Positive Behavior Support for Young Children with Challenging Behavior

Introductory Concepts
Model of Prevention and Intervention for Challenging Behaviors

- Build Positive Relationships With the Children and Families
- Implement Classroom Preventive Practices
- Implement Social & Emotional Teaching Strategies for children who need to develop social skills
- Implement Individualized Intensive Interventions

Positive behavior support fits in this part of the model
Intensive individualized instruction and interventions are used when:

- Children have very persistent and severe challenging behavior and;
- They do not respond to the typical preventive practices, child guidance procedures, or social emotional teaching strategies.

These interventions are based on the concept of positive behavior support.
Positive Behavior Support

Positive behavior support (PBS) is a collaborative, assessment-based process to develop effective, individualized interventions for individuals with challenging behavior.

Support plans focus on proactive and educative approaches.
**Positive Behavior Support**

It is an approach to resolving problem behaviors that is based on child-centered values and effective (validated) procedures.

PBS reduces problem behaviors by:
- enriching or altering the environment
- teaching alternative behavior,
- addressing a person's competence and lifestyle
A challenging behavior occurs

The behavior is perceived by adults as “non-compliant”

The challenging behavior is maintained and/or increased

Adults seek methods of control and/or extinction of the behavior

The skill deficit and/or needs of the student remain unaddressed

Adults design & apply manipulative interventions
A challenging behavior occurs

The behavior is perceived by adults as indicative of a skill deficit and/or unmet need

Adults seek to understand contributing environmental and functional factors

Adults design & apply prevention and/or intervention strategies based on hypothesis

Student learns an alternate socially appropriate means to get their needs met

The student demonstrates appropriate behavior (reduction in challenging behaviors)

The student experiences improved experiences at school and in life

Personal growth of the students results in improved self-management

Adapted from: Knoster & Lapos, 1993
First thing to do when you encounter a student with problem behavior is NOT to only focus on changing his/her behavior but also on changing the environment and behavior of those around them.
Challenging Behavior - What is it?

Challenging Behavior is defined as “behavior emitted by a child that results in self-injury, or injury to others, causes damage to the physical environment, interferes with the acquisition of a new skill and/or socially isolates the child” . . .

(Doss & Reichle (1991))
The Form of Challenging Behavior

The **form** of a challenging behavior is the observable manifestation of the behavior. Examples include yelling, biting, hitting, screaming, running away, self-injury, etc.

The child may engage in a single form of challenging behavior per episode (e.g., just hitting) or a sequence of behaviors (e.g., hit, yell, spit, and pinch).
What we know about behavior . . .

. . . . Behavior is learned and therefore can be taught.
. . . . Behavior is observable and measurable.
. . . . Behavior is lawful – guided by history, context and contingencies.
. . . . Behavior is affected by environmental factors.
. . . . Behavior serves a purpose for the child (has a function).
The Function of Challenging Behavior

The *function* of a challenging behavior is the “why” behind the behavior. The outcome that results from engaging in it.

Children engage in behavior to either . . .

**Escape / Avoid**
- Activities
- Items
- Attention
- Peer/Adult
- Sensory Stimulation

**Get / Obtain**
- Activities
- Items
- Attention
- Peer/Adult
- Sensory Stimulation
Challenging behavior often is used to communicate a message when a child does not have language.
Challenging Behavior

may be used instead of language by a child who has limited social skills or has learned that challenging behavior will result in meeting his or her needs
Challenging Behavior

1. Children engage in challenging behavior because “it works” for them.

2. Challenging behavior results in the child gaining access to something or avoiding or stopping something.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Get / Obtain</th>
<th>Escape / Avoid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Reinforcement</td>
<td>Negative Reinforcement</td>
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Positive Reinforcement

• Something that immediately follows a behavior that **increases** the likelihood of that behavior occurring again in the future.

Negative Reinforcement

☐ Something that is taken away or stops immediately following a behavior that **increases** the likelihood of that behavior occurring again in the future.
A hypothesis statement is a summary statement that describes a best guess about the relationship between the problem behavior and the characteristics of the environment.

• Includes:
  (a) triggering antecedent
  (b) problem behavior
  (c) maintaining consequences (what they hope to get/escape)
Hypothesis Statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When ______ occurs . . . .</th>
<th>the student ______ . . . .</th>
<th>to get or avoid ________ .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(identify the trigger)</td>
<td>(describe the behavior)</td>
<td>(describe the consequences)</td>
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- When approached by his friend, Allison, Jason screams and hits his head. Allison moves away and leaves Jason alone.

What do you think the function is?
When _______ occurs . . . .

(identify the trigger)

When the teacher is paying attention to other students,

the student _______ . . . .

(describe the behavior)

Lisa makes burping noises,

to get or avoid _________.

(describe the consequences)

The teacher scolds her and moves Lisa closer to her to work.

What do you think the function is?
When ______ occurs . . . .  
(identify the trigger)

the student ______ . . . .  
(describe the behavior)

to get or avoid _________.  
(describe the consequences)

| Joey is prompted by his teacher to come to circle. | Joey resists, cries and hits teacher. | Teacher stops prompting Joey and allows him to select a different activity. |

What do you think the function is?
Motivations of the Challenging Behavior

**Socially Motivated**
Challenging behaviors that require the mediation of others in the environment.

- A child may engage in socially motivated behavior to gain access to attention, objects or activities, or to escape or avoid non-preferred situations.

**Non-socially Motivated**
Challenging behaviors that do not require the mediation of others.

- These behaviors may serve the function of obtaining or gaining internal stimuli. None of these behaviors require any interaction with others in the individual's environment in order to be reinforced.

Nonsocially motivated behaviors can become socially motivated over time! How?
What we have learned so far

• PBS is a process to first understand challenging behaviors and next to develop effective interventions to address them.

• PBS is a proactive teaching approach.

• We need to identify why a child engages in challenging behavior to begin to understand it. Identify the **function** of the behavior.

• Challenging behavior often is used to communicate.

• Challenging behavior can be socially (externally) or non-socially (internally) motivated.
PBS Process

• Positive behavior support is a dynamic, problem-solving process involving:
  – goal identification,
  – information gathering,
  – hypothesis development,
  – support plan design,
  – implementation
  – monitoring.

• A support team, often facilitated by individuals skilled in this approach works through this process to develop an individualized plan (Hieneman et al, 1999).
The Process of Positive Behavior Support Planning Involves Five Major Steps

Step 1: Establishing a team and identifying goals of intervention

Step 2: Gathering information (functional assessment)

Step 3: Developing a hypotheses

Step 4: Designing intervention strategies for a behavior support plan

Step 5: Implementing, monitoring, and evaluating outcomes using data
When Deciding On Strategies Always Ask

- Do the strategies fit in the natural routines and structure of the classroom or family?
- Do they fit within the value system and beliefs of the family and/or EC program?
- Have I considered why the child is engaging in the behavior?
As much as possible the intervention strategies should be Antecedent Strategies *(not Reactive!!)*

**REACTIVE**
Intervention consequences implemented after behavior has been produced

**ANTECEDENT**
Interventions implemented **prior to** emission of challenging behavior in situations associated with challenging behavior
Antecedent Strategies- are Preventative!

Start by asking what can be done to make the problem behavior irrelevant?

Ask yourself . . .

- How can the environment be changed to reduce the likelihood that challenging behavior will occur?
- What can I teach the child to do that will eliminate the need to use the challenging behavior?
Antecedent strategies should either:

Teach the child a more appropriate way to respond to the trigger.

Change the situation so it does not trigger the challenging behavior.

Considers the function of the behavior

Alters the conditions and effects the need or motivation for the behavior.
Antecedent Strategies

Teaching new skills that are communicative alternatives that consider the FUNCTION of the challenging behavior

- Rejecting
- Requesting
  - Request a Break
  - Request an Alternative Activity
  - Request Assistance
  - Request for Attention
  - Request an Item or Activity

Using strategies that alter the conditions and effects the need or motivation for the behavior. Does not necessarily consider the function of the behavior.

- Prespecified Reinforcers
- Choice-making
- Preferred Items as Distracters
- High-probability Request
- Sequences and Embedding
- Tolerance for Delay of Reinforcement
- Collaboration
Teaching New Skills that are Communicative Alternatives that Consider the **FUNCTION** of the Challenging Behavior

When teaching communication alternatives to challenging behavior remember . . . .

1. The new communication skill must be efficient and effective (work quickly for the child) to acquire the same desired outcome that the challenging behavior currently does.
2. To identify a skill that the child already has that you can shape or utilize for appropriate communication.
3. To make sure that a positive consequence for using the new communication is available.
4. To teach the new communication skill when the child is not engaging in the challenging behavior.
5. To teach the new communication skill throughout the day in different situations and places.

- **Rejecting Response** – teaching a child to use communication to escape/avoid a person, object or activity.
  - Teach or use a rejecting response only when you can honor the response (avoiding eating vegetables at dinner) vs. a response you cannot honor (taking important medication).
- **Make a Request** – teaching a child to use communication to gain access to a number of desired consequences such as access to attention, to assistance, to items, to activities, to escape from a non-preferred activity, etc. . .
  - **To request a break** – the child completes a portion of the activity and then is taught to request a break. Following the break the child returns to the activity. Examples: verbally say “I need to rest.”, touch a symbol for “break, please” or signing “break”. A child can also be taught to request a work-check for a small amount of work completed. This provides the child attention and a precursor to receiving a break for work completed successfully.
  - **To request assistance** – the child is taught to communicate in order to indicate the desire to have an individual provide him/her with help while engaging in a task. Examples: removing his/her clothing; manipulating materials such as scissors or glue; or gaining access to food/drink.
  - **To request attention** – the child is taught to communicate the need for social closeness and may range from close proximity (touching or holding them) to having someone’s undivided attention. A request for attention may also function as a prelude to another need for the child such as needing a break or assistance.
  - **To request an item or activity** – the child is taught to communicate a desire to gain or maintain access to a preferred object or activity.

**New skills to communicate can take several forms:**

Spoken Language

![](PEEZ!_TANK.GO!.png)

Gestures

![](I'm done.png)  I want a break.png)

Symbols

![](I don't understand.png)  I need help.png)
Teaching Socially Appropriate Skills That Replace the Challenging Behavior

When you teach skills as replacements for challenging behavior remember . . . .

1. The new social skill must be efficient and effective (work quickly for the child) to acquire the same desired outcome that the challenging behavior currently does.
2. Determine the skills to be taught, be very specific (what does the behavior look like?).
3. Ensure that there are opportunities to practice the skill many times throughout the day.
4. Decide on the method of instruction you want to use (i.e. social story, prompt and praise, modeling, role play).
5. Reinforce the skill in natural contexts so that it generalizes.

• Social Skills – teaching a child social skills that will serve them well in the situations in which they have engaged in the challenging behavior.
  ➔ For example, the child may need to learn how to take turns, to use a quiet voice, to sit with their hands to themselves, to walk instead of run, to be gentle with others, to put away things, etc. . . .

• Social Stories – when teaching a child social skills and to differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable behavior, a particularly useful strategy for young children is to develop a social story specific to their needs.
  ➔ Social stories provide a script for the child about social situations and expectations.
  ➔ The story is written from the child’s perspective and includes descriptive, perspective and directive sentences.
  ➔ The story must match the child’s symbolic and receptive communication level.

Example Social Story

**I like talking and playing with my friends at school.**

Sometimes, I want to play with what my friends are playing with

When I play, I sometimes feel like taking using mean words or hitting or kicking. My friends get sad or mad when I hit, kick, use mean words or take toys.
Using strategies that alter the conditions and effects the need or motivation for the behavior. Does not necessarily consider the function of the behavior.

- **Pre-specifying a Positive Consequence** – to increase the probability that a child will participate in a task or activity, prior to engaging the child in the targeted activity, show the child what reward or outcome he/she will receive when they complete it. 
  ➤ Most commonly delivered as an if/then statement.

- **Choice-Making** – offering the child two or more choices for them to select between. When used as a prevention strategy, choices must be offered explicitly and personally to the child. Photographs, visual symbols or actual objects can be used to offer choices.
  ➤ **Choices of when** to engage in a non-preferred task. Choosing to participate now or in 10 minutes when the timer goes off.
  ➤ **Choices between two non-preferred options.** When one of the two choices is slightly more preferred than the other, the child is able to avoid the less preferred option. Only use this strategy when either choice is acceptable. Example: Kari avoids art and hits when asked to participate in art activities, however, when offered a choice among materials she can use in the art activity she is more likely to participate without challenging behavior.

- **High Probability Request Sequence** – an intervention in which a set of simple requests are delivered immediately prior to a low-probability request that would typically result in challenging behavior by the child.
  ➤ Example of a high probability response sequence:

  ![Sequence Diagram]

- **Embedding a Request** – using a preferred activity or conversation rather than a set of requests to increase probability that the child will engage in the low-probability request.
  ➤ Example: Just prior to Leigh getting ready to go to the store (a non-preferred activity), her father begins to tell her a story about dinosaurs: “Once upon a time, Josey the dinosaur became very hungry. Some of her friends ate plants and some ate...” As her father continues the story he says, “It is time to go to the store. This way the dinosaurus will not get hungry.” Then he continues the story as they get ready to go to the store.

### Safety or Emergency Procedures

- If a child is in danger or harming himself or others, you must first ensure their safety.
  - You may only hold a child or remove a child from the situation to keep them or others safe.
  - Safety or emergency procedures may be pre-planned for children who have a history of dangerous outbursts.
  - Safety or emergency procedures only keep children safe, they DO NOT CHANGE BEHAVIOR.

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**Additional strategies . . .**

1. Modify the task length, materials, instructions or response mode (point rather than speak)
2. Provide the child with more frequent attention/reinforcement
3. Provide an activity schedule (visual schedules are helpful)
4. Provide peer or adult support
5. Promote activity participation on the part of the child.
6. Add manipulatives that interest the child.
7. Incorporate child interests into the requested activity.

- **Using a Preferred Item as a Distraction** – present a preferred item as a distractor during an activity in which the child typically engages in challenging behavior.
  - Examples: giving the child colors while they are waiting for dinner at a restaurant or letting a child listen to a tape while riding in the car.

- **Helping the Child Develop Tolerance for Delay** – cue the child that a positive consequence (reward or reinforcement) will come at the end of his/her participation in an activity for a specified amount of time.
  - **Delay cues** – verbal, graphic or gestural signals that communicates that a positive consequence will come after a specified amount of time engaged in an activity. There are two types of delay cues:
    1. Time related cue – “Keep cleaning up the blocks for 2 minutes then you can go play. Let’s set the timer for 2 minutes.”
    2. Task related cue – “When we finish this page . . . . “

  - **When using tolerance for delay procedures, be sure to:**
    * Make eye contact and gain the child’s attention
    * Provide a warning to the child (i.e. “5 more minutes or 3 more times”)
    * Give the child several countdowns (i.e. “2 more minutes or 1 more time”)
      * State the ending activity and activity to follow (i.e. “5 more minutes, then clean-up”)
      * Use visuals, photos or objects to represent the next activity

- **Collaboration as a Strategy** – divide the responsibilities of an activity between the child and a peer or adult.
  - Example: “Tommy, you pick up the red blocks and I will pick up the green ones.”