7.5 Working with Children with Emotional Disabilities in the Classroom

Although many problem behaviors may be exhibited by the child with an emotional disabilities, you should try to focus on one target pattern at a time. Patience, fairness, willingness to confront inappropriate behaviors, a sense of conviction in maintaining boundaries, and a fair sense of play in establishing consequences are all aspects required by you in these situations.

Manage Problems of Attendance and Tardiness

- Reward the child for being on time. This reward can be extra free time, a token (if a token economy is being used), a note home, a verbal compliment, and so on.
- Work with the parent on rewarding on-time behavior.
- Plan a special activity in the morning.
- Use a chart to visually project the pattern of punctuality and lateness for the child. This reduces the child's level of denial and may make the child more aware of his or her behavior.
- Encourage and assist the child to start a club in his or her area of greatest interest and make participation contingent upon his or her positive pattern of attendance.
- Use a point system for on-time attendance. These points may be later turned in for class privileges.
- Set up a buddy system if the child walks to school to encourage on-time behavior.
- Set up a nightly contract for the child listing all the things he or she needs to do to make the morning easier to manage. Have the parent sign it, and reward the child when he or she brings it in.

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Handle Challenges to Authority, Inappropriate Verbalizations, and Outbursts

- Arrange a timeout area in the classroom. In this case, the amount of time spent in the area is not as significant as the fact that you are able to begin the consequence and end it. Therefore, make the timeout period something you can control.
- Structure a time where the child is allowed to speak to you freely without an audience around. In this way, the child will have an opportunity to speak his or her concerns rather than act them out. It will also allow you to deflect any confrontations to that specific time.
- Approach the child as often as possible and ask him or her if there is anything bothering him or her that the child would like to speak about. Offering the opportunity, even if the child refuses, may reduce the need for "spotlight" behaviors in front of the class.
- Offer an emotional vocabulary so that the child is more able to label feelings. Tension is expressed either verbally or behaviorally. Providing the student with the proper labels may reduce frustration.

- Move the student away from those who might set her or him off.
- Preempt his or her behavior by waiting outside before class and telling the child in private what you expect during class. Also make him or her aware of the rewards and consequences of his or her actions.
- Offer other options and indicate that any inappropriateness is the child's decision. Making the child aware that behavior is his or her responsibility allows the child to realize that not doing something inappropriate is also in his or her control.
- Establish clear classroom rules stating rewards and consequences.
- Praise the student for complying with rules and carrying out directions without verbal resistance.

Deal with Incomplete Class Work

- Work out a contract with the child where he or she can determine the rewards for completion.
- Give shorter but more frequent assignments.
- Do not force the child to write if handwriting is beyond correction. Compensate with a word processor or typewriter.
- Correct assignments as soon as possible and hand them back for immediate gratification.
- Reward the student for handing in neat, completed, and timely assignments.
- Help the student become organized by keeping very little in his or her desk, using a bound book for writing rather than a looseleaf where pages can fall out and add to disorganization, using a large folder for the child to keep work in, and so on.
- Have students mark their own work.
- Be very specific on what you mean by "neat," "organized," and so on. Abstract labels have different meanings to different people. Instead, say "Please be neat and by neat I mean . . . ."

Handle the Child's Difficulty in Remaining Seated

- Try to determine a pattern when the child gets up out of his or her seat. Once this is determined, you can arrange to have him or her run an errand, come up to your desk, and so on. In this way you are channeling the tension and remaining in control.
- Use an external control, such as an egg timer, so that the child has an anchor to control his or her behavior.
- Praise other students or hand out rewards to them for remaining in their seats and following the rules.
- Give the child a written copy of the rules that will result in reward or positive feedback. Also give him or her a list of the behaviors that will lead to consequences.
- Close proximity to the child will assist him or her in staying in his or her seat. Seat the child close to your desk or stand near him or her during a lesson.

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7.5 continued

Help the Child Develop Social Relationships

- Role-play with another student during private time so that the child can get feedback from a peer.
- Provide the child with a "toolbox" of responses and options for typical social situations.
- Speak with the school psychologist about including the child in a group.
- Arrange for a peer to guide him or her through social situations. The child may be more willing to model peer behavior.
- Start the child in a small group activity with only one other child. Slowly increase the size of the group as the child becomes more comfortable.
- Arrange for goal-oriented projects where students must work together to accomplish a task. At first, limit this to the student and one other child.
- Have the child and a responsible peer organize team activities or group projects. Some children rise to the occasion when placed in a leadership role.
- Praise the student as often as is realistic when he or she is not exhibiting aggressive or inappropriate social behavior.

Help the Child Follow Directions and Pay Attention

- Use a cue before giving the child directions or important information.
- Give one direction at a time and make it as simple as possible.
- Have the child chart his or her own patterns of behavior in relation to attention and direction.
- Physical proximity may assist the child in focusing on your directions.
- Praise the student when he or she follows directions or pays attention. However, be aware that some students with emotional disabilities have a hard time accepting praise, especially in front of a group. In such a case, give the praise in private.
- Provide optional work areas that may have less distraction.
- Randomly question the child and try to have her or him participate as often as possible to increase her or his interest in the lesson.
- Make sure the materials being presented are compatible with the child's learning levels. In this way you can avoid frustration that is also a cause of inattention.
- Use a variety of visual and auditory techniques—e.g., overhead projector, tape recorder, or computer—to enhance the lesson and stimulate attention.

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Figure 1. Comprehensive Classroom Management Plan: Three-Tiered Model of Support Checklist

Teacher(s) Name(s): _____

Classroom: _____

School Year: _____

Tier 1: Preventative Classroom Management

Guiding Question

What is the core, behavioral curriculum provided? (i.e., How are behavioral expectations communicated to students through existing practices?)

_____

_____

Tier 1 Strategies: Select the tools that are either in place or can be put in place to address this tier of support.

- ❑ High Student Engagement
- ❑ Response Cards
- ❑ Choral Responding
- ❑ Peer Tutoring
- ❑ Organized Classroom
- ❑ Clear Communication (e.g., visual displays of instruction, step-by-step procedures)
- ❑ Ample Background Knowledge and Skill Instruction Provided
- ❑ Established Routines and Procedures
- ❑ High Expectations
- ❑ Teacher Modeling of Positive Behaviors
- ❑ Positive Student-Teacher Rapport
- ❑ Positively Stated Rules
- ❑ Frequent Academic Assessment (e.g., curriculum-based assessments)

Tier 2: First-Line Interventions

Guiding Question

What interventions or additional behavioral supports are in place? (i.e., What is the response if students demonstrate challenging behaviors?)

_____

_____

Tier 2 Strategies: Select the tools that are either in place or can be put in place to address this tier of support.

- ❑ Changes to Academic Instruction (e.g., tutoring program, literacy lab, review supports)
- ❑ Positive Reinforcement System
- ❑ Token Economy
- ❑ Behavior Contracts (e.g., Daily Behavior Report Card, weekly contracts)
- ❑ Remedial Intervention or Tutoring Support
- ❑ Contingency System (e.g., loss of privileges, time out, behavior contracts, group contingency)
- ❑ Surface Management Techniques (e.g., planned ignoring, signal interference, proximity, tension decontamination through humor, hurdle help, direct appeal, antiseptic bounce, rewards)
- ❑ Home-School Note System

Tier 3: Intensive, Individualized Interventions

Guiding Question

What individualized, intensive behavioral supports are drawn on for the most challenging of classroom behaviors? (i.e., For those few students who demonstrate chronic, challenging behaviors, what strategies are used?)

_____

_____

Tier 3 Strategies: Select the tools that are either in place or can be put in place to address this tier of support.

- ❑ Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs)/Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs)
- ❑ Self-Monitoring Strategies
- ❑ Daily Student Evaluation
- ❑ Social Skills Instruction
- ❑ Support Groups (e.g., anger management, grief, study skills)
- ❑ Goal Setting/Monitoring
- ❑ Crisis Management or Safety Plan
- ❑ Functional Assessment Checklist for Teachers

Accommodations Checklist

Adapted from *Accommodations, A Guide for Educators*

Handout T-3

A. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND MATERIALS

1. Student can't identify main ideas or important points.

- ❑ Highlight important points of the text to draw attention. Tell the student to read these points first.
- ❑ Give the student a list of important vocabulary ahead of time.
- ❑ Have the student read the summary or objectives first.
- ❑ Have the student read the review questions first, then look for the answers.
- ❑ Give the student a worksheet or study guide to follow when doing independent reading.
- ❑ Use hands-on activities, pictures, or diagrams to provide alternate ways of learning abstract concepts or complex information.
- ❑ Let the student use sticky notes or an erasable highlighter to mark key points in the textbook.
- ❑ Let the student use a book written at a lower grade level. This can let the student pay more attention to the main ideas.

2. Student can understand the information, but can't read the required materials.

- ❑ Provide an audio version of the material. Use books-on-tape or have an assistant, volunteer, or other student make a recording.
- ❑ Provide alternate materials with similar content at a lower reading level.
- ❑ Use a videotape or movie that presents the same information.
- ❑ Use assistive technology to transfer printed words to speech.
- ❑ Have a learning buddy read aloud textbooks or other printed material.

3. Student is blind or visually impaired.

- ❑ Provide books-on-tape or large print versions of text.
- ❑ Provide books and other instructional materials in Braille.
- ❑ Obtain copies of class handouts and materials with key information in an embossed format.
- ❑ Let the student use a special tilt-top desk or book stand to hold materials for easier reading.
- ❑ Let the student use specialized equipment, such as an optical enhancer, magnifier, tape recorder, stylus and slate, or braillewriter.

4. Student is deaf or hard of hearing.

- ❑ Make sure the student is facing you when you are speaking.
- ❑ Seat the student in the place where he or she can receive maximum information and is least likely to be distracted by other classroom activities.
- ❑ Use nonverbal communications to convey your messages. Speak naturally.
- ❑ Use visual information (words, charts, graphics) to reinforce what is presented orally. Repeat as often as necessary.
- ❑ Help the student to be comfortable asking others for assistance whenever it is needed. "Tell me what you need."
- ❑ Use a sign language interpreter or notetaker where appropriate.

Accommodations Checklist

Adapted from *Accommodations, A Guide for Educators*

4. Student is deaf or hard of hearing. (cont'd)

- ❑ Talk while you teach, making an attempt to describe exactly what you are doing. Be sure to describe nonverbal messages and introduce beginnings, transitions, and closures to each activity.
- ❑ Use real-life examples and concrete materials whenever possible.

5. Student has difficulty with most lessons.

5a. Student needs help to <u>get ready</u> for the lesson

- ❑ Introduce new vocabulary prior to lesson; prepare glossary of terms; use visual aids (chalkboard, overhead, charts).
- ❑ Use advance organizers to alert students to what will be included and expected from the lesson or discussion.
- ❑ Provide an overview of the content or expected learning at the beginning of the session.

5b. Student needs help <u>during</u> the lesson.

- ❑ Present material in a logical manner and use explicit cues to shift from one aspect to the next.
- ❑ Promote active involvement of students by asking questions or breaking up the lecture with small group interaction, discussion, or structured responses.
- ❑ Break the information into steps or key components and monitor the student's comprehension as it is presented.
- ❑ Provide oral and visual clues during lecture or discussion about what is important to include in notes. Write important ideas on the board or chart paper. Use different color chalk or markers for emphasis or coding.
- ❑ Provide structured organizers for notetaking, such as a copy of overheads, outline of lecture, or pre-designed graphic organizers.
- ❑ Use NCR, carbon paper, or photocopying for peers to take notes that can be shared.
- ❑ Teach the student how to use a two-column notetaking format or concept mapping for notes.
- ❑ Key class notes to the relevant pages in textbook.
- ❑ Let the student use a tape recorder to record class lectures and discussions.

5c. Student needs help <u>after</u> the lesson.

- ❑ Repeat, paraphrase, and summarize all important points, particularly at the conclusion of the lecture or discussion.
- ❑ Ask the student to paraphrase key points in his or her own words and identify anything that is still unclear.
- ❑ Prepare a summary of important information from the lecture with blanks to be filled or questions to be answered by the student.
- ❑ Use cooperative learning techniques such as Think-Pair-Share or Jigsaw to have the students review key points.
- ❑ Ask the student to tell or write the important information that was included in the lesson before the class ends. Encourage the student to ask questions.
- ❑ Arrange for time to meet with the student after class to clarify anything the student doesn't understand.

Accommodations Checklist

Adapted from *Accommodations, A Guide for Educators*

6. Student has difficulty with mathematical concepts and processes.

- ❑ Let the student use concrete materials and manipulatives to explore and learn about mathematical concepts.
- ❑ Use computer-based models to represent mathematical concepts.
- ❑ Let the student practice skills using computer-based instruction.
- ❑ Let the student use a calculator for routine computation tasks.
- ❑ Let the student use a chart or table with basic math facts.
- ❑ Color-code or highlight key words in word problems.
- ❑ Let the student use a flowchart to plan strategies for problem solving.

B. ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENTS

1. Student has difficulty following instructions.

1a. Student needs help to <u>get ready</u> for the instructions.

- ❑ Use a prearranged signal to gain attention before giving directions.
- ❑ Make sure the student is facing you when instructions are given.
- ❑ Change your tone of voice to alert the student and sustain attention.
- ❑ Give the student an agenda or schedule for each day.

1b. Student needs help <u>while</u> you are giving instructions.

- ❑ Combine oral directions with pictures, words, or diagrams.
- ❑ Read written directions orally before students start the assignment.
- ❑ When modeling expected behavior, describe critical components.
- ❑ Complete sample problems or tasks to show the student what is expected.
- ❑ Have the student paraphrase instructions or show you what to do.
- ❑ Repeat and simplify instructions for the student.
- ❑ Give the student a description of expected behaviors or the rubric to be used for evaluation.
- ❑ Give step-by-step instructions for an activity with the steps outlined in writing or shown in picture sequences.

1c. Student needs help <u>after</u> the instructions.

- ❑ Assign a study buddy to help the student when needed.
- ❑ Check to see if the student needs any assistance in getting started.
- ❑ Teach the student how to use an assignment notebook or personal planner to keep track of assignments and work.

2. Student has difficulty completing assignments.

- ❑ Break long-term assignments into sections with corresponding due dates.
- ❑ Teach the student to maintain a calendar of assignments.

Accommodations Checklist

Adapted from *Accommodations, A Guide for Educators*

2. Student has difficulty completing assignments. (cont'd)

- ☐ Give the student an individual responsibility checklist.
- ☐ Give the student a choice of tasks and assignments.
- ☐ Let the student have access to resources and materials outside of class.
- ☐ Use a kitchen timer to define work times.
- ☐ Reduce the total amount of work, but select those tasks or items that are needed to accomplish learning objectives.
- ☐ Have the student keep a journal or homework log that includes the directions and timelines.
- ☐ Communicate homework assignments and expectations to parents so they can help, if needed.
- ☐ At first, give partial credit for late assignments or incomplete work until the student is able to complete the work on time.

3. Student gets confused by complex materials.

- ☐ Indicate sections on paper for each response by drawing lines or folding.
- ☐ Use different kinds of paper for different assignments, such as graph paper to write computation problems or paper with midlines for taking notes.
- ☐ Use color-coding to help students identify tasks, meanings, or expectations.
- ☐ Show students how to cover parts of text or worksheet not being used.
- ☐ Give page numbers for locating answers to questions in textbook.
- ☐ Simplify directions by numbering each step.
- ☐ Use uncluttered and clearly formatted tests, assignments and worksheets. Arrange problems or items so that it is easy to see where to start and know how to proceed.

4. Student needs help organizing or keeping track of materials.

- ☐ Let the student use a special folder or binder to keep materials organized. Use dividers or folders to keep subjects organized and use color-coding by unit or subject.
- ☐ Give the student a compartmentalized container for classroom materials, tools, and supplies.
- ☐ Let the student use physical supports such as bookends, plastic containers to keep supplies, or bags or folders for work materials.
- ☐ Place a timetable or assignment list on the student's desk.
- ☐ Give the student a checklist of materials needed for each class, to be kept in the student's locker or binder.
- ☐ Give the student a written copy of instructions and requirements for each assignment.
- ☐ Let the student keep one copy of school materials at home and one copy in class.

5. Student has limited writing abilities.

5a. Student has difficulty with handwriting.

- ☐ Place a dot on the upper left side of the paper to help student remember where to start writing.
- ☐ Give the student a copy of notes or directions for the assignment.

Accommodations Checklist

Adapted from *Accommodations, A Guide for Educators*

- ❑ Let the student write in the workbook or on a copy of the workbook page.

5a. Student has difficulty with handwriting. (cont'd)

- ❑ Let the student use a word-processor or typewriter.
- ❑ Let the student dictate the assignment to an assistant or classmate who will write it down.
- ❑ Let the student create an audio or video recording of response to classroom assignment.
- ❑ Let the student use adaptive devices: pencil grips or special pen or pencil holders, erasable pens, special paper with raised or color-coded line indicators.
- ❑ Make sure that worksheets have ample space for writing answers.
- ❑ Give the student two copies of a worksheet, one to work on as a draft and one to use as a final copy to hand in.
- ❑ Let student use graph paper for writing computation problems to help align the numbers.

5b. Student has problems with expressive language.

- ❑ Reduce the length of a written assignment, or allow more time.
- ❑ Let the student use a thesaurus (book or computer-based) to find words to write or say.
- ❑ Let the student use special word processing software that assists and anticipates what the student is trying to write.
- ❑ Give the student a structured outline or graphic organizer to help plan writing or oral presentations.
- ❑ Let the student use word processing or graphics software to plan ideas before writing.

5c. Student has problems with grammar or spelling.

- ❑ Let the student use a spelling dictionary or electronic spelling aid.
- ❑ Let the student use peer editing or teacher assistance in the revision process.
- ❑ Let the student use the spell-check or grammar-check utility in word processing software.
- ❑ Grade content and mechanics separately in assignments requiring written expression. Give the student a chance to correct identified spelling and grammar errors.

6. Student has difficulty taking tests.

6a. Change the presentation format:

- ❑ Read the test items to the student, unless it is a test of reading skills.
- ❑ Let the student read the test items aloud as he or she works on it.
- ❑ Provide copies of the tests on audio tape, in braille, or large print format.
- ❑ Let the student use assistive technology such as magnification or amplification, if needed.
- ❑ Provide a sign language interpreter to give oral directions.
- ❑ Use symbols on the test or answer form that help the student follow directions, such as an arrow or stop sign.
- ❑ Reread or explain the directions during the test if the student needs it.
- ❑ Underline or highlight important words in the directions or test items.
- ❑ Group questions so that similar kinds of items are together. Put the easiest questions first.
- ❑ Block matching questions into small groups of four or five items.

Accommodations Checklist

Adapted from *Accommodations, A Guide for Educators*

6b. Change the response mode:

- ❑ Increase spacing and size allowed for test answers.
- ❑ Let the student respond orally, dictate to an aide, or tape record for later review.
- ❑ Let the student use a typewriter or word processor to write answers to the test items.
- ❑ Let the student write on the test itself if an answer sheet is used.
- ❑ Let the student use webs, diagrams, or charts and outlines to plan for or respond to open-ended or essay questions.
- ❑ Let the student provide alternate demonstrations of knowledge and skills using objects or oral explanations, role-playing, interviewing, etc.

6c. Change the test procedures:

- ❑ Give extra examples for practice.
- ❑ Let the student have additional time to complete the test or grade only what the student can finish.
- ❑ Break up the test into small sections, and let the student take it over a period of days, if needed.
- ❑ Eliminate one of the choices in multiple-choice items.
- ❑ Require fewer questions, but select ones that measure all required content and skills.
- ❑ Grade the student's response separately for content and mechanics.
- ❑ Let the student take an open book test, unless memorization of content is required.
- ❑ Let the student use references such as a spelling dictionary.
- ❑ In math, let the student use a calculator to recheck or complete computations.
- ❑ Give partial credit for answers that are partly correct.
- ❑ Let the student retake the test and give credit for improvement.
- ❑ Give shorter tests more frequently.

6d. Change the setting:

- ❑ Administer the test individually or in small groups.
- ❑ Let the student use a study carrel to take the test.
- ❑ Let the student take the test in another classroom where there are no distractions.
- ❑ Let the student take breaks during the test.

7. Student has difficulty taking tests.

7a. Student has difficulty preparing for the test.

- ❑ Provide instruction in test-taking skills. Use practice tests to help students learn some of the strategies effective test-takers use.
- ❑ Conduct a review of the knowledge and skills to be tested several days before the test.
- ❑ Give study guides to help students prepare for the test.

Accommodations Checklist

Adapted from *Accommodations, A Guide for Educators*

7a. Student has difficulty preparing for the test. (cont'd)

- ❑ Give the student practice with the testing format; give sample questions and explain the scoring rubric or procedures that will be used.
- ❑ Read the directions of the test and simplify language, if needed. Go over enough sample questions to make sure the student knows how to answer.

7b. Student has difficulty identifying areas that need to be corrected after the test.

- ❑ Review corrected tests and provide a debriefing.
- ❑ Have the student evaluate his or her own performance on the test.
  Did I study the right things?
  Did I make use of clues in the test?
  Did I survey the test and plan my response?
  Did I use the time allowed effectively?
  Did I answer the questions I knew first?
  Did I correct mistakes?
  Did I have to guess?

C. TIME DEMANDS AND SCHEDULING

- ❑ Use flexible scheduling practices that allow the student more time to complete a course. Sometimes summer school can be used for this purpose.
- ❑ Let the student have additional time for assignments and assessments.
- ❑ Give assignments ahead of time so the student can get started early.
- ❑ Provide a clear schedule with checkpoints along the way.
- ❑ Use a reward system to motivate assignment completion. Let the student engage in an activity of choice, following the completion of a required assignment.
- ❑ Give the student shorter tasks with easier tasks first.
- ❑ Give the student a pass to travel between periods to avoid hallway traffic and unnecessary delays in moving between classes.

D. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

1. Student is easily distracted or has a short attention span.

- ❑ Let the student use an enclosed study carrel to complete independent work.
- ❑ Let the student sit in an area away from the busy parts of a classroom.
- ❑ Give the student tasks that can be completed in short periods of time.
- ❑ Let the student use a timer to monitor how much longer he or she has to work on specific tasks.
- ❑ Give the student legitimate opportunities to get up and move in the classroom, use the restroom, or get a drink of water.
- ❑ Have the student sit close to the teacher.

Accommodations Checklist

Adapted from *Accommodations, A Guide for Educators*

2. Student can't work in groups.

2a. Whole groups:

- ❑ Let the student sit next to an aide, volunteer, or trained classmate who can help maintain attention and understanding.
- ❑ Give the student a preview of what is going to happen during the class.
- ❑ Provide a balance of active and passive activities within the lesson.
- ❑ Provide follow-up instruction individually, as needed.

2b. Small groups:

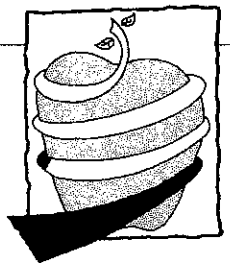
- ❑ Make sure the student has the communication and social skills needed for group interaction.
- ❑ Assign a specific role and responsibility to the student when working in a group.
- ❑ Let the student work with a trained classmate to help keep on task in a group situation.
- ❑ Allow partial participation in cooperative groups.

2c. Student has difficulty with independent work, study, and practice.

- ❑ Let the student use a learning center with appropriate materials and equipment.
- ❑ Let the student use self-checking materials or computer-assisted instruction to practice skills.
- ❑ Let the student have a study buddy who can repeat and explain directions.

3. Student can't control own behavior.

- ❑ Give students a copy of class rules and expectations. Let students role-play positive and negative examples of behaviors on a regular basis to make sure all students understand.
- ❑ Give positive reinforcement for following class rules.
- ❑ Establish and regularly use a hierarchy of consequences for rule infractions. Make sure that the student knows what the consequences are.
- ❑ Monitor student's compliance with class rules and communicate regularly with the student, the family, or others.
- ❑ Identify a study buddy who can help the student when the teacher is unavailable. Make sure the buddy knows how to work effectively with the student.
- ❑ Provide a set of alternative activities for the student during unstructured time. Make sure the student knows how to initiate and complete the activities and wants to do them.
- ❑ Use a regular routine for transitions in the class. Establish a system of alerts and procedures to follow to get ready to start a lesson, to change classes, to complete an activity, to go to lunch, to go to another area in the school, etc.
- ❑ Identify a quiet area where the student may go when necessary.
- ❑ Seat the student away from distractions such as windows, heating or cooling vents, doors, resource areas, and certain students.



Tips for the Classroom

Teaching goes beyond academics. Understanding and addressing the whole child is an essential of good teaching.

Barbara Danoff

2

SURVIVING THE FIRST DAY

Be Prepared . . . and Then Some

The best rule of thumb for successful teaching is to be overly prepared for every lesson, activity, or exercise involving your students. This is especially true the first time you introduce a new topic, idea, or strategy in your classroom. It is better to have more information than you need, more materials than you need, *and* more activities than you need, than it is to have an hour left in the day with no plans. Usually, classroom problems occur during nonstructured times. These types of problems can be avoided with careful planning and some extra thought.

What to Prepare . . . and Then Some

Following is a list of topics that you should discuss with your students the first day they enter your classroom. A brief explanation follows each topic. Handouts related to each topic should be copied and given to each student as an orientation packet.

Getting to Know Each Other. Introduce yourself and have your students introduce themselves. Each of your students will be as curious about you as you are about them. For some students, an easy way to break the ice is to complete an interest inventory with your students. Figures 2–1 and 2–2 are sample interest inventories. These can be completed by each student and then discussed as a group, *or* the names of the students can be deleted and they can try to guess which inventory matches which classmate. (Be sure to leave your birthday/age off the inventory or you will give it away!) Also, be sure to have enough copies of the interest inventory ahead of time. For students with more severe disabilities, you will need to learn about their interests from spending time with them, their families, and their former teachers.

A Place for Everything and Everything in Its Place. Another important rule for teachers is to *be organized.* Your students will be more comfortable if they know exactly what your expectations are. If you want coats on this shelf, books on this table, and work to be graded in that basket, labels are a helpful idea. Use index cards (preferably different colors) to label these areas in your classroom. If possible, laminate the labels so they will last longer. Give your students a tour of your classroom so that they can identify each area of the classroom with its function. This will enable them to be as organized as you are and more comfortable in the classroom.

Figure 2–1

INTEREST INVENTORY

Name _____

Date _____

1. I like to do these things in school:

2. I think this is what I do best in school:

3. This is what I liked best about my last class (or school):

4. I like to do these things at home:

5. I like these games best:

6. I like stories about:

7. My favorite person is: Because:

8. I have the most fun when I:

9. Have you ever earned money? How?

10. Who would you like to work with in this class?

11. Write the name of a good friend in this class.

12. If you could have a wish, what would it be?

Figure 2–2

INTEREST INVENTORY FOR INTERMEDIATE AND UPPER GRADES

Name _____

Birthdate _____

Age _____

Grade _____

School _____

Sex _____

Date _____

1. When you have an hour or two to spend as you please, what do you like to do?

2. What do you usually do after school, in the evenings, or on weekends?

3. What games do you like to play the best?

4. Do you make things? What things have you made?

5. What tools do you have at home?

6. Do you have pets? What kind?

7. Do you collect things? What?

8. Do you take lessons such as music and dancing? What kind?

9. Do you have hobbies? What kind?

10. Suppose you could have one wish that might come true. What would it be?

11. Are there some things you are afraid of? What are they?

12. How much time do you spend looking at TV?

13. What is your favorite TV program?

14. How much time do you spend listening to the radio?

15. What is your favorite radio program?

16. How often do you go to the movies? What movie did you like the best?

17. What is the best book you have ever read? Name other books you have liked.

18. Name some books of your own that you have at home.

19. Do you like to have someone read to you?

20. Do you go to the public library?

21. What magazines do you read? What comic books?

22. Do you read a newspaper? What parts?

23. What kinds of books do you like best? (For example, books about animals, pilots, stars and planets, etc.)

24. What kind of work do you want to do when you finish school?

25. Have you read books or stories about the kind of work you want to do?

Schedule. The classroom/school schedule should be given to each student as a handout in their orientation packet. Include times for breaks, lunch, each classroom time (subject), activities time, clean-up time, group time, and other important activities of the school day. This schedule should also be posted in the classroom and sent home to parents.

My first day, the first hour of school, my class and I were discussing rules for the room. One of my students stood up and stated that he doesn't listen to his parents so why should he listen to any of our rules? I was stumped for a moment. Then I let him come up to the front of the room and be in charge of the discussion and come up with some rules.

Lynette Flight

Behavior Management, Classroom Rules, Rewards, Consequences, and Procedures. The class rules you designed during preplanning should be discussed with the students at this time. If you prefer, determine classroom rules as a group. Review the rules and discuss your expectations with your class. These rules should be posted in your classroom as part of your behavior management system. See Figures 2–3 through 2–6 for sample rules. Try to have as few rules as possible—they will be easier to remember.

Remember—you will need to review these rules again and again. Do not hesitate to review them every day or at the very least every Monday. When your instructors said "be tough in the beginning" they were right! Don't make exceptions to your classroom procedures.

Classroom procedures should also be discussed at this time and reviewed as needed. A few examples of procedures are:

1. How to enter and exit the classroom.
2. How to ask for assistance.
3. How to turn in completed work.
4. How to earn extra points.
5. How to get a drink of water, request to use the restroom, sharpen pencil, earn free time, rewards, etc.
6. What happens if a rule is broken.

One situation I encountered for which I didn't feel adequately prepared was how to handle discipline problems with students who were emotionally or behavior disordered and other lower functioning individuals. I handled the situation by observing other classes, reading journal articles, etc. I then devised my own discipline procedures for each individual student. Individualization was the key—no two students can be handled alike.

Melissa Moore

Assignments. During preplanning you prepared several easy-to-administer diagnostic tests that were either commercial or teacher-made. These tests may be administered during your first day or sometime during the first week of class. However, the sooner you administer these tests, the sooner you can match each student to the appropriate academic textbooks. This type of immediate structure is helpful in establishing a smooth running classroom. Testing also breaks up the "too many rules in one day" syndrome, and it gives you a chance to observe your new students at work on a task. (Of course, you have your anecdotal records ready for notes because you prepared them during preplanning.) If time allows, prepare an easy quiz. It will give the students a chance to earn a good "first" grade.

Social Skills/Affective Learning. Obviously, if you've been explaining rules and procedures all day, you've conducted social skills and affective training the entire day. Surprised? Here are a few ideas to start you off for your first week of group activities. Normally, it is not necessary to begin group activities of this type the first week, but there are always exceptions. It's up to you and your supervisor to work out when you should begin social skills and affective work with your students.

Ideas for Group Activities

1. Self-evaluation of behavior—Students can complete Figure 2–7 before or during group and discuss their answers. They can also pinpoint personal goals related to the classroom, and display these goals in the room.
2. What is confidentiality? Why is it important?
3. Review points earned and problem areas for the day; discuss positive growth and areas to improve.
4. Discuss special education—what it is, why each student is in your class, and what their goals are.
5. Weekly wrap-up—How did they do?

Going Home or *We Made It Through the First Day!* This is the time for you to congratulate your students (and yourself) upon completing the first day of school. Distribute any homework assignments, introductory letters to parents, emergency cards, point cards, permission slips, coats, hats, etc. Be sure to help students find the right bus and/or their parents.

P.S. This is not Gone With the Wind. If you want tomorrow to be as positive as today, you better think about it *now*—not tomorrow. So wave good-bye to your students and get back in the classroom and start planning for tomorrow. Review what went right and what went wrong and plan accordingly. (Don't be shy—seek out veteran teachers for helpful suggestions.)

Do not try to be friends with students at first. Establishing myself as an authority figure gained my students' friendship.

Sue Fox

Figure 2–3

SUGGESTED CRITERA FOR EDUCATIONAL POINTS

10-Point Base

1 point	Follows all directions
2 points	Prepares for class by *arriving on time with progress card*
3 points	Is appropriate with *language, behavior, and dress**
1 point	Keeps *hands, feet, and objects* to oneself
3 points	Completes assigned tasks with a grade of C (75%) or better

Rewards

1 point	Completes assigned tasks with a grade of A (94%)
1 point	Completes extra credit assignments with a grade of C (75%) or better

If the base of 10 points has been earned, can leave class 5 minutes early *or* can have 10 minutes of constructive quiet time in the classroom

Consequences

Failure to follow directions:

1st time = verbal warning
2nd time = 1st check
3rd time = 2nd check, 2 checks = loss of 1 point
Loss of 3 points results in dismissal by teacher request

Dismissal by teacher request = –8 points
Dismissal with assistance = –10 points
Refusal to attend class = –10 points

I have read, understand, and agree to follow the educational point system.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Teacher Signature _____ Date _____

*Accepted criteria/standards for language, behavior, and dress should be described to the students and posted in the classroom.

Figure 2–4

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR GROUP SOCIAL SKILLS/AFFECTIVE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. While the activity is going on, I will not talk without permission.*
2. I will raise my hand if I have something to say or want to ask a question.*
3. I will try to be polite during group.
4. I will try not to disturb others during group.
5. I will not leave group without permission.
6. I will not make noise while rewards are distributed.

Student Signature _____

* Guidelines #1 and #2 should only be necessary in the initial stages of group activities and may be eliminated as the group progresses.

Figure 2–5

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR USE IN DEVELOPING LUNCHROOM RULES

- We talk in quiet voices.
- We talk to the people at our table.
- We keep our mouth closed when food is in it.
- We eat our food...we do not trade food.
- We use our silverware, straws, and milk cartons as they should be used...we don't play with them.
- We stay in our seats except for an emergency.
- We keep our feet off of others and sit in our chairs.
- We clean up after ourselves.
- We sit down outside while waiting for our class.
- We never run in the lunchroom.

Figure 2–6

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM RULES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

1. Please do not disturb others.
2. Please follow all teacher directions.
3. Please keep your hands and feet to yourself.
4. Please stay in your seat (or area).

Figure 2–7

SELF-EVALUATION OF BEHAVIOR

Name _____

Date _____

MY SCHOOL BEHAVIOR:

	Always	Sometimes	Never
1. Do I get to class on time?	1	2	3
2. Do I bring necessary materials to class?	1	2	3
3. Am I a good listener?	1	2	3
4. Am I quiet and orderly in the lunch line?	1	2	3
5. Do I use good lunchroom manners?	1	2	3
6. Am I quiet when changing classes?	1	2	3
7. Do I help keep the school clean and neat?	1	2	3
8. Do I follow directions?	1	2	3
9. Do I talk at appropriate times?	1	2	3
10. Am I polite to others?	1	2	3

I need to work on these things: