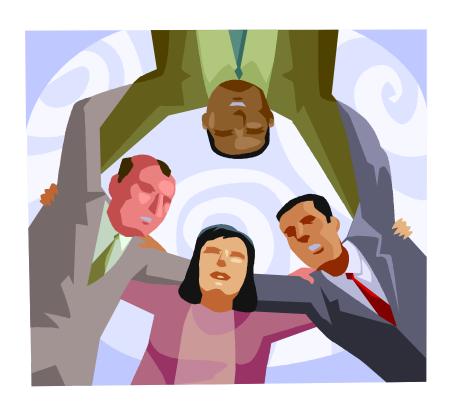# Section IV: Strategies for Preventing Problem Behaviors

Section IV: Strategies for Preventing Problem Behaviors

A. **Teaching Social Skills**
- Social Skills provide students with the tools to enable positive educational experiences and enable students to take control of their behavior.
- Many of the problems children are experiencing are due to skill deficits rather than intentional misbehavior. If a child does not have a skill that works, then he/she will use what skill is available.
- The benefits of social skills instruction:
  - ✓ Increases academic engagement time for students
  - ✓ Remediates skill deficits
  - ✓ Takes no longer than existing discipline practices
  - ✓ Serves as the educative part of the discipline process
  - ✓ Reduces the number of discipline referrals
  - ✓ Increases the use of critical thinking, reasoning and problem-solving skills by students
  - ✓ The child's social skills become more positive in all environments
- The teacher must identify the student's social skills deficit, identify the desired replacement behavior, and give the student the opportunity to learn the skill by using real life opportunities to teach and practice the skill.
- If the student has had the opportunity but has not demonstrated the skill the teacher should:
  - ✓ Check language and comprehension skills
  - ✓ Check motor skills
  - ✓ Check to see if the student is accepted by peers
  - ✓ Check to see if parents, school, and peers reinforce the skill
- Teaching social skills is identical to teaching a math or reading skill
- The major components of social skills are:
  - ✓ Modeling
  - ✓ Role playing
  - ✓ Performance feedback
  - ✓ Transfer of training
- Social skills include, but are not limited to:
  - ✓ Classroom survival
  - ✓ Peer relations
  - ✓ Dealing with feelings
  - ✓ Dealing with stress
  - ✓ Self-esteem issues
  - ✓ Alternatives to aggression
  - ✓ Home relations
  - ✓ Everyday etiquette
  - ✓ Problem solving

Replacement behaviors are positive behaviors students can use to gain the same consequence/outcome they are getting through the negative behavior.

B. **Proactive Strategies**

- **Establish Rules** – These are the backbone of being proactive. All students should follow them. All students must understand them. They must be fair and consistently reinforced. Rules should be specific, measurable, observable, stated positively, posted in a prominent place and easily seen from anywhere in the room. Keep rules to a maximum of 5. Rules should be reviewed prior to the change in an activity with students who have difficulty with transitions.
- **Establish Procedures** - Establish procedures for all activities in your classroom. You must state, show, practice, and reinforce procedures routinely.
- **Planned Ignoring** – Ignore the inappropriate behavior of a student while reinforcing the appropriate behavior of other students. Ignoring is very effective with attention seeking behaviors. Remember to reinforce the student immediately upon exhibiting the desired appropriate behavior.
- **Proximity Control** – Use your presence to control behavior by moving to and standing near the student whose behavior you want to change. Walking around permits you to anticipate problems and to handle them before they get out of hand. The more time you spend behind your desk, the more likely it is that the students will misbehave.
- **Verbal Cueing** – Provide a verbal reminder that leads to an appropriate behavior.
- **Direct Warning** – Using "I" message; tell the student what you want. State the consequences for non-compliance, but don't threaten.
- **Hurdle Help** – When a student feels frustrated because of a difficulty encountered while trying to complete a task, help him/her over the hard spot.
- **Regrouping** – Change the grouping of students to decrease or increase specific behaviors.
- **Restructuring** – Abandon an activity when it is not working. Be ready to substitute an alternative. Do not overuse this technique as it may lead to avoidance of tasks.
- **Antiseptic Bouncing** – Give the student the opportunity to run an "errand" for the teacher. This errand is pre-arranged. This will allow the student an opportunity to perform appropriate behavior and refocus himself or herself positively.
- **Modeling** – Show the student exactly what you want them to do. Have the student practice the behavior. Reinforce appropriate use of the behavior.
- **Shaping** – Many behaviors are complex and are not easily learned. Shaping involves reinforcing behavior that is close to the desired behavior. Expectations increase as the student learns the desired behavior. You must reinforce each step the student accomplishes.
- **Change in Schedule** – Moving undesired tasks or activities to different times of the day. Changing tasks/activities times and duration.
- **Change in Position** – Involves the student moving to a new position to complete the tasks. It allows the student to sit on the floor, work at the chalkboard, or stand at his desk.

- **Change the Task** – Use when the student has difficulty during a particular type of task. Break the task into smaller sections, give extra assistance, or change the delivery. Drop down to a mastery level task.
- **Choice Training** – Gives the student choices. Make sure you give the student enough time to make the choice. The teacher should always provide choices that are acceptable.
- **Contracting with Students** – Contracts are developed when a teacher and student come to an agreement about correcting certain behaviors. Make sure contracts are set up in a positive manner.
- **Signal Interference** – A signal from an adult is used often enough to bring back a student's own control system when he/she is giving in to an impulse.
- **Interest Boosting** – Showing genuine interest in a student's classroom assignment or in his/her personal interest area to increase their academic focus.
- **Easing Tension Through Humor** – A well-trained attempt at "kidding" will often stop the undesirable behavior. Not to be confused with aggression, sarcasm, or cynicism.
- **Support from Routine** – Some students need more structure than others. If a student needs more structure to feel comfortable and secure, provide additional information about program or schedule. Routines and setting expectations sometimes reduce anxiety levels of students.

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