

# MANAGING DIFFICULT BEHAVIORS

LEARN HOW EFFECTIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT  
AT SCHOOL LEADS TO BETTER EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS

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Advocates for Justice & Education, Inc.



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# TRAINING AGENDA

## MANAGING DIFFICULT BEHAVIORS

- I. Understanding the Causes of Problem Behavior
- II. Understanding Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- III. Functional Behavior Assessments
- IV. Developing Behavioral Intervention Plans

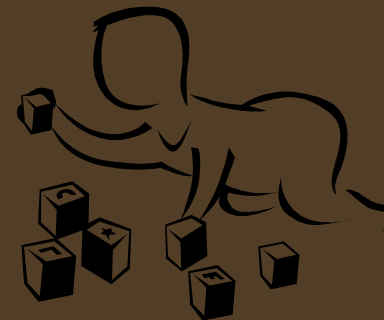


There is logic behind the behaviors of children. The challenge is to understand its context.



# UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES OF PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

Problem Behaviors Have Multiple Causes



# PROBLEM BEHAVIORS ARE CONTEXT RELATED

They arise in response to environmental events

## Classroom Environment

Noise

Disruptions

Temperature



## Child Specific Conditions

Medication Effects   Peer Issue   Allergies   Anxiety   Fatigue

New Person   Teacher Interaction

## Instruction

Work too hard/easy   Transitions

Length of Assignments

No Choices



# PROBLEM BEHAVIORS SERVE A FUNCTION

What a child does is not necessarily related to the function of the behavior.

*To get something:*

- Attention
- Approval
- Reward
- Power



*To escape or avoid something:*

- attending school
- peers or adults
- doing work
- To have control



# WHOSE PROBLEM IS IT?

The problem is not just with the child, but in the relationships between the child and the environment.

Interventions must involve the school and home environment as a whole, not the child alone.



# WHAT ARE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS (PBIS)?

- PBIS is:
  - A research-based approach to eliminate problem behavior based on the assumption that children and youth can develop new behavioral skills when adults:
    - **TEACH** the expected behaviors
    - **RECOGNIZE AND REWARD** those behaviors when they occur, and
    - **CONSISTENTLY ENFORCE MEANINGFUL CONSEQUENCES** when they don't occur.



# IN A TRADITIONAL SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT...

- Discipline strategies vary among classrooms.
- School safety is based on reacting to problem behaviors.
- Academic skills are taught; behavior is controlled.



# IN A PBIS SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT...

- The emphasis is on systems of support that include proactive strategies to define, teach, and support appropriate student behaviors.
  - School safety is based on preventing behavior problems.
  - Teams anticipate and plan for problem behaviors.
  - Behavior skills are taught specifically.



# KEEP IT POSITIVE

Repeated punishment does not help children develop appropriate behavior skills

**PBIS is a better solution**

*A positive intervention plan is NOT the same as a discipline plan!*



Be sure the expectation is positive!

- “once you have finished reading, you may move on to art”
- “you cannot move onto art until the reading is finished....”



# GOAL: CHANGING BEHAVIOR

Teach or  
Re-teach the  
behavior

Provide Meaningful  
Incentives

Provide Meaningful  
Consequences



# TEACH EXPECTED BEHAVIOR

- **Begin with simple, broad rules.**
  - Be safe, be responsible, be respectful.
  - Describe what each of those means.
- **Clearly state the expectation.**
- **Provide examples of appropriate behavior.**
- **Provide examples of inappropriate behavior.**
- **Re-teach expectations regularly.**



# DECIDE WHERE TO PRACTICE THE EXPECTED BEHAVIORS

- Once the new behavior is taught, practice in different settings
  - Define the expected behavior in different locations.
  - State the behavior in terms of what you want to see.



# DO WHAT YOU DO BEST: BE A TEACHER!

- Discuss and model the expected behaviors to use:
  - In the classroom
  - In the locations where specific behavior is expected
- Re-teach regularly and when necessary.
- Keep the expectation positive.



# PROVIDE MEANINGFUL INCENTIVES

- Teaching is not enough to change behavior.
- Children need to be recognized and rewarded when they meet expectations.
- Positive recognition must occur at least four times as frequently as negative recognition for behavior change to occur.



# ENFORCE LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES FOR NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS

Logical Consequences should:

- Be stated clearly in advance
- Be understood
- Be enforced consistently
- Apply to all in a classroom



# WHY SHOULD SCHOOLS USE PBIS?

- To increase academic success!
- To promote a safe, predictable learning environment!
- To reduce the incidence of problem behaviors!
- Children's behaviors can change through instruction!



IF...	FOCUS ON...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ More than 40% of students receive one or more office referrals</li> <li>○ More than 2.5 office referrals per student</li> </ul>	School Wide System
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ More than 35% of office referrals come from non-classroom settings</li> <li>○ More than 15% of students referred from non-classroom settings</li> </ul>	Non-Classroom System
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ More than 60% of office referrals come from the classroom</li> <li>○ 50% or more of office referrals come from less than 10% of classrooms</li> </ul>	Classroom Systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ More than 10-15 students receive 5 or more office referrals</li> </ul>	Targeted Group Interventions / Classroom Systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Less than 10 students with 10 or more office referrals</li> <li>○ Less than 10 students continue rate of referrals after receiving targeted group settings</li> <li>○ Small number of students destabilizing overall functioning of school</li> </ul>	Individual Student Systems

# THE CHALLENGE FOR PARENTS IN WORKING WITH PROFESSIONALS

Parents believe that:

- professionals do not communicate in a way they can understand
- they are being judged for their child's problems
- some professionals don't honor or respect their experiences
- schools keep punishing the child for behaviors that are part of their disability

# THE CHALLENGE FOR PROFESSIONALS IN WORKING WITH FAMILIES

Some professionals believe that parents:

- are part of the problem
- expect schools to “fix” the problem
- don’t trust professionals

# COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS

PBIS will not be successful without  
parental participation.




# IN SUMMARY

- Changing behavior through PBIS takes the effort of a “village.”
- Research and best practices consistently support family involvement as a key component to school success.
- Partnership between families and schools promotes a clear message of shared responsibility involvement.

“No matter what the demographics, students are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, attend school regularly, have better social skills, graduate, and go on to post-secondary education when schools and families partner.”

(Karen Mapp, *Family Involvement Equals Student Success No Matter Background*, 2006)

# DEVELOPING A FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT

A functional assessment looks at  a child behaves as he or she does given:

- The nature of the child, and
- What is happening in the environment

## **Functional Behavior Assessments:**

- Guide to decision making about needs
- Lead to strategies to help meet the need



# FBA AND IDEA

- Under IDEA, children must be evaluated in “all areas related to the suspected disability”
  - If a child has problem behaviors that are not improving, the child may need an evaluation to examine the behaviors more closely.



# FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT

- What is the behavior of concern?
- Where does the behavior occur and not occur?
- What are the antecedents to the behavior? (what happens beforehand)?
- Is there a consistent pattern? Can the behavior be predicted?
- What does the student “get” from using the behavior?
- What are some possible reasons for the behavior?
- What replacement behaviors can be taught that serve the same function?



# TEST THE HYPOTHESIS

The team develops and uses positive behavioral interventions that are written into the child's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) or behavior intervention plan.



# A SAMPLE HYPOTHESIS

- When Jackie...
- (*fast trigger*) is not engaged with others or when she's engaged in activities for 15 minutes or longer (especially during lunch or free time)
- (*slow trigger*) did not get to sleep before 11 p.m. the previous evening or does not feel well,
- (*the student does*) she screams, slaps her face and pulls his hair...
- (*in order to get*) to gain access to teacher attention.”

# BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION PLAN

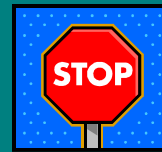
- The child's team develops a plan that usually includes:
  - Skills training to increase appropriate behavior
  - Changes that will be made in classrooms or other environments to reduce or eliminate problem behaviors
  - Strategies to replace problem behaviors with appropriate behaviors that serve the same function for the child
  - Supports for the child to use the appropriate behaviors

# EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

- Stop, Relax, and Think
  - Teaches children how to think about the problem they are having and find a solution.

Children learn the steps:

1. Define the problem
2. Decide who “owns” the problem
3. Think of as many solutions as possible to solve the problem
4. Select a solution to try
5. Use the solution
6. Evaluate its success.



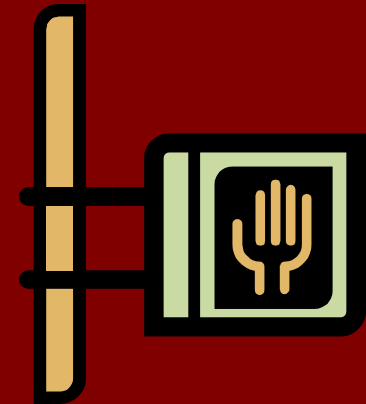
# MORE EXAMPLES...

- Planned Ignoring
  - Useful in stopping behaviors that are annoying.
  - Should never be used for unsafe behaviors
  - Not suitable for extremely disruptive behavior.



# MORE EXAMPLES...

- Preventive Cueing (signal interference)
  - Frown
  - Shake their head
  - Make eye contact
  - Point to a seat for a wandering child
  - Snap their fingers



# MORE EXAMPLES...

- Proximity Control

- Teacher moves closer to the child in a gentle way
- If the teacher does not get the child's attention by using cues, then he or she may move closer to the student or give the lesson while standing near the child's desk



# MORE EXAMPLES...

- Humor

- directed either at the teacher or the situation—never at the child—can defuse tensions as well as redirect children.
- Humor must never be used to demean a child or be used in a manner that might encourage others in the class to ridicule the child.



# MORE EXAMPLES...

- Nonverbal Warnings
  - give a child the opportunity to regain control without being singled out for a verbal reprimand.
  - For example, a teacher might place a colored warning cue card or a note on a desk as he or she moves through the room, or hold up the number of fingers that corresponds to the rule being challenged.



# MORE EXAMPLES...

- Discipline Privately
  - Many children see it as a challenge when teachers attempt to discipline them in front of their peers.
  - Children rarely lose these challenges, even when adults use negative consequences



# TEACH CHILDREN TO SELF MANAGE BEHAVIOR

Homework and school work

Time management- Define and teach routines the child will use



- Provide a checklist of activities that child can mark off as completed

- Begin on time



- Have materials ready

- Stay with task until completed

- ATTITUDE



- Be respectful (demonstrate!)

- Have materials ready for the work being addressed



# SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

- Sometimes school discipline policies are not successful in correcting problem behaviors
- The child does not learn what the school staff intended through the use of punishments such as suspension



# ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICIES

- defined as consistently enforced suspension and expulsion policies in response to weapons, drugs and violent acts in the school setting.
- Over time, however, zero tolerance has come to refer to school or district-wide policies that mandate predetermined, typically harsh consequences or punishments (such as suspension and expulsion) for a *wide degree* of rule violation.



# SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE



*Adapted Slide  
from ECAC  
Conference  
May 2010*

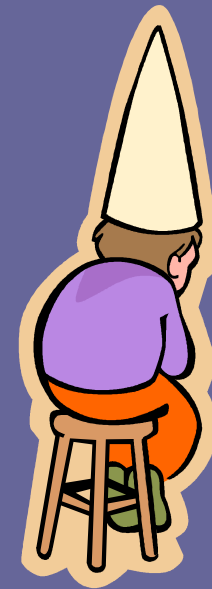
# NATIONAL STATISTICS

- In 2004, more than 3 million students were suspended and 106,000 were expelled
- This represents a 9.3% increase in suspensions and a 7.4% increase in expulsions since 2000

*U.S. Department of Education*

# WHY ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICIES?

- They can remove difficult students from school
- Fast-acting interventions that send a clear, consistent message that certain behaviors are unacceptable at school.





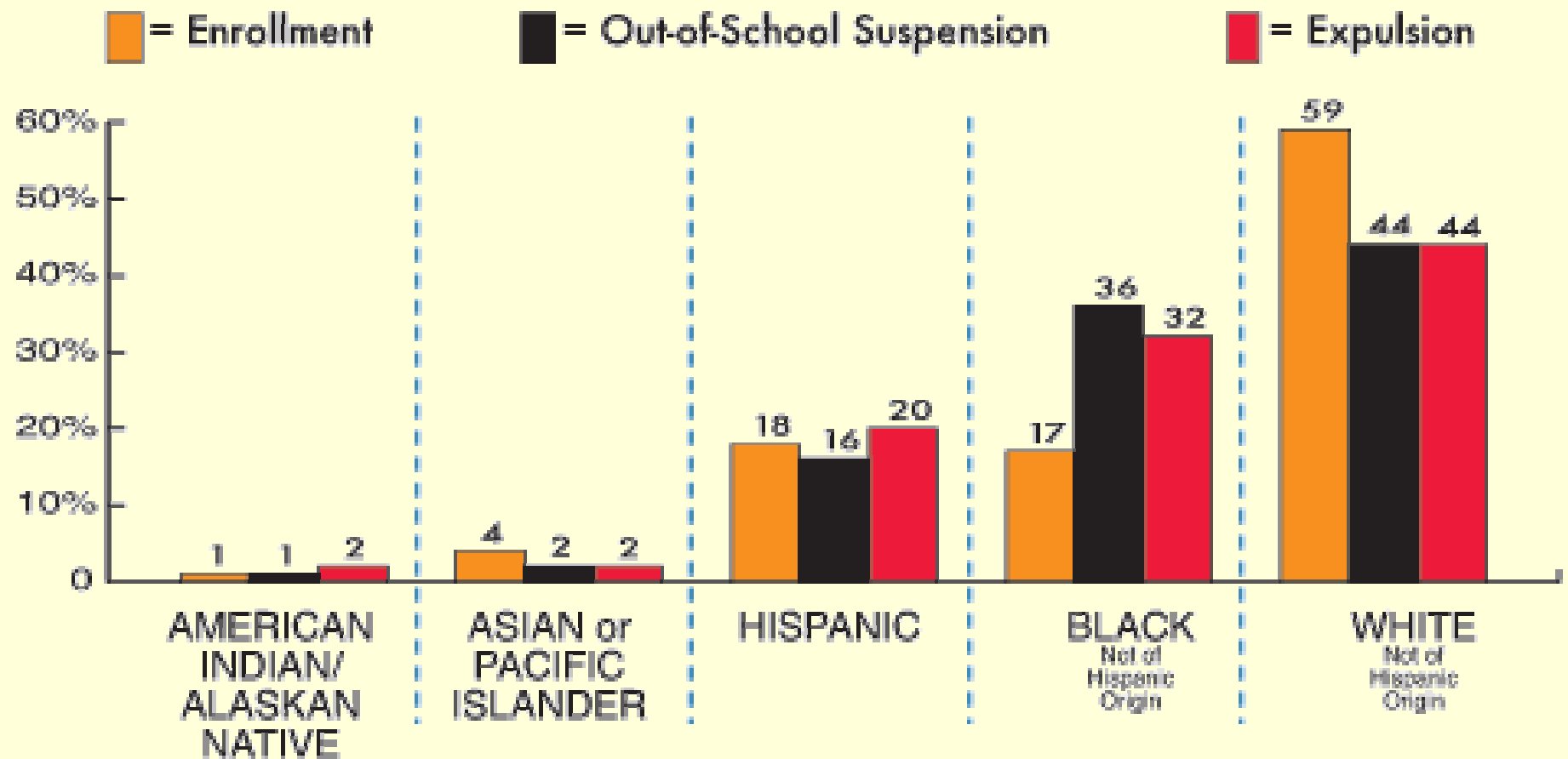
- However, research indicates that, *as implemented*, zero tolerance policies are ineffective in the long run and are related to a number of negative consequences
- increased rates of school drop out and
- discriminatory application of school discipline practices.

# OTHER PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH ZERO-TOLERANCE

- Racial disproportionality: Black students receive more harsh punitive measures (suspension, expulsion, corporal punishment) and less mild discipline than their non-minority peers, even controlling for Socio-economic Status.
- A greater negative impact on educational outcomes for students with disabilities
- An increasing rate of suspensions and expulsions throughout the country, even though school violence generally has been stable or declining.
- Inconsistent application of zero tolerance policies, which often are not reserved exclusively for serious behaviors but applied indiscriminately to much lower levels of rule infraction.

# National Enrollment vs. Disciplinary Actions

Source: Office for Civil Rights, 2002 Elementary and Secondary School Survey



# NATIONAL TRENDS

- African American students represent 17% of public school enrollment, but 36% of out-of-school suspensions (OSS)
- Latino students represent 18% of public school enrollment, but 16% of OSS
- White students make up 59% of public school enrollment and represent 44% of OSS
- OSS results in student removal from school for at least one day

# ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICIES

There is little scientific research to show that zero-tolerance or other "get tough" measures are effective in reducing school violence or increasing school safety.



# DISCIPLINE AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

- A conservative “self report” survey data shows that **one third** of the students in the juvenile justice system are IDEA eligible
- However, youth with disabilities may account for as much as **two-thirds or more** of the total number of youth in the juvenile justice system, while only accounting for 10-12% of the general population in school
- Yet, research shows that many incarcerated youth with disabilities have not been identified for special education

- A national study has shown that 32% of all youth with SLD and 57% with ED are arrested at least once
- Children with ED are more than three times as likely to be arrested before leaving school in comparison to other students
- The vast majority of juveniles in the juvenile justice system are children with Emotional Disturbance (ED) and children with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)

# SCHOOL DISCIPLINE POLICIES

- The IEP team determines whether the school discipline policies need to be amended for a child, or
  - whether the consequences need to be different from those written into the policy.
  - This decision is based on evaluation and review of the records



# A BLUEPRINT FOR REFORM

## THE REAUTHORIZATION OF THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT (ESEA)

### Equity and Opportunity for All Students

#### *Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners*

Schools must support all students, including the provision of appropriate instruction and access to a challenging curriculum along with additional supports and attention when needed

*Adapted Slide from ECAC Conference May 2010*

“In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity - it is a prerequisite”

*President Barack Obama,  
02/24/09*

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# FOR MORE INFORMATION

[WWW.PBIS.ORG](http://WWW.PBIS.ORG)

[WWW.AJE-DC.ORG](http://WWW.AJE-DC.ORG)

CALL OR VISIT AJE!



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