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New School Year, New Approach: Creative Solutions to Challenging Classroom Behavior

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New Year, Fresh Start!

- New Staff?
- New Students?
- Communication is a key component of team work!
- Consistency is critical!

What do we mean when we say “behavior”?

Behavior (response): any measurable activity of an organism

example: walking, talking, writing, raising hand, hitting, kicking, throwing, etc...

All behavior serves a **function** (or purpose); once the function of the behavior is identified, a plan to treat that function can be developed.

Individuals are taught to use *adaptive* behavior that serves the same function as the *maladaptive* (inappropriate) behavior.

What are “functions” of behavior?

The four main reasons why we do what we do:

Attention - positive or negative

Tangible - gain access to preferred items or activities

Escape - non-preferred tasks or activities

Sensory - automatic, provides its own stimulation (scratching an itch, sneezing, clicking pen, etc.)



Observational Information

A – Antecedent any event, action or cue that directly precedes a behavior

B – Behavior an observable, measurable response

C – Consequence any event, item, or activity that directly follows a response



Examples

- Out of Seat
- Off Task
- Spitting
- Flopping
- Self Injurious
- Excessive Crying
- Non-compliance
- Tantrum
- Stealing Food/Toys
- Rituals
- Aggression
- Elopement



Examples

- Calling Out
- Out of Seat
- Off Task
- Missing Assignments
- Late to class
- Socially Inappropriate
- Arguing with Adults
- Arguing with Peers
- Non-compliance
- Inappropriate Language
- Dangerous Acts
- Property Destruction
- Aggression
- Elopement
- Self Injurious



Prompting Adaptive Behavior

- Provide reinforcement for appropriate behavior
- Have a clear schedule
- Provide clear rules and expectations
- Structure the classroom



What is reinforcement?

Positive Reinforcement:

Presentation of an event, activity or stimulus which follows the behavior and ***increases*** the likelihood of that behavior occurring again (if you finish your work - extra computer time)

Negative Reinforcement

Removal of a stimulus following a behavior which ***increases*** the likelihood of that behavior occurring again (do homework M-Th - no homework Friday)



Using a Schedule

- Provide a schedule clearly depicting the activities to be completed that day (pictures/words)
- Refer to the schedule throughout the day or class to promote student use
- Break large activities down (First/Then)
- Utilize individual schedules as needed



Using a Schedule

- Arrange the schedule to promote success
- Intersperse non-preferred activities with preferred activities
- Alternate seated with out of seat activities, individual work with group work
- Provide choices between acceptable activities



Using a Schedule

- Consider a completed or finished pouch
- Allow older students to cross off/check off of completed activities



Using Classroom Rules

- Consider the abilities of the students when designing rules (use pictures if needed)
- Post rules in a visible area of the classroom
- Use a few easy to remember rules that cover a wide range of situations
- Use positive statements like “keep hands and feet to self” instead of “no hitting”



Sample Classroom Rules

1. Keep Hands and Feet to Self
2. Stay with the Group
3. Use a Friendly Inside Voice
4. Follow Directions



Sample Classroom Rules

1. Arrive to class on time
2. Respect Property
3. Stay in your seat
4. Raise your hand to talk
5. Wait your turn
6. Follow Directions
 - If possible have the students participate to the best of their ability in creating the classroom rules.
 - If the students are part of the development they are more likely to take ownership



Classroom Structure

- Decrease effort to remain on task
- Provide space between students
- Preferential seat placement
 - *off task* - towards front, away from doors
 - *out of seat* - end of the row, allow to stand periodically as long as on task, use tape line or carpet squares to define space
- Provide clear expectations (rules, social stories, advance warning, etc.)



Classroom Structure

- List dates/times assignments are due
- Encourage students to use a calendar or agenda book
- Keep a classroom calendar with important dates
 - *book reports, individual projects, due dates*
 - *upcoming changes to schedule: assemblies, trips,*
- Online communication where possible



Classroom Management Plans

Who should be on a Classroom Management Plan?

- All students in the class

Should a **CMP** be discontinued for a student that is not exhibiting problem behavior?

- **No!** Classroom plans are used to increase adaptive behavior
- These plans are implemented to decrease the need for an individual behavior plan for students
- Reinforcing appropriate behavior will increase the likelihood that those behaviors will occur again



What makes a CMP successful?

- Reinforcement is provided for appropriate behavior
- Reinforcement should be provided on a predetermined schedule (after target behavior, end of an activity, set time schedule, etc.)
- Determine if items selected are effective
- Items should be individualized and identified through preference assessment
- Consistent implementation of the plan
- Establish a reinforcer menu that can include toys, foods, activities, privileges, home passes, etc.



Running a sample Classroom Management Plan

1. Prior to the start of an activity review the rules
2. During the activity provide praise for compliance with the rules
3. Utilize count downs to identify the near completion of an activity
4. Review the rules at the end of the activity
5. Provide each student with a token to place on the token board for following the rules
6. When the predetermined number of tokens is earned allow the student to “cash in”



Managing Problem Behavior

Be aware of precursor behavior!

- Precursors are low level behaviors which may be warning signs that higher level behavior may follow
- Precursory indicators can vary and be specific to individuals
- Be aware of potential problems (change in schedule , assembly, fire drill, substitute, different bus driver, etc.)
- Be aware of your own precursor behavior!



Examples of Precursors

- Redness of the face, ear, and/or neck area
- Tears
- Putting head on desk
- Changes in normal breathing pattern or facial expression
- Not talking
- Talking very fast
- Wringing hands, balled fists, twisting clothes, pacing, rocking, tapping



Precursor Interventions

- Calm conversation
- Active listening - listening to understand
- Empathy - communicating your understanding of the other's point of view with respect to their behavior and/or feelings
- Ignore and redirect - ignoring non-harmful behavior and re-focusing the person on another activity
- Provide appropriate choices (order of activities, etc.)



Remember the function!

Try to identify the reason for the behavior

- To avoid work - are you asking them to do something?
- To access a different activity or item - are you telling them to stop doing something, to do something different, or that they can't have/do something?
- To access attention - have they received attention recently, is it a large group activity?



Addressing escape/avoidance behavior

Whenever possible, do not provide a break or delay task completion for problem behavior.

- Restate the direction, use multiple modalities
- Give time and space to respond
- Offer assistance
- Point out positive/negative consequences
- Provide a break following completion of part of the task
- Switch staff
- Use behavioral momentum



Address Tangible Behavior

Do not provide access to the item or activity.

- Redirect to the task at hand
- Point out natural consequences
- Offer acceptable either/or options
- Identify behavioral choices
- Give time and space to calm down
- Switch staff



Addressing Attention Based Behavior


Ignore the behavior as much as possible
(remember ignore the behavior not the student!).

- Redirect to the task at hand
- Use nonverbal redirection tactics - touch corner of desk, gesture to the task or written directions
- Give space and time to calm down
- Provide a break
- Switch staff



Addressing Sensory Based Behavior

- Redirect back to task
- Provide competing activities
- Reinforce absence of target behavior
- Consult clinicians (Speech, OT, etc.) for alternative sensory activates/supports
- Provide out of seat assignments (passing out paper, opening doors, bringing a note to the office, etc.)



When should an individual plan be developed?

- If a student is not earning for appropriate behavior as indicated in the CMP
- If an increase in problem behavior is noted
- If CMP is not addressing the function of the problem behavior



Communication

Inform staff of your expectations for the classroom:

- Structure
- Timeliness
- Never discuss student behavior in front of them
- Model expected behavior
- Use appropriate language and tone of voice
- Allow opportunities for staff input
- Assign student to staff
- Discuss plan of action for problem behavior



Remember!

- Remain calm and use a neutral tone
- Consistency is the key to any successful plan
- Provide as little attention to the problem *behavior* as possible
- Only remove the child from the activity if they are a danger to themselves or others
- Bring the activity to the child
- ***Don't take problem behavior personally!***