

# DISCIPLINE AND BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS

IDEA '97 clarifies the ways that schools can respond to special education students' inappropriate behavior. The following are basic premises of the law:

- Special education students are subject to the usual discipline procedures applied to regular education students unless an alternative discipline plan is outlined in the IEP;
- Special education students are not to be punished for behavior that is clearly related to their disabilities and not within their power to understand or control;
- Special education students can be suspended from school for up to 10 days without receiving services;
- If the behavior of a special education student impedes the learning of the student or other students, the special education student can be removed from the regular education setting to an alternative education setting for up to 45 days if a hearing officer agrees that such removal is necessary and is supported by the preponderance of evidence;
- When a special education student is suspended or expelled for more than 10 days, the student must continue to have access to the general curriculum and must continue to receive a free, appropriate public education, including special education and related services;
- If a special education student is suspended or expelled, the student's IEP team must assure, within 10 days of the discipline, that the student will receive or has received a functional behavioral assessment and that a positive behavioral intervention plan is implemented.

## DEFINITIONS

**Impeding Behavior:** An impeding behavior is any inappropriate behavior that occurs often and interferes significantly with a student's ability to learn or with the learning of others. Impeding behaviors may include:

- Aggression, self-injurious, or destructive behaviors;
- Depression, passivity, or internalization of emotions;
- Obsessions, compulsions, stereotypes, or irresistible impulses.

**Functional Behavioral Assessment:** A functional behavioral assessment is a complete evaluation of the individual's behavior patterns, including an analysis of any impeding behaviors. The assessment may include person-centered planning, interviews, direct observation in a variety of settings, and other in-depth evaluations of the student's impeding behaviors. The purpose of the assessment is to understand why the impeding behaviors occur, when they occur, in what context, and what, if any, communicative or other purpose the behaviors have for the individual.

**Functional Behavior Analysis:** A Functional Behavior Analysis is a process of systematic manipulation of environmental variables to determine what, if any, behavioral changes may occur in an individual who displays impeding behaviors.

**General Curriculum:** *General curriculum* means academic and other school-sponsored learning activities that are available to students who do not have disabilities.

**Positive Behavioral Support:** *Positive behavioral support* is a comprehensive approach to changing inappropriate behavior by teaching the individual new skills to replace impeding behaviors. Unlike the traditional behavior management approach, positive behavioral support does not focus solely on reducing inappropriate behavior. Instead, positive support seeks to change behavior by altering the environment and teaching the individual new skills. Rather than viewing the student's behavior as the sole problem to be addressed, positive behavioral support views the environments in which the student receives education or related services and the student's and others' skill deficiencies as interrelated aspects or causes of the impeding behaviors. Rather than attempting to remediate only the student's behavior, positive behavioral support attempts to make adjustments to the environments and to intervene by promoting appropriate skills in the student and complementary skills of others.

## COMPONENTS OF FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT

- A functional assessment should include all of the following:
- Accurate definition and description of the frequency, duration, and intensity of impeding behaviors.
- Systematic observation, documentation, and analysis of the occurrence of impeding behaviors.
- Systematic observation, documentation, and analysis of the immediate antecedent events associated with each instance of the display of impeding behaviors.
- Systematic observation, documentation, and analysis of the consequences following the display of the behaviors to determine the function the behaviors served for the student (i.e., to identify the specific environmental or physiological outcomes produced by the behavior or the communicative intent of the behavior); and
- An analysis of how the environment may be contributing to the individual's impeding behavior—settings, schedule, variety of activities, physical, health, environmental temperature, noise level, degree of confusion or orderliness, amount of structure.
- An analysis of the student's quality of life; including degree of personal freedom, amount and quality of choices, amount of social interactions, degree of student's participation in typical activities, and the quality of student's communications with others.
- A review of the history of the student's behaviors, including the effectiveness of previously used interventions;
- A review of previous evaluations;
- Interviews of student, parents and other family members, physicians, regular and special educators and related service providers.

# POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT PLAN

The purpose of a positive behavioral plan is to prevent, reduce, and replace impeding behaviors performed by a student and to develop, maintain, strengthen or substitute socially desirable and appropriate behaviors in a student.

Following the functional assessment, the IEP team should develop a positive behavioral plan that includes:

- Changes environmental conditions by . . .
  - Increasing quality of the student's physical environment by enhancing the predictability of events, modifying the student's schedule or minimizing noise and other environmental irritants;
  - Making accommodations for the student by providing an increased range of choices and by accommodating physiological conditions (such as hunger, fatigue, illness, or injury);
  - Making instructional accommodations for the student, such as shortening assignments or the length of work periods, interspersing easy tasks with hard ones, offering choices in tasks and methods, increasing access to engaging activities, and decreasing the number of instructions given to the student.
  
- Increase skills of those interacting with the student by . . .
  - Providing instruction in communicating with the student;
  - Developing social relationships with the student;
  - Problem solving with the student;
  - Preventing impeding behavior;
  - Developing appropriate responses to the student's impeding behaviors.
  
- Develop the student's abilities by teaching . . .
  - Communication skills;
  - Self-management skills; and
  - Social skills.

## **AVERSIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS NOT INCLUDED**

The following aversive interventions may not be a part of a positive behavior plan:

- Corporal punishment, including slapping, paddling, time-out, water spray, sensory deprivation, or the maintenance in any physically painful position, or any other intervention that is designed or likely to cause physical pain;
- Any punishment for a manifestation of the student's disability like physiologically determined behaviors (e.g., verbal or physical tics);
- Rooms, boxes, or other structures or spaces from which a student cannot readily exit;
- Noxious substances, toxic, or otherwise unpleasant sprays (including water sprays, mists or substances released in proximity to the student's face or any especially sensitive part of the student's body);
- Deprivation of health-sustaining necessities, including meals, water, other nourishment, fresh air, or access to toilet facilities;
- Serial suspensions from any school activity;
- Treatment of a demeaning nature, including interventions that are designed or likely to subject the student to verbal abuse, ridicule, or humiliation or that are likely to cause emotional trauma for that student;
- Any interventions or methods implemented by untrained personnel; and
- Any interventions or methods that preclude adequate supervision of the student.

## **EMERGENCIES**

An emergency is any condition or situation that is caused by behavior of a student that is unpredictable, spontaneous, or not previously manifest and poses a clear and present danger to the student or to others.

If other methods are not effective, properly implemented physical restraints may be used to control dangerous behavior.

No emergency intervention may be used for longer than is necessary to contain the behavior so that it is no longer a danger.

The occurrence of an emergency situation should be documented in the student's cumulative file. Repeated episodes of dangerous behavior should trigger a meeting of the IEP team to review the student's positive behavior plan.

## **What Makes Support Plans Work?**

Our goal to develop supports which help prevent challenging behavior and build relationships may be a simple idea, but it is not always easy to do. Over the years we have developed numerous support plans with student planning teams. Some were easy, but most needed lots of work. Our successes and failures taught us that plans that work have a solid foundation built on the following guiding principles:

- Empower kids by providing choices and sharing decision making;
- Build upon the student's strengths and positive attributes;
- Don't do it alone—form a collaborative team to support the teachers, student and family;
- Provide the student and the family with input into and ownership of the plan;
- Base the plan upon a careful analysis of the student's underlying needs and design support in other ways to meet those needs;
- View difficult behavior as communication;
- Focus on building relationships that are fair and enjoyable for all those involved;
- Whenever possible, develop student supports which prevent problems from occurring;
- Continue to question what you are doing and why;
- Regularly monitor, trouble shoot, and change the plan as needed.

Plans that work view teaching and learning as a dynamic process in which flexibility is critical. Implementing a mechanical, step-by-step plan may be easy but it is very unrealistic, ineffective and contrary to the human situation. Some of the lessons we have learned from teachers are:

- Teaching is an art. It requires being sensitive to and adjusting for the moment-to moment needs of our students.
- Teaching involves compromise and change.
- Teaching requires adjusting teaching style to meet the needs of students and their personalities.

## **How Should the Behaviors Be Described?**

The following steps are used to obtain an accurate description of the student's challenging behaviors:

1. List all challenging behaviors.
2. Define each behavior in observable terms.
3. Delineate the history (how long has the student used it), frequency (how often does it happen), and duration (how long does an incident last) of the behavior.
4. Rate the behavior for level of seriousness:
  - a. Is the behavior distracting? (Interferes with others' acceptance of the student. Difficult to be around.)
  - b. Is the behavior disruptive? (Severely limits or seriously interferes with other people's functioning.)

- c. Is the behavior destructive? (Threatens the health of life of the child or others.)

## Why Should the Behavior be Defined in Observable Terms?

Defining behaviors in observable terms involves describing behaviors in terms of actions that are “point-at-able.” For example, the label lazy is not an observable term because it is not an action that can be pointed at as an example. The label lazy does not tell us what students do. For example, lazy could mean that students do not do homework, turn in assignments in illegible handwriting, only partially complete assignments, etc. The following is a sample list of labels and point-at-able actions.

<u>Label</u>	<u>Point-At-Able Actions</u>
Lazy	Does not complete assignments
Hyperactive	Gets out of seat a lot
Rebellious	Talks back
Aggressive	Hits
Noncompliant	Refuses to follow directions

Defining behavior in observable terms is beneficial for at least three reasons:

1. It is easier to develop interventions. For example, it is easier to think of interventions to support students to complete homework than it is to support them not to be lazy.
2. It is easier to develop a measurable system to determine if interventions are having any effect. For example, it is easier to measure how many times a student hits than it is to measure aggression.
3. Labels typically over generalize and often inaccurately describe students in a negative fashion. For example, describing students as lazy because they do not complete homework does not take into consideration all the situations in which they may be industrious.

## **Categories Of Supports, Which Should Be Considered For Each Communication Of Behavior**

### **Attention/Control**

- Increase the student's personal control and choices.
- Increase opportunities for positive attention and friendships.
- Increase the student's status, self esteem, image.

### **Escape/Avoidance/Play**

- Increase the student's personal control and choices.
- Increase the student's status, self esteem, image.
- Match teaching strategies to student strengths and interests.
- Match instructional activities and materials to student strengths and interests.
- Match expected responses/testing methods to student strengths and interests.

### **Self-Regulation**

- Increase the student's personal control and choices.
- Match teaching strategies to student strengths and interest.
- Match instructional activities and materials to student strengths and interests.
- Match expected responses/testing methods to student strengths and interests.

## **Support Strategies for Preventing Problem Behaviors**

### **Increase Student Control and Choices**

- Ask students what they need in order to have a better experience at school.
- Include students in planning and problem solving.
- Increase the number, variety and importance of the decisions students make.
- Support students having flexibility in their daily schedules.
- Support students shortening the length of an activity or taking mini-breaks.
- Grant students legitimate power—involve students in leadership roles.
- Support students to transition to the next class/activity at a different time.
- Add interesting activities and experiences matched to students' individual needs.
- Support students to self-evaluate their work.

- Support students to choose between various assignments or choose what part of an assignment to do.
- Support students to leave class when needed.
- Support students to choose testing methods.
- Develop assignments, which emphasize student's choices, strengths and talents.

### **Increase Opportunities for Positive Attention**

- Assign students to teacher advisor/mentors.
- Increase the number of friends or allies who know and spend time with students.
- Encourage other students to include the student in activities (e.g., develop a "Circle of Friends.")
- Engage family, friends, faculty, and students in supporting the students (e.g., implement a MAPS activity.)
- Identify an adult mentor within the community.
- Increase the number of community activities students have access to.
- Support students to join after school groups/clubs/teams.
- Increase others' knowledge of students' interests, strengths and preferences.
- Use teaching assistants to help all students in the class rather than an assistant paired directly with one student.
- Speak and react to students in ways that model respect and friendship.
- Develop a peer buddy system for students.

### **Increase Student's Status, Self-Esteem, Image**

- Support students to be peer mentors/tutors.
- Support student involvement in community service activities.
- Give students assignments, which will "guarantee" success.
- Support students to obtain a job.
- Add prosocial skills to students' curricula.
- Support students to access high status materials, clothing accessories (in style for age group and community.)
- If any characteristics of the students' life reinforce a negative reputation, try to decrease the stigma students experience.
- Give students high status classroom/school jobs and roles.
- Increase amount of time students spend in roles that offer the best opportunities to express their natural abilities or strong interests (e.g., drawing, music, drama, pottery, sports, reading, math.)

## **Match Teaching Strategies/Assignments to Meet the Student's Strengths**

- Increase the use of hands on, small group (3 to 6 students), teacher directed and student directed activities and decrease/limit large group (e.g., lecture format) activities.
- Increase the use of Cooperative Learning Group Activities.
- Provide students instruction & frequent feedback on how to work in a group.
- Select instructional group in advance and rearrange groupings often to insure good matches among students.
- Decrease the length of activities.
- Increase the use of activities in which students work independently.
- Increase the use of peer partner/tutoring teaching formats.
- Gain student attention prior to giving directions.
- Provide students with written notes/audio tapes of lectures and written directions.
- Increase the use of a questioning/discussion format.
- Increase repeating and rewording questions and answers.
- Insure that students know when activities will be finished and how much time they have between activities.
- Increase use of teacher demonstration/modeling.
- Increase use of role-playing, coaching, and feedback.
- Increase opportunities for students to use computers.
- Increase the fun level of activities (e.g., use games, hands on activities, cartoons and humor.)

## **Match Instructional Activities and Materials to Student Strengths**

- Tailor materials to match students' abilities and interests.
- Increase the use of "hands on activities."
- Increase the use of "real life" examples matched to student age and interests.
- Use materials and activities that students commonly have access to in home and community environments.
- Use a variety of materials and activities to teach important concepts.
- Start at a point where you know students will be successful and work from there.
- Provide a variety of books/articles/materials for each lesson and allow students to select a few.
- Emphasize cooperation among students and sharing of materials.
- Limit competition among students.
- Increase opportunities for problem solving.
- Provide students with pre-training on materials (e.g., content, vocabulary.)

- Be predictable—establish a visual schedule for the class as a whole and for individual students (like a date book.)

## **Match Expected Responses/Testing Methods to Student Strengths**

- Support students to communicate ideas and demonstrate learning in a variety of ways (e.g., art, music, dance, poetry, oral presentations.)
- Avoid requiring students to respond in ways which are likely to produce extreme stress or anxiety (e.g., read aloud for a non-reader, essay exam for a poor writer.)
- When anxiety-producing situations (e.g., oral presentations, final exams) cannot be avoided, provide additional support tailored to students' needs.
- Provide extra practice in non-threatening, supportive situations.
- Test students in private.

## **Example Of Additional Skill Areas To Be Taught**

### **Non-Verbal Communication/Body Language**

Skill Areas: show preferences; indicate rejection/protest through head shake and facial expressions; indicate acceptance through head nod and facial expressions; make eye contact; use appropriate facial expressions; use appropriate body postures; use welcoming gestures; keep interpersonal distance; maintain physical appearance; limit physical contact.

### **Social Relationships**

Skill Areas: introduce yourself; introduce other people; begin a conversation; end a conversation; join in; play a game; ask a favor; participate in turn taking; participation; offer assistance; salutations; ask a question; give a compliment; take a compliment; cooperate; share; apologize; negotiate; stand up for rights; treat others with respect; follow rules/social routines; act appropriately towards opposite sex; accept no; say no; ask permission.

### **Self-Management**

Skill Areas: know feelings; express feelings; recognize another's feelings; express concern for another; express affection; deal with anger; deal with another's anger; deal with fear; use self control; respond to teasing; deal with losing; deal with failure; avoid trouble; stay out of fights; accept consequences; deal with group pressure; deal with contradictory messages; relax; be honest; set goals; make decisions; solve problems; follow personal schedule; create personal schedules.

## **Study Skills**

Skill Areas: listen; ask for help; ask questions; work/study habits; bring materials to class; follow instructions; take notes; organize materials/assignments; time management; complete assignments; ignore distractions; set goals; make choices; come to class on time; work in small groups (student directed); work in cooperative groups; work independently; tutor others; accept tutoring; use computers; follow classroom rules.

### **Tips For Providing Immediate Feedback And Reward For Any Effort The Student Makes To Turn The Situation Around**

- Initiate giving and sharing rewards immediately—accept any level of effort made to participate.
- Acts of human kindness are not limited to verbal praise. Be creative. There are numerous ways of expressing your appreciation.
- Use humor to lighten the mood. Use the opportunity to show students how to be reassuring and positive with someone who is very challenging. Teach them to avoid the trap of only being nice to someone after they do what you want.
- Be a positive role model for your students. Demonstrate how caring about another human being and helping in a time of need is never a mistake.
- Overall, the bulk of your contact with the person should be rewarding, not demanding.
- If at first the student rejects your attempt to show appreciation, try to do so in some other way (also reflect on how difficult it is at times to accept praise, especially if we are feeling lousy about ourselves.)
- Consider stating a compliment as an “I message” which may be easier for the student to accept.
- Take the time to teach reciprocity. Create opportunities for students to do favors for you and other students.

Adapted from Hobbs-

