

Experimental Education Unit Staff Orientation Handout: Managing Behavior

Preventing Behavior Problems by Stacey York

Many behavioral problems can be prevented before they begin. Here are some tips on preventing problems through adult supervision:

- Be aware of your whole group by intermittently scanning the classroom.
- Position yourself so that you can see the entire classroom.
- Clearly communicate your expectations and limits when introducing an activity.
- Anticipate the potential problems of future activities before they begin.
- Intervene during the beginning stages of a troublesome situation before it gets out of hand.

Ignoring Misbehavior

Ignoring can be used with minor inappropriate or low-level attention seeking behaviors such as whining, testing, arguing, eye rolling, pouting, calling out and tantrums (i.e., behaviors that are not dangerous or hurtful to other children or adults). The following are some guidelines for the use of ignoring as an intervention for chronic disruptive behavior.

- Avoid discussion and eye contact - neutralize your reaction to the child's behavior.
- Use consistent ignoring and be prepared for the misbehavior to get worse at first (extinction burst).
- Move away from the student but stay nearby (you want to be far enough away so that the child is not reinforced by your proximity, but close enough to reinforce any appropriate behavior that occurs)
- Teach other students to ignore
- Pay attention to positive behaviors - carefully plan to give attention and praise to pro-social behaviors.
- Give back your attention as soon as possible - as soon as the student stops misbehaving, quickly return your attention (within 5 seconds) and praise the appropriate behavior
- Stay in charge

Cautions

- You must continue to ignore until the behavior changes or you will likely see an increase rather than a decrease in misbehavior.
- Ignoring is only effective if you and the child have a positive relationship
- Ignoring is inappropriate for behaviors that are verbally abusive or physically destructive to children, themselves, other people or property. In addition, it is inappropriate for behaviors such as lying, stealing, non-compliance, or forgetting to do homework.
- Ignoring is inappropriate when the child is not motivated by attention.

Redirecting Misbehavior

Redirecting misbehavior is an appropriate technique for students who become verbal, or physical in nature. The advantage is that it doesn't draw attention to the student's misbehavior from other students and doesn't disrupt the classroom work being carried out. The following are some guidelines for the use of redirecting.

Use non-verbal signals, prompts and picture cues for redirecting

- Use physical redirection to practice, divert, and diffuse - physically teach or support children in performing the appropriate behavior
- Use positive verbal redirection - focus on appropriate behavior
- Be firm and direct
- Use other students to help with redirection - proximity to a positive peer model
- Use positive reminders of rules and consequences
- Be specific about the expectations and the behavior
- Reinforce the expected behaviors - catch kids being good