



**School Practitioner
Listserv**



**A Weekly Community of Practice Network
for Sharing and Interchange**

January 23, 2017

Request from a colleague
**>Professional Development to reduce
classroom behavior problems**

- Center Comments
- Comments from Colleagues in the Field

Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

Featured Set of Center Resources for
**>reducing misbehavior and
enhancing engagement in learning.**

Please forward this to a few colleagues you think might be interested.
The more who join, the more we are likely to receive to share.

**For those who have been forwarded this and want to be part of
the weekly exchange, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu**

**For previous recent postings of this community of practice, see
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>**
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Note: In keeping with the *National Initiative for Transforming Student & Learning Supports*,* this is being sent to and forwarded by over 114,000 school and community stakeholders concerned about (1) daily matters confronting schools, (2) promoting whole child development and positive school climate, and (3) the transformation of student and learning supports.

Request: “A team of us is putting together a presentation for teachers on how to deal with very difficult students. Teachers want skills and interventions they can use in the classroom. Here are some scenarios sent to us by varying role groups. Any input would be most welcomed.”

- A student is starting to misbehave. Assuming a decent student-teacher relationship exists, what should the teacher do?
- Student behavior is not improving after the first strategy(ies) and misbehavior is escalating/continuing. What does the teacher do now? At what point should an office referral be generated?
- After sending the student to the office, what strategies (problem solving) do the counselors and administrators employ to curb the misbehavior? (Teachers should know this so they have a clear understanding that an office referral does equate to punishment.)
- How do counselors and administrators assure that the student's misbehavior will not continue once returning to class?
- What are the expectations of the student when they return to class? Should the student be escorted by the counselor or administrators? Should the student be expected to (sincerely) apologize to the teacher? Should they be expected to return during non-instructional time to catch up on what they missed while they were in the office?
- What are the expectations of the teacher when the student returns? What strategies should the teacher employ after the office referral (to restore the relationship)?
- What if the student's misbehavior starts up again after returning to class? What should the teacher do then? Or should this constitute an immediate office re-referral?"

Center Comments: The first concern in dealing with difficult students is no avoid making matters worse. We have outlined an approach that stresses preventing such situations as those described and how to minimize the damage when they do occur. Our approach goes beyond positive behavior support initiatives (PBIS) and expands beyond the limitations of the current way multitiered student support (MTSS) frameworks are envisioned. (See the *Featured Set of Center Resources* cited near the end of this document.)

Here's are some brief introductory comments:

When a student misbehaves, a natural reaction is to want that youngster to experience and other students to see the consequences of misbehaving. One hope is that public awareness of consequences will deter subsequent problems. As a result, a considerable amount of time at schools is devoted to discipline and classroom management.

An often stated assumption is that stopping a student's misbehavior will make her or him amenable to teaching. In a few cases, this may be so. However, the assumption ignores all the research that has led to understanding psychological reactance and the need for individuals to maintain and restore a sense of self-determination...

As with many emergency procedures, the benefits of using punishment may be offset by many negative consequences. These include increased negative attitudes toward school and school personnel. These attitudes often lead to more behavior problems, anti-social acts, and various mental health problems. Because disciplinary procedures also are associated with dropping out of school, it is not surprising that some concerned professionals refer to extreme disciplinary practices as "pushout" strategies.

In general, specific discipline practices should be developed with the aim of strengthening the relationship between the teacher and student. That is, stopping misbehavior must be accomplished in ways that maximize the likelihood that the teacher can engage/re-engage the student in instruction and positive learning. The growing emphasis on positive approaches to reducing misbehavior and enhancing support for positive behavior in and out-of-the-classroom is a step in the right direction. So is the emphasis in school guidelines stressing that discipline should be reasonable, fair, and nondenigrating (e.g., should be experienced by recipients as legitimate reactions that neither denigrate one's sense of worth nor reduce one's sense of autonomy).

In recognizing that the application of consequences is an insufficient step in preventing future misbehavior, there is growing awareness that school improvements that engage and re-engage students reduce behavior (and learning) problems significantly. That is why school improvement efforts need to delineate:

- efforts to prevent and anticipate misbehavior
- actions to be taken during misbehavior that do minimal harm to engagement in classroom learning
- steps to be taken afterwards that include a focus on enhancing engagement.

For more on this, a good place to start is with the Center's online resource:

> *Conduct and Behavior problems* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/conduct/conduct.pdf>

Included in that introductory resource are excerpts from the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Practice Guide on *Reducing Behavior Problems in the Classroom* – https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/behavior_pg_092308.pdf

As noted in the WWC guide's overview:

“Much of the attention currently given to improving students' academic achievement addresses issues of curriculum, instructional strategies, and interventions or services for struggling learners, and rightfully so. However, even after addressing these issues, barriers still remain for some students. An estimated one-third of students fail to learn because of psychosocial problems that interfere with their ability to fully attend to and engage in instructional activities, prompting a call for “new directions for addressing barriers to learning.” (Adelman and Taylor, 2006)* These new approaches go beyond explicitly academic interventions to take on the learning challenges posed by problematic student behavior and the ways schools deal with it. Approaches aimed at improving school and classroom environments, including reducing the negative effects of disruptive or distracting behaviors, can enhance the chances that effective teaching and learning will occur, both for the students exhibiting problem behaviors and for their classmates.”

*Adelman, H., & Taylor, L. (2005). *The school leader's guide to student learning supports: New directions for addressing barriers to learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

The WWC guide recommends the following:

- (1) Identify the specifics of the problem behavior and the conditions that prompt and reinforce it. Every teacher experiences difficulty at one time or another in trying to remedy an individual student's behavior problem that is not responsive to preventative efforts. Because research suggests that the success of a behavioral intervention hinges on identifying the specific conditions that prompt and reinforce the problem behavior (i.e., the behavior's “antecedents” and “consequences”), we recommend that teachers carefully observe the conditions in which the problem behavior is likely to occur and not occur. Teachers then can use that information to tailor effective and efficient intervention strategies that respond to the needs of the individual student within the classroom context.
- (2) Modify the classroom learning environment to decrease problem behavior. Many effective classroom-focused interventions to decrease students' problematic behavior alter or remove

factors that trigger them. These triggers can result from a mismatch between the classroom setting or academic demands and a student's strengths, preferences, or skills. Teachers can reduce the occurrence of inappropriate behavior by revisiting and reinforcing classroom behavioral expectations; rearranging the classroom environment, schedule, or learning activities to meet students' needs; and/or individually adapting instruction to promote high rates of student engagement and on-task behavior.

- (3) Teach and reinforce new skills to increase appropriate behavior and preserve a positive classroom climate. We recommend that teachers actively teach students socially- and behaviorally-appropriate skills to replace problem behaviors using strategies focused on both individual students and the whole classroom. In doing so, teachers help students with behavior problems learn how, when, and where to use these new skills; increase the opportunities that the students have to exhibit appropriate behaviors; preserve a positive classroom climate; and manage consequences to reinforce students' display of positive "replacement" behaviors and adaptive skills.
- (4) Draw on relationships with professional colleagues and students' families for continued guidance and support. Social relationships and collaborative opportunities can play a critical role in supporting teachers in managing disruptive behavior in their classrooms. We recommend that teachers draw on these relationships in finding ways to address the behavior problems of individual students and consider parents, school personnel, and behavioral experts as allies who can provide new insights, strategies, and support.
- (5) Assess whether schoolwide behavior problems warrant adopting schoolwide strategies or programs and, if so, implement ones shown to reduce negative and foster positive interactions. Classroom teachers, in coordination with other school personnel (administrators, grade-level teams, and special educators), can benefit from adopting a schoolwide approach to preventing problem behaviors and increasing positive social interactions among students and with school staff. This type of systemic approach requires a shared responsibility on the part of all school personnel, particularly the administrators who establish and support consistent schoolwide practices and the teachers who implement these practices both in their individual classrooms and beyond."

Comments from Colleagues in the Field

(1) "It seems as if they would benefit from something like Love or Logic training or Restorative Practices training to develop some ideas on where to begin. Perhaps you should help them learn how to best promote adult learning into practice. Adult learners struggle with taking what they have learned and using it successfully, particularly when it is a change from what they normally do. In fact, in one of my schools I put together a six week course on these very types of scenarios where teachers met with me during staff Professional Development time for 75 minutes per week. Each week we had learning time that went from Tier 1 all of the way to Tier 3 strategies. Teachers also had a case student and chose specific techniques to apply. Then the next week we would learn a few new strategies, discuss implementation successes and hiccups, problem-solve and consult on improving the implementation of that idea, and developed a model to really put our learning and implementation to the test."

(2) "I work at an elementary school where sending students to the principal is discouraged. We have no counselors here but we do have a community based agency, funded through LEA funds. One program provided two sometimes three times per year is 'Be Cool' a series of lessons in self-regulation skills. We use 'Boy's Town' curriculum as a framework for teaching social skills. These skill sets are posted in the classrooms as group expectation. The skills are referenced in development of work or behavior contracts developed by teacher/student.

I think the teacher would begin with strengthening their relationship with the student. Initiate a private conversation at a calm moment such as: "We've had a few incidents lately which I find

troubling and I wonder if there is something I am doing or something going on in class that we could change to support you? Have there been any changes at home”? The point being to break down any barriers that might be forming to reduce teacher effectiveness. Presenting the concern from within the teacher-student interaction context supports student understanding of how the teacher may be an ally in developing more positive solutions. Ask the student what changes would support them and then do it, if reasonable of course. Own the challenge and model steps of effective problem solving and environmental change to decrease need for student to use the behavior.

If conditions at home are of significant concern the teacher suggest to student that he/she reach out to the parent. Then, observing the child's behavior in response to this suggestion the teacher would make a verbal agreement of support in helping parent. If the behavior persists and/or the teacher has contacted the parent without success the teacher might consult with school psych, or counselor if available, or the principal or staff member on site responsible for connecting student with sessions such as Be Cool (which may take weeks to come around).

The less done in front of the class the better. Perhaps student teacher could work out a non verbal signal or teacher pass by using a subtle tap on the desk or pat on the shoulder as reminder. In general, pulling the student aside and expressing empathy for the students feelings is crucial to maintain a positive relationship. Teachers who are quick to refer to the office lose instructional control of the student and confirm in the mind of the student a lack of worthiness promoting a downward spiral. The student must always be provided with a way out in the heat of the moment and then later in a calm moment participate in self-review with teacher support. Teacher could write out (keep it simple, the highest priority) the students perspective and teacher expectation. Then converse with student as to possible solutions. Perhaps this would include student agreement to complete the work missed during the ,cool down' time lost to the behavior. Modify the work if student feels overwhelmed. Often times behavior arises because the student is unable to do the work. Teacher could agree not to call on the student.

I do believe that students should write a letter of apology to the teacher when unacceptable and undeserved behavior targets the teacher who has made sincere efforts to reach out to the student and build in supports. This might be supported by the site administrator with either teacher present or not. Parent might sign the written apology and return to school. Teacher would reinforce the, 'fresh start', accepting the apology and pledging to put it behind them.

These suggestions would be modified depending on the grade level and functioning level of the student in addition to differing levels of site support that may be available. In our district, we are moving to the MTSS model where the Student Success Team (SST) provides support for students with on-going academic and social emotional issues. The social emotional piece is new, in it's first year on this site. We have a new position, 'Social Emotional Support Provider' (person has 5 schools to cover) who is available to support students through the SST process and in some cases principal request. This additional staff has been a great support for the incoming K students at the beginning of this school year. I referred some of these student to ,Dinosaur School' and Parent Child Interaction Therapy (provided by county mental health and Snap, 'Set 4 School). They have turned around behavior and it's a true joy to see them happy in school.

Our process of access to the SST includes the writing of 'smart goals', in an Action Service Plan developed by teacher and parent in conference . The principal or school psych might attend by request..”

(3) “My suggestions for dealing with these problem behaviors usually fall within a framework, like PBIS (positive behavior intervention and support), and/or Restorative practices. Both approaches offer strategies within an overarching school-wide framework that is part of the school culture. Specific strategies within these frameworks might include:

1. Restating and reteaching positive behaviors in contexts (cool tools)
2. Using Restorative questions and affective statements, or a restorative dialog.
3. Understanding the Behavior Escalation cycle and appropriate interventions at each stage.

Here is a video that I like that demonstrates win/win conversations with students that we use in our PBIS training: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=jwSZ3XYUZME> ”

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Invitation to listserv participants:

What is being done in classrooms to support teachers in minimizing behavior problems?

**Share lessons learned. Comments. Recommendations.
Send your responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu**

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Featured Set of Center Resources for

>Reducing misbehavior and enhancing engagement in learning.

For more on this fundamental matter, see the Center’s online clearinghouse Quick Find:

>Conduct and Behavior Problems – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p3022_01.htm

It provides links to resources from our Center and from others. Here is a sample of Center resources:

>Rethinking How Schools Address Student Misbehavior & Disengagement – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/spring08.pdf>

>Common Behavior Problems at School: A Natural Opportunity for Social and Emotional Learning – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/behaviorsocialemot.pdf>

>Disengaged Students – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/disengpn.pdf>

>Rethinking discipline to improve school climate – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/disciplineclimate.pdf>

**THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THE INTERCHANGES BECOME!
Sign-up for the Listserv mailings – email Ltaylor@ucla.edu**

**Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.
We post a broad range of issues and responses to the *Net Exchange*
on our website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm>
and on *Facebook* (access from the Center’s home page <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>)**



*For information about the

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

And note that our new book detailing the prototypes and related resources is now in press.

For a preview, contact Ltaylor@ucla.edu