

# BEST PRACTICES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION



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THROUGHOUT THIS DOCUMENT WE EMPHASIZE HOW DATA, RESEARCH-BASED STRATEGIES, AND THE LAW CAN BE UTILIZED TO PREVENT AND ADDRESS BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS.

# PUBLIC SCHOOLS SEEM ILL-EQUIPPED TO MEET THE BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGES OF MANY SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most contentious parts of the Individual's with Disabilities Education Act's (IDEA) reauthorization in 1997 was discipline. Members of Congress, school administrators and teachers complained that IDEA limited a school's authority to punish students with disabilities and created a double standard for how students who commit serious infractions are treated. However, in January 2001, the U.S. General Accounting Office released a report that seemed to contradict this allegation. The report demonstrated that about two-thirds of all students who engage in serious acts of misconduct (e.g. incidents of violence, weapons, &/or drugs) are given out-of-school suspensions, whether they were general education or special education students. Yet, the same debate persists in the current reauthorization deliberations.

Based on New Jersey's restrictive placements of special education students, we may hypothesize that public schools in New Jersey seem to have difficulty addressing the behavioral needs of special education students. For example, according to the latest United States Department of Education's statistics (1998-99 school year), New Jersey is five times as likely to educate public school stu-

dents with disabilities in separate private schools than the country as a whole.

According to New Jersey's December 2002 statistics, these costly and restrictive placements persist. For example, as the table below indicates, 6.5% of New Jersey's and 9.3% of Newark's public school special education students, ages 6 to 21, are placed in private schools. In addition, the vast majority of these students are limited to two disabling conditions (ED & MD), where students tend to have behavior problems.

One can't help but wonder why New Jersey and Newark tend to educate special education students with behavioral problems in much more costly private schools, with exorbitant tuition and transportation costs?

In addition, in New Jersey & Newark, 36% & 34% respectively of all special education public school students with a disabling condition of "Emotional Disabilities" are being educated in facilities that remove them from the regular education student population (e.g. self contained special education classes, separate special education schools, residential schools, home instruction, and county detention



NTU VPs Mitch Gerry and Michele Corbo, as well as all Newark's Asst. & Associate Supts attend Newark's discipline policy committee meeting, led by Anzella Nelms

facilities).

Just as the General Accounting Office utilized research and data to study outcomes of discipline practices applied to special education students who commit serious behavioral infractions, throughout this document, we will demonstrate how research, data and IDEA mandates can assist in better meeting the behavioral needs of our special education students. We first demonstrate how special education teachers can use research proven techniques that can also be integrated in to IEPs to prevent behavioral problems. We then illustrate how IDEA mandates and research-proven strategies can better equip public schools to prevent and intervene effectively with problematic student behaviors.

**\* THE TECHNIQUES & STRATEGIES CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT TO ADDRESS BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS CAN ALSO BE UTILIZED WITH REGULAR EDUCATION STUDENTS**

## PUBLIC SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS (AGES 6 TO 21) PLACED IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS AS OF DECEMBER 2002

	NEW JERSEY		NEWARK	
	# of Students with Disability	% of Students with Disability	# of Students with Disability	% of Students with Disability
<b>Disability</b>				
Multiple Disabilities	4,536	19.7%	169	18.9%
Emotional Disabilities	3,004	22.5%	206	31.0%
Autism	1,217	29.4%	22	21.2%
Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)	1,129	1.1%	51	1.8%
<b>All Disabilities</b>	<b>11,559</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>9.3%</b>

# DISCIPLINE - AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION IS WORTH A POUND OF CURE

## PREVENTION

Discipline strategies should prevent behavior problems from arising, stopping misbehaviors when they occur, and address the cause of the behavior problems so they don't occur again. Prevention is the most effective and cost-efficient technique for dealing with discipline problems. In fact, there is a large array of "research-proven practices" special education professionals, paraprofessionals, parents, building administrators, and IEP teams can utilize in preventing discipline problems and/or addressing these problems if they occur. On the following pages we have delineated effective techniques that can be utilized for entire classes &/or integrated into IEPs, based on the individual behavior needs of students.

### 1. CLEARLY DELINEATE AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCE RULES:

Establishing, monitoring, and consistently reinforcing classroom rules is one of the most effective ways to prevent and reduce behavior problems. On this page we have provided tools to reinforce classroom rules that can be customized for

#### CLASSROOM RULES

1. Do what your teacher asks;
2. You can only talk and leave your seat with permission;
3. Keep your hands and feet to your self.
4. Have all necessary supplies, such as books, pencils, paper, etc.
5. Complete and hand in all homework and classwork on time.
6. Be in your seat before the bell rings.

individual teachers and students.

**a. Classroom Rules should be limited to five or six**, stated in positive, pro-social terms, and posted in the classroom:

**b. Begin the first week of school by establishing clear and predictable routines, rules, and procedures** with the active participation

of students. Consequences for following/not following classroom rules need to be clearly delineated. Developing and posting a "What If Chart" next to the classroom rules may be helpful.

#### WHAT IF CHART

WHAT IF YOU DO?	WHAT IF YOU DON'T?

Could be individualized for each student, or can be implemented for the whole class. It enables student(s) to be aware of the agreed upon contingencies and ensures teacher remembers consequences.

- c. Reinforce appropriate behaviors** ("catch them being good!") and focus students' attention on the internal, rather than external, reasons for their behavior.
- d. Apply error correction strategies in a business-like manner, and minimize attention for the problem behavior.** For low frequency and intensity rule violations, teachers should provide a brief signal that an error has occurred, indicate what the desired behavior should have been, and follow up with the established consequence.
- e. Frequently discuss rules and behavior with students so they not only know what behaviors are "right" and "wrong" but also understand why.** Helping students focus on the effects of their behavior on others may also help.

Monitoring student(s) adherence to classroom rules in a consistent and transparent way, as well as establishing and enforcing realistic goals are critical for improved classroom discipline and student behavior. The following tools may assist in this endeavor &/or changed to meet individual student/classroom needs:

#### MONITORING CLASSROOM RULES

##### CLASSROOM RULES

A.M. P.M.

1. Do what your teacher asks
2. Talk and leave your seat only with permission;
3. Keep your hands and feet to your self.
4. Have all necessary supplies, such as books, pencils, paper, etc.
5. Complete and hand in all homework and classwork.
6. Be in your seat before the bell rings.

**Rating scale: 1=needs improvement;  
2=barely OK; 3=average; 4=Great**

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### (STUDENT'S NAME) WEEKLY POINT TOTALS

WEEKLY POINT GOAL:

IF WEEKLY GOAL IS MET, THE STUDENT EARNS:

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
POINTS				

Parental involvement and support for improved student behavior can be facilitated with ongoing communication, using regular notes like the following that can be modified to meet individual student's and teacher's needs:

#### PARENTAL NOTICE OF STUDENT FOLLOWING RULES

DATE:

DEAR: PARENT'S NAME

**YOUR CHILD HAD A GOOD WEEK. AS THE INCLUDED SHEET INDICATES, THE RULE FOLLOWING GOAL WAS MET. IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR YOU TO DO SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR YOUR CHILD TO REINFORCE THIS GOOD WORK.**

SINCERELY,  
CLASSROOM TEACHER

## DISCIPLINE - AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION IS WORTH A POUND OF CURE

### 2. PHYSICALLY ARRANGE THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT TO:

- a. minimize congestion, distractions and disruptions;
- b. facilitate the smooth and quiet movement of students;
- c. provide a seating arrangement that:

- minimizes visual and auditory distractions;
- permits teacher's visual contact with all students; and
- enables the teacher to continuously move around the room to attend to all students;

### 3. FACILITATE TRANSITIONS BY:

- a. Developing, teaching, practicing, preparing for and reinforcing step-by-step procedures, with student and staff responsibilities, for smooth transitions and activity shifts ( e.g. entering & leaving class, movements in the class, changing subjects, going to the bathroom & auditorium, etc.);
- b. Providing students with advance organizers to remind them about expected behavior before they enter situations in which displays of problem behaviors are likely. For example, teachers may say; "Remember, before you go to first period collect all your materials, put your work on my desk and quietly line up" or "What are your responsibilities before you go to first period?"
- c. Utilizing "Before-class-Starts" activities in the classroom to engage students in positive and productive activities (e.g. board work, hand outs);

### 4. PROVIDE A POSITIVE FOCUS WITH CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES:

- a. Increase social reinforcement (e.g. teacher praise, feedback, smiles, "thumbs up" gestures, & "good job" statements) and concrete rewards for appropriate behavior and decrease teacher attention for inappropriate behavior (e.g. four positive engagements for each negative interaction);
- b. Communicate high and positive expectations;

c. Provide specific instruction to build alternative pro-social responses and skills (e.g. academic, social, etc.);

d. Use behavior contracts to increase prosocial and decrease inappropriate behavior(s);

BY FEBRUARY 11, 2004, STUDENT'S ON-TASK BEHAVIOR AND WORK COMPLETION WILL INCREASE TO 80%.

STUDENT AND TEACHER WILL COLLABORATE ON ASSESSING & RECORDING DAILY PROGRESS.

TEACHER AND PARENT WILL APPLY AGREED UPON CONTINGENCIES ON A WEEKLY BASIS, BASED UPON AGREED UPON GOALS.

STUDENT'S SIGNATURE  
TEACHER'S SIGNATURE  
PARENT'S SIGNATURE

e. Reinforce high- status peers or models for performing desired behavior(s);

f. Utilize time-out and planned ignoring to withdraw reinforcement following the occurrence of undesirable attention-seeking behavior;

g. Emphasize strategies that are proactive and focus on the antecedents of behavior, rather than relying solely on strategies that are reactive and focus on the consequences of behavior.

h. Offer opportunities for students to voice their needs and opinions (e.g. class meetings, student councils, etc.) and to solve social problems on their own. In addition, encouraging children's active participation in decisions regarding their behavior encourages autonomy and self-discipline.

i. Catch problem behavior before it escalates or becomes more severe by redirecting student's attention and behavior;

5. ESTABLISH AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCE PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES THAT KEEP STUDENTS ON-TASK, SUCH AS:

a. on-going classroom housekeeping procedures that students can assist in

implementing and monitoring such as:

- using the bathroom and the water fountain;
- distributing & collecting materials and assignments; -
- maintaining bulletin boards,-
- maintaining a homework place where students place/retrieve homework.
- taking attendance, monitoring tardy arrivals, as well as students entering and leaving the classroom;
- how and when students can make up missed work, get the teacher's attention, etc.;

b. Contingencies for school attendance and punctuality (e.g. praise, points, monthly certificates, within class competition);

c. Minimizing interruptions by:  
- scheduling specific times for managerial, non instructional activities, such as collecting money, cleaning up, and making announcements;

- establishing and consistently enforcing explicit rules;

d. Allocating group instructional time and short time blocks for individualized practice, assistance, discussing grades, etc.; and

e. Ensuring classroom instruction and assigned tasks match student(s)' interests and instructional level;

f. utilizing structured, interactive, fast-paced and directive teaching styles that maximizes students' attention during whole school instruction and individual seat work;

g. clarifying, reinforcing, and monitoring instructions and performance expectations;

h. ensuring that teacher's feedback is primarily positive; and

i. ensuring that teaching includes all students with techniques such as choral responding, calling on all students, and asking students to comment on other's responses.

\* NOTE - SEE PAGES 7 & 8 FOR MORE DETAILS ON KEEPING STUDENTS ON-TASK

# SPECIAL EDUCATION EVALUATIONS MUST ASSIST IN PREVENTING & ADDRESSING BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

## Introduction

When a referred student's behavior interferes with his/her learning best practices would suggest that the assessments and subsequent reports should describe that behavior, how it interferes with learning, possible causes of the behavior and recommendations to address this behavior. In this and subsequent sections, we will illustrate the processes & mandates by focusing on three common and disruptive behaviors: off-task, aggressive, &/or defiant behavior.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENTS & STUDENT BEHAVIOR

IDEA mandates that special education evaluations include:

1. a "functional assessment of behavior where appropriate";
2. at least one structured observation of the student in other than a testing situation

In these observations & functional assessments, we try to:

- a. identify variables that contribute to a misbehavior & pro-social behavior; and
- b. quantify the behavior by noting how often the misbehavior occurs, its intensity, and duration. When we quantify the extent of the behavior problem(s) it facilitates objective instructional and programmatic decisions. This baseline data is critical if IEPs are to include code-mandated measurable objectives of student's performance and can be used to judge the success, or failure of subsequent interventions. Therefore, in addressing off-task, aggressive, & defiant behaviors we need to define the behavioral concern in observable and measurable terms.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION REPORTS

The special education code mandates that the reports include relevant behavior (observed &/or reported) and the relationship of that behavior to the student's academic functioning. These instructional implications are critical. In addition, to ensure that the assessment findings and subsequent reports are utilized, these reports should be written

in a user-friendly way that allows parents and teachers to understand the findings, what they mean instructionally, and the recommendations need to address the behavioral concerns in a clear fashion. The use of technical jargon and statistics frequently obscures the meaning; therefore, explanations should focus on lay terms.

## SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS AND INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

Many emotional problems can contribute to a behavioral problem. Therefore, the individual evaluations must assess these causes and recommend interventions to decrease inappropriate behaviors. Subsequent IEPs, behavior intervention plans, related services, teachers' lesson plans, and parental assistance can all be utilized to address these underlying social/emotional problems and subsequent inappropriate behaviors. For illustration we will focus on three of the most common and problematic behaviors: aggression, defiance, and off-task behavior(s). We will demonstrate how each inappropriate behavior can have many causes and subsequent interventions must address these unique causes.

Although the code doesn't mandate the following evaluations, best practices suggests they should be part of all assessments when a student exhibits a behavioral problem:

1. a functional behavioral assessment to determine the cause(s) & possible recommendation(s) (see following page); and
2. a curriculum based assessment to determine where a student feels comfortable in various academic subjects and when they are frustrated, as well as how they react to these academic frustrations.

In addition, the evaluations should assess the student's "awareness of the problem behaviors and the controlling variables, his/her motivation to change, and skill at behavioral self-control.

**The ABCs of Behavioral Problems** - On a simplistic level, behavior (B) can be said to be caused by antecedent events (A) and consequences (C). The factors related to the occurrence of a problem behavior consist of:

1. Setting events - Events that by themselves do not trigger the problem behavior. However, they influence the likelihood that other events will trigger the problem behavior;
2. Antecedents - Events or actions that immediately precede and trigger the problem behavior; and
3. Consequences - Events or actions that occur as a result of the problem behavior.

The following form can be used to observe and make a preliminary analysis of the causes and frequency of a behavioral problem.

### OBSERVATION AND DATA COLLECTION FORM FOR PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

Antecedents		Problem Behavior(s)		Consequences	
Intervals	Subject	Task		Gain	Avoid

# SPECIAL EDUCATION EVALUATIONS MUST ASSIST IN PREVENTING & ADDRESSING BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS - FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENTS

## FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT (FBA)

Although FBAs are only mandated when certain discipline actions are taken, or proposed (see page 19), it's a useful tool that can help school staff and parents understand and address behavioral problems. There is a whole array of strategies school-based staff and parents can use to address students' behavioral problems; however, deciding on which interventions to utilize can be made easier, if we know why a student misbehaves.

Even though IDEA does not detail the components of an FBA, the literature suggests the following steps should be minimally included:

### **1. IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM BEHAVIOR(S) -**

Although the FBA moves beyond the behavioral manifestation of a problematic behavior, the behavior itself is critical since its intensity, frequency, and duration help define the nature and scope of the problem that must be understood and addressed. Therefore, before we can decide on the cause(s) for misbehavior(s), we must first identify the misbehavior(s) in concrete, observable, and measurable terms. We must make sure everyone who sees the targeted behavior as a problem &/or may intervene to address the problem, agrees with the definition of the problem behavior. The assessor(s) may also have to prioritize problematic behaviors.

### **2. GATHER INFORMATION ABOUT WHEN AND WHY THE BEHAVIOR**

### **DOES AND DOES NOT OCCUR -**

Answering the following questions, utilizing observations, interviews, assessments, etc. will address the requirements of a functional behavioral assessment:

- a. What does the student avoid, or escape, by the identified behavior?
- b. What does student gain by the identified behavior(s)?
- c. What problem(s) is student's identified behavior solving for them?
- d. Which biological, social, affective and/or environmental factors initiate, sustain or end the behavior in question?
- e. What are the events that precede the identified behavior(s)?
- f. What tends to be happening when the identified behavior(s) occur?
- g. What seems to trigger the identified behavior(s)?
- h. When, where and with whom are the identified behavior(s) most likely to occur?
- i. When, where and with whom are the identified behavior(s) least likely to occur?
- j. What happens right after the inappropriate behavior(s) occur?
- k. What is the intensity, frequency, and duration of the identified behavior(s)?

- l. Does a skill deficit contribute to

the identified behavior(s)?

- m. Does a performance deficit contribute to the identified behavior(s)?
- n. What are the expectations, which have determined that the behavior is problematic?
- o. Which positive appropriate behavior(s) could replace the behavior(s) to be decreased or eliminated?
- p. What preferred items, activities, or people could be used as incentives in an intervention for this child to increase positive behaviors?
- q. What are some strengths and abilities of the student, which can be used as a basis of positive change?

### **3. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS THE IDENTIFIED BEHAVIOR PROBLEM(S)**

Answering the questions in the above section (steps 1 and 2) should provide a good understanding of the nature, scope, and possible cause(s) of the student's misbehavior(s). This knowledge can then lead to a solid basis to develop an effective behavioral intervention plan. (see pages 13 & 14)



Special Ed teachers Michael Mosher (Berliner) and Rosanna Obilo (Boylan) with Special Ed. Supervisor Michelle Elek

**SPECIAL EDUCATION EVALUATIONS MUST MUST ASSIST IN PREVENTING &  
ADDRESSING BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS - OFF TASK BEHAVIORS**

**OFF - TASK BEHAVIORS**

A very common problem of special education students and most misbehaving students is off-task behaviors. When a student is "off-task" they are not doing what they should be doing; therefore, on some level they are misbehaving. Whether they are playing with a toy instead of doing seat-work (inattentive), refusing to do assigned tasks (defiant), or fighting with others (aggressive) when they should be taking a test, these behaviors are inappropriate, disruptive and interfere with teaching and learning. Therefore, by increasing these students' on-task behaviors we would also decrease the incompatible inappropriate inattentiveness, defiance, &/or aggression.

<b>Student's Name:</b> _____		<b>Date:</b> _____
<b>Subject/Task</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Off Task Behavior</b>
_____	<b>From:</b> _____ <b>To:</b> _____	_____
_____	<b>From:</b> _____ <b>To:</b> _____	_____
_____	<b>From:</b> _____ <b>To:</b> _____	_____
_____	<b>From:</b> _____ <b>To:</b> _____	_____
_____	<b>From:</b> _____ <b>To:</b> _____	_____
_____	<b>From:</b> _____ <b>To:</b> _____	_____
_____	<b>From:</b> _____ <b>To:</b> _____	_____

**PASSIVE OFF-TASK** - not looking at teacher during lessons &/or directions; daydreaming, looking around, staring at something, or into space when supposed to be working on assigned tasks; coming to class late &/or cutting class, etc.

**VERBAL OFF TASK** - Off task by talking to others, calling out, making noises, etc. instead of working on assigned work.

**PHYSICAL OFF TASK** - Instead of working on assigned task, student is playing with objects, other students, making inappropriate gestures or acting silly, fighting with others, getting out of seat without permission, etc.

**OBSERVABLE & MEASURABLE BEHAVIOR -**

Whether we are dealing with a lesson's goal, a goal in an IEP, or a special education evaluation we need to observe and collect data on student performance. However, to do this accurately and consistently we need to first define the student's performance in objective, observable and measurable terms.

Off-task behavior can be operationalized into three broad categories::

1. Off-task motor - out of seat, fidgeting, playing with pencil/toys, hitting, biting, or throwing things, etc.
2. Off-task verbal - calling out, talking to someone when prohibited, etc. and
3. Off-task passive - looking around, daydreaming, looking out window, skipping school, coming to class late, delaying starting assigned task, etc.

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>INTERVALS (I)</b>					
	I-1	I-2	I-3	I-4	I-5	I-6
Writing	+	+	-	-	+	-
Reading	-	-	-	-	-	+
Math	+	+	+	+	-	+
Science	+	+	+	-	+	+
Social Studies	-	-	-	+	-	-

Place a "+" during an observation that student was on task and a "-" when student is off task.

To measure off-task behavior(s), we could record the occurrence of the targeted misbehavior at predetermined units of time. For example, based on the above definitions, we could record a student's off-task behavior for thirty 10 -second intervals equally spread out over five major subjects &/or types of assigned tasks. Interval recording could use one of the charts on this page or modify/combine them, based on the sought after data.

**ANALYSIS -**

Based on the data on the chart on the left, 15 off task observations/30 observations = 50% off task. We arrive at % of on-task &/or off-task behavior by dividing the number of "+"s & or "-"s by the number of intervals. When we analyze this data further, we see that reading and social studies gave the most off-task behavior. We could further analyze these observations by the types of tasks that were assigned to better understand the functional relationships between the task requirements and on-task or off-task behaviors. This analysis would help us differentiate whether the off-task behavior was due to a skill deficit or performance deficit. Clearly, if it's a skill deficit we would need to teach the students those skills &/or provide curriculum modifications. On the other hand, if it's a performance deficit we will probably need to rearrange environmental contingencies that are reinforcing off-task &/or on-task behavior(s). In most cases, interventions will involve a combination of these factors.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION EVALUATIONS MUST ASSIST IN PREVENTING & ADDRESSING BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS - OFF TASK, AGGRESSIVE, &/OR DEFIANT BEHAVIORS**

**Special Education Evaluations & Reports for Off-Task Behaviors Need to clarify the Cause(s) of these Off Task Behavior(s)**

Special education evaluations need to determine why a student is off-task so that subsequent interventions can be tailored to the individual student's needs. For the most part, there are three general causes for off-task behavior:

1. The student gains something. For example, he/she may gain adult/peer attention, access to preferred activities, such as playing with peers, toys, or other material, etc.;
2. The student avoids or escapes something. For example, he/she may avoid academic tasks that they find boring or frustrating.

- Research demonstrates a close relationship between off-task behavior and the difficulty of academic tasks. If the curriculum is too difficult relative to the student's academic skill level, excessive performance demands are created. This may then result in higher levels of off-task behavior to escape difficult and frustrating academic tasks.

- Conversely, fewer off-task behaviors are noted when students work on academic tasks on his/her instructional level. Therefore, a curriculum-based assessment is needed to determine mastery, instructional, and frustrational levels for each subject that student exhibits significant off-task behaviors.

3. The student's off-task behavior(s) may be a response to a physiological need, such as a student with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

The above approach can also integrate personality dynamics to explain a student's behavior. For example, a student with a poor self image &/or feelings of inadequacy may avoid the anticipated frustrations past experiences have demonstrated he/she would encounter

on academic tasks. In addition, the teacher's assistance & attention the student gains may help compensate for these feelings of inadequacy and unmet dependency needs as well as giving the student a sense of control over a situation that's generally beyond his/her control. Subsequent recommended interventions will be inextricably intertwined with these causes.

**Aggressive and defiant behaviors -**

As previously noted, a student's aggressive and defiant behaviors tend to take them off-task assignments. However, as the following analysis indicates, to better understand the causes of these behaviors and make more effective recommendations a more comprehensive assessment is required.

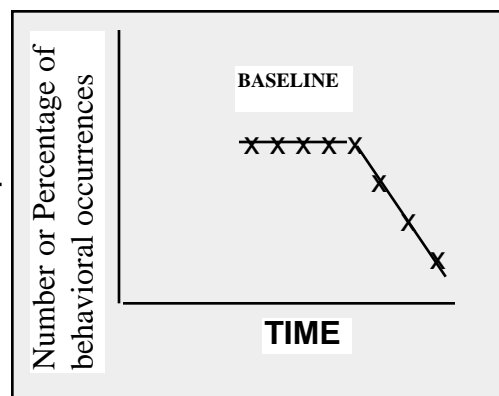
In order for us adequately assess these misbehaviors, we must ensure that everyone means the same thing by "aggressive" and "defiant" behaviors. A student's aggressive behavior may include verbal (e.g. cursing, threatening) and physical aggression (e.g. hitting, punching, kicking, throwing things, etc.). The student's defiant behavior(s) may consist of refusal to follow teacher's directions, breaking class/school rules, etc.).

**Quantifying the behavior**

In this case, since concerned behaviors tend to be discrete events, with an observable beginning and ending, "event recording" may be the preferred observational technique. In this simple observation and recording system we note the number of times an aggressive, or defiant behavior, occurs during a designated time period.

For example, over a week we could record the number of aggressive &/or defiant behaviors and find the daily average. This would then enable us to

quantify the scope of the problem for others, such as the student, parents, administrators, etc. This would also provide us with baseline data that the success &/or failure of future interventions can be judged.



**Cause(s) of aggressive/defiant behavior(s)**

Psychological &/or Social evaluations may determine that certain students experiencing academic and social frustrations become angry and act out inappropriately instead of utilizing more adaptive techniques to overcome the frustrating obstacles. Therefore, recommendations for these students may include helping them identify and overcome these obstacles, as well as learning to manage their anger more adaptively. They need to learn coping strategies for resolving conflicts without resorting to coercion, physical force, and aggression. These students need to recognize the triggers that ignite their anger and aggression, develop strategies for managing their anger, and avoid unnecessary conflict with others.

However, as research demonstrates the causes of aggressive and defiant student behavior is much more complex. The information on the next page provides a much more comprehensive and ecological perspective to understand student aggression and defiance.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION EVALUATIONS MUST ASSIST IN PREVENTING & ADDRESSING BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS - AGGRESSIVE & DEFIANT BEHAVIOR

THE ASSESSMENT OF AN AGGRESSIVE AND DEFIANT STUDENT MAY CONFIRM THE RESEARCH THAT DEMONSTRATES THESE STUDENTS:

- a. **Selectively attend to and interpret social cues as being hostile, threats to their pride, &/or obstacles to attain-ing desired outcomes.** This is most prevalent with ambiguous cues &/or when the student is emotionally aroused;
- b. **Retaliate against those who present obstacles to his/her desired goals** and are less interested in being socially accepted; and
- c. **Value aggressive behavior because it leads to positive outcomes** and also the student believes circumstances justifies its use.

THE SOCIAL ASSESSMENT MAY FIND THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO THE STUDENT'S AGGRESSIVE AND DEFIANT BEHAVIORS:

- a. verbal and physical aggression were/are frequently modeled at home;
- b. discipline at home was/is overly harsh and coercive; and
- c. antisocial behaviors and cognitions were/are reinforced with inconsistent discipline.

At home the child has learned that when his/her parent makes a demand the child can avoid compliance with a variety of techniques, such as ignoring the demand or arguing with the parent. The parent then makes more harsh demands that lead to escalating arguments, whining, and threats. If the parent fails to enforce the demand the child "wins" because he/she didn't comply, or the parent stops bothering him/her. On the other hand, the parent can respond to the child's continued non compliance with increased verbal and physical aggression until the child eventually complies. In either case, coercive behavior is reinforced, and thus is likely to be repeated. As

aggression becomes effective in controlling others and reducing or eliminating events perceived to be aversive, skills of coercion are repeatedly practiced, often at the expense of learning and practicing pro-social adaptive behaviors.

### BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS IN SCHOOL

Based on this history, as well as the subsequent social & emotional concerns, the relevant school-behavior of the assessed students may reveal acting out aggression & defiance. The assessment may also indicate that these inappropriate behaviors are an attempt to get attention from peers &/or school authorities. Many students would rather have negative attention than no attention at all.



CST MEMBERS NANCY DIAS (SLT III) AND NIKITA HOLT (SLT II AND III)

RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE REPORTS MUST NOW ADDRESS THE CAUSE(S) OF THE BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS (E.G. DEFIANCE AND AGGRESSION) AND BE EFFECTIVE, BASED ON RESEARCH AND RESULTS. IN THIS CASE, RECOMMENDED INTERVENTIONS SHOULD:

1. Target the student's social cognitive and social information processing skills, moral reasoning, self-management, empathy training, social perspective taking, interpersonal understanding, and negotiation strategies;
2. Seek to break the coercive parenting cycle by targeting the following par-

enting skills:

- a. The use of social and tangible reinforcement techniques (e.g. attention, treats, praise, privileges, etc.) for pro-social behavior(s);
  - b. The use of less coercive discipline techniques (e.g. time-outs, short-term privilege removals, work-chores, etc.);
  - c. The use of problem-solving and negotiation strategies
3. If the student's misbehavior is attention seeking, we need to ensure that the student gets sought after attention with appropriate behaviors. However, in many cases the students may lack the academic &/or skills necessary to behave pro-socially and may have to be taught them.

4. In addition, research demonstrates that teachers have been effective in reducing aggressive and non-compliant behaviors in their students by:

- a. Displaying warmth towards and acceptance of their students by:
  - showing positive affect, sympathy, support, interest in students & enjoyment of students company;
  - Distinguishing between the student and their misbehavior. The teacher considers several possible explanations for a misbehavior rather than automatically assuming negative intentions of the student. In addition, after applying consequences, teachers should not hold student's previous misbehaviors against them.
- b. Emphasizing cooperation rather than competition in the classroom. Students are encouraged to take others' feelings and perspectives into account. By doing so, teachers foster feelings of empathy and guilt; thereby motivating students to act pro-socially and as a check against antisocial behavior.

## IEP COMPONENTS THAT PREVENT & ADDRESS BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

### Individual Education Programs (IEPs) Must Address Behavior Problems

Whether they are aggressive, defiant, shy, withdrawn, impulsive, distractible, etc., most students exhibit behaviors that impede his/her learning, or that of his/her classmates. According to IDEA, if a child has behavior problems that interfere with his/ her learning or the learning of others, the IEP team must consider whether strategies, including positive behavioral interventions and supports are needed to address the behavior.

### IEP Components

IEP teams must ensure that all appropriate parts of the IEP that address the behavior problem(s) are filled out clearly to best ensure implementation.

#### 1. Present Level of Educational Performance (PLEP)-

For a student with behavioral, social, emotional problems, the PLEP should clearly delineate the specifics of these problems, which the rest of the IEP and the subsequent special education program(s) need to address. For example, if a student has a social/emotional problem that contributes to his/her off task, aggressive, &/or antisocial behavior, the PLEP may state any/all of the following problems lead to a particular student's inappropriate behavior(s):

a. "The student's poor anger management skills results in acting out behaviors approximately three times a day";

b. "The student's poor social problem-solving skills results in interpersonal conflicts";

c. "The student's attention-seeking behavior results in frequent violations of classroom rules"; and

d. "The student is easily distracted and demonstrates off-task behaviors six times a class period".

#### 2. Parental concerns -

For example, if the parent indicates it, the IEP team may write, "The parent is concerned that the student's inappropriate behavior interferes with school learning and interpersonal relationships and consequently has a negative impact on his/her self-image."

#### 3. Behavioral considerations -

The IEP team may write that "The student's acting out behaviors require related services, accommodations, and a behavior intervention plan to monitor and provide positive behavior supports and feedback

#### 4. Behavioral Improvement Plan (BIP)-

It is up to the IEP team to determine which behaviors are significant enough to require that interventions are formally written into the IEP. Previous hearings and court cases suggest that these problem behaviors may include (a) disruptive behaviors that distract teachers from teaching and students from learning, (b) noncompliance, (c) verbal and physical abuse, (d) property destruction, and (e) aggression towards students or staff.

IDEA requires the BIP to be individualized to meet the needs of different students in different educational environments.

This plan seeks to change targeted behaviors, utilizing multiple strategies that include changes in the school setting, environmental modifications, teaching replacement behavior(s), general skills instruction, cognitive behavioral interventions, differential reinforcement strategies, or any other combination of non-aversive behavior change strategies. The key component of the BIP is the use of multiple positive behavioral interventions.

On some level, each BIP utilizes a single case experimental design. We need to study the student's behavior before, during and after interventions. The intervention is the independent variable and the behavior change determines its effectiveness. (see pages 13 & 14)

#### 5. Academic Goals and

**Objectives** The IEP team may say, "By carefully matching the student's math skills with seat-work and homework, we will increase the student's on-task time from 10 minutes to 15 minutes and work completion to 80% by January."



JUANA POSEY (LEARNING CONSULTANT IN TRAINING) WITH SUPERVISOR MICHELLE ELEK

**6. Supplementary Aids and Services**

The IEP team may say, "During reading instruction, student will be provided with student/teacher-selected concrete reinforcement, for sitting through lessons without misbehaving."

**7. Related services**

Related services must be provided to a student with a disability, by appropriately certified and/or licensed professionals, when required for the student to benefit from the educational program. (see pages 15 to 18).

**8. Test Accommodations**

The IEP team may say "to minimize frustrations and subsequent acting out behaviors, the teacher should provide the student with frequent breaks and ongoing encouragement."

**9. Supports for school personnel**

The IEP may say that, "Counselor and case manager will meet with all student's teachers on a monthly basis, to provide insight into the causes of the student's behavior problems and collaborate in deciding on subsequent interventions."

**10. LRE statements**

IDEA's presumption is that all students will be educated in the regular education program. However, as was noted in the introduction, special education students in New Jersey, with behavior problems, tend to be educated in programs and facilities that separate them from regular education peers. In too many cases, this is occurring because we are not ensuring that the programs & services students need to prevent & address behavior problems are provided. IDEA mandates that there be an explanation of why a student

does not participate with non-disabled students in the general education class and in extracurricular and non-academic activities. For example, "the student's frequent and aggressive acting out behaviors have been documented to be intractable to discipline procedures and pro-social interventions". We should also ensure that the PLEP and the BIP, as well as related services goals & logs reflect these behaviors & past interventions.



**McKinley Spec Ed. Teacher Gloria Morales and Aide Ruth Rodriguez**

**11. Parent Involvement**

Parent involvement is an effective but under utilized resource that schools need to access to improve teaching and learning, including student behavior. In fact, home-school collaboration greatly enhances the prospects that an intervention will be effective. Parent involvement may include:

- a. providing information to families about their child's behavioral progress,
- b. Sharing strategies that have proven successful in improving classroom behavior and gather information from families about strategies that have worked at home;
- c. Helping families identify their concerns and locate resources to assist them.
- d. Contacting parents periodically by phone or postcard, focusing on students' successes and upcoming activities for students and families;

A simple strategy for facilitating teacher-home communication and improving student behavior involves the use of school-home contingency notes. The basic components of a school-home notes procedure involve a teacher periodically sending home a brief written report on a child's behavioral performance and a parent reviewing the report, delivering the prescribed consequences to the child, signing the report, and sending it back to the teacher. School-home notes have been described as "one of the most effective techniques for improving a student's motivation and classroom behavior. It is also one of the most mismanaged and underutilized techniques"(see page 3 for an example).

**12. Programs**

Students with behavior problems that impede their learning, or that of their classmates, can be placed in any program. However, as previously noted, the presumption is that all students will be educated in a regular education program. However, "Behavior Disabilities" programs may be utilized for students, when this is their primary educational need.

Unfortunately, many of these programs/classes have only served to isolate these students and have not been effective in teaching the students alternate pro-social behaviors that are reinforced in their natural environment.

## IEP COMPONENTS THAT PREVENT & ADDRESS BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

### Special Education Programs (continued)

Although a student with significant behavioral problems may be placed in a regular class, a Learning &/or Language Disabilities (LLD), Multiple Disabilities (MD), or Resource Program, the IEP team must clearly delineate the student's programmatic needs in the IEP. The case manager must then monitor the implementation of the IEP mandates and the school-based administration must ensure the IEP is implemented for behavioral problems to be addressed.

On the other hand, IEP teams may mistakenly place students that desperately need a BD program in other programs, such as an LLD, or MD Program, thereby compromising the integrity of these other programs.



Mckinley's Pre-School Child Study Team: Deborah Robinson, Manuela Blanco, Yesenia Concepcion, Nereida Espado, Mercedes Rana

### School-based administrator's responsibilities

The IEP determines the student's program needs. However, in order for the IEP to be implemented, school-based administrators must

ensure the IEP is:

1. accessible to each regular education teacher, special education teacher, related services provider, and other service provider who is responsible for its implementation. These responsible staff members must be informed of his or her specific responsibilities related to implementing the student's IEP and the specific accommodations, modifications, and supports to be provided for the student in accordance with the IEP.
2. integrated into teachers' lesson plans and related service providers plans; and
3. Implemented as written;

However, if the IEP is being implemented as it is written, and the student is still not making adequate progress towards meeting the IEP goals, including behavioral improvement, further assessments, a different program and/or a new IEP may need to be written. This doesn't necessarily mean a new placement.

### What are the code-mandated services each school's regular education staff must provide for special education students/staff to address discipline problems?

For the most part, unless the IEP exempts them, which is rare, special education students adhere to the same discipline policies and procedures as regular education students ( for exceptions see page 19). In addition, according to New

Jersey Administrative Code, Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS), if a student exhibits behaviors that interfere with learning, the code-mandated school-based I&RS team should intervene. Every school has a family support team, PRC, or an equivalent to address individual student's behavioral problems. On some level, in the Abbott districts, each school's regular education staff includes a true clinical team, (Guidance counselor, WSR social worker, nurse, drop out prevention officer/attendance counselor, parent liaisons, tutors, etc.) to assess the cause of each student's behavioral problem(s) and intervene to address these problems. These school-based intervention teams can use techniques and strategies for special students, including counseling, parent training/counseling, Behavioral Intervention Plans, Functional Behavioral Assessments, Curriculum Based Assessments, etc. However, this should be in consultation with a special education student's case manager and the IEP may have to be changed accordingly. Each school-based administration is charged with ensuring that these teams are operating effectively.

### TWO OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE IEP-MANDATES THAT CAN ADDRESS THE BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS ARE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION PLANS (PAGES 13 & 14) AND RELATED SERVICES (PAGES 15 TO 18)

## Introduction -

Developing and implementing effective behavioral intervention plans can improve the capacity of public schools to address the behavioral needs of special education students as a whole and individually, as well as better ensuring accountability. In this outcome-based planning the IEP team must decide on problematic behaviors to be decreased/eliminated &/or prosocial behaviors to be learned &/or increased. At this point the IEP team must develop a plan to reach these goals and decide on who, how, where, and when the plan will be implemented. This ensures the BIP is meaningfully and directly related to student performance goals decided by teachers, parents, the case manager, the student if appropriate, and administrators, if they choose to participate in the process.

**New Jersey's Sample Behavior Intervention Plan has a number of components and we have provided examples on how to fill out this BIP using research-proven effective techniques to address off-task, aggressive, & defiant behaviors:**

## Target Behaviors

"The student will increase time on assigned tasks and completed assignments."

"The student's adherence to classroom rules will increase."

"The student's misbehaviors will decrease."

## Prior interventions (if any) and the student's response -

"School-based administration has suspended student for fighting this school year and classroom teacher has spoken to parent about inappropriate behaviors." "The teacher has also given student failing grades because of minimal homework, classroom participation and poor test grades."

## Description of the positive supports/interventions -

The behavioral intervention plan should utilize the findings of the special education evaluations, including the functional behavior assessment. Based on the individual needs of the student, the following

research-based strategies can be integrated into IEPs and lesson plans to improve student behavior:

**1. Reduce/eliminate unwanted behaviors while at the same time increasing a desired replacement behavior.** We need to focus on what a student should do, as well as what they shouldn't do. For example, increasing on-task behaviors would decrease off-task, aggressive, and defiant behaviors. Behavior contracts can be negotiated and written to specify agreed upon actions between a student, parent, peer, &/or teacher to increase pro-social behaviors &/or decrease problematic behavior(s).

**2. Decrease/eliminate targeted misbehavior -** We need to decrease and/or eliminate the opportunities and/or causes for problematic behaviors by:

a. Changing the consequences for misbehaviors - We can change or remove the consequences which make a misbehavior reinforcing. By changing consequences, we can also make the targeted misbehavior(s) irrelevant, ineffective, inefficient, and possibly even aversive to the student. For example, if a student misbehaves to get attention, time-out, or the withdrawal of reinforcement following the occurrence of undesirable behavior (e.g. planned ignoring, separating student from others, or the reinforcing setting). However, there might be a tendency to overuse consequences when dealing with disruptive behaviors and this can lead to fruitless power struggles in the classroom.

b. Changing the antecedent events and environmental causes of misbehaviors - If there are environmental factors in school, which seem to be contributing to the misbehavior, (i.e. public reprimands, seating arrangements, independent seat work, academics that are too difficult or boring), then we may need to make modifications, to these environmental factors.

**3. Teaching new skills -** If the student engages in inappropriate behaviors to avoid or escape a particular situation because he/she doesn't have the needed skills, lacks appropriate alternative skills and/or believes this misbehavior is appropriate to get what he/she wants, then skills

training is needed. Instruction could be aimed at teaching academic, behavioral, social and cognitive skills. For example, teaching the student anger management or conflict resolution skills may help reduce aggressive behavior(s). In some cases a task analysis may be required to break the skill down into its component parts, which can then be taught (e.g. student needs to recognize that they are angry, triggers or situations that get them angry, alternative pro-social ways to cope with the situation that made them angry, ways to avoid the situations that make them angry, more adaptive ways of expressing anger, etc.) In addition, many students who exhibit antisocial behavior have not acquired the basic competencies that contribute to effective social functioning. Consequently, systematic instruction in specific social skills &/or social problem solving helps these students to develop positive relationships with peers and adults, as well as deal effectively with social situations, problems & conflicts

**4. Changing habits -** If the student does not realize that he/she is engaging in the misbehavior, it may be a habit. The plan then needs to cue the child when he/she is so engaged and possibly change the antecedent event(s), which call forth the habit &/or change the consequence(s) of the habit, which reinforce it.

**5. Changing expectations -** Problem behavior(s) can be viewed as a gap between what the student is currently doing and what we expect him/her to do. To remedy the problem we can, therefore, intervene with student or teacher's expectations. The teacher may need to change his/her expectations and/or may need to change the student's behavior.

**6. Reframing the behavior -** Knowing the function or cause of the misbehavior, enables people to think of it differently. For example, a student who constantly calls out answers is a problem. However, if the teacher viewed this behavior as the student's intense interest and involvement in the lesson, instead of inappropriate attempts to get attention, interventions would differ.

## DEVELOPING & IMPLEMENTING A BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION PLAN (BIP)

**7. Increase supports to help reduce misbehaviors and increase replacement behaviors** - School personnel, such as the social workers, psychologists, learning consultants, speech and language specialists, guidance counselors, personal aides, etc. may be able to help the student with counseling, conflict resolution activities, curricular modifications, family interventions, remedial assistance, etc. Social reinforcement (e.g. "teacher attention," "teacher feedback," and "teacher encouragement") contingent upon demonstrating acceptable student behavior and peer modeling (e.g. reinforcing high- status peers or models for performing desired behavior(s)) can be successful in reinforcing pro-social behavior(s).

**8. Increase appropriate replacement behaviors that serve the same or similar function(s) as the inappropriate ones** and, if possible, select a behavior that is likely to be elicited and reinforced in the natural environment. Replacement behavior should address the setting events, functions, or skills deficits which seem to maintain the problem behavior.

**9. Address performance deficits.** If the student has the skill to behave appropriately, but doesn't do so, then it's a performance deficit. If the problem behavior is more desirable to the student than the appropriate behavior, then the intervention plan needs to address motivations. We need to arrange circumstances to make inappropriate behavior less reinforcing and/or modify the circumstances which elicit it. The intervention plan also needs to include techniques to make the appropriate behavior more desirable, as well as modify the factors, which seem to inhibit its occurrence. Sometimes we have to make the desired behavior more relevant to the child. We may also have to reinforce the desired behaviors with some type of extrinsic rewards (i.e. free time, tokens, toys, etc.) and/or provide the supports necessary for the child to use the appropriate behaviors.

**We also must map out the specifics on how the interventions will be implemented.** The positive behavioral intervention plan should include the following detailed information to ensure proper implementation:

- a. initiation date and review dates, to determine the success of the plan in meeting its listed goals;
- b. specific behavior to be decreased, including baseline data on its frequency, duration and intensity;
- c. obtainable goals and objectives that will demonstrate a decrease in the targeted behavior;
- d. specific strategies to decrease the behavior, delineating who does what, how they do it, when they do it and where they do it;
- e. specific replacement behavior(s) to be increased;
- f. how the intervention plan will be monitored - We need clear methods for recording and evaluating interventions. A sustained effort and periodic reviews prevent regression. We need to monitor whether the plan is being implemented as designed. We need to make sure the problem behavior(s) are decreasing and replacement behavior(s) are increasing. If any of the above is not occurring we need to make adjustments to the intervention.

### **Data Collection and Management System -**

Teacher will utilize "Off-task On-task Behavior" form to record and track student's on-task, off-task behavior(s) before, during and after interventions (see page 8 for sample forms).

### **3. Data Collection and Management System**

- a. The student will record and chart his positive behaviors based on selected behavior goals and monitor his progress daily, weekly, and monthly;
- b. The student will rate his adherence to classroom rules (excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor) daily, weekly, and monthly.
- c. The teacher will establish a daily record of student behaviors, including antecedents and consequences, descrip-

tions of the frequency, duration, seriousness, and extent of inappropriate behaviors, and amelioration or escalation of behaviors over time based on various interventions.

### **Conditions under which the supports & interventions will be implemented -**

IEP teams must use ongoing evaluations to monitor a student's progress and to make the appropriate changes when data indicate that a program is not effective to ensure that behavioral programs lead to meaningful results.

IEP teams must continuously collect meaningful data to document student progress toward IEP goals and, thus, to document the program's efficacy. This means that data should be collected daily or at least weekly during behavioral programming so that student progress is continually monitored. The purpose of data collection is to provide objective evidence of program efficacy, assess student performance, and guide programming decisions. IEP teams can ensure that they provide effective programming by collecting relevant data and by demonstrating that data were used to guide sound instructional decisions.

### **Conditions under which the supports & interventions will be terminated -**

When the student consistently demonstrates pro-social skill acquisition and elimination of problematic behavior(s).

### **Parental Involvement -**

1. Utilize daily school-home contingency notes - brief written report on a child's behavioral performance and a parent reviewing the report, delivering the prescribed consequences to the child, signing the report, and sending it back to the teacher.
2. Parent will attend weekly parent counseling/training sessions to learn more effective parenting skills (e.g. recognizing and reinforcing pro-social behavior in their child; utilizing effective behavioral techniques; etc.)

## IEP - MANDATED RELATED SERVICES THAT ADDRESS BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

### WHEN MUST RELATED SERVICES BE PROVIDED?

When the IEP team determines that a student with a disability requires the related service to benefit from the educational program and delineates the related service on the IEP.

### HOW DO WE DOCUMENT RELATED SERVICES ON THE IEP?

All Related Services Must:

1. be noted in the student's IEP as a related service including the goals/objectives, frequency and duration of service, professional providing the service, where the services are provided and whether services are provided individually or in groups;
2. be oriented towards goals and objectives on the IEP;
3. maintain progress notes which should be kept confidential;
4. include a periodic review between student, parent, teacher, case manager, and provider to reestablish goals, revise IEP if required and determine need for future sessions.

**BY ADHERING TO THESE LEGAL MANDATES THE ACCOUNTABILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THESE RELATED SERVICES SHOULD INCREASE.**

### WHAT TYPES OF RELATED SERVICES ARE MOST LIKELY TO PREVENT &/OR ADDRESS BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS?

Possible related services range from minimally intrusive assistive technology that limits student's frustrations to the more intrusive assignment of a personal aide. In previous documents we have specified how assistive technology &/or teacher aides could be integrated into special education programs/services with IEPs and lesson plans, to pre-

vent &/or address behavior problems. (For a copy of these documents contact Mike at the NTU by phone -(973) 643-8430, or e-mail mm@ntuoft.com) Therefore, we will not discuss them here.

### COUNSELING IS THE MOST COMMON RELATED SERVICE TO ADDRESS BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS-

Although there is an array of related services that may be considered to address unresolved social/emotional concerns, as well as inappropriate behavior(s), as federal and state statistics indicate (see chart on this page), counseling is the one most frequently selected.

In Newark, 37.5% of all classified students receive counseling compared to 21.8% in New Jersey; therefore they must be effective .

### COUNSELING MUST DEMONSTRATE ITS EFFECTIVENESS

To ensure the effectiveness of these counseling services and to comply

with the No Child Left Behind Act's mandates, it's imperative that we utilize counseling approaches that have been proven effective by scientifically-based research.

Counseling can be provided to assist students and their parents to:

1. adapt to their disabilities;
2. address transition concerns;
3. cope with psycho-social stressors, etc.

However, in most cases counseling seeks to alleviate psychological distress, reduce inappropriate/maladaptive behavior, and enhance appropriate/adaptive behavior. Consequently, the effectiveness of our counseling should be judged if selected goals are achieved .

**Rehabilitation counseling services** focuses specifically on career development, employment preparation, achieving independence, and integration in the workplace and community of a student with a disability.

<b>STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES RECEIVING COUNSELING AS A RELATED SERVICE AND THE PERCENTAGE OF EACH DISABILITY RECEIVING COUNSELING BASED ON NEW JERSEY'S DECEMBER 2002 STATISTICS:</b>				
Disability	Newark		New Jersey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Preschool Disabled	0		92	
Other CST classified	0		147	
Autism	9	8.7%	424	10.2%
Deaf/Blindness	0	0.0%	6	22.2%
Emotional Disturbance	543	81.7%	8,532	63.8%
Hearing Impairments	8	16.0%	191	11.8%
Language Impairments	23	30.3%	940	9.4%
Multiple Disabilities	350	39.1%	6,965	30.2%
Mental Retardation	52	15.8%	712	11.6%
Other Health Impairments	99	35.0%	2,691	20.7%
Orthopedic Impairments	5	22.7%	116	20.6%
Specific Learning Disabilities	1,011	34.9%	12,078	11.7%
Traumatic Brain Injured	62	36.0%	448	19.9%
Visual Impairments	1	20.0%	27	11.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,163</b>	<b>34.8%</b>	<b>33,369</b>	<b>16.4%</b>

## IEP - MANDATED RELATED SERVICES THAT ADDRESS BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS - THE ADVANTAGES AND EFFECTIVENESS OF GROUP COUNSELING

### INDIVIDUAL VERSUS GROUP COUNSELING-

IEP teams must delineate whether a specific student requires individual or group counseling. How do they make that decision? There are clearly times when individual counseling is critical, such as when a student is in crises. However, there are many other times when group counseling may be preferred. Not only is it more cost-effective, but it may also be more relevant for many of our students. For example, many of the behavioral problems our students exhibit occur in groups. Therefore, by providing treatment in groups, what a student learns can be more easily transferred to naturalistic settings. In fact, one of the Newark Public School's Special Education Task Force's recommendations was to "assign a cadre of specially trained social workers, guidance counselors &/or psychologists to provide group counseling, utilizing best practices, as per IEPs".

### WHAT FOLLOWS IS A SUMMARY OF RESEARCH-BASED COUNSELING AND TRAINING PROGRAMS THAT HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVE IN REDUCING AGGRESSIVE AND DEFIANT BEHAVIORS:

#### GENERIC DESCRIPTIONS OF THE TYPES OF GROUPS

Although research demonstrates that group counseling is effective, we need to know what type of group is effective with what type of problem. There are three types of groups that offer different approaches to child and adolescent treatment in schools:

- 1. Educational/guidance groups** - primarily aimed at training in social skills to prevent problems from developing and are held primarily in the classroom;
- 2. Counseling groups** - focus on self

esteem and social difficulties and target students with mild difficulties (e.g. social rejection) and possibly situational problems (e.g. divorce, death, moving, etc.)

**3. Group therapy** - targets students with severe adjustment and/or behavioral problems. High level of emotional arousal, significant social/cognitive deficiencies, and/or lack of self-control.

#### PROCESS RESEARCH ON CHILD GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY DEMONSTRATES THAT:

- 1. children and adolescents seem interested in self disclosing and cathartic experiencing.**
- 2. On the other hand, they react negatively to confrontation,** even when presented effectively. They do react more positively to feedback and interpretations when they are presented in a supportive and caring manner, rather than a judgmental way.
- 3. Children express an explicit need to learn social skills.** Although adolescents place a higher value on interpersonal learning, which they could use to enhance their social interactions, they seem to express a need for more practical guidance and training as well.

#### IN GENERAL, COUNSELING PROGRAMS ARE EFFECTIVE WHEN THEY RELY ON STRATEGIES THAT HAVE BEEN SHOWN TO PREVENT OR REDUCE AGGRESSION (E.G., PARENT INVOLVEMENT, TEACHING ANGER CONTROL AND SOCIAL DECISION MAKING SKILLS).

On the other hand they are likely to fail when they focus on strategies of undemonstrated value (e.g., building self-esteem, active listening without fostering problem solving skills, counseling that does not address the multiple factors influencing the student's behavior).



#### TEACHING SOCIAL INFORMATION PROCESSING SKILLS ARE EFFECTIVE

A number of studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of intervention strategies and programs specifically designed to prevent or reduce antisocial behavior by targeting social cognitive and social information processing skills shown to be linked to social behavior. Cognitions, and emotions, commonly targeted in these programs include:

- 1. Social information processing, social problem solving, and social decision making skills;**
- 2. Moral reasoning;**
- 3. Self-management,** including self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement;
- 4. Empathy training;**
- 5. Social perspective taking,** interpersonal understanding and negotiation strategies; and
- 6. Anger management and impulse control** - The Anger Coping Program is a group therapy program developed by Lochman that is based on the Social Information Processing Model and has a research-base supporting its effectiveness with aggressive children. The work is carried out in very small groups of five to seven children, led by professional leaders who use a cognitive-behavioral orientation to train the children in the areas of social understanding and problem solving.

## IEP - MANDATED RELATED SERVICES THAT ADDRESS BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS - THE ADVANTAGES AND EFFECTIVENESS OF PARENT COUNSELING & TRAINING

### **PARENT COUNSELING AND TRAINING IS PROBABLY ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND UNDER UTILIZED RELATED SERVICE -**

Research demonstrates that parent counseling &/or training can have a dramatic and positive impact on student behavior; yet, it's rarely delineated on IEPs. The effects of parent training in preventing and reducing conduct problems are most impressive when intervention begins early, during early childhood or the early school years. Early intervention also has more lasting effects when parent training incorporates an academic/cognitive component.

### **EXAMPLES OF PARENT TRAINING/COUNSELING PROGRAMS THAT RESEARCH DEMONSTRATES WORK:**

- 1. Living with Children** (Patterson 1976) or **Families** (Patterson 1975) The program, which is based on a one-to-one counseling model, starts with having parents read a programmed text and then complete a test on the reading material. The counselor then works with each parent individually in a step-by-step approach wherein each newly learned skill forms the foundation for the next new skill.;
- 2. Adolescent Transition Program, Parent Focus** (Dishion & Kavanagh - in print) A group-based version of the above program was developed for parents of older children with at risk behaviors (ages 11 to 15 years). This 12-session, group-based parenting program uses videotape examples and discussion to assist parents in pinpointing and reinforcing desired behaviors and setting limits effectively;
- 3. Helping the Noncompliant Child** (Forehand & McMahon - 1981) Treats noncompliance in young children,

ages 3 to 8 years, by working with individual parents and children together. The therapist uses role-playing, modeling, and coaching to teach parents how to: play with their children in a non-directive way; identify and reward children's prosocial behaviors through praise and attention; give direct commands in such a way as to gain more compliance; and use 3-minute time-outs for noncompliance. A major limitation of the program is that it requires a playroom equipped with one-way mirrors for observation and "bug-in-the-ear" devices through which the therapist can prompt and give feedback to parents while they play with their child;

**4. "Parent-Child Interaction Therapy"** (Hembree-Kigin & McNeil - 1995) The program supplements behavior management techniques with the skills for child-directed play (e.g. "DRIP skills": Describe, Reflect, Imitate, Praise);

**5. Incredible Years** (Webster - Stratton - 1984) A parent training program for children, ages 3 to 10 years that has been effective as a prevention program &/or an intensive intervention for parents of children with diagnosed oppositional defiant disorder or conduct disorder.. Two 12 to 14 week programs that makes extensive use of videotape modeling non violent discipline approaches in the context of a parental group. A trouble shooting book as well as a self-administered version of the videotape program are also available;

**6. The ADVANCE parent training program** (D'Zurilla & Nezu - 1982) The program is designed to strengthen positive parenting skills and utilizes a videotape training series;

**EACH OF THE ABOVE EFFECTIVE PARENT COUNSELING/TRAINING PROGRAMS TEACH PARENTS TO BREAK A**

### **COERCIVE & PUNITIVE PARENTING APPROACH BY PROMOTING SOME OF THE FOLLOWING SKILLS:**

#### **1. Teaching parents the positive use of reinforcing pro-social behavior in their children:**

- recognizing and reinforcing desired behaviors;
- social and tangible reinforcement techniques (e.g., praise, differential-attention, encouragement, point systems, privileges, and treats)
- problem-solving and negotiation strategies;
- giving direct commands in such a way as to gain more compliance; and
- cognitive behavioral approaches such as mutual problem-solving strategies, self-management principles, and self-talk approaches to cope with depressive and self-defeating thoughts.

#### **2. Recognizing, tracking, and addressing problematic behaviors:**

- ignoring inappropriate behaviors;
- setting limits effectively; and
- using nonviolent discipline procedures, such as time-outs, short-term privilege removal, response cost, work chores, and logical and natural consequences, and monitoring;

#### **3. Strengthening the parent and child relationship through a variety of techniques and strategies:**

- recognizing their children's positive qualities;
- non-directive &/or child-directed play skills;
- responding to their children in a sensitive and genuine manner;
- teaching children and parents conflict management skills and self-control techniques; and
- monitoring their children even when the children are away from home.

## IEP - MANDATED RELATED SERVICES THAT ADDRESS BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS - THE ADVANTAGES AND EFFECTIVENESS OF A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

THE PREVIOUSLY CITED RESEARCH-PROVEN PARENT COUNSELING & TRAINING TECHNIQUES INDICATE, RELATED SERVICES SHOULD NOT BE LIMITED TO DIRECT INTERVENTIONS WITH STUDENTS. IN ADDITION, SECONDARY INTERVENTIONS WITH SCHOOL STAFF CAN ALSO HAVE A BENEFICIAL IMPACT ON STUDENT'S BEHAVIOR(S). CONSEQUENTLY, INTERVENTIONS MAY BE MORE EFFECTIVE IF THEY ARE FLEXIBLE AND COMPREHENSIVE, AS THE FOLLOWING RESEARCH-BASED EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS DEMONSTRATE:

**1. THE DINOSAUR SOCIAL SKILLS AND PROBLEM-SOLVING CURRICULUM** are two videotape-based training series -- one for training teachers in positive classroom management strategies and in effective methods of communicating with and involving parents and the other for training children directly in problem solving, anger management and social skills.

**2. THE SECOND STEP** is a well-known, well-researched violence prevention program that has different user-friendly curriculum for elementary students, secondary students, teachers, and families that focus on problem-solving, anger-management, and conflict resolution skills. Children learn how to:

- a. Recognize and understand feelings;**
- b. Make positive and effective choices;**
- c. Keep anger from escalating into violence.**

**3. THE PATHS CURRICULUM - PROMOTING ALTERNATIVE THINKING STRATEGIES** - This is a program for educators and counselors designed to facilitate the development of self-control, emotional awareness, and interpersonal problem-solving skills. The curriculum consists of an Instructional

Manual, six volumes of lessons, and additional materials. The program focuses on self-control, emotional understanding, problem-solving skills, and creative self-expression. These skills, in turn, increase the child's access to positive social interactions, thus reducing isolation, and provide opportunities for a greater variety of learning experiences.

**4. PROJECT ACHIEVE IS A FEDERAL DEMONSTRATION PROJECT THAT ADDRESSES BOTH BEHAVIOR AND ACHIEVEMENT USING A VARIETY OF APPROACHES.** This is an effective whole-school design/school reform process that helps schools achieve a number of goals including:

- a. Creating safe school environments and positive school climates by using a variety of approaches including:**

- *Social skills training and*
- *Creating effective behavior management systems.*

- b. Building effective problem solving teams that speed successful interventions to challenging students.**

THE ABOVE PROGRAMS ARE ONLY A SAMPLE OF RESEARCH-PROVEN APPROACHES THAT PREVENT & REDUCE VIOLENT, AGGRESSIVE, & DEFIANT BEHAVIORS.

There are two under utilized related services that allow for a more comprehensive and flexible approach to address behavior problems as their IDEA definition makes clear:

**1. PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES, WHICH INCLUDES:**

- a. administering psychological and educational tests, and other assessment procedures;**
- b. interpreting assessment results;**

- c. obtaining, integrating and interpreting information about child behavior and conditions relating to learning;**
- d. consulting with other staff members in planning school programs to meet the special needs of children as indicated by psychological tests;**
- e. planning and managing a program of psychological services, including psychological counseling for children and parents; and**
- f. assisting in developing positive behavioral intervention strategies.**



NTU Vice President Mitchel Gerry explains Newark's plan to pilot research based group counseling to whole school reform social workers

**2. SOCIAL WORK SERVICES IN SCHOOLS INCLUDES:**

- a. Preparing a social or developmental history on a child with a disability;**
- b. Group and individual counseling with the child and family;**
- c. Working with those problems in a child's living situation (home, school, and community) that affect the child's adjustment in school;**
- d. Mobilizing school and community resources to enable the child to learn as effectively as possible in his or her educational program; and**
- e. Assisting in developing positive behavioral intervention strategies.**

## LEGAL MANDATES TO ADDRESS BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

### **Are special education students subject to the same school and district policies for discipline that apply to regular education students?**

Yes. However, some additional provisions are required in special education regulations:

1. if a special education student exhibits a behavior, which interferes with his/her learning, or the learning of his classmates, the IEP team should consider developing a positive Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP). (see pages 13 & 14);
2. Whenever a special education student is suspended, the case manager must be notified. Removals up to 10 days (cumulative or consecutive) in a school year are permissible if classified students are subject to the same procedures as non-disabled students.
3. Removals for more than 10 days in a school year (cumulative or consecutive) require the IEP team to determine whether a "manifestation determination", functional behavioral assessment &/or a Behavior Intervention Plan are necessary.
4. For subsequent removals in a school year of a student who already has an FBA and BIP, the IEP team members individually can review the BIP and its implementation. The review of the student's behavior may take place without a meeting unless one or more of the team members believe that the plan (or its implementation) needs modification.
5. When FBAs and BIPs have not been completed prior to a behavioral incident that leads to a suspension over 10 days or removal to an IAES, the IEP team must meet to conduct an FBA and complete a BIP. Those interventions must then be implemented as quickly as possible.
6. If the student carries a weapon to school or school functions, knowingly possesses/uses illegal drugs or solicits the sale of a controlled substance while at school or a school function, they can be removed for up to 45 days. This is permissible if classified students are subject to the same procedures as non-disabled students and student is placed in an 'interim alternative placement,' determined by the IEP team. The district must notify the parents of their procedural safeguards under IDEA and convene an IEP meeting to conduct a 'manifestation determina-

tion.' The student must return to the prior program after the 45 days unless consent or court order is obtained.

7. A hearing officer may order a change in the placement of a child with a disability to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting for not more than 45 days if a hearing officer determines that a student is a danger to himself/herself or others.

### **When must a school conduct a manifestation determination review?**

When a disciplinary action involving a change of placement for more than 10 cumulative days in a school year is contemplated for a classified student, because he/she engaged in behavior that violated any rule or code of conduct of the district that applies to all children:

1. The parents shall be notified of that decision and of all procedural safeguards accorded, not later than the date on which the decision to take that action is made; and
2. immediately, if possible, but in no case later than 10 school days after the date on which the decision to take that action is made, a review shall be conducted of the relationship between the child's disability and the behavior subject to the disciplinary action.

### **Who carries out the manifestation review?**

The IEP Team and other qualified personnel conduct the manifestation determination review to determine if a student's behavior is a manifestation of his/her disability.

### **When must the IEP team consider a behavior as a manifestation of the student's disability?**

1. The IEP is not appropriate to address the behavior subject to disciplinary actions;
2. The placement is not appropriate to address the behavior subject to disciplinary actions;
3. The special education services, supplementary aids and services, programs and modifications or supports for school personnel, and behavior intervention strategies provided, were not consistent with the student's IEP and placement;

4. The student's disability impairs his/her ability to understand the impact and consequences of the behavior subject to the disciplinary action;

5. The student's disability impairs his/her ability to control the behavior subject to disciplinary action

### **When must the IEP Team determine that the behavior of the child was not a manifestation of such child's disability?**

1. The IEP team first considers, in terms of the behavior subject to disciplinary action, all relevant information, including: evaluation and diagnostic results, including such results or other relevant information supplied by the parents of the child; observations of the child; and the child's IEP and placement; and
2. The IEP team then determines that:
  - a. in relationship to the behavior subject to disciplinary action, the child's IEP and placement were appropriate and the special education services, supplementary aids and services, and behavior intervention strategies were provided consistent with the child's IEP and placement;
  - b. the child's disability did not impair the ability of the child to understand the impact and consequences of the behavior subject to disciplinary action; and
  - c. the child's disability did not impair the ability of the child to control the behavior subject to disciplinary action.

### **What actions must occur after the manifestation review?**

1. If the student's behavior is a manifestation of their disability, the IEP must be reviewed and revised as appropriate.
2. If the student's behavior is not a manifestation of their disability, disciplinary action may be taken, but Newark must continue to make FAPE available to the student.

### **What happens if a classified student commits a crime?**

School officials can report crimes committed by children with disabilities to appropriate law enforcement authorities to the same extent as they do for crimes committed by non-disabled students.



# BEST PRACTICES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION



## RESOURCES & CONTACT INFORMATION

### NEWARK PUBLIC SCHOOLS SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Dr. Helene Feldman - Director - (973) 733-7064 - [HFeldman@nps.k12.nj.us](mailto:HFeldman@nps.k12.nj.us)

#### THE OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER

FOR CODE AND NPS PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS,

CONTACT AT MCKINLEY SCHOOL:

SAKINAH SPRINGS  
MITCHEL GERRY  
MARY HART  
(973) 350-5811



TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION  
JOSEPH FONSECA (973) 481-5398

#### SPECIAL EDUCATION'S RESOURCE TEACHER COORDINATORS



FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FOR TEACHERS AND TEACHER AIDES CONTACT:

GLEENDA WIMBERLY (973) 733-4336  
KATHY GREENAWALD (973) 424-4335  
NICK COLUMBO (973) 424-4339  
AIDA VASQUEZ (973) 424-4334  
JANET CHAVIS (973) 733-6708

### NEWARK TEACHERS UNION (NTU)

FOR INFORMATION ON SPECIAL EDUCATION AND THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT, INCLUDING CODE CONCERNS, CONTACT MITCHEL GERRY AFTER 3:30 P.M. AT (973) 643 - 8430, OR E-MAIL HIM AT [MG@NTU-AFT.COM](mailto:MG@NTU-AFT.COM)

### STATEWIDE PARENT ADVOCACY NETWORK (SPAN)

FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE WORKSHOPS FOR PARENTS, PROFESSIONALS, TEACHER AIDES, SPECIAL EDUCATION, NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND & COLLABORATION. INFORMATION ON HOW TO INCREASE PARENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES  
CONTACT: (973) 642 - 8100

#### NPS Special Ed. Legal Staff

Arsen Zartarian - (973) 733 - 8708  
Joe Virga - (973) 733 - 8708

#### Employment Opportunities

Jean Avenosa - (973) 733 - 6707  
Helene Feldman - (973) 733 - 7064

#### Assistive Technology

Mike Scolomeira - (973) 350 - 5802  
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PLEASE SEND US ANY COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, ETC.

### OTHER RESOURCES ON

THE NEWARK TEACHERS UNION (NTU), THE NEWARK PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THE STATEWIDE PARENT ADVOCACY NETWORK (SPAN) HAVE FORMED A COLLABORATION TO DEVELOP AND PUBLICIZE BEST PRACTICES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION. THESE PUBLICATIONS CAN SERVE AS A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS AND PARENTS.