

# SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATES

## BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS

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Pyramid of Interventions



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*"Be careful what you pretend to be because you are what you pretend to be"*

**Behavioral disorders also known as conduct disorders** are one of the most common forms of psycho-pathology among children and young adults and is the most frequently cited reason for referral to mental health services.

The appearance of behavioral disorders is increasing dramatically in our K-12 classrooms. As a result their presence severely constrains the ability of the school systems to educate students effectively.

The prevalence of behavioral problems among children and young adults is substantial. Many surveys indicate that behavioral disorders vary among young adults, ranging from 2% and 6% in K-12 students. This percentage translates into 1.3 to 3.8 million cases of behavioral disorders among the school and pre-college population.

Behavioral disorders become apparent when the student displays a repetitive and impact persistent pattern of behavior that results in the significant disruption in other students. Such disturbances may cause significant impairments in academic, social, and or occupational functioning. Such a behavior pattern is consistent throughout the individuals life.

Among the characteristics of a behavioral disorder among children and adolescents are:

- Initiation of aggressive behavior and reacting aggressively towards others.
- A display of bullying, threatening, or intimidating behavior.
- Being physically abusive of others.
- Deliberate destruction of other's property.
- Showing little empathy and concern for the feelings, wishes, and well being of others.
- Showing callous behavior towards others and lack of feelings of guilt or remorse.
- They may readily inform on their companions and tend to blame others for their own misdeeds.

**Because you asked...**the following pages provide teaching and communication strategies for working with students with behavioral disorders.



The Estacada School District does not discriminate against an individual's race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, marital status, age, or disability.



## General Strategies

- Ask previous teachers about interactive techniques that have previously been effective with the student in the past.
- Bring to the student's attention science role models with disabilities with a similar disability to that of the student. Point out that this individual got ahead by a combination of effort and by asking for help when needed
- Expose students with behavioral disorders to other students who demonstrate the appropriate behaviors.
- Direct instruction or target behaviors is often required to help students master them.
- Have pre-established consequences for misbehavior.
- Administer consequences immediately, then monitor proper behavior frequently.
- Determine whether the student is on medication, what the schedule is, and what the medication effects may be on his or her in class demeanor with and without medication. Then adjust teaching strategies accordingly.
- Use time-out sessions to cool off disruptive behavior and as a break if the student needs one for a disability-related reason.
- In group activities, acknowledge the contributions of the student with a behavioral disorder.
- Devise a contingency plan with the student in which inappropriate forms of response are replaced by appropriate ones.
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- Devise a contingency plan with the student in which inappropriate forms of response are replaced by appropriate ones.
- Treat the student with the behavioral disorder as an individual who is deserving of respect and consideration.
- When appropriate, seek input from the student about their strengths, weaknesses and goals.
- Enforce classroom rules consistently.
- Make sure the discipline fits the "crime," without harshness.
- Provide encouragement.
- Reward more than you punish, in order to build self-esteem.

- Praise immediately at all good behavior and performance.
  - Change rewards if they are not effective for motivating behavioral change.
  - Develop a schedule for applying positive reinforcement in all educational environments.
  - Encourage others to be friendly with students who have emotional disorders.
  - Monitor the student's self-esteem. Assist in modification, as needed.
  - Self-esteem and interpersonal skills are especially essential for all students with emotional disorders.
  - Do not expect students with behavioral disorders to have immediate success; work for improvement on an overall basis.
  - As a teacher, you should be patient, sensitive, a good listener, fair and consistent in your treatment of students with behavioral disorders.
- Present a sense of high degree of possessiveness in the classroom environment.



## Laboratory

- Use the appropriate general strategies, given above.
- Consider alternate activities/exercises that can be utilized with less difficulty for the student, but has the same or similar learning objectives.
- If unstructured activities must occur, you must clearly distinguish them from structured activities in terms of time, place, and expectations.
- If unstructured activities must occur, you must clearly distinguish them from structured activities in terms of time, place, and expectations.
- Be sensitive when making team pairings for activities so that the student with an emotional disorder is supported.
- When an interest in a particular piece has been kindled, the instructor can talk to the student about it and show him or her how to use it.
- Activity instructions should be simple but structured.

- Monitor carefully to ensure that the students without disabilities do not dominate the activity or detract in any way from the successful performance of the student with the behavioral disorder.
- If unstructured activities must occur, you must clearly distinguish them from structured activities in terms of time, place, and expectations.
- Special efforts should be made to get students with behavioral disorders to interact in laboratory activities.
- If a student must be denied permission to use the equipment, this should be done on an impersonal basis so the student will not feel hurt or discriminated against.
- Plan for successful participation in the laboratory activities by the students with behavioral disorder. Success is extremely important to them.
- To ensure success consider the special needs and interests of each person; give friendly, patient instruction in the laboratory skills; and continually encourage a wider interest in activities.
- When a student displays a reaction of dislike to the activities this dislike usually stems from fear or lack of experience for the activity or factors inherent within the situation itself.
- Some students with behavioral disorders may go to great lengths to avoid class participation. To feign their disorder is the method most frequently used, in hope of being excused from participation.

Every effort should be made to arouse the interest of such students in laboratory activities, so they will learn to perform the activities with success and pleasure.





## Teacher Presentation

- After a week, or so, of observation, try to anticipate classroom situations where the student's emotional state will be vulnerable and be prepared to apply the appropriate mitigative strategies.
- By using examples, encourage students to learn science so they can emulate adult behaviors.
- Check on the student's basic capacity to communicate and adjust your communications efforts accordingly.
- Use a wide variety of instructional equipment which can be displayed for the students to look at and handle.
- When an interest in a particular piece has been kindled, the instructor can talk to the student about it and show him or her how to use it.
- Instructions should be simple and very structured.
- Group participation in activities is highly desirable because it makes social contacts possible.
- Monitor the student carefully to ensure that students without disabilities do not dominate the activity or detract in any way from the successful performance of the student with the behavioral disorder.
- Teachers should reward students for good behavior and withhold reinforcement for inappropriate behavior.
- Some aggressive students act as they do because of a subconscious desire for attention, and it is possible to modify their behavior by giving them recognition.
- Have the individual with the behavioral disorder be in charge of an activity which can often reduce the aggressiveness.
- Special efforts should be made to encourage and easily facilitate students with behavioral disorders to interact.
- Show confidence in the student's ability and set goals that realistically can be achieved.
- Plan for successful participation in the activities by the students. Success is extremely important to them.
- The environment must be structured but sensitive to the needs of these youth with behavioral disorders.
- Expose students with behavioral disorders to other students who demonstrate the appropriate behaviors.
- Direct instruction or target behaviors is often required to help students master them.
- Consultation with other specialists, including the special education teacher, school psychologist, and others may prove helpful in devising effective strategies.
- Keep an organized classroom learning environment.
- Devise a structured behavioral management program.
- As an educator you serve as a model for the students who are behaviorally disturbed. Your actions therefore, must be consistent, mature, and controlled. Behavioral outbursts and/or angry shouting at students inhibit rather than enhance a classroom.
- Provide a carefully structured learning environment with regard to physical features of the room, scheduling, routines, and rules of conduct.
- If unstructured activities must occur, you must clearly distinguish them from structured activities in terms of time, place, and expectations.
- Let your students know the expectations you have, the objectives that have been established for the activity, and the help you will give them in achieving objectives.
- When appropriate, seek input from the students about their strengths, weaknesses and goals.
- Do not expect students with behavioral disorders to have immediate success; work for improvement on an overall basis.
- Be fair and consistent, but temper your consistency with flexibility.
- You should refer the students to visual aids and reading materials that may be used to learn more about the techniques of skill performance.
- Present a sense of positiveness in the learning environment.



- Administer consequences immediately, then monitor proper behavior frequently.
- Enforce classroom rules consistently.
- Make sure the discipline fits the "crime," without harshness.
- Provide encouragement.
- Reward more than you punish, in order to build self-esteem.
- Praise immediately and all good behavior and performance.
- Change rewards if they are not effective for motivating behavioral change.
- Find ways to encourage the student.
- Be positive and supportive.
- Develop a schedule for applying positive reinforcement in all educational environments.
- Encourage others to be friendly with students who have emotional disorders.
- Monitor the student's self-esteem. Assist in modification, as needed.

Self-esteem and interpersonal skills are especially essential for all students with emotional disorders.

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We are on the web  
[www.esd108.org](http://www.esd108.org)

"For many people, one of the most frustrating aspects of life is not being able to understand other people's behavior!"

*"A student friendly learning environment"*

## Group Interaction and Discussion



- Acknowledge the contributions of the student with an emotional disorder.
- Call for responses and participation commensurate with the student's socialization skills.
- As the student's comfort level rises and when a safe topic is available, encourage the student to be a group spokesperson.
- Along with the student, devise a contingency plan in which inappropriate forms of response are replaced by appropriate ones.
- Gradually increase the challenges in the student's participation in group exercises while providing increased positive reinforcement.
- Help the student to feel as though he or she has something worthwhile to contribute to the discussion.
- Some students may experience considerable strain in social adjustment in a group context. It may be necessary to work gradually toward group activities. One can devise a strategy of progressing from spectatorship to one-to-one instruction and eventually to small group discussion.
- Should monitor carefully to ensure that the nondisabled students do not dominate the discussion or detract in any way from the successful performance of the student with the behavioral disorder.

## Reading

It is necessary to target specific pro-social behaviors for appropriate instruction and assessment to occur such as:



- Taking turns, working with partner, following directions.
- Reading in group or with others.
- Increasing positive relationships by means of awards when they read appropriately.
- Demonstrating appropriate reading

Instructional strategies involving self-control, self-reinforcement, self-monitoring, self-management, problem solving, cognitive behavior modification, and meta-cognitive skills should be focused on teaching students reading skills.



## Research and Field Experiences

- Review and discuss with the student the steps involved in a research activity. Think about which step(s) may be difficult for the specific functional limitations of the student and jointly devise accommodations for that student.
- Use appropriate laboratory and field strategies.
- Depending on the site of the research check the previous two sections.
- Show clear examples of what the students should expect as an outcome of their research
- Use appropriate general strategies.
- Consider alternate activities/exercises that can be utilized with less difficulty for the student, but has the same or similar learning objectives.
- In field activities acknowledge the contributions and assistance of the student with an emotional disorder.
- Help the student to feel as though he or she has something worthwhile to contribute to the field trip.
- Use a buddy system.
- Gradually increase the challenges in the student's participation in field exercises while providing increased positive reinforcement.
- Group participation in field activities is highly desirable because it enhances social contacts.
- Make the student with the behavioral disorder become one of the field trip leader of an activity which can often reduce their disorder.
- Special efforts should be made to get students with behavioral disorders to interact with other students.
- You should encourage students to practice field skills during their free hours.

Every effort should be made to arouse the interest of such students in activities, so they will learn to perform the activities with success and pleasure with appropriate behaviors.