Behavior Management Handbook

Creating Safe, Engaging and Responsive Classroom Communities

Everybody counts. Everybody learns.
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Introduction to Behavior in Schenectady City Schools: Our Unique Needs

Schenectady City School District is a school district where everybody counts, and everybody learns.

According to the data reflected on our district's website, 74% of Schenectady City School District students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, and 79% are economically disadvantaged; 50.8% of Schenectady's children reportedly live below the poverty line, and Schenectady is ranked 13th in the nation for highest childhood poverty rate among cities over 65,000 in population. Thirty-three percent of our students are Black or African American, 19% Hispanic, 17% Asian or native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, 27% White, 8% American Indian or Alaska Native, 5% Multiracial and 18% have Disabilities. In addition, a large percentage of our students have experienced one or more adverse childhood experiences (Schenectady City School District, 2017).

The Government Law Center reported that despite a demonstrated decrease in index crimes (murders, rapes, robberies, aggravated assaults, burglaries, larcenies, and stolen cars) between 2007 and 2015, Schenectady County had the highest rate of index crimes in New York State, 50% higher than the index crimes reported in New York City (Liebman, 2016). With this said, we understand that students living in Schenectady are likely to experience some level of an Adverse Childhood Experience.

These levels of poverty and trauma, combined with issues of racial disproportionality, can often lead to social and academic difficulties for children, which may manifest as challenging behaviors across school settings. Students are sometimes fearful to take risks or put forth effort and thus can become defensive when asked to engage in cognitively demanding work by their teachers. How we respond, the structures that we establish, and the prosocial skills that we teach, can make a difference.

It is our belief that, with the creation of safe, engaging, responsive classrooms, high quality initial instruction and universal (Tier 1) supports, all students can make academic growth and all teachers can grow right alongside them. We believe that with this sort of growth mindset, opportunities abound. After all, smart is not something you are, it is something you get. Research says, and we believe, that relationships are one of the most powerful ways to work at instilling this in kids. SCSD is committed to promoting strong home-school partnerships, honoring a culturally responsive code of conduct, and devoting significant attention to systems-level, Tier 1, efforts in preventing barriers to learning. Importantly, we are equally committed to promoting cultural sensitivity, supporting mental and behavioral health awareness and practices, and establishing classroom practices that convince all students they belong and that they are capable learners. Developing a comprehensive classroom management plan complete with solid rituals, routines, and habits, as well as culturally responsive and cognitively demanding lessons, can help to make these aspirations come to fruition.

Just as we are committed to providing for the needs of our students, we are also committed to recognizing that this is challenging work for faculty and staff. When adults are feeling the deleterious effects of vicarious trauma, they are unlikely to be able to provide ideal supports to students with trauma or other unique needs. Vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress, compassion fatigue, and burnout are all forms of stress that may affect those working directly with children who have been exposed to traumatic events and/or multiple adverse childhood experiences. Untreated, vicarious trauma is associated with burnout or compassion fatigue which can lead to a deep sense of
ineffectiveness in one’s work, emotional distress, detachment, ineffective professional behavior, and depression (Hill, 2011; Koenig, 2014). For all these reasons, we must also consider and concertedly organize efforts to build our own capacity for application of trauma-informed strategies when engaging and interacting with students.

This Behavior Management Handbook, developed collaboratively by educators from across the district (including elementary and secondary level teachers, district instructional coaches, behavior consultants and administrators) is meant to help increase our collective familiarity with the needs of our students so that we are able to develop safe, engaging and responsive learning spaces. For continued learning and support please see the section entitled, Resources for Additional Support, on page 15.

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Behavior as Communication

In our efforts to understand and intervene with students’ challenging behavior, especially those students whose experiences with poverty or trauma are likely impacting their accessibility for learning and their social, emotional, and behavioral development, our thinking is guided by several empirically-supported theories.

We understand that behavior is learned, and that behavior serves as communication (Powell, Symbaluk, & Macdonald, 2005). We accept the Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) Model (Greene, 2017), which suggests that “kids do well if they can,” and that challenging behavior results from children lacking the skills to not be challenging under certain circumstances. The CPS model posits that our best efforts at understanding and resolving challenging behaviors are to build students’ lagging skills and help address unmet needs, teaching them new ways to get their needs met.

We are also guided by the core principles of the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Schools (TCIS) Model: listen to children; put children first; respect children’s dignity; protect children’s personal integrity; protect families; provide abused and neglected children with the opportunity for healing; and focus on prevention (Holden, et al., 2013).

Challenging behaviors occur for many different reasons. To maximize the effectiveness of our work it is imperative that we:

- Create a comprehensive classroom management plan based on the tenets outlined in the Guiding Questions for Comprehensive Classroom Management Planning Section
- Develop dynamic, engaging and scaffolded instruction
- Start with the least confrontational strategy, especially if we are unfamiliar with a student’s particular needs and struggles
- Remain self-aware and self-regulated so that we can effectively influence students’ moods and receptiveness to learning
- Remember that:
  - what’s fair is not always what’s equal; different students need different things to achieve equally
  - desirable behavior needs to be taught, modeled and practiced
  - no single response strategy will work all the time - every student is different, the circumstances around challenging behaviors are also different (public or private occurrence, intensity, frequency and duration of the challenging behavior, etc.)
Just as we always need to carefully consider how we respond in the moment, we also need to engage in reflection. Reflection is integral to continued learning and growth.

We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience.
- John Dewey

Consider asking yourself the following questions:

- What was the severity of the behavior and is it a new or recurring behavior?
- Did my response seem to escalate or de-escalate the situation? Why?
- What seemed to have triggered the student’s challenging behavior?
- What could I do differently next time?
- How might I build or repair the relationship(s)?
- How do I help this student increase his/her self-awareness about their behavior and its impact on themselves and others?
- Who might I consult with for additional support (i.e., parent, administrator, guidance, social worker, coach, behavior specialist, and mentor).
Resiliency-Promotion in SCSD

Research on the impact of poverty and trauma in urban school settings highlights the challenges faced by students in the Schenectady community. As summarized in the Introduction to this handbook, the percentage of children living in Schenectady who are facing circumstances detrimental to their well-being is alarmingly high. Research on intergenerational trauma and urban poverty (and related, ongoing stressors including exposure to violence, addiction to alcohol and other drugs, chronic and/or severe mental illness, incarceration) has demonstrated that adults with histories of childhood abuse and exposure to family violence are at a greater risk for having challenges with emotional regulation, aggression, social competence, and interpersonal relationships, leading to functional impairments which can be transmitted to the next generation (Collins, et. al, 2010).

Children’s experiences of acute or chronic traumatic stress can profoundly impair their cognitive development, manifesting as difficulty with paying attention, following directions, concentrating and staying on task, comprehending and remembering information accurately, and acquiring academic skills. In addition to the impact on cognitive functioning, adverse childhood experiences can also result in psychological, social, and emotional impairments including difficulty with feeling safe and secure, trusting others, perceiving, interpreting, controlling impulses, regulating emotions, coping with frustration, establishing and maintaining relationships, resolving conflicts peacefully. Even seemingly minor additional stressors sometimes reflexively trigger shutting down, eloping, intense outbursts of rage and/or unsafe behavior. Research also shows that children exposed to trauma are more likely to be referred for special education, have higher rates of school discipline referrals and suspensions, have lower test scores and grades, and are less likely to graduate from high school (Martin, 2015; Owen, et al, 2015).

Schenectady City School District’s over-suspension of students with disabilities and students who are members of minority groups is an ongoing problem worthy of serious consideration from a trauma lens. The harmfulness of racial microaggressions (i.e., use of racial slurs, demeaning a person’s racial heritage, or subtly excluding persons of color) in addition to “internalized racism, overt racist experience, discrimination, and oppression within the lives of people of color” is widely recognized in the literature, and is relevant for our district, as we have a highly diverse student population (DeAngelis, 2009; Lebron et al., 2015). Both problems (disproportionate suspension and microaggressions) likely add stress and additional trauma to the lives of many SCSD students. As a district we have been working with the Technical Assistance Center on Disproportionality (TAC-D) for a number of years; this work will continue so that we ensure poverty, race and disability are never predictors of success.

As members of the SCSD educational community, we each have the ability to mitigate the deleterious impact of these adverse circumstances by examining our own values and assumptions and their impact on our understanding of students and our interactions with them. We can be resiliency-promoters by doing our part to establish school environments that are safe and predictable with consistent routines, limits and expectations. We can also begin to help students gain a sense of control by creating opportunities for choice and establishing caring and trusting relationships with students in order to foster positive teaching and learning outcomes.

To further our understanding of the ways in which our practices need to align with our student’s needs, please see the chart below detailing common views of student behavior versus trauma-informed views.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common View</th>
<th>Trauma-Informed View</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Views negative behavior solely as student choice. Utilizes punitive</td>
<td>Views students as wanting to do well, but possibly...</td>
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<tr>
<td>consequences to motivate students (shame, blame, guilt, rejection,</td>
<td>1) lacking the necessary skills to get their needs met or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isolation or deprivation).</td>
<td>2) having developed misunderstood patterns of behavior in response to challenges. Considers students may have a</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>negative worldview that influences their interaction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Characterizes student challenges in negative language (acting out,</td>
<td>Characterizes student challenges in constructive language (in need of emotional regulation, calming strategies or skills).</td>
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<tr>
<td>uncontrollable, manipulative, naughty, and defiant). Communicates an</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expectation of failure.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refers to the student with a label (ex. ED).</td>
<td>Eliminates the use of labels and uses richer language to describe the student (ex. Lance does well with his peers when he receives assistance on the playground).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilizes an authoritarian approach.</td>
<td>Uses a collaborative approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishes or minimizes the importance of the student’s coping strategies.</td>
<td>Recognizes that behavior is communicating a need and attempts to identify and meet that need (e.g., identifies function of the behavior) in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>positive and productive ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not take the whole student into account (strict focus on academics</td>
<td>Recognizes student academics, behavior, social-emotional learning, health, and family and community wellness as connected and works to integrate support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>only, reduced capacity for genuine warmth or concern, prioritizes task</td>
<td>from a whole student perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>completion exclusively).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not teach expectations to the student and assumes the student</td>
<td>Teaches and re-teaches expectations in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>should already know.</td>
<td>Understands that teaching is not simply telling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differentiates instruction for both academic and behavioral expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates systems by which the student must demonstrate he/she is worthy</td>
<td>Promotes systems that are integrated (not “siloed”) and a culture where all students get what they need to be successful, regardless of whether they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of intervention or must qualify for services (ex. Special education).</td>
<td>qualify for services or not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritizes the needs of the school or staff over the needs of the student.</td>
<td>Fosters a student-centered environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses professional “insider” language or jargon.</td>
<td>Uses language that can be understood by students and families considering comprehension level, language skills, and native language.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Adapted for use by schools created by Elizabeth Hudson for the Department of Health Services. 
5 TIC Values are from Fallott and Harris, Community Connections, [www.ccdc1.org](http://www.ccdc1.org)
When considering trauma-sensitive de-escalation strategies & resiliency promoters consider...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unhelpful Thoughts</th>
<th>Helpful Thoughts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-size-fits-all mentality.</td>
<td>Empathy about child's history and current skill levels, if known. Considerations of multiple explanations for lack of responsiveness, over-reactiveness, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing yourself to feel angry, hurt, or rejected in the moment of conflict with</td>
<td>Recognize when a child is attempting to test you by controlling your emotions, and stay the even-tempered, predictable, responsible course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student and reacting accordingly, relinquishing power / control to the student.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusion about why child is expressing anger over seemingly silly situation / event,</td>
<td>Remember that child’s anger may not be about the thing they say it is; it could be that some strong feelings have been triggered by something else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attempts to rationalize with child in the heat of the moment.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unhelpful Actions</th>
<th>Helpful Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address conflict loudly, in crowded situation, with an audience, without appropriate</td>
<td>Physically separate children who are in conflict, isolate conversations to reduce audience effects. Safety first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>back-up adult support available.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give warnings, impatiently expecting child to comply independently.</td>
<td>Say, “I see you need help with...” and provide assistance patiently and respectfully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make ultimatums, speaking with anger and frustration in your tone of voice.</td>
<td>Use structure (e.g., presenting two choices) with calm, confident tone of voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow your emotions to guide you; incessantly lecture and chatter, push child to</td>
<td>Remain calm and regulated in the face of child dysregulation; a soothing, confident tone of voice (and not much talking at all) will remind child that you are able to help them be safe and calm down. Check in with yourself so you know if you need to “tap out” and switch with another supportive adult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engage in conversation or academics while they are still upset.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send students out (which replicates their feelings of rejection / messages that child</td>
<td>Reframe student disruption as a need for extra help and attention from you; ask them to come and sit with you to work. Use natural consequences designed to repair any damage to relationships or property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is unlovable), use of punishment.</td>
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</table>

Building Effective Relationships and a Caring Classroom Community

Building rapport with students can be a remarkably effective way to begin to establish a desirable classroom environment. When students like you and trust you, and when you in turn like and believe in them, you’ll form a bond that makes classroom management a lot easier. Building rapport cannot be done overnight. When working to build rapport with your students, keep in mind that you need to act with sincerity, and show students that you care about them.

1. Show an interest in your students' personal lives
2. Greet students by the door as they enter the classroom
3. Share personal anecdotes when appropriate (including your goals for them, what you know they are capable of)
4. Watch for, and touch base with students who display strong emotion
5. Engage students in conversation, sometimes outside of academics
6. Sincerely listen to students
7. Empathize with students
8. Hold them to high expectations, and help them see the path forward

Please keep in mind that if you need to reprimand a student, it’s important to try and avoid embarrassing him or her by doing so in front of the class. Instead, try to deliver the reprimand quietly, in a 1:1 manner, whenever possible. When you do reprimand a student, try to follow it up by finding other opportunities to give the student at least three positive affirmations—like pointing out how well they followed directions or praising them for a correct answer to a question asked.

The trick is to make the students want to be a part of the classroom culture. If they want to be there, then they will follow the classroom and school guidelines to make sure that they stay there. In order to achieve this you need to make the classroom culture appealing, and a place where the students want to be.
The National Equity Project gives the following five suggestions for creating a culturally responsive classroom environment:

1. **Commit to knowing your students well** — academically, socially, and emotionally. Learn about their families, cultures, and interests. Ask questions, talk with parents, community members and colleagues, read books, watch movies, listen to music. Make home visits, or create opportunities for students to share and celebrate their family traditions and cultures (and never underestimate the power of the positive phone call home). Be aware of different worldviews, and learn about the ‘collectivistic-individualistic continuum’. Be explicit and talk to your students about ‘code-switching’ — the choices we make in how we talk and present ourselves at different times, and in different places. Help students to know when and why it is appropriate, while valuing their home culture and language.

2. **No matter the subject, build on your students’ life experiences and consistently bring them into the classroom.** Current, real world examples help students connect to the curriculum, allow for deeper engagement and help students make connections with their individual, community, national, and global identities. The classroom can be a space for students to develop and explore their ‘socio-political consciousness’ (Gloria-Ladson-Billings, 1994).

3. **Create a classroom learning community.** Encourage students to care for one another and be responsible for each other inside and outside of the classroom. Provide consistent routines that help students feel valued and safe, and accountable to one another. Design a safe and welcoming classroom environment—students respond cognitively and emotionally to classroom aesthetics. Whenever possible, aim for natural light, moveable chairs and desks, and ample space to highlight student work and cultural artifacts. Let students know that the classroom space is theirs to create together.

4. **Hold high academic standards and expectations for all of your students, and enthusiastically encourage all students to reach those standards and beyond.** Treat all students as competent and developing—focus on fostering a ‘growth mindset’. Design lessons with your most underserved students in mind.

5. **Understand your own cultural identity, and its consequences.** Rigorously examine your cultural behavior patterns, especially when it comes to classroom management and discipline. Be yourself with your students – honest, caring, and human.

(Gray, 2012)
Cultural Responsiveness: Building Self-Awareness and Finding Common Ground

Evidence regarding the efficacy of responsive classrooms in helping teachers to increase their students’ social skill development, and in turn increase their access to academic learning, is mounting throughout the research community and being confirmed and validated in schools across the country as an effective approach to working with students and helping them to achieve success across school settings (Rimm-Kaufman & Chiu, 2007, p. 409).

A critical element of creating a classroom responsive to the needs of a diverse student population is the development of a culturally-sensitive classroom management plan. This can be somewhat intimidating as we consider our own understanding of others’ experiences; after all, is it even feasible to have a nuanced understanding of all of the cultures of the students with whom we interact on a daily basis? That’s where the development of cultural competence comes into play. We don’t need to be an expert on everyone in order to lead a responsive classroom, we just have to be open to learning as much from our students as we expect them to learn from us.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

What is cultural competence?
Simply stated, cultural competence in education is “the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than our own” (National Education Association [NEA], 2008). It “implies a heightened consciousness [and understanding] of how culturally diverse populations experience their uniqueness and deal with their differences and similarities within a larger social context” (NASW, 2015, p. 10).

Culture can be described as encompassing the “history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions of [students] served in the different cultures related to race and ethnicity, immigration and refugee status, tribal status, religion and spirituality, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, social class, and abilities,” (NASW, 2015, p.12).

Specific to education, cultural competence “involves the [educator’s] ability to acquire knowledge of [the student’s] education-related beliefs, attitudes and practices to improve student achievement (Stith-Williams, 2009, slide 8). It is important to understand that cultural competency “is never fully realized, achieved, or completed; it is a lifelong process for [educators] who will always encounter [diversity] and new situations in their [craft]” (NASW, 2015, p. 15).
Why is cultural competence important?
As our community and our country become increasingly diverse, the need for cultural competency is necessary to successfully understand, engage, and educate our students. The National Education Association (NEA, 2008) highlights the following as important reasons why educators should be culturally competent:

- Culture plays a critical role in learning
- Cultural competence leads to more effective teaching
- Culturally competent educators are better equipped to reach out to student’s families
- Cultural competence helps address student achievement gaps
- Cultural competence reinforces American and democratic ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity
- Cultural competence helps educators meet accountability requirements

Strategies for increasing cultural competence
Working towards cultural competence means increasing awareness about ourselves, our values, and our views, as well as increasing our understanding of other cultures, how others experience their cultures and the intersection between our cultures.

- **Approach students and families with cultural humility**
  Cultural humility is described as one’s “willingness to suspend what you know, or think you know, about [students] based on generalizations about their culture” in order to remain open to what students themselves have determined is their personal expression of their heritage and culture (Moncho, 2013).

- **Increase your cultural awareness**
  
  **Introspective Awareness**
  The starting point for understanding others and their experiences is to first understand ourselves. As adults we often take this as a given; after all, haven’t we spent our lives exploring our identities, values, and ethics? We know who we are, right? The truth is that self-awareness, much like cultural competence, is also an ongoing process. To truly be connected to ourselves, we need to work at it. To that end, researchers recommend that we begin by exploring our own culture and historical roots, and the beliefs and values associated with them. This encourages a “personal awakening and growth” which contributes to increased “intercultural literacy” and curiosity (Weigel, 2009; Clay, n.d.).

  **Extrospective Awareness**
  Developing extrospective cultural awareness, or an awareness of others’ cultural values and beliefs, can seem intimidating. The important thing to remember is that no one person can be an expert in anyone else’s experience. Here are some ideas you can start with:

  - **Appreciate differences**: A culture is built on more than just food, music, art and clothing. Its foundation includes stories, values and beliefs passed down through generations. Learn to value a culture’s contributions to the greater human story.
  
  - **When in doubt, ask**: Don’t be afraid to ask questions. You won’t be perceived as less intelligent, as people generally appreciate the interest, and enjoy sharing information about their nation and its culture. By being humble and acknowledging that you’re still learning you may be more likely to gain acceptance in a new culture.
  
  - **Smile**: You may have heard the saying, “A smile is the same in every language.” Indeed, a smile can be a great ice-breaker and stress reliever. Have a smile ready when facing unexpected challenges and look for humor in a predicament.

Bisk Education, 2017
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CLASSROOMS
What is cultural responsiveness?
The National Education Association (2008) states that “Cultural responsiveness is the ability to learn from and relate respectfully with people of your own culture as well as those from other cultures.” In essence, cultural responsiveness is our ability to respond to our student’s needs within the context and understanding of their cultural experience.

Sound culturally responsive classroom management plans use the broader social, economic, and political context as a lens through which to develop an awareness and understanding of how social issues such as racial inequality and poverty in urban schools impact interactions with students and their families. This is an important consideration when identifying key features of your classroom management plan that will address the needs of diverse students in urban populations which tend to have greater exposure to risk factors relating to economic, racial, and social disparity (Metropolitan Center for Urban Education, 2008).

Remember...engaging our students and their families with cultural sensitivity doesn’t have to be an insurmountable task. If you’re interested in delving deeper into the subject, please refer to the human resource index for additional support.
Comprehensive Classroom Management Planning: Guiding Questions

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” - Benjamin Franklin

Classroom management is defined by the NYS Education Department as all the actions teachers take to create an environment that supports academic and social-emotional learning. It includes all of the teacher’s practices related to establishing the physical and social environment of the classroom, regulating routines and daily activities, and preventing and correcting behavior. Following are a series of guiding questions that correspond to a more extensive, best practice Customizable Comprehensive Management Plan document (see www.SCSDbehaviormatters.weebly.com).

Part 1. Five Senses and the Physical Space: Designing a Positive Classroom Environment
● How will I arrange the physical environment of my classroom in a way that creates safe and fluid traffic patterns and promotes student engagement?

● What will my observable and enforceable classroom rules be, and how will I model, guide and practice these with my students?
● How will I use routines and procedures to teach and practice expected behavioral routines in my classroom, during transitions, and across school settings?
   • How will my classroom plan align with my buildings expectations?
   • How will my rules align with other teachers’ rules vertically and horizontally across my broader team?

Part 3. Kindness is a Language: Building Effective Relationships with My Students
● How will I build effective relationships and demonstrate cultural sensitivity and inclusiveness with students, parents, and guardians?
● How will I promote feelings of community and positive student-to-student relationships?

● What best practice instructional strategies will I use to be reflective and responsive to my student’s cognitive and academic needs and interests?

Part 5. Keep Calm and Carry On: Utilizing Planned Responses to Appropriate and Inappropriate Behavior to Enhance Students’ Opportunities for Learning
● What whole-class behavior management systems and strategies will I use, and how will I teach students and adult support staff how they work?
● What strategies will I use to promote appropriate and pro-social student behaviors, planned responses to reduce inappropriate behaviors?

Part 6. It’s a Journey not a Destination: Reflecting on, Reviewing, Revising, and Sharing My Plan
● How will I reflect on, review, revise, and share my classroom management plan with parents, students, and colleagues?
● Where will I keep a physical copy of the most up-to-date version of my classroom management plan that allows for my school team to access it easily?
Behavior Response Playbook: Strategies for Handling Frequently Occurring Behavioral Challenges

Just as a sports playbook offers a menu of options or plays, all working towards achieving the end goal of winning the game, so does this menu of behavior response strategies.

Additionally, just as a sports playbook depends on the quality of athletes’ play execution, this menu of behavior response strategies relies on its teacher’s strategy implementation, as well as the Comprehensive Classroom Management system in which each live. It will only be effective if implemented as intended, with consideration given to timing, delivery, and other important factors at play. Those with the best chances of helping students achieve their full potential understand that challenging behaviors occur for many different reasons, and thus there is not always one best response. Knowing when to run which play and how best to execute it takes practice, and thoughtfulness around many other components of learning.
To maximize the effectiveness of the behavior response strategies in this section, it is imperative that we:

- Establish basic tenets of comprehensive classroom management planning and give thought to the following:
  - Layout of physical space
  - Building relationships
  - Establishing high expectations and routines, considering:
    - how you will teach and practice routines and expectations (academic and behavioral)
    - how you will respond to both appropriate and inappropriate behavior
- Developing dynamic, engaging and scaffolded instruction
- Starting with the least confrontational strategy, especially if you are unfamiliar with a student’s particular needs and struggles
- Remaining self-aware and self-regulated so that you can effectively influence students’ moods and receptiveness to learning
- Remember that:
  - what’s fair is not always what’s equal; each student might need something different to achieve equally
  - desirable behavior needs to be taught, modeled and practiced
  - no single response strategy will work all the time - every student is different, the circumstances around challenging behaviors are also different (public or private occurrence, intensity, frequency and duration of the challenging behavior, etc.)

As was noted under Behavior as Communication, we always need to engage in personal reflection, as it is an integral part of continued learning and growth.

Finally, in order to use a student-centered approach, we must recognize that behavior is dynamic and, often, student-specific. It is important to keep in mind that the contextual factors that affect student behavior may differ from student to student and that, even the same behavior exhibited by two different students may be communicating different needs and serving different functions for the students. Therefore, the strategies outlined in this playbook should be considered a helpful place to begin. Additionally, it is not the intent that this playbook is to be used “in the moment” but rather as a tool to guide, grow and calibrate our responses.
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### OFF-TASK (NON-DISRUPTIVE)/ LACK OF ENGAGEMENT

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| **Student who sleeps**        | Consider changing the environment | ● Open a window to create more flow  
                       |                                   | ● Offer crackers/ or other food if available and *there are no allergies that you are aware of*  
                       |                                   | ● Allow the student to get a drink of water  
                       | Use a highly audible whole-class call and answer strategy that may alert the drowsy student | ● Rhythmic clapping  
                       |                                   | ● “1, 2,3... who’s with me.”  
                       | Get down to their level to connect and inquire | ● Kneel, squat or sit next to the student to engage him/her in 1:1 quiet conversation, saying, “Is everything ok? Is there something I can help you with?”  
                       | Provide signals and cues to alert student to assess and monitor their own behavior | Non-verbal  
                       |                                   | ● Pat the student on the back or shoulder to wake them up (you must have a relationship with the student in order to determine whether this would be an effective strategy or serve to escalate a situation)  
                       |                                   | ● Tap on the desk in a discrete, non-shaming way  
                       |                                   | Verbal  
<pre><code>                   |                                   | ● Remind student about an upcoming self-monitoring check-in by saying, “check in is coming in 5 minutes!” and tapping their work to remind them to stay on task. |
</code></pre>
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| **Student repeatedly asks to leave class:  
“I need to use the bathroom/nurse/guidance/main office...”** | Communicate with student in private regarding the consistency with which they ask to leave class  
- Be clear about what is expected and the consequences of missed instruction  
Communicate with student’s team to determine if there are any health concerns necessitating frequent breaks from class | “Is everything ok? I’m concerned about how often you are having to leave class. We miss you when you’re not here, and you are missing valuable learning time.”  
Talk with the parent, school nurse, guidance counselor, social worker and/or Principal |
| **Increase the likelihood the student will want to stay in class:**  
- Provide opportunities to be a helper  
- Integrate Brain, Movement or Tech Breaks into your lessons  
- Consider pairing/seating the student with a preferable peer  
- Have items that may be needed in the classroom (band aids, pencils, erasers, tissues) | Say, “I really need/would like your help with this...”  
Brain breaks include sharing fun riddles, pictures, or stories intermittently with the whole class  
Movement breaks include quick exercises (ex. jumping jacks, yoga, squats), or stretching activities  
Tech breaks include 1-2 minutes to check messages/phone before returning to work  
All work to to build a positive classroom community | |
| **Regularly remind students of classroom management plan that promotes a clearly defined approach to leaving class** | “After the first ten minutes of class, students will be permitted to leave the classroom for a bathroom break one at a time.” | |
| **Provide positive praise and authentic reinforcement for the student’s attempts to stay in class** | Approach student and quietly say, “Thanks for sticking to our plan,” or “I’m happy that you are here; I don't want you to miss out.” | |

For each of the above categories, we should also consider evaluating the academic level and relevance of tasks at hand. We must reflect on how our Instructional Practices, or pedagogical choices, and the level of cognitive demand within our lessons are engaging for all students and learning styles, or not. Are they too difficult, too easy, or not engaging enough? Have we designed learning experience through a culturally responsive and/or trauma sensitive lens?
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<tr>
<td>“…I need a pencil…” “I don’t have that…” “I lost mine”</td>
<td><strong>Adopt a neutral face, and a relaxed and non-threatening posture to deliver all of the following responses:</strong></td>
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| Help the student problem solve:  | ● Use verbal or nonverbal reminders as to where in the classroom the student can go to borrow forgotten materials  
● Provide the student with a tool to assist in increasing organization  
● Create a plan for potential future recurrences of forgotten materials | ● Point or gesture to the location in the room where the student can find a pencil  
● Encourage classmates to help out by sharing when appropriate  
● Say, “Turn and talk with your neighbor about what you need to be ready for this lesson.”  
● Give the student a list of the materials needed and discuss a place where s/he could put that list to help remind him or her  
● Suggest obtaining an agenda, pencil box, etc.  
● Help the student create a weekly calendar that lists what materials will be needed, and when |
| Provide a gentle reminder of the expectations |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | ● “Zaekwon, remember that in order to really get the most out of your learning you need to come prepared with…”  
● Stand near the student during transition/preparation time; remind them of the items being gathered/needed for the lesson  
● Praise the student when any improvement in organization or preparedness is made                                                                 |
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<td>Refusal to go to class</td>
<td>Approach the student respectfully, attempting to isolate the conversation so that there is a smaller peer audience</td>
<td>• Say, “Hi. Good Morning/afternoon. Let me help you get to class.”&lt;br&gt;• Say, “Hi. Good Morning/afternoon. How can I help?”</td>
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<td>Refusal to put phone away</td>
<td>Deliver a whole-class reminder, citing previously discussed classroom management plan.</td>
<td>• Say, “All phones should be away right now; tech break starts in 4 minutes for everyone who’s been working.”</td>
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<td>Consider whether cell phone out is an exceptional situation and if there could be an emergency they are handling.</td>
<td>Approach the student and quietly use their name, say:&lt;br&gt;• “Do you need a minute to check in? If it’s not a pressing issue, please put the phone away so that you can focus on &lt;insert objective here&gt;”</td>
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<td>Provide student with specific options (forced choice) of what they can do&lt;br&gt;Work at collaboratively developing a pre-established plan with the student. Give the student a reminder about this pre-established plan when needed.</td>
<td>Approach the student and quietly use their name, say:&lt;br&gt;• “You can either place it in your backpack or on your desk face down. Thank you.”&lt;br&gt;• “We made a plan and I’m planning to follow through on my end of it; it’s important that you please do the same.”</td>
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<td>Refusal to return materials or other belongings taken from a classmate</td>
<td>Assess the situation... do the students need to be separated before addressing the material item taken?</td>
<td>“Xenobia and John, I’m going to help you both with this situation but first I need you two to separate.”</td>
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<td>Establish classroom policy about limits / boundaries and how to request materials if needed</td>
<td>• “Tell me what you need in order to get started; I’m sure I can help. (After waiting for response) Let’s return this to &lt;classmate&gt;.”&lt;br&gt;“I’m going to give you some time to make the right decision here. I’ll be back to check in with you in a few minutes.”</td>
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| Refusal to put hood down or remove earbuds | Explicitly direct the student to remove their hood/earbuds. Use brief reprimands delivered promptly, quietly, and calmly, and devoid of shaming, with close proximity and eye contact (not forced). Explain your reasoning. | • Isolate your conversation with the student. Use their name and an appropriate greeting. “It’s time to take your hood down now/earbuds out. I want to be sure you are really with us and learning.”  
• “I’m concerned that you won’t hear or see everything you need to.” |
|                               | Give the student time to respond/comply with directive. If they do not, probe deeper. | • Inquire if everything is alright. Ask, if they need to speak with someone... a guidance counselor, social worker, etc.  
• If no, say, “I’m going to give you some time to make the right decision here. I’ll be back to check in with you in a few minutes.” |

If the student continues to refuse to follow directions, do not escalate the situation. If they are not causing a disruption to the learning of others, or acting in any unsafe manner, consider...

Privately exploring, with the student, why they feel the need to wear a hood/earbuds in the classroom, use their phone, etc. There may be a reason beyond noncompliance for which you or someone else may be able to help them problem solve (e.g., they may have hair that is falling out, psoriasis, lice, etc. which may be contributing to feelings of shame or anxiety. They may have a parent or family member in crisis).
**DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR**

*Often times, disruptive behavior can escalate quickly. Always assess the situation. If the student is escalating, use TCIS de-escalation strategies (listed below) for crisis co-regulation.*

| **Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Schools: De-Escalation Strategies** | 
| --- | --- |
| Remain calm in order to have an opportunity to effectively assess the situation. Take a deep breath, step back and assume a neutral stance (if appropriate). Speak calmly, assertively, and respectfully. Acknowledge student emotions and/or perspective. Use understanding responses with students before making requests of them. Remember to always give the student time to process, consider options, and comply with your directive. Using aggressive tone or attempting to use your power will escalate the situation! |

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| Student pokes, engages in other unwanted playful touching | ● Reiterate classroom expectations  
● Have a private conversation with the student  
● Encourage student to use a quiet area within the classroom to take a break from an activity or environment that may be contributing to their behavior and practice self-management strategies  
● Make environmental adjustments (e.g., seat moves)  
● Encourage restorative conversations | ● “Please keep your hands, feet &/or objects (whatever the issue you’re dealing with) to yourself.”  
● Initiate an isolated conversation, addressing the student individually, reduce stimuli by perhaps going outside the classroom  
● Ask student to move to another area of the classroom  
● Have both students talk this out with teacher guidance e.g., “I feel ______ when you touch/poke me.” and the other student learns to respond by reflecting on what the student said to him/her. |
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| **Student(s) walks in late, loud and unprepared** | Use verbal or nonverbal redirection (with neutral face, relaxed and non-threatening posture) | **Verbal:**  
- Greet and welcome the student  
- Ask for a pass or reason for tardy  
- Explain what the class is working on, and what work the student is expected to engage in  
**Non-Verbal:**  
- Motion for student to take a seat and point to the agenda or current task  
- Motion for student to sign the late book, or engage in other expected protocol upon arriving late to class |
| If the behavior continues, use planned ignoring (unless there is a safety concern), with the intent of a follow up conversation later |  | **Systematically withhold attention, continue with lesson** |
| In order to break an unwanted habit, or avoid continued late arrivals, once the student has settled in, there is an appropriate break in teaching, or right before class ends, ask to speak with the student. Use Restorative Practices |  | **Give student a reminder of desired behavior**  
**Give student a warning about losing privileges, and/or a reminder about the consequences of falling behind/losing sight of one's work**  
**Explain to the student how their behavior makes you feel, as well as inquiring what they are feeling and/or thinking** |
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| Talking off topic, chatter, side conversations, etc.                                          | Deliver brief and explicit reprimand quietly, calmly, with close proximity            | ● State calmly, quietly, and firmly with unforced eye contact:  
  ○ Please stop the chatter and focus on me  
  ○ I need you to focus your talk on our objective...”  
  ○ “...stop talking...”  
  ○ “It’s very distracting to me, and others, when there are side conversations. Please stop talking and focus your efforts on our work.” |
| Constant initiation of conversation during directions                                         | Make environmental adjustments                                                       | ● Move or assign seats  
 ● reduce stimuli (e.g., play quiet classical music in the classroom, turn down the lights)  
 ● change the way student desks are arranged in the classroom space  
 ● change the way the teacher’s desk is arranged in the classroom space |
| Encourage student to use a quiet area within the classroom to take a break from an activity or environment that may be contributing to their behavior and practice self-management strategies |                                                                                      | ● “Sam, try going to the ‘chill out zone’ in the back of the classroom to settle down and get ready to join the class.”                                                                 |
| Use a whole-class attention-getter                                                           |                                                                                      | ● Say to the whole class, “1-2-3, Eye’s on me!” or alternative, developmentally-appropriate attention-getting statement.  
 ● Use rhythmic clapping                                                                 |


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<td><strong>Student rolls eyes and scoffs at classmate or teacher</strong></td>
<td>Used planned ignoring</td>
<td>● Ignore the eye roll or scoff and continue teaching</td>
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<td>Reiterate classroom expectations</td>
<td>● “Remember students, in this class we always work at being kind, respectful and listening intently to one another.”</td>
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<td>If behavior continues/escalates, isolate the conversation and deliver a brief and explicit reprimand quietly, calmly, and with close proximity. Welcome the student to share his or her potential frustrations or strong feelings at a more appropriate time</td>
<td>● “Please be respectful and refrain from rolling your eyes or scoffing at…” ● “Javon, let’s talk after class please. I’d like to understand what we can do together to avoid eye rolling/scoffing.”</td>
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<td><strong>Student shouts, “You’re racist!”</strong></td>
<td>Assess the situation. If the student is escalating use TCIS de-escalation strategies (listed above) for crisis co-regulation.</td>
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*Note: It’s not the student’s perception that is disruptive, it is his or her delivery (e.g., shouting “you’re racist”).

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<th>Instead of trying to defend your position, acknowledge and validate the student’s feelings and offer a time to talk with the student further</th>
<th>State calmly, quietly, and firmly:</th>
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<td>● “I see that you have some strong feelings and I think it’s important that we talk about the reasons for this. Can we discuss after class?”</td>
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<td>● “I hear that you are angry right now and feel that you’re being treated unfairly. Let’s talk about this (name a time other than instructional, with PPS presence to mediate the conversation if desired).”</td>
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<td>● “You are important to me and I want us to better understand each other so that we can work together. Can we arrange a time to chat about this?”</td>
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| **Student uses demeaning language (or is name-calling) towards peers** | **Assess the situation. If the student is escalating use TCIS de-escalation strategies for crisis co-regulation:**<br>- Remind/reinforce and reiterate classroom expectations around language, name calling, etc.<br>- Keep classroom expectations/rules posted in a prominent location in the classroom for all to see<br>- Calmly, assertively, and respectfully, say:<br>  - “We all agreed when creating our class expectations that mean or unkind words were not going to be accepted. Please speak nicely to one another.”<br>  - “I see that you are frustrated and angry. Let’s go outside of the classroom and discuss the problem.”<br>- Explicitly teach which comments will not be tolerated in school and what appropriate words or phrases to use in situations of anger, stress, frustration, disappointment, etc. without resorting to name-calling or use of other demeaning language<br>- Take class time to build ideas of community, kindness, relationships/friendships<br>- Teach students how to express anger, stress, frustration, disappointment, etc.<br>- Help to reduce emotional intensity by addressing the student’s emotion, clarifying the event and helping to problem solve<br>- In an isolated, quiet conversation with the student, quietly ask, “What’s up? Is everything ok?” “Remember that kind of language is not acceptable in class, but if there’s something bothering you, maybe we can talk about that (give options for when you could chat)?”<br>- Use a pre-arranged buddy teacher for a student break<br>- Utilize Peer Mediation | **Reinforce students in the classroom who are communicating in appropriate ways through the use of both tangible and intangible rewards such as:**<br>  - Classroom privileges (line leading, passing out materials, five minutes of free time, etc.)<br>  - Praise (“Thank you Steve for using appropriate language.” OR “I see Leshawna helping Nadine. Great teamwork ladies!” A handshake, thumbs up, smile, etc.)
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<td>Student uses sexualized language, makes sexualized noises or gestures</td>
<td>If possible, consider using planned ignoring of the sexualized language in combination with a gentle redirection to avoid inadvertently reinforcing sexualized language by giving the student a big reaction</td>
<td>● Approach student quietly after brief delay to quietly ask their input on the academic topic or lesson at hand (e.g., “Roxanne, what are your thoughts about &lt;insert lesson related topic&gt;?”)</td>
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<td>Reduce peer audience by attempting to isolate the conversation</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>● “Shelby, let’s talk for a second in the hallway please.”</td>
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<td>Validate student’s emotional state and remind them of classwide expectations (respect, appropriate language)</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>● “Randy, I hear that you’re upset. I don’t want to see you get in trouble. Let’s talk after class about what’s troubling you.”</td>
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**AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR**

Often times aggressive behavior can escalate quickly. Always assess the situation. If the student is escalating, use TCIS de-escalation strategies (listed below) for crisis co-regulation.

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<th>Remain calm in order to have an opportunity to effectively assess the situation. Take a deep breath, step back and assume a neutral stance (if appropriate). Speak calmly, assertively, and respectfully. Acknowledge student emotions and/or perspective. Use understanding responses with students before making requests of them. Remember to always give the student time to process, consider options, and comply with your directive. Using aggressive tone or attempting to use your power will escalate the situation!</th>
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| Student purposefully knocks books out of someone’s hands, pushes desks, knocks over tables... | Deliver brief and explicit reprimand quietly, calmly, and firmly, with close proximity | ● “That behavior is unsafe and not acceptable.”  
● “This is not how we treat one another.”  
● “You are making unsafe choices.”  
● Remind student of classroom rules and expectations for being safe and respectful |
| | Encourage student to use a quiet area to take a break from an activity or environment that may be contributing to their behavior and practice self-management strategies. This can be done within or outside of the classroom | Within the classroom:  
● Janelle, “Let’s take a break... come on back here for a minute. Can you help me understand what happened?”  
Outside the class:  
● “Amir, please go see (insert the name of a pre-arranged buddy teacher, a counselor, social worker or principal that has a relationship with the student)” |
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| **Slap/hits another student in the classroom with intent to harm** | **Remain calm and call for assistance**  
**Do not block student from leaving the room**  
**Engage in planned response for inappropriate physical behavior as outlined in your building/classroom plan** |  
| If the student(s) is/are escalating:  
  * use TCIS de-escalation strategies for crisis co-regulation |  
  * Provide students with a firm directive statement, such as, “safe hands,” “we do not hit,” “stop fighting,” or another developmentally appropriate alternative reminder of safety expectations  
  * Direct nearby bystanders, using a firm tone of voice, to “step away.” |  
| If the students back off after the initial engagement:  
  * Speak calmly, assertively, and respectfully (using aggressive tone or attempting to use your power will escalate the situation)  
  * Use understanding responses with students before making requests of them |  
  * “I understand you’re both upset. Right now I need you both to step away from each other, please.”  
  * If you are able to separate the students and can talk with the student who is calmest, or whom you have a good rapport with, check in by saying, “What’s going on? Can you help me understand what happened?” |
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<td><strong>Student leaves supervision without permission</strong></td>
<td>Make the appropriate staff aware that the student has left the premises</td>
<td>● Alert the main office and PPS staff</td>
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<td>Communicate with the student regarding the importance of the matter</td>
<td>● Say “I need you to always ask an adult first before leaving an area because it is not safe to leave on your own. I get very worried when I don’t know where you are.”</td>
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<td>Consider rearranging classroom seating or center locations to reduce opportunities to run away from the space</td>
<td>● Seat the student the farthest away from the door</td>
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<td>Appeal to the student’s motivation for remaining in the classroom</td>
<td>● “Give yourself a smiley face for being part of the activity for ____ minutes (or other developmentally appropriate response; e.g., if you can make it through with us for the next five minutes, you can sit quietly in the back of the room and listen to your music for five minutes.”)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Encourage student to use a quiet area within the classroom to take a break from an activity or environment that may be contributing to their behavior and practice self-management strategies</td>
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<td>Communicate with families who may be able to offer strategies that will allow the student to remain in the classroom</td>
<td>● When speaking with the family, take the family’s values and resources into consideration to collaborate on a plan. For example, if the student remains in supervision today, he can earn an extra 15 minutes (or other length of time) of video game time, a sleepover, etc (depending on what motivates the student)</td>
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<tr>
<td>If any of the above behaviors are presenting as repeated concerns after private conversation with the student, his or her family, and school leadership, and initial attempts at preventing and intervening, discuss the challenging behavior with School-Based Support Team (SBST) and consider developing an Individual Crisis Management Plan (ICMP) and Intervention Support Plan for Behavior (ISP-B), in recognition of the need to differentiate for behavioral needs, and treating students fairly, not equally.</td>
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Resources for Additional Support

Please make sure to reach out to your administrators, social workers, psychologists, instructional coaches, and behavior consultants for more in-depth, collaborative problem-solving opportunities.

Building Leaders
Your building Principal, Assistant Principal, and/or Instructional Supervisor are all available to help troubleshoot and guide you in the right direction, or to the right people, depending on the situation.

School Based Support Team (SBST)
SCSD School Based Support Teams can connect teachers to best practice recommendations and human resources to support students with varied tiers of academic and behavioral need. The SBST aims to support teachers with effective use of high leverage teaching practices and behavior management strategies to ensure equity, access, and opportunity for all students. SBST meetings themselves focus on developing targeted plans to address student need (i.e., Progress Monitored Instructional Support Plans) and secure corresponding, progress monitored teacher supports / SMART goals. SBST aims to offer teacher supports that are applicable for each level of student academic or behavioral need (whole class, universal - Tier 1, smaller subsections of at-risk students - Tier 2, or highest intensity, most exceptional need - Tier 3).

Pupil Personnel Services
School Social Workers, School Psychologists, and School Counselors have training in effective approaches for home-school partnerships, social/emotional/behavioral student needs, and positive school climate promotion. Prior to participation in a School Based Support Team (SBST) meeting, teachers may wish to consider connecting with a PPS faculty member for encouragement and some initial ideas on preventing or troubleshooting behavioral challenges in their classrooms.

Behavioral Health Consultants
The role of SCSD’s Behavioral Health Consultant team members is to support district and school building preventative initiatives through professional development offerings and committee involvement, provide confidential classroom consultation support for individual teachers upon request, share resources for addressing individual student behavior challenges, and help facilitate the School Based Support Team’s (SBST’s) problem-solving process. The Behavior Team maintains a resource-sharing website (www.scscdbehaviormatters.weebly.com) and a Twitter account (@SCSDbxteam).

Instructional Coaches
The role of SCSD’s Coaches is to support continual instructional growth among teachers with a focus on high leverage practices, effective questioning techniques, well developed plans with clear and measurable objectives and classroom management. Please reach out to our Instructional Coaching Coordinator for information on how our coaches can best support you.
References


Metropolitan Center for Urban Education. (2008). Culturally responsive classroom management strategies (New York State Education Department, contract #007052). Retrieved February 14, 2017, from


Wadsworth Thomson Learning.


