

*Creating Environments that Work for All Students:
Real Manuals for Real Teachers*



*Positive Behavior Support:
A Classroom-Wide Approach to
Successful Student Achievement
and Interactions*



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About the Department of Child & Family Studies



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Introduction



Other than families, teachers are the most influential resource for students with and without disabilities. They create powerful student change through their vast knowledge and application of instructional and curricular strategies. However, classrooms are dynamic, filled with students who possess unique ethnic and cultural heritages, family backgrounds, learning styles and personalities. As a result, teachers may encounter unforeseen student challenges that result in lessons that are not successful and even worse the deterioration of student behavior. This combination of less than desirable outcomes may begin a repetitive cycle of challenging student behavior and thwarted classroom activities.

The intention of this manual is to empower teachers to address student challenges through every day teacher-applied strategies. The foundation for these strategies is in curricular and instructional research situated in a problem-solving framework for behavior support. The framework, Positive Behavior Support (PBS), is a proactive approach proven successful in addressing challenging behavior within general and special education classroom settings and is most effective when implemented across home, school, and community environments. This approach is based on the premise that students exhibit goal-directed behavior in response to environmental events, social interactions, and other internal emotional states.

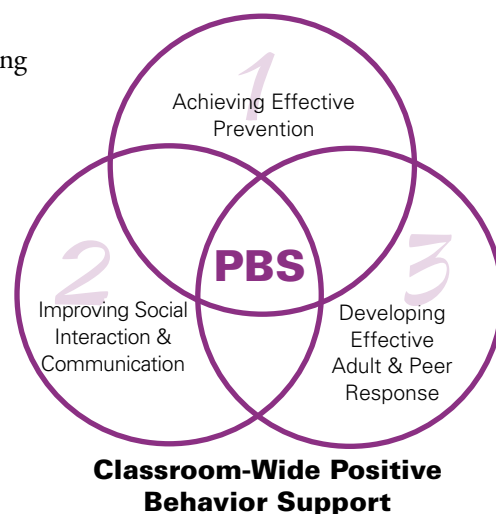
Functional behavior assessment, at the heart of PBS, helps determine the events that influence and maintain challenging behavior. The goal of the behaviors is to either escape or avoid something or to get something such as social attention or material things. A functional behavior assessment is necessary when students exhibit serious or dangerous challenging behavior or behaviors that persist over time. While functional behavior assessment assists with complicated challenging behaviors, teachers may also prevent the possibility of serious challenging behavior through the implementation of the positive behavior support strategies discussed in this manual. These strategies fit within the framework of the classroom and when used consistently, help promote positive student behavior.

Positive Behavior Support is a proven approach to minimize or eliminate challenging student behavior

About the Manual

The manual highlights three components for dealing with challenging behavior. The sequence of these components first offer preventative strategies for diminishing or eliminating those things in the environments that set off behaviors, then preventative strategies for teaching new social skills to replace challenging behaviors, and finally response strategies to alter the way that teachers and peers respond to student's challenging behavior.

Each of the three components begins with a discussion of the importance, followed by strategies, rationale for the strategies, and short examples. There is a quick reference of strategies in the appendix.

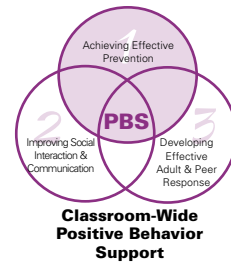


1 Achieving effective prevention of challenging behavior addresses the prevention of challenging behavior through arranging the environment and adapting curriculum and instruction. Students exhibit challenging behavior in response to environmental events or internal emotional states. By altering the environment or curriculum and instruction, teachers may alleviate the triggers or events that set off the challenging behavior (e.g., sitting next to a taunting peer, a difficult activity, the pace of a lesson, etc.).

2 Teaching effective social interaction and communication as replacements for challenging behavior emphasizes preventative strategies teaching replacement skills for missing or little used student social interaction and communication skills. Students often lack the social skills to get help or attention or interact effectively with peers. Indeed, they use challenging or disruptive behavior to communicate their needs. This section provides a framework for assessing social interaction and communication needs with strategies and examples for teaching new, more effective skills that replace the challenging behavior.

3 Promoting effective teacher and peer responses to challenging behavior is the third component. It focuses on promoting positive responses to desirable behavior and changing responses to challenging behavior that might cause the behaviors to continue, intensify or reoccur. Sometimes teachers and peers unintentionally encourage student-challenging behavior through laughing at attention-seeking behavior or using time out for students who refuse work. In such cases, teachers and peers need to reconsider their responses.

1 Achieving Effective Prevention



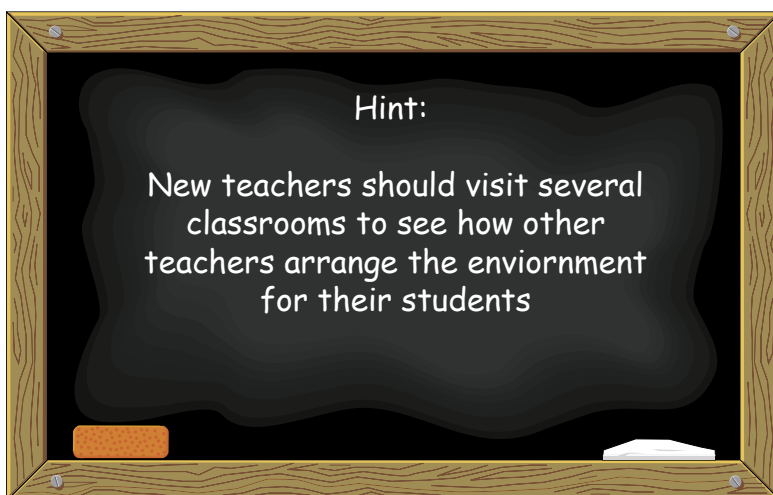
Arranging the Environment to Promote Success and Prevent Failure

This component of the manual offers the most powerful, yet simplest tools – using various environmental and instructional strategies to promote positive behavior and prevent challenging behavior.

As discussed at various points in this manual, student behavior is goal-directed. The goal might include getting teacher or peer attention, or it might include the avoidance of instructional tasks. The goal of student behavior is understood by what they “get” from their disruptive or challenging behavior, but it is also understood by what sets off the behavior.

Student challenging behavior often is sparked by various events in the environment. Some of these events involve the actual environmental arrangement, while others involve curricular or instructional factors. The events that influence behavior might include who or what they sit next to, whether they understand an assignment, whether or not they think the assignment is appealing, or if there are concrete (versus abstract) examples. The most appealing part of these prevention strategies is that they involve natural adjustments and instructional alterations within the classroom without many of the artificial props required by some behavior support strategies. By altering even some of these components, teachers can prevent and eliminate many student challenging behaviors while maintaining a well-organized classroom.

This component offers the most powerful, yet simplest tools for preventing challenging behavior.



Classroom Environment

Classroom environment includes the physical environment and classroom rules and procedures. A student's environment can have a profound effect on the way he/she functions in the classroom. Alterations in the environment can head-off challenging behaviors before they start. Students with learning problems do best in an environment that is structured and predictable. Rules and routines should be fair and consistent. Clear definitions and examples of the rules should be provided, as well as a predictable structure for routines. A well-organized classroom improves instruction, learning, classroom management, and diminishes the challenging behavior of students.

Environment includes such things as:

- Schedules and rules,
- Room arrangement for instruction and materials management,
- Student seating arrangements,
- Plans for transitions between activities and settings.



Schedules and Rules

Schedules (both classroom and individual student) and rules are critically important in providing consistency and structure for students with learning problems. Classroom rules and procedures must be taught and re-taught and covered on a daily basis if not more frequently.

1. Classroom schedule

The schedule for classroom instruction and activities should be posted in a prominent place in the classroom such as the front board or on the wall next to the door. This is especially important if the schedule of classes changes from day to day. Schedules should be referred to frequently and notices given when there's a change or when a transition is about to take place.

Example: You might begin every morning (or class period) by orienting the class to the schedule for the day. You might say, "be sure to note that there's a change in the schedule today because of the holiday assembly" or "remember FCAT testing begins third period today, there will be no change of classes." If your students change classes every period, you might create a schedule of activities for the period with any special note about a possible change in their daily schedule (e.g., testing, assemblies, etc.). Don't assume that other teachers will tell them of changes that occur in their class period.

2. Individual student schedules

Sometimes students with organizational problems, learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, or other disabilities experience difficulty with their schedule and changes in their schedule. Predictability and consistency are important to them and they often become upset when unexpected changes occur in their daily routine. A schedule lets them know of changes and assures them that other classes or subjects have not changed. A student's individual schedule should be posted or kept where the student will have easy access to it. Even though some of these students may "know" their schedule, a personal or individual schedule offers them predictability.

Example: You need to consider the intellectual level of the students. Some students can use a daily planner, a written schedule, or some students who do not read, may need a picture schedule. They may need to carry the schedule from class to class and be reminded to check the schedule, especially when first learning to use it. You may need to say "remember John, check your schedule" or "what's next." You can tape it to the desk or let them keep it inside their planner or notebook.

Classroom rules give students a framework for behavior

3. Classroom rules

Classroom rules give students a framework for behavior. They can cover academic and social situations. The rules should be simple but relevant, and consequences should be logical and consistent. It is generally accepted that five or fewer positively worded rules are most effective. Creating the rules can be the first activity on the first day of a new school year. Let students assist with making the rules to increase their buy-in. When teaching the rules, **focus on the behaviors** that you want students to engage in. Post the rules prominently in the classroom, and refer to them frequently. Be sure to define, model, and demonstrate the desired behavior.

Example: Rules may be general, such as “Be kind to others,” as long as specific behaviors are identified when the rules are taught. Rules may also be very specific such as “raise your hand before speaking.” Whether general or specific, you might help students define what the rule means. For instance, “Be kind to others,” might be defined as always speaking to others as you would want them to speak to you—in a polite manner and pleasant tone of voice. Give them examples and ask them what they think it means to be kind. Rules must be taught, re-taught and modeled by teachers, students, and other adults. Students need a clear understanding of what is expected. Define the expected behaviors and state them in a positive, proactive way.



Room Arrangement



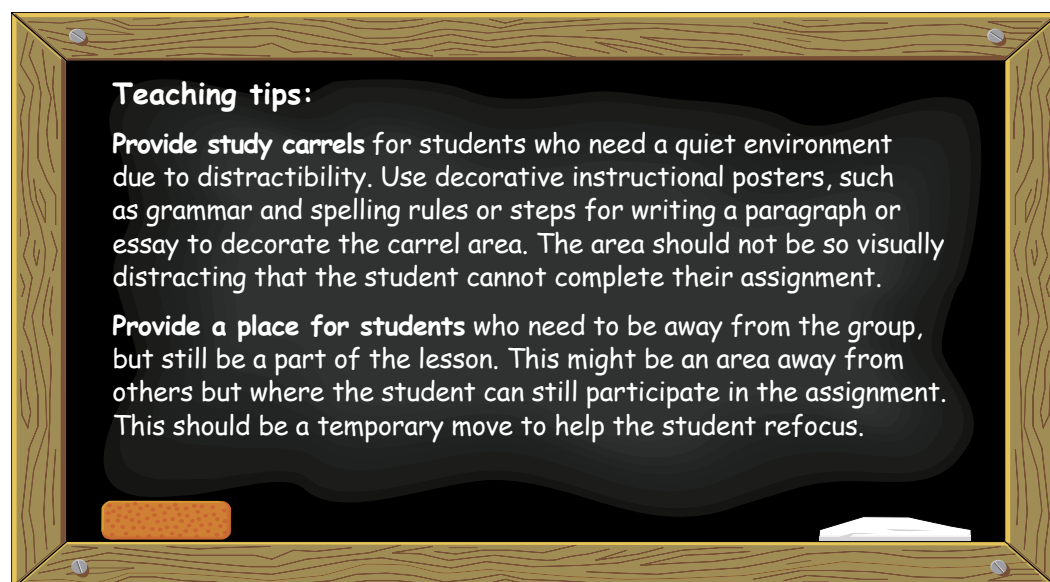
The classroom should be arranged to:

- Maximize the teacher's ability to monitor students,
- Decrease noise and disruption,
- Increase students' on-task behavior,
- Minimize distractions,
- Encourage students to interact with each other and the teacher,
- Allow students easy access to materials.

1. Instructional areas

If space permits, designate and clearly label areas of the classroom for specific tasks. Labels create a consistent environment and helps students focus on the task at hand. Avoid cluttered tables, desks, closets, and walls. Teach students to be organized by setting a good example.

Example: Create academic or activity areas in the classroom such as quiet places for reading with cushions and bookcases, or math areas stocked with calculators, manipulatives, and even simple math games or a box of "math teasers." These areas may be clearly marked with pictures, separated using furniture or even colorful tape on the floor as dividers, and clearly labeled.



2. Materials

Students need to know where materials are located and where they can be used. Kids feel most comfortable when they know the routine and know it will be followed consistently. Make sure students know where to find the materials they will need for instruction and where they should turn in completed assignments and homework. Arrange the room so that the traffic pattern to and from materials and instructional areas is least disruptive to other students.



Provide clearly labeled baskets for students to turn in assignments. Teach them to label assignments with their name, the date, the subject and any other identifying information, so that you need only one basket.

Teaching Tip:

Identify special materials necessary for each day's instruction (such as worksheets, manipulative, or books) and clearly display the materials on a table or counter if students don't already have them in their desks or backpacks. Sometimes it helps to color code folders for specific assignments (especially if a student is a visual learner). Consistency is important, so try to make this process as routine as possible.

Student Seating Arrangements

If a student has trouble controlling his/her behavior, maybe a different seat away from disruptive students or interesting distractions would improve the situation. You may have to try several locations before you find the best seat for a student. The important thing to remember is that wherever a student sits, there will be fewer learning and behavior problems if the learning task is the most interesting thing to do.

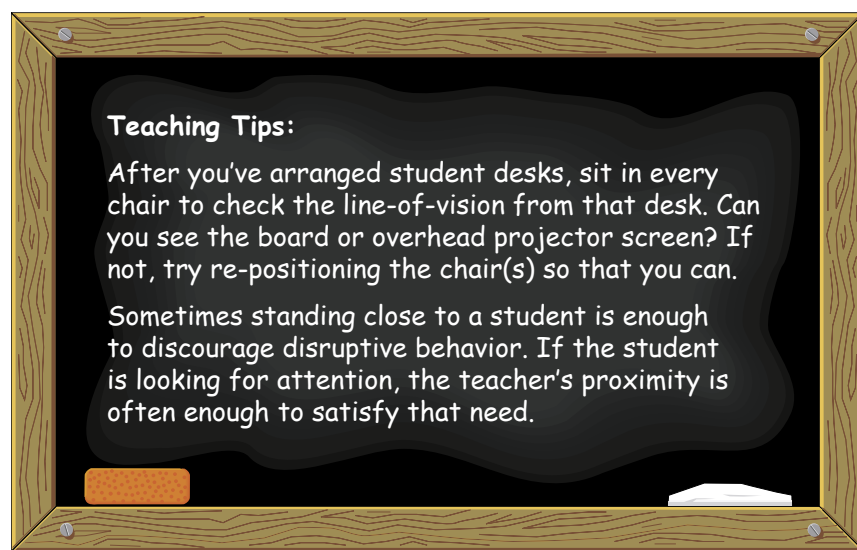
1. Proximity to the teacher

Some students do better if they are placed in close proximity to the teacher. For some students, having the teacher nearby may cut down on inappropriate behaviors and encourage the student to seek the teacher's help when needed. While the teacher is circulating around the classroom, the teacher can also give attention and praise to students who are on task or remind students who exhibit challenging behavior of the desirable behavior.

Example: You may want to seat highly distractible or disruptive students near the areas where most of the instruction occurs. Also students who have difficulty transcribing from overheads or white boards may need to sit nearby. This may vary from room to room and according to teaching styles.



Where a student sits in a classroom can have a profound effect on behavior and academic achievement.





2. Proximity to other students

It is important to seat students in the classroom strategically to minimize problems. Students may respond to many things in their environment, especially other students. These students may talk or distract one another, or seek each other's attention.

Example: Students who seek an audience for their behaviors may need to be seated at the end of a row, in the back of the class, or next to students who are less likely to respond to their behavior. Students also can taunt and tease and distract one another from work. You can create seating arrangements that promote attention to task. Some kids, however, do well with the help of a buddy and should be seated next to a helpful classmate who can provide assistance when needed.

3. Proximity to distractions

Some children may not seek the attention of others or taunt and tease, but instead are distracted by nearby materials. For children who are interested in everything but their assignment, it can be a challenge to create an interesting learning environment that does not cause distraction. Situate children who are distractible away from high traffic areas with lots of fascinating things going on such as:

- the places where assignments are picked up or turned in,
- the teacher's desk,
- classroom doors and windows,
- classroom bathroom, sinks, pencil sharpeners, water fountains, fish tanks and pet cages, computers, VCRs, TVs,
- any other place where other students gather.

Transitions

Many students with learning difficulties have a poorly developed sense of time. They are unable to gauge how much time is left to finish an activity and begin the next one. Disorganization may prevent them from putting materials away from the last activity or getting ready for the next activity. They may also need closure and preparation time for the transition. Problems arise if the teacher tries to push them to transition at the last minute.

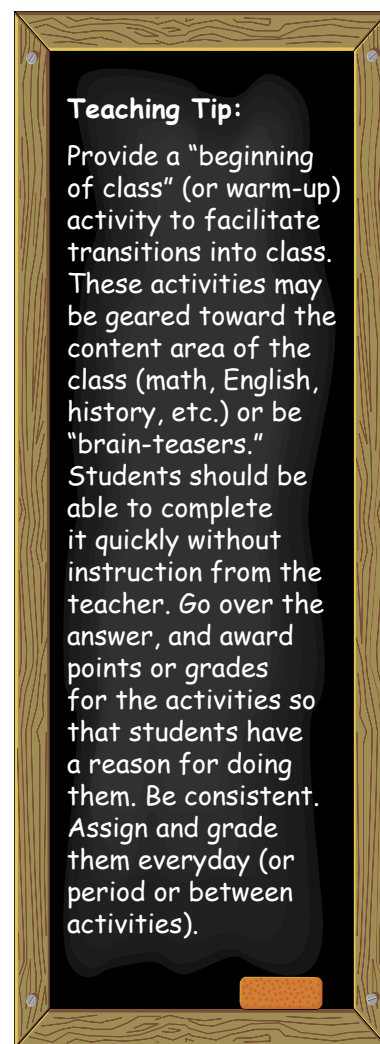
Some of these problems can be avoided if:

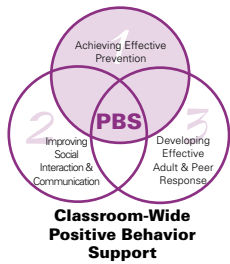
- The routine for making transitions is consistent.
- The routine for making transitions is well developed, consistent, and rehearsed ahead of time.
- Students are given 5-10 minute notices before the transition must be made,
- A daily schedule is posted and reviewed throughout the day or class period.
- Students' individual schedules are posted or kept on or near their desks, if they differ from the class schedule. Individual schedules are reviewed with students after each activity or period.
- Changes are made on the posted classroom schedule and students' individual schedules to reflect any changes in the routine (such as for field trips, assemblies, or different bell schedules).
- Materials for activities are organized and easily accessible.

Example: About 10 minutes prior to the transition, refer to the classroom schedule and announce when the bell will ring or when the next activity will begin. Provide a 5-minute and then a 1-minute warning. This countdown helps students finish assignments or end favorite activities. For students that have difficulty getting started after a transition, place assignment folders on their desks before they enter the classroom so that they have their assignments and don't have to wait for instructions or materials. They can use the same folder to submit assignments (the folders can be left on their desks at the end of the period).



Transition involves changing from one activity to the next or moving from one location to another.





Adapting Curriculum and Instruction for Success



Use Multiple Modalities

Use a variety of modalities to deliver instruction for a lesson (e.g., visual, auditory, and kinesthetic methods), to make lessons more interesting and possibly utilizing a student’s preferred mode of processing information. Use videos, instructional TV, overheads from a presentation program with illustrative clip art or additional materials to augment concepts and skills.

Example: When teaching simple math skills, you can use pictures of musical groups or individual singers who are current favorites among students. These pictures are easily obtained from the internet. Print relevant math problems on the backs of the pictures. For example, “A concert ticket to Group X costs \$50 and a concert T-shirt costs \$30. You want to earn the money for the ticket and a concert T-shirt by doing jobs around the neighborhood. Mrs. Jones will pay you \$20 to baby-sit for 4 hours. Mr. Smith will pay \$25 to mow his yard which will take 4 hours. Mr. Brown needs help painting his garage, and he’ll pay \$36 for 6 hours of work. How many hours will you have to work to make enough to go to the concert and buy a T-shirt? On the back of a different picture change the cost of a ticket and have a different problem. Multiple problems with different music stars may engender interest in students to complete the assignment.

Relate Instruction to Real Life



Many students may have fewer opportunities to apply the skills they learn in the classroom to real life situations. This lack of exposure may hinder them from generalizing the math or reading, for instance, the real exchange of money in fast-food restaurants, movie theaters, clothing stores, etc. Create instructional lessons that resemble real life situations. Students with challenging behaviors may exhibit fewer of these behaviors when the activity resembles the actual application of concepts to the “real world.” The lesson may become more interesting and motivate learning as they realize the importance of addition and subtraction in accessing fun and interesting events in life. It is always better if these activities can occur in a natural context (e.g., movie theater, fast-food restaurant, etc.) however, that is not always possible.

Example: In planning lessons for older students, you could ask banks to donate check registers and some unnumbered checks. Teach bill paying and check writing along with the necessary addition and subtraction concepts for balancing a checkbook. For all ages, you could organize, in the classroom, a day at the movies where students buy a movie ticket, popcorn, and a drink, and conduct the addition or subtraction of money, recognition of money, or money value within the context of this lesson. Survey students for the fast-food restaurants they frequent, then gather “to go” menus from those restaurants and role play paying the bill, while practicing social skills used in a restaurant.

Change Amount of Work



Reduce the length of an assignment. Put fewer rather than more math problems on a worksheet, or highlight in a color, the problems for the student to complete rather than a work sheet of 30 problems. You can always have them do another sheet of 5 or 10 problems.

Example: “Here are a few math problems to start with. Let’s see how you do when you finish these five.” “John, please complete the math problems circled in red.” “John, choose 10 problems and circle them in red and work the problem.”



Strategy

Change the Appearance of Assignments

Sometimes students perform better when assignments are more interesting. As discussed previously, assignments related to real life or student interests may encourage motivation and can be as simple as decorating worksheets with drawings downloaded from the Internet. These additions, of course, must fit the age of the child, or you risk insulting older students and create more classroom disruption.

Example: At the beginning of the school year, assess each student's interests in a variety of areas (e.g., activities, sports, music, books, etc.). Use this interest inventory to help create visually interesting assignments or activities. This is very simple to do and may increase on-task behavior.



Strategy

Pacing

The pacing of an instruction may increase or decrease challenging behaviors. Pacing is the length of time it takes to present a concept or assignment. Often when pacing is too slow, students become bored. They may start talking to others or become disruptive in some other way. On the other hand, if material is presented too quickly, students may miss critical information needed to begin or complete an assignment. This may make the assignment too difficult, which can result in student behavior that is directed toward escape.

Example: Time the length of instruction and check the students for signs of restlessness or confusion. If the majority of students are ready to move on or begin an assignment, shorten your instruction or use interesting manipulatives to enhance instruction. Pull slower students aside or sit with students that need more instruction. Engage students in the instruction, especially those students likely to exhibit challenging behavior.



Change Amount of Time

Change the amount of time a student a student needs to work. Sometimes when students have long assignments, they may need to break up the assignments into chunks or take breaks. When assignments are broken up during the day, or divided into blocks of time, students can have shorter work periods with other assignments in between. This may give them a break between the long assignments that allows them to come back to it with a fresher attitude. If breaking the assignment up is not possible, then give students a break. Many people take short breaks from their work and then go back to it.

Example: If students are doing long assignments, create a break to get water, go the restroom, or stretch. Be careful of making the break more fun than the assignment. Transitions back to work need to be easy, or break reading assignments into 10- or 15-minute blocks rather than 30 or 45 minutes. If students lose interest during an assignment, rather than allowing them escape through their disruption, tell them “let’s work for 5 more minutes, then we’ll stop.” You can always use timers to set limits. This keeps you in control. You are the one ending the lesson, not the student.

Provide an Alternative Time for Assignments

Because of their learning difficulties, some students may not finish assignments. Teachers may need to provide alternative times for students to complete their work.

Example: You may allow 10 minutes at the end of a period or 30-45 minutes at the end of the day depending on whether they have academic periods or blocks or whether the students remain in the same class for most of the day. You can also create Fridays as make-up days and hold study halls. This extra time allows students an opportunity to complete unfinished work. An alternative time for work, or a “study hall,” may alleviate challenging behavior from students who become frustrated by lengthy activities or difficult activities. This extra time allows them an opportunity to negotiate assignment completion during this alternative time, rather than exhibiting challenging behaviors.





Change Difficulty

Change the difficulty level by interspersing easy and difficult concepts of an assignment. An assignment may begin with material the student has already mastered, then move to new or more challenging material, or information that the student has not yet acquired. You may want to end an assignment with the simpler or mastered material. That way the student begins the assignment confidently.

Example: When completing math problems, begin with familiar problems they have mastered, introduce acquisition problems followed by a few simple problems at the end. If you are reading, let them begin with something easy to read before presenting more challenging material.



Change Student Output

Sometimes it may be necessary to modify the way students respond to instruction as well as adjusting the instruction or curriculum. Some students may become frustrated by the mode they are required to use to demonstrate mastery (e.g., writing versus typing). This may lead to the refusal to begin or complete assignments or to other challenging behaviors. They may need a less taxing mode for output so that teachers can discern their level of acquisition without interference from their mode of expression.

Example: Provide your students with a choice between oral or written answers. Allow students to dictate answers to a peer, teacher, or paraprofessional or tape record answers to tests or assignments.

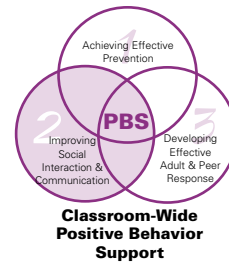


Peer Support

While providing students in need of “extra” attention with appropriate attention and support from peers, it lessens the teacher’s burden of being the sole provider of attention and support. Often students prefer help from their peers and may feel more comfortable if assistance is offered while completing an assignment. This may draw less attention to their abilities as well as giving them more personal attention from a supportive classmate.

Example: Assign peer buddies or tutors that are more independent, tolerant, and patient, and that recognize the importance of supporting or helping students rather than doing the work for them. You may allow the student of concern, to choose between some willing peer tutors or cooperative groups (those you think are helpers rather than doers). BE CAREFUL that the peer tutor does not do all the work for the student of concern. Allow a peer to act as scribe for written assignments.

Improving Effective Social Interaction & Communication



Understanding Student Behavior

Often students exhibit challenging behaviors with the goal of escape or the goal of getting attention. For instance, when the curriculum is hard or there is high teacher demand, students may avoid or escape work or teacher demands through their behavior (e.g., refusal, passive aggression, disruption, etc.). They may also experience disappointments or perceive the lack of teacher attention and use challenging behavior to get comfort or attention. Some students also exhibit challenging behavior to get materials or personal items (e.g. refusal to share, theft, vandalism, etc.). These students may have very little access to these items outside of school. The bottom line is that these students lack the skills to effectively communicate their academic, social or emotional needs.

When teachers understand the goal of student behavior they can begin to teach new interactional skills. Often these students do not have the skills or do not use them. Teachers can then model, demonstrate, or role-play the appropriate interaction skills. They can teach students to ask for help during difficult activities or negotiate alternative times to finish work. Teachers can encourage or teach positive social interactions such as conversational skills, so that students with challenging behavior can effectively get positive peer attention.

This section provides teachers ideas for teaching different skills to replace challenging behavior and improve effective social interactions.

The goal of challenging student behavior is dependent on the environment, social situation or activity, internal state or emotional condition, and responses from peers and instructional staff



They need encouragement and instruction to expand their conversational

Teach Social Skills

1. Initiating interactions

You might notice that when students enter the classroom or enter into a group or other social interaction, that they have difficulty greeting others or actually starting a conversation. They may joke, call students names, act rough (e.g., elbow or slug someone in the arm), giggle, or say something nonsensical. In this situation they may have trouble initiating interactions or conversations. You might talk to them separately and offer suggestions for ways they can say “hello” or introduce a topic of conversation.

Example: “Ray, why don’t you ask students what they did last night, tell them about a TV show you watched, or ask if they finished their homework, rather than saying ‘Hey, Stupid.’ Students want to be your friend, but you make it difficult for them to respond to you.”

2. Maintaining interactions

Some students can start a conversation, but struggle to maintain a conversation (i.e., take-turns). Sometimes they want to dominate the conversation or make others feel that they have nothing to contribute, while other students experience difficulty expanding on the topic and asking questions. In these situations, the conversation ends quickly. Students with more severe disabilities or distractibility may have limited topics and may discuss these topics repetitively. They need encouragement and instruction to expand their conversational topics.

Example: “Ray, I’ve noticed that students cannot share their thoughts and ideas with you when you start a conversation because you do all the talking. It may seem to them that you don’t care what they have to say. The other student will be more willing to talk if you stop once you’ve stated your idea or opinion and allow them a turn to talk. When you stop, they know you are listening. You can also say to them, ‘What do you think?’ or ‘Has that ever happened to you?’”



3. Terminating interactions

Some students may do fine with conversation, but do not know how to gracefully end a conversation. They may abruptly walk away or turn, start talking with another student, or bluntly tell a student they don't know what they're talking about. Other students may interpret this as rude behavior. Teachers might point out to students some acceptable ways of ending the conversation.

Example: "Ray, you just walked away from that student when they were talking. Rather than walk away, you might say 'I have to go now,' 'It's time for my next class,' 'My ride's waiting.' Or 'Catch you later and we can finish.'"

4. Recognizing body language

The recognition of body language or nonverbal cues is critical to successful interactions; however, some students cannot interpret these cues from teachers or other students. Body language tells students when they breach a person's personal space, a person needs to leave, or they need to change behavior (e.g., quiet, slow down, wait, etc.). Teachers can incorporate these skills into their class time or school day.

Example: Before leaving the classroom, you demonstrate the nonverbal cues by holding a finger to your lips and telling students that means "quiet," a hand held up with palm facing outward means "wait" or "stop," and both hands pushing downward means "slow down." You may need to demonstrate facial expressions you use to "deliver messages" and what they mean. Other students can demonstrate nonverbal cues they use. When students travel through the halls, you may want to teach them the "arms length" rule for personal space.



Students with challenging behaviors may not have the social skills to negotiate alternative activities or assignment times or the length of an assignment

Teach New Communication Skills

1. Requesting help

Students may have problems asking for help when something is confusing or challenging, instead they may use their challenging behaviors to get help or to get out of the activity. Some students may not understand the concept of “help” depending on their literacy level or the severity of their disability, while others may not want to appear to *need* help when more independence is encouraged at home. Students need to be reminded that it is “O.K.” to ask for help. We as adults often struggle to ask for help because we don’t want to seem inadequate or to “bother” someone. It is important for teachers to put aside their issues with asking for help, and instead model that skill to students.

Example: Maybe all the students get a little card on their desk that says “HELP” as a reminder to raise their hand or call your name. You may offer students extra credit for every time they ask for help rather than cause problems.

Students who are reluctant to ask for help may prefer to ask another student, rather than the teacher.

Example: In this case, you may have them work in pairs or in groups with a student in the group designated to help the others. You can offer the “help” student extra credit or some sort of incentive for being the group “leader.”

2. Negotiating assignment completion

For some students, long activities are difficult. Their definition for long may be very different than the teacher’s. For some, 10 minutes is long, for others it may be 30 minutes. If it is unreasonable to shorten the activity, then honor the length of time that works best for the student. Remember that long activities are tiring for many of us (e.g., filling out district IEP or other mandated forms), but we may chunk our work, or let someone know that we need extra time. Students with challenging behaviors may not have the social skills to negotiate alternative activity or assignment times or the length of an assignment. Teach them the skills to negotiate or request a different time to finish their work. Teaching these skills helps eliminate the challenging behavior that comes from frustration with long assignments.

Example: When there is a long activity, let students know they can come to you to negotiate an alternative time to finish work. Look for opportunities during the day or the period when they can complete assignments (e.g., a special class at the end of the day or the last 10 or 15 minutes of a period).



Give that time a name such as “down to the wire,” “the finish line,” or give them a “pass” to the alternative work time, or develop a short contract that states when they will finish their assignment. You can teach them to “answer two more questions and then you can finish during ‘down to the wire time’.”

3. Requesting preferred materials or activities

Some students exhibit challenging behavior when they cannot use classroom materials or participate in favorite activities (e.g., computers, electronic games, books, games, etc.), or when they have to share materials or activities. Some students have problems when they have to terminate a favorite activity. These students often exhibit challenging behavior under these conditions and may even destroy materials to prevent others from enjoying the activities or materials. Some students have few material possessions, thus they become more possessive of classroom equipment. Sometimes student do not know when they can have access to these materials again, which makes it harder for them to give up or share the materials. They also may live in situations where older brothers or sisters or neighborhood bullies take their possessions.

Example: You may want to post a schedule for highly preferred classroom items. That way every student can see when it is his or her turn and every student can get equal time. The schedule can be typed and posted each week with the students name by the time. You may want to use a timer that you control for time with materials or time in activities. You may want to pair students with materials that require turn-taking (computer games, board games, etc.) to teach them to share. You can also use individual schedules for certain students with the time for the activity or item scheduled into their day.

4. Seeking attention

All students, and adults for that matter, direct their behavior to get attention from others. This is a very natural need for all people, but most important is how they do it. For students, knowing how to get attention from others in an effective and appropriate way is vital to their social development. When students have not learned good attention-seeking behavior, they cannot get the comfort they need from friends and guidance from adults. They may resort to methods that hurt others' feelings and result in social exclusion from very important social activities. Keep in mind that all behavior is goal directed, even if it at the time, seems illogical with unpleasant outcomes. Remember that there are two strategies that can help improve this situation for the student. First is to provide them with alternatives to get attention without using challenging behavior and second, to ignore, as much as possible, inappropriate attention seeking.

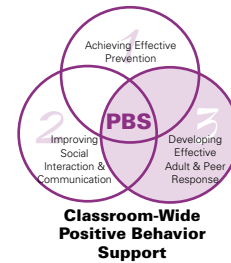
Example: A teacher from a neighboring classroom comes to borrow materials. You show her how to use the materials while the class finishes their seatwork. A student finishes his seatwork assignment, and begins to tap his pen loudly. You ignore the student and continue talking. Next, the student flips the pages in the workbook while whistling, causing other students to laugh. You realize that this student has finished and either needs something to do or to have his work checked. You say to the student, "Ray, it looks like you're finished. When you finish, you can raise your hand and call my name, or call my name and bring your work to me. That tells me you need some attention or something to do. Now that you're finished you can also help me by gathering the papers as other students finish." You might also get students to create a list of things they can do when they finish or when they need to wait while you're with someone else. and things that they can say to

Teaching Tips:

Challenging behavior is communication. Teach students a replacement for the challenging behavior. Role-play and model the desired behavior. Look for opportunities to reinforce it through out the day.



Developing Appropriate Adult & Peer Responses



Many factors may interact to influence the direction of student behavior such as cultural or ethnic beliefs or values, upsetting events before school, sleep habits, diet or nutrition, self-esteem, and skill level to name just a few. However, along with these environmental factors, there is a goal or an underlying motivation or reason for the challenging behavior.

For instance, some students complete assignments to please the teacher, their parents, and/or themselves. Therefore, they may obtain attention from others or gain self-esteem or confidence for themselves as a result of completing an assignment successfully. Students may also complete assignments because of their interest in the work, or because it fulfills a requirement before moving on to a more rewarding or interesting activity. In this case, they are obtaining access to knowledge or to an interesting external activity. On the other hand, students may avoid or refuse to complete assignments or activities. They may find the work uninteresting, confusing, or too difficult. Students may also be fearful of rejection by peers, the teacher, or their family, or of failing their assignment altogether. Students also exhibit challenging behavior as a means of getting attention from others (i.e., teachers and peers). They may possess the skill and understanding to complete an assignment, but they may seek recognition through their challenging behavior rather than the desirable behavior of completing work.

How teachers and peers respond to student behavior becomes especially important when motivating students to complete assignments and in decreasing their need for difficult or challenging behavior.

*Teachers and peers
must be careful not to
unintentionally encourage
the challenging behavior*

All of this is very interesting, but what is the point?

The point is that teachers and student peers may change the direction of student behavior not only through the preventative methods discussed earlier, but also in how they respond or react to challenging behavior. Responses to behavior may motivate students to continue or discontinue their challenging behavior. Teachers and peers must be careful not to unintentionally encourage the challenging behavior. For instance, if peers laugh at students who are seeking attention by acting silly or obnoxious, their response to the student may cause the continuation of the silly behavior. Remember, in this case, the goal-directed behavior is to obtain attention and if the student gets attention, they are more likely to use the behavior again for the same reason. Likewise, if a student acts out to avoid or escape an assignment or activity or they are removed from the area without completion of the assignment, the student may engage in that behavior again to achieve the same goal, escape.



Teacher Response

Praise



1. Specific Praise

Specific praise versus general praise tells a student exactly what they are doing that is working well. Describe, within a praise statement, what specifically you like. If the student is on task and completing a math assignment, let them know that you like the way they're working through the assignment.

Example: "Wow, you are working hard on that math assignment! I like the way you are taking time to work through each problem."

The terminology you use for praise varies according to the age and ability level of the students. Use this same strategy when students work cooperatively together on an assignment.

Example: "You all are working so well together!" "Cool, I like the way you're helping each other."

2. Vary Praise

Vary praise to avoid sounding repetitive or insincere. Students notice when you use different terms to praise them or their work. When you use the same phrase or words over and over, students may become accustomed to the words and diminish their reinforcing value. Varying praise and keeping it specific, piques student interest and motivation.

Example: "Your research of this topic was very thorough" or "I can tell you really took some time to gather information on this topic" or "Wow, you really gathered a lot of information for this assignment."

3. Praise of Others

The praise of others may increase the motivation of less task-oriented students. Praise students that are sitting close to the student who is less motivated.

Example: "John and Sarah, you are working very well on your history assignment."

Be careful not to follow the praise of other students with statements of sarcasm or shame.



Voice Tone/Intensity

1. Neutral voice tone

Neutral voice tone and intensity signals control and command. Often the goal of student challenging behavior is to get attention, or to get out of work by upsetting the teacher or other students. When students live in situations where harsh voice tones are the norm, they may seek those same interactions in school or may be reinforced by such interactions. It is best if you use neutral, but firm voice tone/intensity when students disrupt the class. This lets students know that you have it together, and no matter what they do, they will not rattle you. A neutral rather than harsh tone also models the type of voice tone you want from the students.

2. Demonstrative

Be demonstrative or enthusiastic when students perform well, even for slightest positive change. A lively, positive tone of voice signals to them that you are pleased even with small changes, and provides a decided contrast to a neutral, but firm tone. This is the tone of voice to use when praising students for their performance.

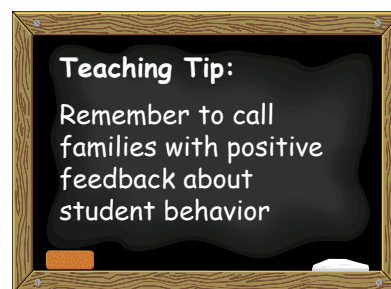
Example: Use exclamations such as: "that's tight" "Cool!" "Way to go!" (these terms may be outdated). Be sure to praise using their jargon. Follow general with specific praise.

Ignore/Redirect



1. Ignore challenging behavior

When possible, ignore challenging behavior. Isn't this letting the student get away with the behavior? No, ignoring helps minimize the effects of the student's behavior. For instance, when teachers take time to scold students, they are giving them attention. Yes, negative attention works as well as any attention for some students. When teachers scold students, they are addressing the behavior specifically and if it is in front of anyone they are the center of attention. Thus, they received the attention they desired. Likewise, if the student's goal-directed behavior is to avoid or escape, then the time teachers take to lecture or scold is time away from the task, especially if they end up in time out. By ignoring behavior, teachers may defeat the student's efforts to escape work.



2. Redirect

In a neutral tone, remind the student of the task at hand, while ignoring the behavior. By discussing their work, you bring them back to the task. Teachers actually provide positive interaction for their attention to you or the task at hand.

Example: "Ray, let's see where you are with this assignment. Show me what you've done, so I can help you get started again. It looks like you've gotten a good start, that's great."

3. Remind student of desirable behavior

When students exhibit challenging behavior, rather than focusing on, or emphasizing problematic or challenging behaviors, remind them of communicative options or new interactions you are trying to teach. When teachers remind them of the positive behaviors they need to exhibit, they are emphasizing the positive rather than the negative. Students are more likely to repeat the behaviors teachers emphasize most.

Example: "Remember Ray, you can raise your hand and ask for help or come and talk to me privately. When you are tired or frustrated this might be a time when you can move on to a different assignment. We can negotiate a different time to finish this assignment. You can let me know that you're frustrated or tired."

Peer Response



Peer Laughter or Taunting

Peer laughter or taunting may perpetuate challenging or boisterous student behavior. Even the best students may laugh in response to challenging behaviors, sometimes in laughing at them not with them. Other students may use taunt or encourage challenging behaviors in other students rather than being disruptive themselves. Teachers may want to take students aside and ask them not to respond to the student. Teachers might offer incentives in the way of extra credit or by making them team leaders for assignments, stressing the importance of setting good examples.

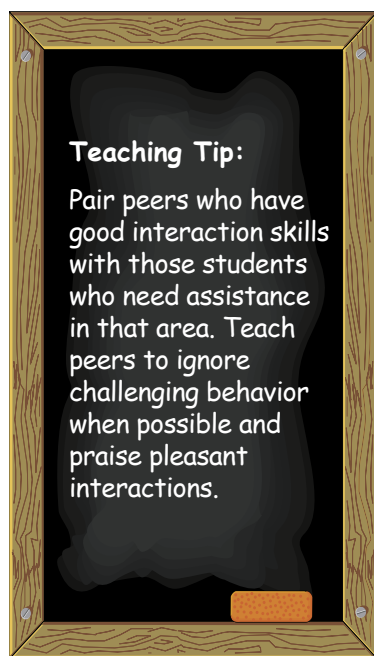
Example: "I'd like for you all to set examples for good classroom behavior. Paul is having a difficult time right now and needs your help. You're good behavior will help him with his behavior. Please ignore his disruptions and support his good behavior."



Peer Exclusion

Peer exclusion occurs when disruptive students alienate their classmates to the extent that no one will interact with them, even when their goal may be peer attention. Teachers may want to explain to students the possible reasons why a student is acting out, and the importance for them to be friendly and include the student in activities. They can set up opportunities for peers to work with the student. During the course of completing an assignment, a peer can encourage opportunities for interaction. Ask them to ignore the student's challenging behavior and remind them of the importance of the student's contributions or of the desirable behavior.

Example: "I am going to set up a group activity and include Mary in your group. I'd like you all to welcome her and praise her participation. Sometimes she acts out because she wants to be your friend. Let's give her a chance to work with you all. Remember, ignore any challenging behavior and remind her of how much you need her help."



Conclusion



The strategies and suggestions in this manual were included because they are effective, but only if they are implemented. Students in special education require varying amounts of effort on our part to be successful. It is up to each of us to decide how much time and effort each student needs and which strategies will help him or her to be successful.

Resources



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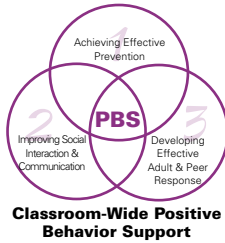
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PBS Strategy Checklist

1 Achieving Effective Prevention

Environment

- Schedules & Rules
 - Classroom schedule
 - Individual student schedules
 - Classroom rules
- Room Arrangement
 - Instructional Areas
 - Materials
- Seating Arrangements
 - Proximity to the teacher
 - Proximity to other students
 - Proximity to distractions
- Transitions

Adapting Curriculum and Instruction

- Multiple Modalities
- Relate instruction to real life
- Change amount of work
- Change appearance of assignments
- Pacing
- Change amount of time
- Alternative time for assignments
- Change difficulty
- Change student output
- Peer support

2 Improving Effective Social Interaction & Communication

Teach Social Skills

- Initiating interactions
- Maintaining Interactions
- Terminating Interactions
- Recognizing body language

Teach Communication Skills

- Requesting help
- Negotiating assignment completion
- Requesting preferred materials or activities
- Seeking attention

3 Promoting effective teacher and peer responses

Teacher Responses

- Specific praise
- Vary praise
- Praise of others

Voice Tone/Intensity

- Neutral tone
- Demonstrative

Ignore/Redirect

- Ignore challenging behavior
- Redirect
- Remind student of desirable behavior

Peer Response

- Laughter or taunting
- Peer exclusion