

## Effective behavior management for inclusive classrooms

Managing disruptive behavior is examined in detail. The teaching methods and strategies discussed in this article focus on behavior management in an inclusive classroom.

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# How to Manage Disruptive Behavior in Inclusive Classrooms

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## The Same or Different Disciplinary Strategies?

Generally, classroom teachers can use the same disciplinary practices to manage the disruptive behavior of students with disabilities that they use to manage the behavior of students without disabilities. Much of the undesirable behavior exhibited by both groups is similar in nature. The differences, however, may originate in the teacher's selection of the particular behavioral intervention. When selecting behavior interventions for students with disabilities, teachers should ensure that the strategies are developmentally appropriate and take into consideration the student's disability and due process rights. Here are 10 questions that may help you diagnostically analyze situations that foster disruptive behavior in students with disabilities. These discussions may provide guidance as you select behavior-reduction strategies.

### **Question 1. Could this misbehavior be a result of inappropriate curriculum or teaching strategies?**

Inappropriate curriculum and teaching strategies can contribute to student misbehavior – but not all misbehavior is attributable to these factors. Some misbehavior may arise as a function of the teacher's inability to meet the diverse needs of all students. Consider these factors:

- Group size.
- Group composition.
- Limited planning time.
- Cultural and linguistic barriers.
- Lack of access to equipment, materials, and resources.

If the misbehavior evolves as a result of inappropriate curriculum or teaching strategies, redress the content and skill level components of your curriculum, its futuristic benefit for the student, and the formats you use in instructional delivery. When you identify the instructional needs of students within the context of the classroom, using a diagnostic prescriptive approach, and make curricular adaptations both in content and instructional delivery, you can

greatly reduce the occurrence of student misbehavior.

**Question 2. Could this misbehavior be a result of the student's inability to understand the concepts being taught?**

When there is a mismatch between teaching style and the learning styles of students, misbehavior inevitably results. Incidents of misbehavior may also result when students refuse to learn concepts because they are unable to see the relationship between the skills being taught and how these skills transcend to the context of the larger environment. In these situations, you should employ strategies and tactics that show students how component skills have meaning in the classroom and in the community. If you find that the cause of the inappropriate behavior is related to the student's lack of prerequisite skills or abilities to acquire concepts, you can use a simple procedure known as task analysis. By using this procedure, you can pinpoint specific functional levels of students on targeted skills and provide sequential instructional programs that will move the student with disabilities toward mastery of a targeted goal at a pace appropriate for the student (Moyer & Dardig, 1978).

**Question 3. Could this misbehavior be an underlying result of the student's disability?**

Some disruptive behavior may be a result of the student's disability (e.g., emotional/behavioral disorders). Meanwhile, other behavior may result from deliberate actions taken by the student to cause classroom disruption. Determining the underlying cause of a student's disruptive behavior involves a careful analysis of the behavior, as follows:

- Try to clarify what kinds of behavior are causing concern.
- Specify what is wrong with that behavior.
- Decide what action should be taken to address the behavior. -Specify what behavior you desire from the student.
- Implement a plan to correct conditions, variables, or circumstances that contribute to the problem behavior (Charles, 1996).

You should analyze the disruptive behavior and render a professional judgment as to its cause. Redl and Wattenberg (cited in Charles, 1996) suggested that teachers employ a procedure of "diagnostic thinking" when faced with incidents of student misbehavior. These procedures include forming a first hunch, gathering facts, exploring hidden factors, taking action, and remaining flexible. While such a task is not easy, having a knowledge base of the general characteristics (e.g., academic, behavioral, social/emotional, learning, physical) of students with disabilities and the associated etiologies (causes) can be helpful.

**Question 4. Could this misbehavior be a result of other factors?**

Many aspects of classroom life may contribute to students' misbehavior: the physical arrangement of the classroom, boredom or frustration, transitional periods, lack of awareness of what is going on in every area of the classroom. Remember, however, that classroom climate and physical arrangements can also encourage desirable behavior. You should regularly assess your teaching and learning environment for conditions or procedures that perpetuate or encourage misbehavior. Because inappropriate behavioral manifestations of students can also stem from certain types of teaching behavior, teachers need to become more cognizant of the kinds of behavior they emit and the relationship between their teaching behavior and the resultant behavior of students. Examine your instruction and interactions with students in ongoing classroom life, as follows:

- The development of relevant, interesting, and appropriate curriculums.
- The manner in which you give recognition and understanding of each student as an individual with his or her unique set of characteristics and needs.
- Your own behavior as a teacher, and characteristics such as those identified by Kounin (1970) withitness, overlapping that reduce misbehavior, increase instructional time, and maintain group focus and movement management of students.

### **Question 5. Are there causes of misbehavior that I can control?**

As a teacher, you can control many variables to thwart undesirable behavior. You may modify or change your curriculum; make adaptations in instruction to address multiple intelligences; and make changes in your communication style, attitude toward students with disabilities, and expectations of these students. Analyze how much positive feedback you give students. If you find that you use limited feedback (encouragement or praise), which accentuates positive behavior of students (and also communicates respect and promotes self-esteem and self-confidence), you may be contributing to behavior problems. Feedback (both verbal and nonverbal) is an important factor in the learning paradigm that is too often neglected, overlooked, or haphazardly orated.

### **Question 6. How do I determine if the misbehavior is classroom based?**

This is a difficult question. Conducting a self-evaluation of teaching style and instructional practices as in the previous questions may provide some insight into whether the behavior is related to the disability or is classroom based. You may find a classroom ecological inventory (Fuchs, Fernstrom, Scott, Fuchs, & Vandermeer, 1994) helpful in determining cause-effect relationships of student misbehavior. The classroom ecological inventory could help you assess salient features of the learning environment of your school or classroom. In such analysis, you can gather specific information about the student, the behavior, and the environmental conditions and settings associated with the behavior (Evans, Evans, & Gable, 1989). By taking into account the learning ecology, you can be more decisive and selective in your use of resources for managing student behavior and, at the same time, obtain a more accurate and complete picture of a particular student for developing a more appropriate and comprehensive behavior-change program. Classroom ecological inventories can be useful for collecting information about a wide range of events, variables, and conditions that can influence and affect a student's behavior. Conducting a functional analysis or functional assessment can also be useful in examining cause-effect relationships of students' behavior. Functional assessments can also help you address serious problem behavior displayed by "target" students. These analyses examine the circumstances or functional relationships between, or surrounding, the occurrence or nonoccurrence of the challenging behavior. The assessments can help you identify variables and events that are consistently present in those situations (Dunlap et al., 1993; Foster-Johnson & Dunlap, 1993). You may identify events, variables, and circumstances that contribute to the problem. In addition, you may devise a comprehensive, individualized approach to designing interventions logically related to the target behavior and, in the process, better meet the student's specific needs.

### **Question 7. How do I teach students to self-regulate or self-manage behavior?**

You can teach students to self-regulate or self-manage their behavior by teaching them to use the skills of self-management:

- Self-instruction, self-recording, or self-monitoring.
- Self-reinforcement, self-evaluation, and self-punishment.
- Multiple-component treatment packages (Carter, 1993; Hughes, Ruhl, & Peterson, 1988; Rosenbaum & Drabman, 1979).

Many studies (e.g., McCarl, Svobodny, & Beare, 1991; Nelson, Smith, Young, & Dodd, 1991; Prater, Joy, Chilman, Temple, & Miller, 1991) focusing on self-management techniques have shown the effectiveness of self-management procedures in behavior change and academic productivity. These studies included students from many different populations, ranging from average achievers to students with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities. Teachers have found many advantages in using self-monitoring procedures: These procedures improve target behavior, stress the student's role in behavior change, allow generalization to non-school environments, free teachers for other tasks, and teach students responsibility and self-determination (Frith & Armstrong, 1986). Furthermore, these procedures are relatively simple to implement; they quickly reach a point in which little supervision is required; and, they help students become more successful and independent in their classroom and in everyday life (Dunlap, Dunlap, Koegel, & Koegel, 1991). Of course, teaching students self-management skills should not be regarded as a substitute for a high-quality curriculum of instruction (Dunlap et al., 1991) that emphasizes academic and social learning skills. Here are some steps for teaching self-management skills:

- Defining the target behavior.
- Defining the desired behavior.
- Developing the data-collection system.
- Teaching the students how to use the self-management system.
- Implementing the system.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the system (Carter, 1993).
- Additional steps may include identifying functional reinforcers and fading use of the self-monitoring procedure (Dunlap et al., 1991).