Common Classroom Behaviors and Helpful Supports

ALYSIA FUHRMANN, MS, BCBA

Teachers

- Most teachers do not have specific training in "behavior" or in the best practices of intervention. This is not part of their training in college, or for professional development.
  - General Education teacher instruction programs typically only have an overview of disabilities, but not specific training.
  - Programs concentrate more specifically on state standards, how to ensure they are meeting these standards, and differentiating instruction to incorporate children that need a challenge, and children that need a little more assistance with the material or subject.
  - Due to this, many teachers lack the ability to determine why a child may be engaging in a particular behavior, thus not allowing them to determine the best way to intervene. The teacher may be inadvertently promoting the behavior, not because they do not care about the child, but because they lack the appropriate training to do this.
- Resources available to teachers look different based on the particular school, as well as what services the individual child has qualified for in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
  - Some schools have Behavior Specialists available to assist with program and intervention development, however these individuals typically service the entire school district
  - Their training may still be very limited or geared towards a specific diagnosis (e.g. autism)

What are behaviors?

- Observable Events
  - Differentiate between desired and less desired behaviors
  - Avoid using emotions to describe behaviors
  - E.g. Instead of "angry" say "dropped to the ground and started kicking"
- Take not of the ABCs
  - Antecedent : What occurs immediately behavior the behavior
  - Behavior : What the behavior looks like
  - Consequence : What occurs immediately following the behavior
- Look for patterns within the ABCs to determine the function

Functions of Behaviors

- This is the reason or the "why" behind the behavior
- All behaviors that we engage in serve a function, and fit into three categories:
  - Access : to attention, a tangible item or an activity
  - Escape: an aversive or painful situation, or work task
  - Automatic : Sensory input
- One behavior can serve multiple functions depending on the situation
- A behavior may start out as one function but then take on a secondary
  - **Think scratch off lottery ticket**

How Behaviors are Shaped

- Through the consequences!
  - Reinforcement
  - Punishment
  - Planned Ignoring
  - Blocking and Redirecting

Reinforcement

- Something that immediately follows the behavior and increases the frequency of that behavior.
  - This can include edibles, toys, bubbles, movies, verbal praise, tickles…almost anything that the child desires.
  - You can determine what may act as a reinforcer by asking the child, watching to see what the child seeks out, or providing choices.
  - This can be something added or something removed (ie positive or negative)
- We cannot assign reinforcing value for others, so follow their motivation.
- We cannot arbitrarily assign a schedule of reinforcement, so follow the data.

Punishment

- Something that immediately follows the behavior and decreases the frequency of that behavior
  - This can include time out, extra work, aversives and so on
  - This can be something added or something removed (ie positive or negative)
- We cannot assign punishing value for others, so follow the data.
- Always try to modify behaviors through reinforcement first.
  - Punishment should not be used lightly.
  - Emotional backlash
  - **IT DOES NOT TEACH ANYTHING!**

Planned Ignoring

- Ignoring an undesired behavior

  - It's planned in advance

  - Used for attention seeking behaviors

  - Be nonreactive by not speaking to the child about the behavior, not looking at him, providing as little attention as possible

  - THIS DOES NOT MEAN IGNORE THE CHILD!!

  - If he were to engage in the desired behavior (regardless of how long he was engaging in the undesired behavior or how difficult those behaviors were to manage), you would want to provide your attention to him! This is how we teach him what you want from him!

Blocking and Redirecting

- Blocking refers to physically preventing an undesired behavior from occurring.

  - Examples of undesired behaviors may include eloping from the room, hitting a peer sitting next to him, throwing objects, loud clapping, hugging others inappropriately, and so forth.

  - Typically, a clearly visible motor action is required for blocking to be used.

  - Examples of blocking may include putting your body in the doorway to prevent a child from eloping, putting your hand between the learner and their peer so the hand does not make contact when attempting to hit, holding the learner's hands down in a neutral position and so forth.

- Redirecting refers to providing the learner an alternative, more appropriate behavior

  - Examples of redirecting include having the learner help carry something in line as an alternative to pulling items off the wall in the hallway or asking the learner to fold his hands as an alternative to loud clapping.

  - This can also be done BEFORE the behavior ever occurs if the teacher knows the triggers and can work to get ahead of them (i.e. antecedent manipulation)

Antecedent Manipulations

- These are things that include changing the environment or how things are presented PRIOR to a behavior occurring to prevent it.

- Things we can do BEFORE the behavior occurs:

  - Pair

  - Verbally Mediate Expectations

  - Noncontingent Reinforcement

  - Set up Rewards

Pairing

- Describes the process of building and maintaining rapport with a learner
  - Begin with intentional and thorough pairing, where its ALL about what the learner loves or enjoys and making that available to them on a non-contingent basis (jargon defined: for FREE). Basically, the relationship should start off with low demand and high reward.
- People like to do things for people they like!
- Often times we find that the idea of "make them work!" backfires, and significantly less learning ultimately occurs when we do not dedicate the time and resources to establishing a positive relationship.

Verbally Mediate Expectations

- Make sure to tell the learner the expectations

  - Sometimes, particularly when our learners have limited expressive language, we forget how much they understand. Don't fall into the habit of simply responding to them instead of setting them up in advance for success.

- Remind them of the desired behaviors frequently

- Focus on what you do want rather than what you don't want

Noncontingent Reinforcement

- Noncontingent reinforcement is the use of positive reinforcement that is not related to the occurrence of a target behavior. In other words- it's free rewards, not earned.
  - Examples may include putting the learner on your lap during circle time, handing out popcorn to the class for no particular reason, give a learner a pat on the back when you see them
- Make sure the reinforcement you give matches the function of the behavior you are trying to offset.
  - Example: If a learner smacks his peers to get attention then provide lots of attention (hugs, tickles, high 5s, verbal praise and so forth)
- This can be done on a set schedule (eg. Every 5 minutes) or more variable

Set up Rewards

- ▶ Have a schedule of reinforcement worked out in advance

- ▶ Take the learner's lead on what he is going to earn

- ▶ Set reasonable expectations for the learner to meet

  - ▶ For example, if he typically only makes it 2 minutes in circle time before he hits a peer then the goal needs to be just over 2 minutes for him to earn his reward, you cannot reasonably expect him to go the entire circle time.

- ▶ Fade out reinforcement slowly as the learner is more and more successful

  - ▶ Do not stop the rewards for the desired behavior once he is doing it. Instead, reinforce intermittently.

Strategies to Help

▶ When wanting to help your child have the best outcomes in school it is important to establish a partnership with the school.

  ▶ Be honest with your goals for your child

  ▶ If you don't understand your child's IEP goals, how they are taking data, etc. ask. Know that you child is working on many goals above and beyond

  ▶ Be willing to have an open discussion with your child's team about your concerns and what has worked, or not worked, in the past, and their concerns, input, etc.

  ▶ Be understanding of what resources your child's teacher has available to them

  ▶ You are the best advocate your child will ever have, with that in mind fostering a team approach with your school is going to assist in better outcomes for them.

▶ Interventions cannot require much extra effort on the teacher's part

▶ Focus on only one or two things at a time

▶ If the plan is not working within a couple of weeks then change the plan

  ▶ …After checking its being implemented

Most Critically

- GET A SCHEDULE OF REINFORCEMENT IN AND IMPLEMENTED!!!!