

Dealing with Challenging Students

Lynne DeSousa & Barb Long
Behavior Support Team

Techniques to Minimize Negative Behaviors In The Classroom

- Clear Rules and Expectations
- Teach children to set limits and monitor their own behavior
- Punishment should be mild and used sparingly
- The way to succeed in your classroom should be very clear
- Temper discipline with flexibility
- Make an extra effort at consistency and predictability
- Allow children to save face
- Do not try and control behavior with power struggles
- Focus upon replacement behaviors
- The competing behavior is the key
- Utilize the Peer Element

- Be Ready to be tested and act accordingly---Don't make limits that you can't enforce
- Open Communication

- You do not have to react at that moment--responding later can be even more powerful

☺ Remember the 5:1 Ratio: ***Five** positives to every **One** correction*

Examples of Program Accommodations and Adjustments

Here are some examples of accommodations and adjustments you can make to help students with learning and behavior problems in the classroom. They are not offered as check lists and should not be considered as all-inclusive listings. Rather, they are “starters” for helping develop effective programs.

Structural Strategies

- Provide a structured learning environment with definite routines
- Make separate spaces for different types of tasks
- Adapt non-academic times such as lunch, recess, and physical education to be instructional times for learning social skills
- Change student seating to increase proximity and/or decrease distractions
- Alter location, personnel, and/or classroom supplies for easier access or to minimize distraction
- Extend time requirements
- Allow breaks, vary activities often

Organizational Strategies

- Model & reinforce organizational systems
- Write out homework assignments, check student’s recording of assignments
- Help students develop completion plan(s) for lengthy or complicated assignments
- Tailor homework assignments to strength areas
- Set time expectations for assignments, co-planning with student when possible
- Provide clues such as clock faces indicating beginning and ending times
- Provide a “visual schedule” of activities and events
- Give oral cues or prompts
- Use home-school assignment sheets
- Use study guides to organize material

Behavioral Strategies

- Use behavior management strategies consistently within a class and across classes
- Utilize positive verbal and/or non-verbal reinforcements
- Utilize natural consequences whenever possible
- Emphasize connection between task required and benefit(s) accrued
- Confer with student’s parents (and students as appropriate) to extend involvement at home and outside school
- Establish a home/school communication system
- Post rules and consequences for classroom behavior
- Make rules clear, simple, and easy to interpret
- Provide daily/weekly progress reports to students and parents

- Request parent reinforcement
- Have students repeat directions, contingencies, and conspicuous strategies
- Reinforce self-monitoring and self-recording of behaviors, emphasizing attention on expected and successful behaviors

Presentation Strategies

- Tape lessons or allow students to tape lessons so student can listen to them again
- Use computer-aided instruction & other audiovisual equipment
- Select alternate textbooks, workbooks, or books on tape
- Highlight main ideas and supporting details in the book
- Provide outlines, graphic organizers, and study guides
- Vary the method of presentation (lecture, sm. groups, lg. groups, movies, peer tutors, demonstrations, simulations, experiments, games)
- 1-to1 instruction with available adults
- Ask students to paraphrase to check understanding
- Provide community mentor in specialized areas of student's interest
- Vary instructional pace
- Reinforce use of compensatory strategies (mnemonic devices, spell check, mind maps)
- Vary the kinds of instructional materials used
- Use manipulatives when appropriate
- Emphasize critical information and ideas
- Provide routine review
- Provide conspicuous strategies to address and solve problems
- Provide parallel curriculum when needed
- Demonstrate concepts and procedures (Show, not tell)
- Reinforce study skill strategies (survey, read, recite, review)
- Introduce new vocabulary and check for understanding before giving reading assignment
- Provide note takers
- Allow use of calculator/computer and other support technologies

Evaluation Methods

- Limit amount of material presented on single page
- Provide a sample or practice test
- Provide for oral testing
- Provide tests in segments so that student hands in one segment before receiving the next part
- Provide personal copy of test tools and allow for color coding/highlighting
- Extend the time and/or number of days given to take a test
- Modify grading system, weight of course components
- Provide alternate methods to show critical learning

Behavior Types Summary Worksheet

TYPE I: Child doesn't know how to do what is required

Signs to look for:

- A. Have you seen the behavior in this or other settings and/or situations?
- B. Have others (teachers, parents, peers) seen the behavior?

Major intervention strategy: Provide direction instruction of behavior (demonstrations, modeling, coaching)

General rules: Provide more information, move from concrete to abstract, gradually reducing size and number of steps.

Suggestions: Change instructions, provide demonstrations, use models, change materials, increase cues and prompts, and provide buddies or guides to help through learning the fine points. Provide rewards for completing steps along the way.

TYPE II: Child knows how to do what's required, but doesn't do it

Signs to look for:

- A. Behavior occurs in other situations and/or with different people.
- B. Behavior occurs some of the time, but not under the conditions desired or required by the environment.

Major intervention strategy: Increase the contingency discrimination. Highlight the stimuli/consequences relationship.

General rules: Highlight relationship between behavior and consequences, make discriminating stimuli clear and consistent, and increase similarities between current environment and those where behavior occurs naturally.

Suggestions: Consistently apply and withhold reward, pair prompts with stimuli, use rehearsals and role plays of appropriate behavior scenarios, post rules and rewards, describe specific behavioral expectations.

TYPE III: Competing Behaviors

Signs to look for:

- A. Child will do the "right" thing when there is nothing better to do.

Major intervention strategy: Change the result of the behavior.

General rules: Change ration between rewards for desired and undesired behaviors, increase the number and types of desired behaviors that will access desired intent, increase the number and types of competing intents available.

Suggestions: Strengthen reinforcement for desired behaviors, weaken reinforcers for undesired behaviors, increase contact with the child, increase number and types of behaviors that can access reinforcement, build a menu system of reward that is partially controlled by the child, increase option, choices and autonomy of child.

TYPE IV: Not enough reward to maintain the behavior

Signs to look for:

- A. Behavior that has been improving begins to deteriorate.
- B. Reoccurring problems that were once solved.
- C. Child stops doing what is required in a particular area.

Major intervention strategy: Change to a more difficult task, increase the payoff for the task, and vary the payoff/task ratios over time.

General rule: Change the reward to task ratio.

Suggestions: Switch task for novelty, replace current task with a more difficult one, find alternate behavior path to same result, change methods of input and output, switch types and frequency of rewards, increase rewards, reduce quantity of work required, develop menus of rewards, tasks and input-output formats with child, develop alternate sources of reinforcement (peers, parents, other teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, bus drivers, siblings).