

Researched-Based Behavior Interventions

The following is a collection of introductions and summaries of research-based strategies for behavior problems. Many of the interventions are described in full and can be found in Student Behavior: Intervention and Prevention Strategies that Work, Leigh Deveres, LRP Publications and If My Kid's So Nice..., Dr. James Sutton, Friendly Oaks Publications. Additional interventions have been collected from other professional resources.

Planned Discussions: One-on-one talks with students about their behaviors.

1. Make sure you talk to the student in terms of preventing future bad behavior, not dwelling on past problems.
2. Talk to all students during regular pullout sessions. That way, when a child acts out, and needs to have a planned discussion time with the teacher about his behavior, it won't seem unusual.

Structured Reinforcement Systems: Giving students small rewards for achieving behavioral goals, sometimes based on a points system.

1. Let the student choose what he wants to work for, then narrow down the responses to what can realistically be offered. Or, if the student is significantly learning-delayed and can't express what he wants, observe what they do to find out what they like.
2. Don't set artificial time limits for earning the reward. For example, if a child earns points for good behavior, don't say they need to collect 50 by the end of the week in order to earn their reward. Instead, each time they earn a reward in whatever time it takes, up the ante a little and make it harder the next time.

The Timer Game or Beeper Tapes

Purpose: To improve positive reinforcement for increasing amounts of appropriate behavior.

Method: Use a cassette player or timer to sound a series of audible beeps at unpredictable times during the class period. Each time the "beep" is heard, have students check themselves and record whether they are on task on self-monitoring sheets.

Contracts

Purpose: To positively motivate and obtain desired behavior.

Method: Objectively define a specific behavior. Create a standard and timeline for students to demonstrate that behavior. Select a positive consequence as the motivating component of the contract. It can be designed for an entire classroom.

Mystery Motivators

Purpose: To maintain a desired behavior over time.

Method: Write a reinforcer on a piece of paper and put it in the mystery motivator envelope, Create excitement. Randomly mark "reinforcement days" on a monthly calendar and then cover all the days with pieces of masking tape or self-

sticking dots. Post the calendar at the front of the room. For each day students earn reinforcement, one dot or piece of masking tape is peeled. If there is a star, the students are given the mystery motivator envelope to open.

Raffle/Lottery

Purpose: To reinforce desired academic performance or behavior on a daily basis.

Method: Allow students to earn chances in a raffle when they show desired behaviors, such as following directions the first time they are given. Depending on how frequently you need to reinforce the class, hold drawings daily, weekly, or monthly.

Marble Mania

Purpose: To increase a desired behavior of a group of students.

Method: Allow the class to earn marbles at various times throughout the day for exhibiting desired behaviors. The class may earn one marble for each student who is showing the desired behavior. Place the marbles in a container. When the container is full, the group earns a predetermined reward.

Class Meetings

Purpose: To build self-confidence and continuous reinforcement of desired behaviors in a classroom.

Method: Give students a specific time at the end of each week to discuss collaboratively among themselves and the teacher how well desired behavior goals were achieved. Students and teacher give positive feedback to each other and discuss ways to work on specific desired behaviors.

Managing Resistance: People are much more likely to perform a small task than a large task. Take baby steps in your approach to altering behavior. It gives a person the ability to begin managing their behavior. Resistance serves an adaptive function - all behavior is purposeful and is designed to produce a particular outcome. To manage resistance you must teach replacement behaviors - ones that are socially acceptable but still allow the student to accomplish the same outcome as the inappropriate behavior.

Encouraging Resistance: If a student is resistant, by encouraging that resistance, it can redefine the student's behavior as cooperative. Example: A student throws his book on the floor in defiance and says, "You can't make me pick it up." Using the student's resistant frame of reference, you reply, "You're right, I can't make you pick it up. I can't even make you move that book one inch. And I refuse to allow you to move the book to the table!" The student is caught between a rock and a hard place. If he doesn't pick up the book, he is being cooperative. If he does pick up the book, the goal of getting the book on the table is met.

Positive Behavior Support

Students who engage in serious problem behavior typically require an individualized, multi-component approach to behavioral support. This approach, termed "effective" or "Positive Behavioral Support (PBS)" grew out of the

critical limitations of common behavior management interventions. PBS combines reactive consequence strategies with proactive interventions to minimize serious problem behaviors and increase the student's repertoire of socially acceptable skills. An example would be to teach a student how to appropriately gain attention rather than use unacceptable methods to meet the same need.

The focus of PBS is that challenging behaviors arise from unmet needs. Therefore, it is necessary to teach students who engage in such behavior (aggression, defiance, self-injurious) socially acceptable alternative ways to address their needs.

From this perspective, problem behavior is viewed as purposeful and as serving a function for the student, either to get something, such as attention, or to avoid or escape something, such as failure. Further, problem behavior is viewed as context-related. For example, Johnny might push David to get attention from David during Math class, while pushing David in the hallway might serve another function, such as to avoid teasing.

Understanding the reason behind the problem behavior provides the teacher with opportunity to design and implement effective interventions. It is unlikely that the student's problem behavior will decrease or extinguish itself without specifically teaching the student an appropriate set of alternative skills. The word "discipline" means, "to teach". It is important that we teach in this sense, and not simply look to hand out consequences in order to suppress undesirable behaviors.

Collaboration: There are a variety of ways educators can work together to help students with behavior problems.

*planned discussion with the student about his or her behavior

Problem-Solving: Teach students specific approaches to problem-solving so they can use them in dealing with their own conflicts and thinking through potential issues. Students without these skills are more likely to act on impulse or ignore problems rather than thinking through solutions.

and *academic assistance to address underlying problem

*restructuring self-talk to help a student avoid negative comments

Persistence-plus: Persistence, continuity and consistency.

Persistence: Every student should have someone who will not give up on them or allow them to become distracted from the importance of school.

Continuity: There should be someone who knows the student's needs and is available throughout the school year. Consistency: The message should be the same from everyone who works with the student: "Do the work, attend classes, be on time, express frustration in a constructive manner and stay in school." To the extent possible, the same person should provide continuity and consistency.

*self-behavior monitoring

Monitoring: Keep on top of what the student is doing in school in order to target the occurrence of risk behaviors and measure the effects of the interventions used to address them.

*teaching desired behaviors and goal setting and contracts (see *Self-Management To Reduce Disruptive Classroom Behavior)

*giving students positions of responsibility, such as fire drill monitor, to boost their feelings of self-worth and reduce their need to attract attention

Affiliation: Promote the student's connection to the school and sense of belonging to the community of students and staff by facilitating his participation in school activities.

*ask staff to go out of their way to have frequent and age-appropriate positive interactions

Relationships: Build caring relationships between the student and adults. The foundation of these relationships should be built on the premise that an adult associated with the school cares about the student's education experience, and notices and acknowledges the student's progress.

Verbal Conflict De-Escalation: When a teacher sees a change in a student's energy level, such as becoming withdrawn or hyper, it is time to begin an intervention. At this stage the student needs to know that the teacher is there to support him/her. This can be accomplished by simply walking over to the student and asking how he/she is doing. Not being judgmental or confrontational is key. The teacher should use a tone of voice and body language that says he/she is empathetic. If the student shares concerns, the de-escalation process has already begun. However, if the student tells the teacher to get out of his/her face, then the conflict has escalated to a new intervention. At this point, the teacher needs to back away and stand at an angle to the student. Standing directly in front of a student comes across as confrontational. To defuse this stage of conflict, the teacher should use classroom or school rules to establish limits for the student and give him/her simple, reasonable behavior choices. For instance, the teacher can say, "You need to stop disrupting the class so we can get finished and go to the special computer activity we have planned. If you don't then you can not participate". If the student makes the right choice, praise him/her. If the student chooses the unacceptable route, the teacher must follow through, consistently, with consequences.

More Research-Based Interventions:

*pictures to show routines: Research has shown children up through 6th grade need visual cues to help them transition.

*interspersed requests: Give two or three tasks that students like before giving them the one they dislike.

*differential reinforcement techniques: This is when the teacher reinforces appropriate behavior that make it inappropriate behaviors impossible to do.

Ineffective Intervention Strategies to Use with Student Aggression:

Punishment: The student who is being punished often learns the wrong lessons, such as "might makes right." In turn, they might treat other children in a similar way.

Catharsis: This occurs when the student is to "get rid of the anger" on an inanimate object. Research has shown that the benefits of catharsis are a myth and violence is not decreased when this technique is used.

Cohabitation: This approach focuses on the belief that there is really nothing one can do and that aggression is just human nature.

*Self-Management To Reduce Disruptive Classroom Behavior:

A study conducted by Kathryn E. Hoff and George J. DuPaul of Lehigh University suggests that children with attention or behavior disorders can actually monitor themselves.

The researchers first took the students' baseline measures by observing their behavior before using a self-evaluation procedure.

Next, students were informed the teacher would rate their behaviors on a 1-5 scale during certain intervals. The ratings would correspond to points the students could redeem for "reinforcers."

Students were then trained to self-evaluate and record their own behavior, eventually evaluating themselves during the same intervals as the teacher. At the end of the interval, researchers compared the two evaluations. Depending on the amount of agreement between the teacher's and the student's evaluations, the student then received points. Total agreement meant the student received a bonus point, while a difference of two or more points resulted in no points being earned for that interval.

Disruptive behaviors decreased in all three students. The results suggested that elementary students are capable of self-evaluation and able to maintain positive behaviors without the direct influence of a teacher. No negative effects were observed.

The following is a self-monitoring chart that was designed by a school psychologist to use with a 4th grade student who was experiencing difficulty with focusing and being productive. This same student also had a great deal of trouble "owning his behaviors." Throughout his school career, when sited for making poor choices, he would often place blame on someone else and become very argumentative. Accepting feedback without confrontation was very rare. Most often, he would become defensive. However, once the self-monitoring procedure was explained to the student and his parent, it was put into effect. Throughout the intervention, the student has been honest in his ratings and, in the process, improved his on-task behaviors and productivity. His parent receives a copy of the chart each day and rewards him according to the results.

Date:		Rating of Focus					*Points	Accurate Rating	Accept Feedback	Total points per subject				
Subject														
Math	Tch	0	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	0	1	0	1
	Stu	0	1	2	3	4	5	.....					
Reading	Tch	0	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	0	1	0	1
	Stu	0	1	2	3	4	5	.....					
Lang. Arts	Tch	0	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	0	1	0	1

Date:		Rating of Focus				
Subject						
Math	Tch	0	1	2	3	4
	Stu	0	1	2	3	4
Reading	Tch	0	1	2	3	4
	Stu	0	1	2	3	4
Lang. Arts	Tch	0	1	2	3	4

11
 11
 the
 11
 11

	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
Sci./Soc.St.	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
TOTALS						

	Stu	0 1 2 3 4			
Sci./Soc.St.	Tch	0 1 2 3 4			
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4			
TOTALS					

Date:	Rating of Focus		*Points	Accurate Rating	Accept Feedback	Total points per subject
Subject						
Math	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
Reading	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
Lang. Arts	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
Sci./Soc.St.	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
TOTALS						

Date:	Rating of Focus				
Subject					
Math	Tch	0 1 2 3 4			
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4			
Reading	Tch	0 1 2 3 4			
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4			
Lang. Arts	Tch	0 1 2 3 4			
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4			
Sci./Soc.St.	Tch	0 1 2 3 4			
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4			
TOTALS					

Date:	Rating of Focus		*Points	Accurate Rating	Accept Feedback	Total points per subject
Subject						
Math	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
Reading	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
Lang. Arts	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
Sci./Soc.St.	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
TOTALS						

* # of points allows for fo

Date:	Rating of Focus		*Points	Accurate Rating	Accept Feedback	Total points per subject
Subject						
Math	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
Reading	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
Lang. Arts	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
Sci./Soc.St.	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
TOTALS						

* # of Points allowed for focus rating: 0-1=0; 2=1; 3=2; & 4 or 5 = 3

Date:	Rating of Focus		*Points	Accurate Rating	Accept Feedback	Total points per subject
Subject						
Math	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	

	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
Reading	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
Lang. Arts	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
Sci./Soc.St.	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
TOTALS						
Date:	Rating of Focus		*Points	Accurate Rating	Accept Feedback	Total points per subject
Subject						
Math	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
Reading	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
Lang. Arts	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
Sci./Soc.St.	Tch	0 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	0 1	0 1	
	Stu	0 1 2 3 4 5	.....		
TOTALS						

Accomplishing Compliance at School:

James D. Sutton, Ed. D.

The most effective way of minimizing struggles is to "Reduce and Raise". The **Reduce** part of the process addresses how the relationship between the authority figure and the child can dramatically improve when negative elements are removed.

Excessive Expectations: When such expectations are reduced to the essentials that really matter, the change can be significant. Behaviors involving power struggles will lessen in about every instance. It's not a total solution to the problem, but it is a good start.

Overdependency: Overdependency is a condition that is imposed upon the child by the adult. This occurs when the adult takes away the child's opportunity to make decisions. The teacher is always in command of the terms. This creates the student to become overdependent on the teacher. Difficulties will soon arise. The student will most likely become resentful. Instead of motivating the student to improve, it will cause even more trouble. The student's way of discussing how she feels will be done with behavior. The reduction of overdependency involves giving back of what was taken away.

Conditions on the Relationship: In reducing the conditions attached to acceptance, nurturance, and affirmation, a teacher enhances unconditional positive regard – the very best kind.

Rigidity: Not everything is negotiable, of course, but the practice of making choices available is very effective in re-empowering the oppositional and defiant child.

The **Raise** part of the process addresses awareness. By helping a student to consider the connection between their behavior and the emotions that they prefer to keep hidden, real change can begin.

Spit in the Soup: To raise a student's awareness of his behavior, provocative action is sometimes called for. Provocative action signals to the student that the teacher is expecting a conflict, and he is prepared for it. It calls attention to the behavior and addresses the possible reasons for it. It exposes the motive and the intent of the behavior that immediately follows. This intervention works mainly because the teacher is prepared for the conflict and the student is not. The teacher has drawn the 'battle lines', something which often saps the fight right out of the student. An Oppositional student does not want a showdown. He fears that if there is a showdown, he will lose face, power, and affection. Caught in this predicament, the student is apt to comply.
WARNING: Never use punitive or embarrassing actions. Stay away from sarcasm.

The process of encouraging a student to accomplish school-related tasks can be divided into three simple and distinct parts: beginning the task, continuing the task, and completing the task.

Task-Directed Interventions

- a summary-

Beginning the Task

1. Fail-proofing against misunderstandings
2. Fail-proofing against procrastination
3. Redirecting through paradox
4. Employing forced choice

Continuing the Task

1. Employing humor
2. Structuring progressively more difficult material
3. Using times creatively

Finishing the Task

1. Using behavior modification
2. Writing contracts

Beginning the Task:

Fail-proofing against misunderstandings: Repetitive and persistent misunderstanding by the oppositional and defiant child is the target behavior for this intervention. The teacher simply asks for a favor. The teacher calls the student over and explains to him the assignment. She then asks him to write it on the board for the rest of the class to see. The student is then asked to explain the assignment to the class. Lastly, the student is asked to initial the assignment. He is given thanks for helping to explain the assignment. The assignment needs to stay on the board until it is due.

Fail-proofing against procrastination: When giving due dates for assignments, specifics are a must, even to the point that they appear ridiculous. After giving the specifics, ask the student to go to the board and write next to the assignment that everyone understands what the assignment is and when, where, and how it is due.

Redirecting through paradox: Paradoxical intent is the same as reverse psychology. As an intervention, it draws its power from the fact that it predicts, or permits, the child's oppositional and defiant behavior. As a result, it "steals their thunder"; the "reward" for noncompliance is removed.