult
Social Skills Instruction

Social skills are necessary for student success. “Even with the best of academic instruction, if students do not know how to appropriately behave, they will not be able to perform to expectations” (Marchant & Womack, 2010, Pg. 6). Students who struggle academically are often placed into intervention groups to help students gain missing academic skills. Social skills can often be over looked – students are simply expected to follow social norms and behave appropriately. It is not expected that students come to school with the knowledge to read or add and subtract – the skills are taught. If students are lacking social skills, as educators we cannot expect students to pick them up on their own, we must teach them.

Common Social Skills Students Lack but Teachers Expect:

- Follow directions
- Make their assistance needs known in an appropriate way
- Ignore Peer distractions
- Manage conflicts appropriately with peers and adults
- Demonstrate self control
- Cooperation
Skillstreaming the Adolescent: A guide for teaching prosocial skills, 3rd Edition by Ellen McGinnis, Robert Sprafkin, N. Jane Gershaw and Paul Klein (2012) is an effective resource for teaching social skills. The following activities have been taken from their collection of activities. The activities are simple to use in most academic settings and can take as little as 20 minutes. Each activity includes a description and steps of the specific skill, suggested modeling activities and two interactive homework activity/worksheets.

Specific Social Skills:

- Listening
- Following Directions
- Understanding the Feelings of Others
- Using Self-Control
- Responding to Failure
- Concentrating on a Task
Listening

Skill Steps:

1. **Look at the person who is talking.**
   Face the person; establish eye contact.

2. **Think about what is being said.**
   Show this by nodding your head, saying, “Mm-hmm.”

3. **Wait your turn to talk.**
   Don’t fidget; don’t shuffle your feet.

4. **Say what you want to say.**
   Ask questions; express feelings; express your ideas.

**SUGGESTED MODELING DISPLAYS**

*School or neighborhood:* Teacher explains classroom assignment to main actor.

*Home:* Mother feels sad, and main actor listens.

*Peer group:* Friend describes interesting movie to main actor.

*Job:* Your boss tells you how to be safe on the job.

**COMMENTS**

All of the beginning social skills are basic to the functioning of the group. In starting a Skillstreaming group, it is useful for participants to have a reasonable grasp of these skills before proceeding to other skills.

Like Step 2 for this skill, many of the behavioral steps that make up the skills described in this chapter are *thinking* steps. That is, in actual, real-world use of many skills, certain steps are private and occur only in the thinking of the skill user. When modeling or role-playing such thinking steps in Skillstreaming, it is crucial that the enactment be aloud. Public display of thinking steps significantly aids learning.
HOMEWORK REPORT

Listening

Name ___________________________ Date __________________

SKILL STEPS

1. Look at the person who is talking.
2. Think about what is being said.
3. Wait your turn to talk.
4. Say what you want to say.

FILL IN NOW

1. Where will you try the skill? ____________________________

2. With whom will you try the skill? ____________________________

3. When will you try the skill? ____________________________

FILL IN AFTER YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL

1. What happened when you did the homework?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2. Which skill steps did you really follow?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3. How good a job did you do in using the skill? (check one)

  □ excellent □ good □ fair □ poor
HOMEWORK REPORT

Listening

Name______________________________________________ Date _______________________

SKILL STEPS
1. Look at the person who is talking.
2. Think about what is being said.
3. Wait your turn to talk.
4. Say what you want to say.

FILL IN NOW
1. Where will you try the skill? ________________________________
2. With whom will you try the skill? ________________________________
3. When will you try the skill? ________________________________
4. If you do an excellent job, how will you reward yourself? ________________________________
5. If you do a good job, how will you reward yourself? ________________________________
6. If you do a fair job, how will you reward yourself? ________________________________

FILL IN AFTER YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL
1. What happened when you did the homework?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

2. Which skill steps did you really follow?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

3. How good a job did you do in using the skill? (check one)
   □ excellent □ good □ fair □ poor

4. What do you think your next homework assignment should be?
Asking for Help

SKILL STEPS

1. Decide what the problem is.
   Be specific: Who and what are contributing to the problem; what is its effect on you?

2. Decide if you want help for the problem.
   Figure out if you can solve the problem alone.

3. Think about different people who might help you and pick one.
   Consider all possible helpers and choose the best one.

4. Tell the person about the problem and ask that person to help you.
   If the person wants to help you but is unable to do so at the moment, ask the person when a good time would be.

SUGGESTED MODELING DISPLAYS

School or neighborhood: Main actor asks teacher for help with difficult homework problem.
Home: Main actor asks parent for help with personal problem.
Peer group: Main actor asks friend for advice with dating.
Job: Main actor asks supervisor to clarify what he/she is to do.

COMMENTS

The definition of problem, as used in this skill, is anything one needs help with, varying from problems with other people to school and other informational problems.
Asking for Help

Name_________________________________________ Date _________________________

SKILL STEPS
1. Decide what the problem is.
2. Decide if you want help for the problem.
3. Think about different people who might help you and pick one.
4. Tell the person about the problem and ask that person to help you.

FILL IN NOW
1. Where will you try the skill? ________________________________________________
2. With whom will you try the skill? ___________________________________________
3. When will you try the skill? ________________________________________________

FILL IN AFTER YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL
1. What happened when you did the homework?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

2. Which skill steps did you really follow?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

3. How good a job did you do in using the skill? (check one)
   □ excellent  □ good   □ fair   □ poor
Asking for Help

Name__________________________________________ Date ______________________

SKILL STEPS
1. Decide what the problem is.
2. Decide if you want help for the problem.
3. Think about different people who might help you and pick one.
4. Tell the person about the problem and ask that person to help you.

FILL IN NOW
1. Where will you try the skill? ____________________________________________
2. With whom will you try the skill? _______________________________________
3. When will you try the skill? ___________________________________________
4. If you do an excellent job, how will you reward yourself? __________________
5. If you do a good job, how will you reward yourself? _______________________
6. If you do a fair job, how will you reward yourself? _________________________

FILL IN AFTER YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL
1. What happened when you did the homework?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

2. Which skill steps did you really follow?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

3. How good a job did you do in using the skill? (check one)
   □ excellent   □ good   □ fair   □ poor

4. What do you think your next homework assignment should be?
   __________________________________________
Understanding the Feelings of Others

SKILL STEPS

1. Watch the other person.
   Notice tone of voice, posture, and facial expression.

2. Listen to what the other person is saying.
   Try to understand the content.

3. Figure out what the person might be feeling.
   He/she may be angry, sad, anxious, and so on.

4. Think about ways to show you understand what he/she is feeling.
   You might tell him/her, touch him/her, or leave the person alone.

5. Decide on the best way and do it.

SUGGESTED MODELING DISPLAYS

School or neighborhood: Main actor brings gift to neighbor whose spouse has been ill.

Home: Main actor recognizes parent is preoccupied with financial concerns and decides to leave parent alone.

Peer group: Main actor lets friend know he/she understands friend’s discomfort on meeting new people.

Job: Main actor supports co-worker who is in trouble with the boss.

COMMENTS

This skill is well known by the term empathy. Although difficult to teach, it is critical for group members to add it to their repertoire of skills.
HOMEWORK REPORT

Understanding the Feelings of Others

Name ____________________________ Date __________________

SKILL STEPS
1. Watch the other person.
2. Listen to what the other person is saying.
3. Figure out what the person might be feeling.
4. Think about ways to show you understand what he/she is feeling.
5. Decide on the best way and do it.

FILL IN NOW
1. Where will you try the skill? ________________________________

2. With whom will you try the skill? ________________________________

3. When will you try the skill? ________________________________

FILL IN AFTER YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL
1. What happened when you did the homework?

2. Which skill steps did you really follow?

3. How good a job did you do in using the skill? (check one)
   - excellent  - good  - fair  - poor

HOMEWORK REPORT

Understanding the Feelings of Others

Name ___________________________ Date _______________________

SKILL STEPS

1. Watch the other person.
2. Listen to what the other person is saying.
3. Figure out what the person might be feeling.
4. Think about ways to show you understand what he/she is feeling.
5. Decide on the best way and do it.

FILL IN NOW

1. Where will you try the skill? _______________________________________

2. With whom will you try the skill? ____________________________________

3. When will you try the skill? _________________________________________

4. If you do an excellent job, how will you reward yourself? ______________

5. If you do a good job, how will you reward yourself? ___________________

6. If you do a fair job, how will you reward yourself? _____________________

FILL IN AFTER YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL

1. What happened when you did the homework?

   _________________________________________________________________

   _________________________________________________________________

2. Which skill steps did you really follow?

   _________________________________________________________________

   _________________________________________________________________

3. How good a job did you do in using the skill? (check one)
    □ excellent □ good □ fair □ poor

4. What do you think your next homework assignment should be?

   _________________________________________________________________
Using Self-Control

SKILL STEPS

1. Tune in to what it is going on in your body that helps you know you are about to lose control of yourself.
   Are you getting tense, angry, hot, fidgety?
2. Decide what happened to make you feel this way.
   Consider both outside events and “internal” events (thoughts).
3. Think about ways in which you might control yourself.
   Slow down; count to 10; breathe deeply; assert yourself; leave; do something else.
4. Choose the best way to control yourself and do it.

SUGGESTED MODELING DISPLAYS

School or neighborhood: Main actor keeps from yelling at teacher when teacher gives harsh criticism.
Home: Main actor controls self when parent forbids desired activity.
Peer group: Main actor controls self when friend takes something without asking permission.
Job: Main actor keeps from yelling at his/her supervisor when corrected on work.

COMMENTS

It is often helpful to discuss various ways of controlling oneself before role-playing the skill. A list of self-control techniques can be written on the whiteboard or easel pad and used to generate alternative tactics to use in a variety of situations.
HOMEWORK REPORT

Using Self-Control

Name ____________________________________________ Date ____________________________

SKILL STEPS

1. Tune in to what it is going on in your body that helps you know you are about to lose control of yourself.
2. Decide what happened to make you feel this way.
3. Think about ways in which you might control yourself.
4. Choose the best way to control yourself and do it.

FILL IN NOW

1. ___________________________ W
   Here will you try the skill?

2. ___________________________ W
   With whom will you try the skill?

3. ___________________________ W
   When will you try the skill?

FILL IN AFTER YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL

1. What happened when you did the homework?
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

2. Which skill steps did you really follow?
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

3. How good a job did you do in using the skill? (check one)
   □ excellent □ good □ fair □ poor

HOMEWORK REPORT

Using Self-Control

Name ____________________________ Date ____________________________

SKILL STEPS

1. Tune in to what it is going on in your body that helps you know you are about to lose control of yourself.
2. Decide what happened to make you feel this way.
3. Think about ways in which you might control yourself.
4. Choose the best way to control yourself and do it.

FILL IN NOW

1. Where will you try the skill? ____________________________
   W

2. With whom will you try the skill? ____________________________
   W

3. When will you try the skill? ____________________________
   W

4. If you do an excellent job, how will you reward yourself? ____________________________
   I

5. If you do a good job, how will you reward yourself? ____________________________
   I

6. If you do a fair job, how will you reward yourself? ____________________________
   I
FILL IN AFTER YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL

1. What happened when you did the homework?

2. Which skill steps did you really follow?

3. How good a job did you do in using the skill? (check one)
   □ excellent □ good □ fair □ poor

4. What do you think your next homework assignment should be?
Responding to Failure

SKILL STEPS

1. Decide if you have failed at something.
   The failure may be interpersonal, academic, or athletic.

2. Think about why you failed.
   It could be due to skill, motivation, or luck. Include personal reasons and circumstances.

3. Think about what you could do to keep from failing another time.
   Evaluate what is under your control to change: If a skill problem, practice; if motivation, increase effort; if circumstances, think of ways to change them.

4. Decide if you want to try again.

5. Try again using your new idea.

SUGGESTED MODELING DISPLAYS

School or neighborhood: Main actor deals with failing grade on exam.
Home: Main actor fails at attempt to help younger sibling with a project.
Peer group: Main actor deals with being turned down for date.
Job: Main actor deals with not being selected for a special job by his/her supervisor.
HOMEWORK REPORT

Responding to Failure

Name_____________________________________________ Date ___________________________

SKILL STEPS

1. Decide if you have failed at something.
2. Think about why you failed.
3. Think about what you could do to keep from failing another time.
4. Decide if you want to try again.
5. Try again using your new idea.

FILL IN NOW

1. ____________________________
   where will you try the skill? _____________________________________________

2. ____________________________
   with whom will you try the skill? _________________________________________

3. ____________________________
   when will you try the skill? _____________________________________________

FILL IN AFTER YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL

1. What happened when you did the homework?
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

2. Which skill steps did you really follow?
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

3. How good a job did you do in using the skill? (check one)
   □ excellent   □ good   □ fair   □ poor
HOMEWORK REPORT

Responding to Failure

Name_________________________________________ Date ________________________

SKILL STEPS
1. Decide if you have failed at something.
2. Think about why you failed.
3. Think about what you could do to keep from failing another time.
4. Decide if you want to try again.
5. Try again using your new idea.

FILL IN NOW

1. Here will you try the skill? ________________________________ W
2. With whom will you try the skill? ________________________________ W
3. When will you try the skill? ________________________________ W
4. If you do an excellent job, how will you reward yourself? ________________________________ I
5. If you do a good job, how will you reward yourself? ________________________________ I
6. If you do a fair job, how will you reward yourself? ________________________________ I
FILL IN AFTER YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL

1. What happened when you did the homework?

2. Which skill steps did you really follow?

3. How good a job did you do in using the skill? (check one)
   - excellent  - good  - fair  - poor

4. What do you think your next homework assignment should be?
Concentrating on a Task

SKILL STEPS

1. Decide what your task is.
2. Decide on a time to work on this task.
   Consider when and how long to work.
3. Gather the materials you need.
4. Decide on a place to work.
   Consider where: Minimize noise level, people present, possible interruptions.
5. Decide if you are ready to concentrate.

SUGGESTED MODELING DISPLAYS

School or neighborhood: Main actor prepares to research and write a report.
Home: Main actor prepares to repair bicycle or appliance.
Peer group: Main actor gathers materials necessary for trip with friends.
Job: Main actor gathers materials and interview questions to interview for a job.

COMMENTS

This skill helps group members overcome problems with distractions by focusing on planning prior to undertaking a task. Planning, in this sense, involves scheduling and arranging materials and work environment.
HOMEWORK REPORT

Concentrating on a Task

Name ___________________________ Date ___________________________

SKILL STEPS

1. Decide what your task is.
2. Decide on a time to work on this task.
3. Gather the materials you need.
4. Decide on a place to work.
5. Decide if you are ready to concentrate.

FILL IN NOW

1. Where will you try the skill? ________________________________________
2. With whom will you try the skill? _____________________________________
3. When will you try the skill? __________________________________________

FILL IN AFTER YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL

1. What happened when you did the homework?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

2. Which skill steps did you really follow?

_________________________________________________________________

3. How good a job did you do in using the skill? (check one)
   excellent    good    fair    poor
HOMEWORK REPORT

Concentrating on a Task

Name ___________________________ Date ___________________________

SKILL STEPS
1. Decide what your task is.
2. Decide on a time to work on this task.
3. Gather the materials you need.
4. Decide on a place to work.
5. Decide if you are ready to concentrate.

FILL IN NOW
1. Where will you try the skill? _______________________________________
2. With whom will you try the skill? ____________________________________
3. When will you try the skill? _________________________________________
4. If you do an excellent job, how will you reward yourself? _______________
5. If you do a good job, how will you reward yourself? _____________________
6. If you do a fair job, how will you reward yourself? ______________________

FILL IN AFTER YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL
1. What happened when you did the homework?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

2. Which skill steps did you really follow?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

3. How good a job did you do in using the skill? (check one)
   □ excellent □ good □ fair □ poor

4. What do you think your next homework assignment should be?
   ________________________________________________________________
Use of Praise

Teachers can easily experience high levels of stress and emotional exhaustion when teaching in classrooms with high levels challenging student behavior. A simple strategy than can easily be overlook as even being a strategy, is the use of praise. Behavior specific praise positively influences both academic and behavioral success (Haydon & Musti-Rao, 2011). Behavior specific praise is specific praise and specifically identifies the behavior that is desirable.

Examples of specific behavior praise include:

- “Jim, you did a really nice job writing a five paragraph essay and including topic and concluding sentences for each paragraph.”
- “Nice job having all of your folders organized and your agenda completely and accurately filled out”

Key components of Behavior Specific Praise:

- Link praise statement to a specific behavior
- Provide feedback
- Be Sincere

It is easy for teachers to get wrapped up in the negatives of behavior. Teachers sometimes struggle to find positives during a class period. When is the last time you complemented a student for a behavior that is typically expected? Teachers need to remember that focusing on the negatives, not only makes their jobs more stressful, but can also make it difficult for students to understand the expectations.
CHAPTER FIVE

REPRODUCIBLE TOOLS

The following tools have been taken from The Tough Kid Tool Box. The tools are easily reproducible and allow for teachers to create helpful documents for students with challenging behaviors. The collection includes:

Information Note

My Weekly Note

Weekly Summary Sheet

Monitoring Behavior Form

Behavior and Home Contracts

Reinforcer Menus

These documents can easily be recreated to use in your own classroom and are helpful with communication and self monitoring.
# Information Note

**Name:**

**Date/Week of:**

**Phone:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periods</th>
<th>Teacher's Initial</th>
<th>Class Performance (circle one)</th>
<th>Assigned Homework</th>
<th>Upcoming Tests?</th>
<th>Missing Work?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G Great</td>
<td>A Average</td>
<td>U Unsatisfactory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Great</td>
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<td>G Great</td>
<td>A Average</td>
<td>U Unsatisfactory</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Rating Scale**

- **Great = ____**
- **Average = ____**
- **Unsatisfactory = ____**

**Comments:**

---

*See pp. 17-26 for suggestions for use.*
# My Weekly Home Note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject(s) or Behavior(s)</th>
<th>Teacher's Initials</th>
<th>MON</th>
<th>TUE</th>
<th>WED</th>
<th>THUR</th>
<th>FRI</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Scale</th>
<th>G = Great</th>
<th>A = Average</th>
<th>U = Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent's Initials</td>
<td>MON</td>
<td>TUE</td>
<td>WED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any homework?

Any upcoming tests?

Any missing work?

---

See pp. 17-26 for suggestions for use. © 2009 Jenson, Rhode & Reavis
## Weekly Summary Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student's Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best Daily Score:</th>
<th>Weekly Average:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Self-Monitored Behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MON</th>
<th>TUE</th>
<th>WED</th>
<th>THUR</th>
<th>FRI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1.  

2.  

3.  

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Define one to three behaviors and write them in the boxes.
2. Have the student record the behaviors for the morning and the afternoon each weekday.
3. Do not have the student keep track of more than three behaviors.
4. Have the student write his or her best daily score and weekly average at the top of the form.

### Comments:

---

See pp. 13–36 for suggestions for use. © 2009 Jenson, Rhode & Rears
# Monitoring Behavior Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s Name:</td>
<td>Class:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periods</th>
<th>Performance Rating</th>
<th>Teacher’s Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 3 4</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rating Scale—Circle a Number**

1 = Needs Improvement  
2 = Barely OK  
3 = Average  
4 = Great

If the teacher agrees with the student rating, put a line across the circled rating. ✏️

If the teacher disagrees with the student rating, put an "X" across the circled rating. ✗

**Behavior(s) Being Rated:**

---

See pp. 33-36 for suggestions for use.  © 2009 Jenson, Rhode & Reavis
I. __________________________ agree to do the following behaviors:

1. __________________________

2. __________________________

3. __________________________

When: _________________________

How Well: ______________________

If I am successful, I will receive __________________________,
given by __________________________ on __________________________.

Bonus Clause __________________________

Penalty Clause __________________________

__________________________________________  (Student Signature)  (Date)

__________________________________________  (Teacher Signature)  (Date)

See pp. 45–46 for suggestions for use.  © 2009 Jenson, Rhode & Reavis
**Homework Contract**

1. ____________, agree to complete the homework assignment(s) for the following subjects:

   1. ____________
   2. ____________
   3. ____________
   4. ____________
   5. ____________
   6. ____________

   with at least _____% accuracy in _____ out of _____ subjects over a time period of ________ to ________

   (Date)  (Date)

For meeting criteria on _____ out of _____ days, I can earn ________

   (Number)  (Number)

   ________ to be delivered ________ by ________

   (When)  (Person)

(Contract)

(Student Signature)  (Date)

(Teacher Signature)  (Date)

See pp. 45-49 for suggestions for use.  © 2009 Jenson, Rhode & Reavis
Secondary Reinforcer Menu
With Key

Student Name ___________________________ Class Period ___________________________

Instructions to Student:

Write a check (✓) next to at least eight items/activities you would like to earn in class.

1. Listen to Top 40 music
2. Skip a homework assignment
3. Talk to a friend
4. Soda pop
5. Ticket to a sporting event
6. Watch a movie
7. Pizza
8. Listen to iPod
9. Class trip
10. Fast food coupon
11. Snack food
12. School supplies
13. Play a video game
14. Computer time
15. Play basketball or another sport
16. Read
17. Ticket to a school dance
18. Participate in an assembly
19. Class party
20. Drawing

See pp. 75 and 76 for suggestions for use. © 2009 Jensen, Rhode & Reavis
Secondary Reinforcer Menu

Student Name __________________________ Class Period __________________

Instructions to Student:
Write a check (√) next to at least eight items/activities you would like to earn in class.

Teacher: Write available items/activities to the right of each item number.

1. ______________________________________
2. ______________________________________
3. ______________________________________
4. ______________________________________
5. ______________________________________
6. ______________________________________
7. ______________________________________
8. ______________________________________
9. ______________________________________
10. _____________________________________
11. _____________________________________
12. _____________________________________
13. _____________________________________
14. _____________________________________
15. _____________________________________
16. _____________________________________
17. _____________________________________
18. _____________________________________
19. _____________________________________
20. _____________________________________

See pp. 75 and 76 for suggestions for use.

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References


Appendices
Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

PURDUE UNIVERSITY

HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS

To: JANE LEATHERMAN
NF 250L

From: JEANNIE DICLEMENTI, Chair
Social Science IRB

Date: 10/05/2012

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 10/04/2012

IRB Protocol #: 1209012741

Study Title: An investigation of the classroom teachers needs to help students with behavior issues in the general education setting.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed the above-referenced study application and has determined that it meets the criteria for exemption under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

If you wish to make changes to this study, please refer to our guidance “Minor Changes Not Requiring Review” located on our website at http://www.irb.purdue.edu/policies.php. For changes requiring IRB review, please submit an Amendment to Approved Study form or Personnel Amendment to Study form, whichever is applicable, located on the forms page of our website www.irb.purdue.edu/forms.php. Please contact our office if you have any questions.

Below is a list of best practices that we request you use when conducting your research. The list contains both general items as well as those specific to the different exemption categories.

General
- To recruit from Purdue University classrooms, the instructor and all others associated with conduct of the course (e.g., teaching assistants) must not be present during announcement of the research opportunity or any recruitment activity. This may be accomplished by announcing, in advance, that class will either start later than usual or end earlier than usual so this activity may occur. It should be emphasized that attendance at the announcement and recruitment are voluntary and the student’s attendance and enrollment decision will not be shared with those administering the course.
- If students earn extra credit towards their course grade through participation in a research project conducted by someone other than the course instructor(s), such as in the example above, the students participation should only be shared with the course instructor(s) at the end of the semester. Additionally, instructors who allow extra credit to be earned through participation in
research must also provide an opportunity for students to earn comparable extra credit through a non-research activity requiring an amount of time and effort comparable to the research option.

* When conducting human subjects research at a non-Purdue college/university, investigators are urged to contact that institution’s IRB to determine requirements for conducting research at that institution.

* When human subjects research will be conducted in schools or places of business, investigators must obtain written permission from an appropriate authority within the organization. If the written permission was not submitted with the study application at the time of IRB review (e.g., the school would not issue the letter without proof of IRB approval, etc.), the investigator must submit the written permission to the IRB prior to engaging in the research activities (e.g., recruitment, study procedures, etc.). This is an institutional requirement.

**Category 1**

* When human subjects research will be conducted in schools or places of business, investigators must obtain written permission from an appropriate authority within the organization. If the written permission was not submitted with the study application at the time of IRB review (e.g., the school would not issue the letter without proof of IRB approval, etc.), the investigator must submit the written permission to the IRB prior to engaging in the research activities (e.g., recruitment, study procedures, etc.). This is an institutional requirement.

**Categories 2 and 3**

* Surveys and questionnaires should indicate
  ° only participants 18 years of age and over are eligible to participate in the research; and
  ° that participation is voluntary; and
  ° that any questions may be skipped; and
  ° include the investigator’s name and contact information.

* Investigators should explain to participants the amount of time required to participate. Additionally, they should explain to participants how confidentiality will be maintained or if it will not be maintained.

* When conducting focus group research, investigators cannot guarantee that all participants in the focus group will maintain the confidentiality of other group participants. The investigator should make participants aware of this potential for breach of confidentiality.

* When human subjects research will be conducted in schools or places of business, investigators must obtain written permission from an appropriate authority within the organization. If the written permission was not submitted with the study application at the time of IRB review (e.g., the school would not issue the letter without proof of IRB approval, etc.), the investigator must submit the written permission to the IRB prior to engaging in the research activities (e.g., recruitment, study procedures, etc.). This is an institutional requirement.

**Category 6**

* Surveys and data collection instruments should note that participation is voluntary.

* Surveys and data collection instruments should note that participants may skip any questions.

* When taste testing foods which are highly allergenic (e.g., peanuts, milk, etc.) investigators should disclose the possibility of a reaction to potential subjects.
Appendix B

Information withheld for privacy.
Appendix C

Information withheld for privacy.
Appendix D

**Challenging Behaviors in the General Education Setting**

1.) *What subject or subjects do you teach? (Choose all that apply)*

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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Special Education</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2.) *How many years experience do you have teaching?*

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>More 15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.) *What is your highest degree earned?*

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.S.</td>
<td>M.S.</td>
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</table>

4.) *On average how many students are in your class?*

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>26-30</td>
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</table>

5.) *My rules and expectations are clearly stated and posted so all students understand.*

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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
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</table>

6.) *During a regular class period how many behavior issues/concerns do you have?*

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.) *What student behaviors cause you challenges in your classroom most often? (Choose all that apply)*

- Not following directions
- Sleeping
- Foul Language
- Disrespect
- Other: ____________________________

8.) *Student behavior interferes with my instruction:*

- Hourly
- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Never

9.) *During my class I teach social/behavioral skills:*

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Never
10.) During a typical class period I acknowledge and praise appropriate behavior
0 times
Once
Twice
Three times
Four times
Five or more

11.) Students who have behavior issues in my class are mostly
General education students
Special Education Students
Both

12.) Students who most commonly have behavior issues have a behavior improvement plan (BIP)?
Yes
No
Unsure

13.) Why do you believe you see students have behavior issues in your classroom?
Students are bored
Students do not care
Academic material is too hard
Students enjoy trouble
Other ________________

14.) Challenging behaviors in the classroom are highly predictable.
True
False

15.) Students who display disruptive classroom behaviors often repeat the behavior.
True
False

16.) What strategies do you most commonly use to help with students who have behavioral issues?
Differentiated Instruction
Ignore behavior
Positive Reinforcement
Time Out
Other __________________
17.) How often do you use positive behavior strategies in your classroom per day?
- 0 times
- Once
- Twice
- Three times
- Four times
- Five or more

18.) Would you like to have more training/strategies for dealing with behaviors that occur in your classroom?
- Yes
- No

Open Ended

19.) List the behaviors that cause you the most issues in your classroom.
20.) What strategies do you use most often to deal with behavioral issues in your classroom?
21.) What do students need to be successful in your class?
Appendix E

Information withheld for privacy.
Information withheld for privacy.
Information withheld for privacy.