Little Kids–BIG Problems!!

Classroom Management Strategies for Young Children
New Problems

- Behavioral issues are surfacing in younger and younger students
- Mental health disorders are diagnosed at earlier and earlier ages
- Psychotropic medications are being prescribed to younger children—often off-label and in “cocktails”
- Children enroll in school without the common social experiences that help prepare them
- Parents are often ill-equipped to deal with parenting—much less with behavioral issues
Classroom Management

- Young students must learn how to “do school”
- Classroom management is about PREVENTION first, INTERVENTION second
- Classroom structure and the teaching of procedures are the two most important parts of classroom management for young children
Four Functions of Behavior

- To get attention
- To gain power or “win”
- To get revenge
- To avoid something
Two Functions of Behaviors

- To get something desirable to the student—either positive reinforcement or negative reinforcement (attention, stuff, time with peers, etc.)
- To avoid something undesirable to the student—(work, failure, embarrassment, negative reinforcement, attention)
Common Causes of Bad Behavior

- Reinforced by adult attention
- Caused by anticipation or anxiety
- Caused by inappropriate expectations
- Caused by excessive brain reactivity
- Caused by environmental stressors of dysfunctional environment
Influencing Behavior Positively

- Pay attention to what you want
- Cue and manage more than punish
- Pay more attention to good behavior than to bad behavior
- Errors merit “oops” responses, not punishment
- Ignore and/or manage bad behavior that results from:
  - Developmental delays
  - Genetics of families
  - Brain chemistry
Influencing Behavior Positively

- Major mistakes adults make:
  - Too much talking
  - Too much emotion
  - Too much “fixing”
  - No prioritizing
- Remember—Anger is optional
- It takes TWO to argue—you can choose not to argue with a student
Very Important teacher Rules

- Shut up and shut down in the face of anger and noncompliance
- Ask directly for the exact positive behaviors you want
- Praise both previous and past episodes of adaptive behavior
- Meet loud and fast with soft and slow
- Praise successive approximations
- Reward more than you consequate
Very Important Teacher Rules, cont.

- **Provide a variety of reinforcement**–whole class, group, and individual
- **DO NOT** take an individual’s behavior personally
- **DO NOT** ask children for behaviors or work they are incapable of performing
- **Look** for antecedents and goals for problem behaviors–then develop plans to intervene
Preparing for Success

- The way a classroom is designed is a key to successful behavior management.
- Teachers who are purposeful in their classroom arrangement and who consider all of the activities and transitions that will take place in the classroom will be more successful than those who just arrange the room to be visually pleasing.
Things to Examine

- **GROUP TIME AREAS**
  
  The group area needs to be large enough for the whole group to meet while sitting comfortably. It should allow every child a view of the speaker, and have some delineation for individual seating areas.

- **LOCATION OF CENTERS**
  
  The room should have several distinct areas or centers. In upper grades, these may be located around the edges of the room. As you plan centers, think about traffic patterns. Use visual cueing, such as footprints on the floor, arrows, etc. to indicate these patterns.
Things to Examine

- **BOUNDARIES OF CENTERS**
  Centers need to have well defined boundaries. These can be shelves, screens, or furniture. They can also be carpet squares, masking tape, contact paper, or hula–hoops for moveable activities.

- **ACCESSIBILITY OF MATERIALS**
  The children need to be able to access their materials without the help of the teacher. They also need to know routines and procedures for accessing materials, and know clearly what they may and may not use.
Things to Examine

ORDER AND LABELING

Areas where materials are stored should be labeled clearly with words and/or pictures. Materials should be stored in the same place all year to facilitate clean-up and access. Play and center materials should be rotated so that students maintain high interest in these materials.
Routines and Transitions

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES
How arrival is handled sets the tone for the whole day. The teacher should meet and greet the children individually as they arrive. This allows assessment of each child and can prevent a “bad morning” from becoming a “bad day”. Activities should be planned so that each child has something to do while waiting for others to arrive. Departures should follow set routines such as distributing work, handing out notices, gathering backpacks and coats, etc. The teacher should individually acknowledge the departure of each child.
Routines and Transitions

**ROUTINES**
For teachers

a. Once established, routines reduce planning time
b. Routines help stabilize activities
c. Routines help with both learning and behavior management by allowing teachers to focus on children.
Routines and Transitions

**ROUTINES**

For children

a. Routines reduce anxiety and uncertainty because children know what to expect and when to expect it

b. Routines allow more time to be spent in activities as less time is spent explaining transitions

c. Routines provide continuity and reliability and strengthen a child’s sense of control over the environment.
Routines and Transitions

- TRANSITIONS

Transitions are one of the most likely times for behavior problems to occur. Children from chaotic home environments, those that are unsocialized, and those with cognitive and behavioral disorders are less able to cope with transitions than most and may act out at these times. Preventions involves indoctrinating children to transition routines AHEAD of time.
Routines and Transitions

GUIDELINES FOR TRANSITIONING

a. Adults should give clear cues through a variety of channels before transitions occur.
b. Adults should initiate the transition.
c. Adults should begin the new activity right away, rewarding those who have transitioned properly.
d. Transition times should be minimal compared to time spent on classroom activities.
e. Transition times should be viewed as “teachable” moments.
Routines and Transitions

TEACHING TRANSITIONS
a. Think through and diagram all steps of the routine.
b. Develop procedure cards or a word script that diagrams every step of the activity
c. Go over the routine with the group, using the script
d. Have a adult demonstrate the steps or go through them yourself, pointing out the space and materials used
e. Use peer models or volunteers to demonstrate
f. Use humor or exaggeration to point out possible problems.
Routines and Transitions

- **FURTHER HINTS**
  a. Use the previous approach to modify the routine if needed.
  b. Use picture to designate proper use of space and materials—visual schedules can also help.
  c. Use arrows, tape, etc. to define boundaries.
  d. Use color and warning signs to designate “danger” areas, such as the arc of a swinging door, “no touch” materials, etc.
Discipline for Young Children

- Provide a loving and nurturing classroom environment
- Clearly state goals and expectations
- Anticipate and “head off” potential problems
- Teach the skills that are necessary to meet your expectations. Practice and reinforce these in advance.
- Rehearse situations in advance.
- Teach the class to give positive reinforcement to each other (round of applause, thumbs up, pat on back..)
- Recognize positive behaviors specifically.
- Develop cues to assist children with behaviors (red light, green light, stop–look–listen, etc.)
- Use time–out, time–away.
- Use words to simple tunes to cue behaviors and transitions.
Discipline for Young Children

- Use graphic communicators and schedule boards to assist in time management and reduce conflict.
- For a child who has difficulty with transitions, use a timer and warn them in advance that an activity is about to change.
- Do not be discouraged if it takes a long time for rules and routines to become ingrained.
- Use the PREMAC principle—First _____then_______.
- Use literature to teach rules and behavioral options in various situations.
- Write clear, specific class rules and post them both in words and pictures.
- Get on a child’s level to communicate with them. Secure eye contact before giving any command.
- Use A–C–T to communicate limits.
Guidance Signs

- Quiet
- Who's Got It?
- Please Raise Your Hand!
- Time to Clean Up!
- Look and Listen!
- Please Line Up Quietly!
Classroom Rules

- Based on sound principles.
- Related to safety
- Stated positively when possible
- Brief and specific
- Involve input from others when possible
- Presented visually to the children
- Integrated into the curriculum daily
- Can be changed during the year
- Contain a range of logical consequences
Icons as Rules

- Helping Hands
- Listening Ears
- Quiet Voices
- Looking Eyes
- Walking Feet
More Rules

Classroom Rules

Listen

Keep your hands to yourself

Raise your hand if you have something to say

Follow directions

Do your best
Class Rules

1) Come to class prepared with materials & positive attitude.
2) Pay attention and don't talk while the teacher is talking.
3) No personal grooming, electronics, food or drinks (except water) in class.
4) Discuss grades or class expectations after class.
5) Follow all school and district rules.
PRINCIPLES

Principles are things that we hold important and which should govern our behavior. It is important for you and your classroom to come up with principles which you feel are important. This list will be the “soil” from which your class rules will grow. Principles commonly suggested by young children are: Be honest, Be nice to others, Be prepared, Don’t take anything that doesn’t belong to you, Listen, etc.
WRITING RULES

Remember–rules are written for those who break them. Your literal minded rule–breakers will always look for a way out of or around the rules. AS a general rule, you should limit the number of rules to the age of the child from ages 5 through 10. Rules work best if they are:

- Brief
- Clearly worded
- Describe specific behaviors
- Reinforce a predictable environment
- Are worded positively
COMMUNICATING RULES

- Represent rules visually
- Use words and pictures or icons
- Post rules in different locations in the room
- Refer to rules frequently—have kids point out rules
- Use stories to help teach rules
- Have children act out the rules
- Design games/songs about the rules
- Use small group discussion to relate class rules to other situations where we follow rules
Classroom Rules

- **CHANGING THE RULES**

  At the beginning of the year, let students know that you are willing to have a class meeting to discuss any rule that might need changing. At the same time, let them know that you will change a rule if necessary, but that you will let them know the reason. You may have a formal procedure, or be less formal.
Limit Setting

- You can’t have rules for every situation
- Limits fill in where rules leave off
- Limits are stated/enforced as needed
- Use language to communicate limits—”The table is not for sitting on. You may sit in your chair or on the rug.” ”I will not accept work after class. You are to put your assignments in the basket before class starts.”
Limit Setting – A–C–T–S

A– Acknowledge the child’s behaviors, feelings, wished, desires
   “You seem angry”
   “You really don’t want to work today.”
   “You hate worksheets, don’t you?”

C– Communicate the limit
   “The sand is not for throwing.”
   “It is time to work on math now.”

T– Target Acceptable Behavior
   “You must keep the sand in the box.”
   “Get your book and paper out and get started.”
Limit Setting

Sometimes, limits are broken and the A–C–T method does not work. The 4\textsuperscript{th} step is:

S–State the final choice

“If you choose to throw the sand again, you choose to leave the center and go to your desk.”

“If you do not do your work now, you will be assigned to detention to do it.”

Remember to emphasize that the consequence is the child’s choice, not yours.
Beyond Limit Setting

Giving Information—Serves as a reminder for the children to modify behavior.
“"I see blocks on the floor. Someone could trip on them and get hurt.”
“"It is very noisy right now. Groups cannot keep working if they cannot hear.”

Consequences—Things which decrease the likelihood of the behavior’s reoccurrence.
“"If it does not get quiet, tomorrow we will work individually at our desks.”

Contingencies—Grandma’s rule
“"When you have put away the blocks, we can go outside to play.”

Choices—These choices are directly related to the desired behavior
“"You may outline the chapter first, or work on your problems.”
Many times, teachers and parents use language which makes it more difficult to manage students. Behaviorally difficult students are “pros” at word games. They enter the classroom with years of practice in arguing with and manipulating adults. It is critical that people working with these students not allow them to “take charge” through the language they use. When a student engages in these provocative uses of language, he is essentially dangling a “hook” in front of the teacher. If the teacher takes the bait, he or she loses.
Language to Manage Behavior

FOGGING—Agree with what the student says, then restate the demand.

“This is too much homework. I’ll never finish it.”
Fog: “I know you think this is too much homework, but you are to finish it tonight” or “You may be right,…”

TO YOU–TO ME– Recognize what the student feels, then add your feelings or opinion.

“This assignment is too hard. I’m not doing it”
TYTM: “To you it seems too hard, but to me it is a fair assignment and one you can do.”
Language to Manage Behavior

TABLING—Set aside a time when the student can come in privately.

“You always pick on me. I can never do anything right in here!” T: “I understand you are upset with me. Here is a pass. Come in tomorrow at the end of 6th period and we’ll talk about it.”

REFLECTION—Acknowledge the feeling without judgment, then restate the demand/consequence.

“I’m not going to the office! You can’t make me!”

R: “You’re right—I can’t make you. But if you do not go on your own, I will call for the office to send someone to escort you.”
Language, cont.

RECORDER–When a child says something completely outrageous, stay calm. Record the exact statement by writing it down, then repeat it.”

“You can’t do that. My uncle is on the school board and he’ll get you fired.” R: (writing) “Let me be sure I have this right. Your uncle on the school board will have me fired if I make you...”
BROKEN RECORD– Simply repeat your initial demand until compliance or a consequence stage is reached.

Child continues to work on reading after you have instructed the class to move on to a math assignment. BR: “Johnny, it is time for you to put away your reading and get your math book out.” (back off for compliance) REPEAT DEMAND (Pause) You are telling me by your choice to keep your reading out that you want to (state the consequence). Number of repetitions before consequence depends on the individual student.
Interventions

- The child who cannot stay in one place in group time
  - Mark a circle, use mailing dots, or tape an x
  - Use carpet squares
  - Use placemats of hand towels
  - Seat the child to be flanked by only one other child
  - Seat the child where you can use touch control
  - Use a “freeze” signal with all children during group time
Interventions

- The child who had difficulty keeping up with materials
  - Give the child only what is needed
  - Use a tray for the child to work in
  - Use an icon card to show what the child needs for an activity
  - Allow borrowing materials only from the teacher
Interventions

- The child who has difficulty recognizing boundaries when working on the floor
  - Use a hula hoop to designate work space
  - Use a towel, piece of felt, or rug
  - Use masking tape to delineate boundaries
  - Build work squares using PVC pipe
  - Use the top of an appliance box as a “floor tray”
The child who does not recognize safety hazards

- Use red tape to mark stopping points
- Use “STOP” signs to show stopping points
- Use tape, contact paper, or paint to mark the arc of a door or a danger spot
- Mark line up areas with footprints or tape
- Use universal “no” signs or a danger symbol to mark things children are to stay away from
Interventions

The child who has difficulty staying seated at a desk

- Use tape to mark an area around the desk. Allow standing work in that area.
- Allow the child to sit on a Swiss ball or a partially deflated play ball
- Use a system or rewarding the child for small increments of remaining seated
- Be sure that the need for movement is fulfilled on a regular basis
Interventions

- The child who has trouble with anger or hitting
  - Use a “hands in pockets” or “hands behind back” approach
  - Reward appropriate behavior
  - Teach others to use assertive messages
  - Increase space between students
  - Use an “angry” or “cool-off” area in the classroom to allow an outlet
  - Teach words to use to get attention, express anger, or be included
Interventions, cont.

- Intervene and remove the child or the group when behavior escalates
- Have a “time away” area in the classroom
- Arrange with another teacher to allow the child in that classroom at certain times
- Provide an outlet for physical tension, such as running, wall ball, etc.
- Develop a system for conflict mediation
- Use social stories to illustrate principles of anger management
- Use a fidget for stress relief and hand control
- Use calming touch
Interventions, cont.

- Enlist the help of the school counselor to do individual, group, or classroom work on anger management
- Avoid sending the child home unless you can be sure that the aggressive behavior is not being modeled at home
- Do not physically intervene unless you have been trained in the techniques and in when it is acceptable
Interventions

The child who does not recognize personal boundaries

- Extend an arm as the child enters your personal space and reward/praise them for stopping at that boundary
- Develop a policy of “side hugs” only at school
- Extend a hand for a handshake instead of a hug
- Designate times for hugs (entering or leaving the classroom)
- Use hula hoops to demonstrate personal space
- Use tape lines at your desk to delineate “waiting” areas
- Use a visual cue when the child gets too close
The child who argues

- Use a “broken record” technique
- Use “speak and spin” – give a directive, then walk away–implying compliance
- Use “to you….to me”
- Use fogging
- Use active listening and reflection to let the student know that you have heard their concerns, then restate the directive and the consequence for noncompliance
Interventions

- The child who tantrums
  - Try to intervene before the tantrum by meeting the need expressed by the tantrum
  - Develop a cue to let the child know to go and calm down
  - Ignore the tantrum if possible
  - Remove the audience
  - Teach the child to wrap up in a towel or blanket to help calm themselves
  - Restrain the child only as a last resort and only if trained
Interventions

- The child who is easily distractible or overstimulated
  - Use visual boundaries to screen distractions
  - Use earplugs or headphones
  - Allow a transition from a stimulating event such as listening to music or relaxation
  - Provide frequent breaks in activities
  - Use a visual reminder for “off task” “on task”
  - Watch closely and intervene before “meltdown”
  - Use lists to help avoid conflicts
Interventions, cont.

- Reward progressively longer periods of on task behaviors
- Use a beeper or timer to provide whole class reinforcement
- Use “windows” or break work up into smaller segments
- Train and practice listening behavior
- Take care in the physical placement of the child
- Use multisensory techniques
- Use color and placement to help in organization
- Use graph paper to help line up math work
Interventions

- The child who cannot keep up with work
  - Use a “finished–unfinished” folder system
  - Take up partially finished work, copy, and return for completion
  - Consider sending a folder home on Friday
  - Overteach procedures
  - Consider making homework a part of the day
  - Try to make a one binder system
  - Use lists and cognitive portfolios to help child keep up with work
Resources

- Reif, Sandra “How to Reach and Teach ADD/ADHD Children”
- Copeland “Attention Without Tension”
- Canter “Succeeding With Difficult Students”
- Jenson, Rhode, Reavis “The Tough Kid” series
- Farber “How to Talk so Kids Will Listen” and “How to Teach so Kids Will Learn”
- Bailey “There’s Got to be a Better Way”
- MacKenzie “Setting Limits in the Classroom”
- Sopris West Publisher—lots of behavior management resources