

De-Escalation Strategies

De-escalation reduces the level of arousal so that discussion becomes possible. Techniques must be practiced before they are needed so they can become second nature.

- Cue students to use calming strategies: “Stop, Take a breath, and Relax (STAR)”
- Use nonverbal cues
- Use predetermined alternate spaces
- Offer limited choices
- Selectively ignore
- Deflect the center of control from you: “What rule are you not following right now?” vs. “I’ve told you that...”
- Use calm, even tone
- Maintain personal space

If these strategies are not working, stop and get assistance from a fellow educator, school mental health personnel, or school leader.

Reflecting and Revising Strategies

Progress monitoring is used to track growth and changes over time using multiple sources of information.

- Involve the student in planning and reflecting on the interventions, when appropriate.
- Teach and practice self-management skills and strategies in multiple environments over time to successfully acquire these life-long skills.
- Support the student in developing greater self-control and problem-solving skills; understand that this will take time and encouragement.

Conclusion

Current research on the developing brain reveals that students need more support in learning to manage their own behavior and emotions. NEA understands that challenging student behaviors often result in on-the-job stress. This brochure is intended to offer you a more responsive perspective on student behaviors and provide tools and techniques to support your job of supporting your students. Rather than just reacting with punishment, identifying problems early, de-escalating behaviors, and redirecting students fosters a more receptive and engaging school environment and opportunities for all.

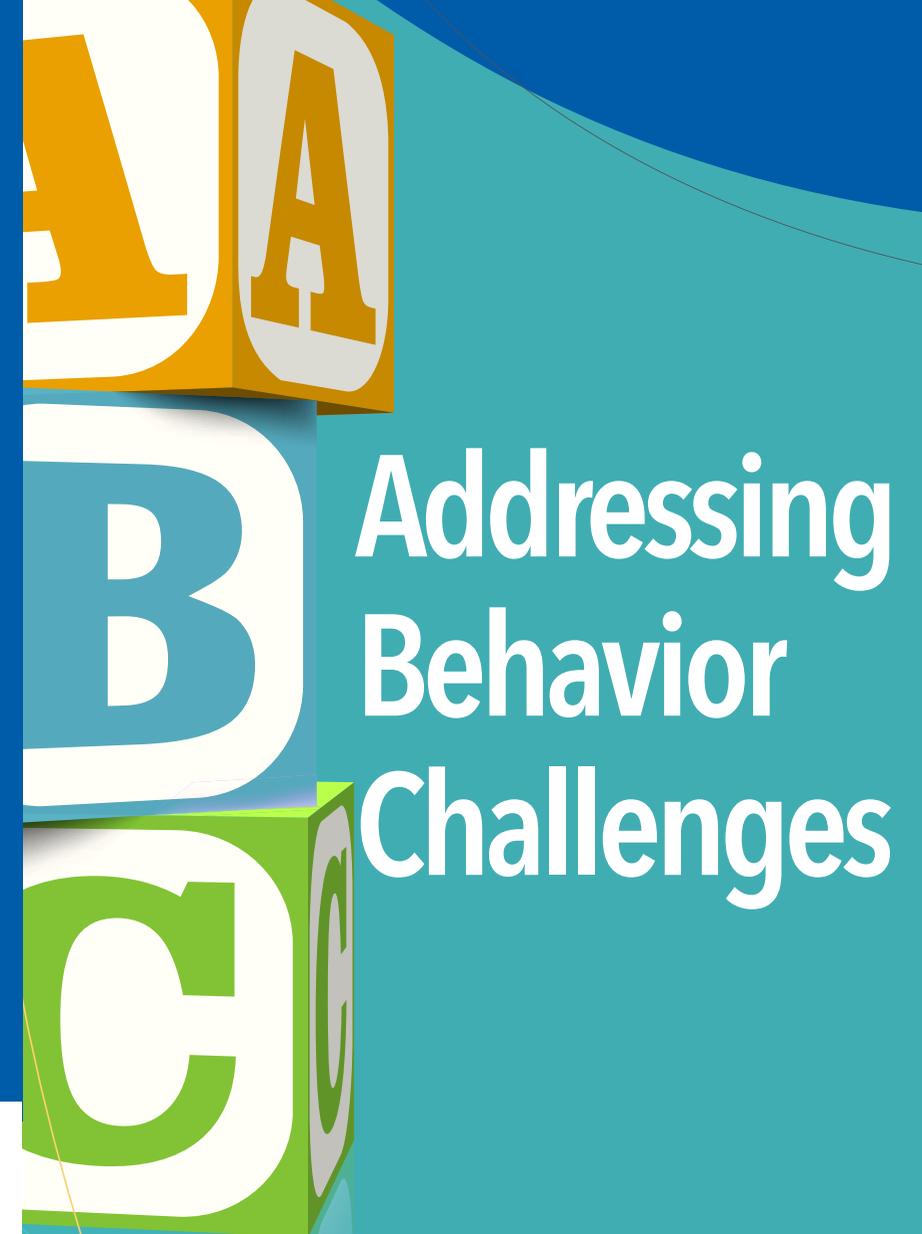
“Every student deserves to learn—and every educator deserves to work—in a safe school. But zero tolerance school discipline policies, which were supposed to make schools safer, have done more harm than good, pushing kids out of the classroom and into the criminal justice system at alarming rates. When students aren’t in school, they can’t learn. Let’s work together to keep more kids in the classroom and out of the courtroom.”

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Introduction

The National Education Association (NEA) believes that students must learn the social emotional skills of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, decision making, and relationship management.

The development of these competencies is necessary in the learning process to provide pathways for both academic success and achievement.... (NEA Resolution on Social and Emotional Learning, B-66, 2015)

Positive behavioral supports and interventions are preventive, proactive alternatives to punitive and ineffective discipline practices, which develop and promote healthy social and emotional skills in all students for their lifelong learning process. All behavior is a form of communication. The behavior you witness, however, is just the tip of the iceberg.

"The goal is to get to the root of the problem, not to punish the child. What good does it do to punish a child who literally hasn't yet acquired the brain functions required to control his behavior?" *Russell Skiba, The Equity Project at Indiana University*

The NEA IDEA Resource Cadre and NEA Healthy Futures developed this brochure to help school personnel address challenging behaviors and redirect students towards positive responses and healthy development. All educators want students to learn and be successful academically, behaviorally, and socially.

"Teachers who aim to control students' behavior rather than helping them control it themselves undermine the very elements that our essential for motivation: autonomy, a sense of competence, and capacity to relate to others." *Ed Deci, University of Rochester*

As You Start the Year

As you begin your school year, it is essential that all education staff establish an operational plan—a clear and concise description of how the environment will operate. This plan should be shared with students, parents/guardians, and colleagues and include the following elements:

- Establish routines and procedures
- Organize the physical space
- Engage students in the conversation to set clear rules and expectations
- Model expected behavior and social skills
- Define consequences
- Establish positive relationships and communications strategies with families

The Building Blocks of Self-Management



Prevention

Students misbehave even in effectively managed classrooms. Educators can employ these proactive strategies to prevent occasional misbehavior from becoming a chronic problem:

- Effective classroom procedures and routines—Reflective educators continually look for ways to improve their practice. Developing effective classroom management techniques should be at the top of the list.
- A continuum of behavioral educational supports—Studies show that punitive discipline policies are among the least effective responses to problem behavior.

Prevention *(continued)*

- Embedded social emotional learning (SEL) instruction—SEL is an important way to prevent inappropriate behaviors and will make a difference in a student's ability to self-manage effectively in all environments.
- Cultivate positive student-adult relationships—These relationships establish a nurturing environment of trust and support and are at the heart of school connectedness. Students who feel connected to school are less likely to experience emotional problems and engage in risky behaviors.
- Model relaxation skills—Help students recognize when they feel stressed, frustrated, or upset, and give them a way to manage their own feelings and emotions.
- Teach decision-making skills/resolution—Provide opportunities for students to be involved in decision making to reinforce responsible behavior.

Intervention

- Recognize and address antecedents—As noted earlier, all behavior is a form and expression of communication. Students' actions are purposeful attempts to solve a problem. They are typically trying to get something or to avoid something. Minimize or accommodate factors in the environment that tend to set off incidents of inappropriate behavior. By understanding which antecedents are problematic for a student—such as being close to other students or being asked to read aloud—the educator can intervene effectively and create a school environment that is supportive and proactive.
- Reinforce desired behavior—If a student can't engage in academic demands successfully, an educator may modify the curriculum/task, reduce required time on task, and/or change factors within the environment. As the student demonstrates increasing attempts of self-regulation or the use of prosocial skills, the educators will recognize and reinforce those efforts.
- Teach a replacement behavior—Introduce an appropriate behavior to take the place of the misbehavior. Teach students the SEL skills that eventually will eliminate the need for the replacement behavior.
- Engage families and community—Foster ongoing collaboration and communication with families and the educational team to reinforce healthy responses and responsible behavior.