Beecher Road School-Wide Behavioral Supports

Guidelines for Positive Behavioral Support for All Students

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Beecher Road School

School-Wide Behavioral Supports

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Belief Statement
Discipline at Beecher Road School

In our school, teaching self-discipline is an important part of the curriculum. We believe that all students wish to participate fully in all school activities in a safe and respectful environment. We understand that to do so requires an appreciation and understanding of rules and guidelines. We believe all adults should model for children what it means to be excited about learning, what it means to have the time to stop and listen, and what it means to be kind, considerate and respectful. We encourage a learning process that examines and develops rules and guidelines. We guide students to understand and appreciate that self-discipline and order help create a successful academic and social environment. We want students to value and follow the rules because they have faith in themselves and the adults who have faith in them.

In order to support our Belief Statement, an underlying principle of school-wide discipline at the Beecher Road School should be that **all children are our responsibility and the adults must interact with all of them as if they were in our classroom**. This may sound simple, but a change in our trust level and cooperation is necessary for this to fully become a part of our practice. In our common areas, all adults need to participate in reminding children about our rules. It is particularly important for all adults to support each other.

Overview

Goals for School Discipline

Establish a calm, orderly, and safe environment for learning

Foster an appreciation for the role of rules in school community

Help children develop self-control and self-discipline

Teach children to be responsible, contributing members of a democratic society

Promote respectful, kind, and healthy adult-child, child-child and adult-adult interactions

Purposes of Rules

Create a sense of order and predictability

Create a climate of respect and healthy interactions

Create a climate in which children feel safe enough to take risks

Serve as guidelines for behavior to help children learn self-control

Help develop social awareness and responsibility

Balance the needs of the group with the needs of individuals

Address issues as they arise

Purposes of Logical Consequences

Help children recognize, fix, and learn from their mistakes

Help children internalize the rules to enable them to better develop *self*-control

Maintain a safe and orderly school

Balance the needs of the group with the needs of the individual

Help children make reparations and maintain relationships when they hurt each other in any way

Characteristics of Logical Consequences

Logical consequences are:

Relevant: directly related to the child's action

Realistic: reasonable for a child to do and a teacher to follow through on

Respectful: communicated with firmness, but also with caring; focus on changing specific behavior rather than making general judgments

Expectations for Common Areas

In the hallways

We walk silently because it is safe and classes are working.
We keep our hands and feet to ourselves to respect others and our environment.
We walk together on the right in a single line.
We are trustworthy – we know the rules apply when we are alone and when we are together.

In the bathrooms

We demonstrate self-control by keeping the bathrooms clean.
We flush the toilet, clean up after ourselves and wash our hands.
We report problems to the adult in charge right away.

On the playground

We use only school equipment and stay within the playground boundaries.
We enter the Nature Trail and Kucinskas Loop only with an adult.
We respect others and welcome all to join in our play.
We play and use the playground equipment safely, respecting others' personal space and feelings.
We report problems to the adult in charge right away.

At programs, performances and special events

We enter and exit the area silently, following the directions of the adult in charge.
We stay in the program area and leave only with adult permission.
We are part of a respectful audience, listening, participating, and showing our appreciation appropriately.

In the Cafeteria

Use quiet voices (indoor voices) to speak to others at your table.
Keep hands, feet, and other objects to yourself.
Walk at all times in the cafeteria.
Eat quietly and use appropriate table manners.
Treat others with dignity and respect. Clean up after yourself.
Stay in your seat until dismissed. Raise your hand if you need assistance or have a question.
Eat only your own food.

Responsive Classroom
9 Empowering and Encouraging Phrases

I see...
I notice...
I hear...

Show me...
Remind me...
Tell me about...

What do you think of ...?
How does this work?
How do you feel about ...?

Behavior Support
Classroom Level

Behavior

*calling out
*getting out of seat
*using verbal put-downs
*not preparing for class
*passing notes
*not working well with others
*shouting
*not following teacher's directions
*not completing assignments
*cheating
*not following classroom rules
*careless and impulsive misuse of property
*invading personal space
*refusing to work
*teasing
*throwing objects
*lying

Prevention

*morning meeting
*developing and posting rules
*keeping extra materials on hand
*using calm, neutral teacher response
*using empowering language from RC (be assertive)
*posting routines and schedules
*using social reinforcement: smile, pat on back, thumbs up
*implementing Premack's Principle (pair less desirable activity with a very desirable one)
*using read alouds
*providing clear instructional goals
*initiating and maintaining parent communication
*teaching, modeling, and practice of expectations and specific behaviors
*communicating among staff
*using clear, simple, one-step directions
*having a private chat with child before lesson begins
*creating an intentional seating plan
*cueing and previewing
*using proximity
*touch control
*using role playing
*providing movement breaks and energizers
*using visual reminders
*providing active supervision

Intervention

*seating student next to positive peer role model
*providing a safe place
*preparing a daily schedule with pictures
*regrouping the children
*using a buddy teacher time out
*contacting school psychologist/previous teacher
*PLC problem solving
*contacting parents (parent communication options include: communication log, weekly communication, as needed communication)
*providing take a break/time to think and change
*using social (problem solving) conference
*setting up a private signal
*preparing a written agreement
*targeting specific behaviors, including consequences
*practicing specific behavior

Consequence

*using break it – fix it (restitution)
*imposing a loss of privilege
*providing time to think and change (take a break)

Behavior Support
PLC Team Level

Behavior

*repeated patterns of classroom level behavior
*careless, impulsive physical contact that may result in bodily injury
*violation of school acceptable use policy
*vulgarity
*leaving without permission
*use of personal electronics
*persistent disruption
*disrespectful use of personal or school property

Prevention

*morning meeting
*practicing expectations and specific behaviors
*using clear, direct, simple directions
*having a private chat with child before lesson begins
*posting routines and schedules
*using proximity
*using social reinforcement: smile, pat on the back, thumbs up
*implementing Premack's Principle (pair less desirable behavior with a very desirable one)
*providing active supervision
*communicating among staff
*support staff check-in
*reviewing posted rules
*using calm, neutral teacher response
*using empowering language from RC (be assertive)
*creating an intentional seating plan
*cueing and previewing
*touch control
*using role playing
*providing movement breaks and energizers
*using visual reminders for rule reminding
*using read alouds
*giving clear instructional goals
*maintaining parent communication

Intervention

*seating student next to positive peer role model
*using a safe place
*regrouping the children
*targeting specific behaviors, including consequences
*taking a break
*PLC problem solving
*using a daily schedule with pictures
*using a regain self control place
*using a private signal
*using a written agreement
*using a buddy teacher time out
*contacting school psychologist/previous teacher
*practicing specific behavior
*social (problem solving) conference
*contacting parents (parent communication options include: communication log, weekly communication, as needed communication)
*referral to Child Study Team (if necessary after team interventions and data collection)

Consequence

*using break it – fix it (restitution)
*imposing a loss of privilege
*providing time to think and change (take a break)

Behavior Support
Administrative Level

Behavior

*persistent pattern of team level behaviors
*intentional, repeated, and/or malicious physical contact resulting in bodily injury
*possession and/or use of tobacco, alcohol, and/or drugs
*bullying
*violation of school acceptable use policy
*possession of weapons
*deliberate and severe destruction of personal or school property
*severe, persistent lying
*selling unauthorized merchandise
*pulling the fire alarm

Prevention

*continued use of classroom and team prevention strategies
*providing parent communication
*revisiting Parent and Student Handbook

Intervention

*continued use of classroom and team prevention strategies
*referral to Child Study Team
*parent communication
*revisiting Parent and Student Handbook

Consequence

*using break it – fix it (restitution)
*imposing a loss of privilege
*notifying the parent
*providing time to think and change (take a break)
*confiscation
*suspending the student (in and out of school)

Woodbridge Public Schools

Crisis Intervention Protocol

Crisis is defined as a situation in which instruction is disrupted by **behavior** that is **aggressive/explosive** and **threatens the safety** of the classroom and the education of peers and/or the "**student"** exhibiting the behaviors.

Call 267

Office staff contact the appropriate personnel :

TEAM A Primary	TEAM B Intermediate
Administrator ("**Lead")**	Administrator (**"Lead**")
BCBA	BCBA
Nurse	Nurse
PMT Trained	PMT Trained
PMT Trained	PMT Trained
Clinical Team Member	Clinical Team Member

- **The classroom teacher or special area teacher stays with the "student" until 2 team members have arrived**

- **The "Lead" determines who needs to stay and who can be sent back to their assignment**

- **The "Lead" designates a "Communicator" to keep office in touch, re-direct other students, etc.**

- **The "Lead" assigns a "Recorder" to keep time and documentation**

- **The Lead notifies appropriate parties when emergency/crisis has ended**

5/2017

Behavioral Support Team Glossary

1. **Acceptable Use Policy**- Communicate through computers, as you would deal with people in person. (See BRS Parent and Student Handbook for complete policy.)

2. **Active supervision –**Effective and efficient supervisory technique supporting appropriate student behavior: which includes teaching expected behaviors and routines, reminding and prompting, actively and positively scanning and moving, and interacting with students and acknowledging contextually appropriate behavior. (U. Oregon and U Conn.)

3. **Apology of Action** (See RESTITUTION)

4**. Behavior Plan** – Data driven intervention plan developed for an individual child, by the team, that articulates target behaviors, goals and objectives, and expectations and supports for students and staff involved

5. **Break it/Fix it**- Children take responsibility for fixing, as best they can, any problem or mess they created (See Responsive Classroom)

6. **Buddy Teacher**- a second teacher (in close proximity) who is enlisted for support to escort a child out of the child's classroom and into a suitable spot in his/her classroom visible to the teacher. A Buddy Teacher is useful when a child needs to leave the room due to continuing distracting behavior, repeated behavior after a time-out, the stimulation within the room is agitating a student, or when the teacher needs a break from a student. (See Responsive Classroom and Appendix)

7. **Bullying –** Threatening, harassing, humiliating, singling out or embarrassing individuals. When informed of a child being bullied, the staff member is expected to provide direction to the child, support resolution of the problem, or engage the assistance of the building administrator in resolving the situation and addressing the inappropriate behavior of the student who is doing the bullying or teasing. (See BRS Parent and Student Handbook)

8. **Communication log-** A tool for documentation and /or attempt to communicate with parents (See Appendix)

9. **Constructive behavior**-Serving to build or improve; positive relationships for self and with others

10. **Cueing** – Proactive strategies such as gestures, words or other signals to remind support or prevent specific behaviors.

11. **Cyber bullying**- The use of electronic means by a minor to torment, threaten, harass, humiliate, single out, embarrass or otherwise target another minor

12. **Destruction of property** – Damage to belongings; can be personal or school

13. **Developmental expectations**- Limitations of developmental characteristics and characterizations must be appreciated and considered in order to treat children fairly and equally.

14. **Developmental fit-** Ensuring a match between student's developmental stage, expectations and chosen intervention

15. **Empowering language-** Divided into 3 categories; reinforcing, reminding and redirecting. Purpose of giving specific positive feedback and recognizing students' efforts at self discipline, using reminders when students are beginning to get off track or just before a specific time or situation when the rules are particularly challenging to use, and when a child needs to be stopped and pointed in the right direction. Teacher focuses on specific actions of the child and speaks in a non-judgmental tone. - (Responsive Classroom)

16. **Energizers** - Quick breaks that get children moving, breathing, and having fun together—into your classroom day. Energizers are great ways to get children refreshed and refocused on learning

17. **Expected behavior**- Expectations and routines are set forth so the school can prosper in an atmosphere of respect and dignity, through team building and problem solving. (See BRS Student and Parent Handbook)

18. **Explosive child**- Students demonstrating a developmental delay in flexibility, frustration, tolerance and problem solving which results in challenging behaviors including severe non-compliance, outbursts and non-compliance. (Ross Greene)

19. **Intervention**- Treatment: care provided to improve a situation

20. **Loss of Privilege- (**A type of Logical Consequence) When students are not responsible, misuse materials, or misuse work areas, the adult will remove the material or privilege from them until they are ready to make better choices and try again. Privileges are opportunities to learn to be reliable and to take responsibility for following the rules when acting autonomously

21. **Logical Consequences-**There are three types of Logical Consequences:
1) Reparation: you break it, you fix it, 2) Loss of Privilege, and 3) Time to think and change. Responding to inappropriate or undesired behavior in a natural way that allows children to fix and learn from their mistakes while preserving their dignity. The adult must remain calm, be brief, and use direct language. Logical Consequences are: Respectful, Relevant and Realistic (Responsive Classroom)

22. **Non-compliance-** Failure or refusal to conform to established rules or expectations (includes ignoring adult directions)

23. **Peer Mediation-** The use of peers to promote reconciliation, settlement or compromise between conflicting students

24**. Performance Anxiety-** A condition of persistent and uncontrollable uneasiness, nervousness, stress, and worry

25. **Positive Climate-** A respectful and caring learning environment where children feel trust and belonging

26**. Premack's Principle-** Pairing of a less desirable activity with a more desirable activity**.** Ex. Homework paired with time on the computer

27. **Prevention-** Actions carried out to deter expected negative behavior (includes **Cueing**)

28, **Problem Solving-** Using conferencing, role playing, and other strategies to resolve problems with students (known as **Collaborative Problem Solving)**

29**. Regrouping-** To reorganize for renewed effort, after a temporary setback or situation

30. **Reparation-** (See **Break-It Fix-It)** Students are responsible for fixing the mess, material, or even the friendship they broke

31**. Responsive Classroom-** A general approach to teaching, based on the premise that children learn best when they have both academic and social-emotional skills

32**. Restitution** (formerly **Apology of Action**) A type of Logical Consequence;
Students develop their own way to fix a situation or a way to "right a wrong,"
May or may not involve an apology

33**. Social Curriculum-** Curriculum that builds social-emotional competencies and enhances children's self-management skills to build a sense of community

34**. Take a Break-** See **Time to Think and Change**

35**. Teasing-** Words or actions that cause others to doubt their worthiness as persons or learners; annoy, make fun of, mock

36. **Thorny-** Difficult, hard to deal with

37. **Time to Think and Change-** (formerly **Take a Break**) Type of Logical Consequence used in a consistent, calm, and non-punitive way; used for subtle acting out and obvious misbehaviors and gives students opportunity to calm down, develop self-control, and redirect their focus.

38. **Time out-** (See **Time to Think and Change**)

39**. Verbal Abuse-** Involves use of language, expletives, oral communication and written word that significantly affect a person's self-esteem, emotional well-being, and physical state

40. **Verbal put-downs-** Name calling, insults, verbal abuse, racist remarks

41. **Vulgarity-** An act or expression that is offensive or mean/ profanity

APPENDIX

Problem Solving Conference Plan Sheet

Teacher's name:
Student name:
Time and place of conference:

Reaffirm rapport:
For example: *You worked so hard at math time.*
Yesterday I saw you help Melanie find her independent reading book.

Talking about the problem:
For example: *I noticed that when you write you often forget punctuation and spelling that I know you know. What have you noticed?*

Teacher	Student

Naming the behavior as a problem and why it's a problem:
For example: *When I see you poking kids in line, I noticed that they get annoyed.*
It's important to keep your papers in your own area so that your tablemates will have space to work.
It's important that you read a just-right book so you can learn to be a better reader.

Inviting the student to work on the problem:
For example: *Would you like to work on this together?*
It'd like to help you with this if you'd like to work on it.
(If the student declines, simply restate rules and redouble your efforts to use logical consequences)

Student and teacher suggesting possible causes of the problem:
For example: *Why do you think this is happening? Might it be that you think that kids will want to be your friend if you snatch their hats and run away?*
Sometimes kids forget their homework because they think it's too hard. Could that be what's happening here?

Articulating a clear, specific goal to work on:
For example: *Your classmates will want to work with you if you share your thoughts calmly and respectfully. What about if we thought about some ways to do that?*
Which one of these three goals would you like to work on first?

Suggest possible solutions for working on the problem:
For example: *What might help you remember to wait your turn to speak in a group discussion?*

Solution that the teacher and the student agree to try:

Plan for follow up:

Plan for communication:
- Plan / strategy shared with specialists as appropriate
- Plan / strategy shared with parents as appropriate

SAMPLE

PARENT/GUARDIAN COMMUNICATION LOG (or use Powerschool)

Student Name:

Address:

Phone: Home _____Work _____ Cell

Email address:

Date
Communicated with
Initiated by
Type**
Reason
Outcome

Date
Communicated with
Initiated by
Type**
Reason
Outcome

****TYPE: E=EMAIL P=PHONE L=LETTER M=MEETING**

SAMPLE

Weekly Progress Report

_____'s Weekly Report.

Please read, sign, and return this report to school with your child. If you would like to discuss any part of the report with me, you can contact me at _____, between the hours of _____ and _____.

		Comments
Initials	Completed all classroom assignments.	
Initials	Completed all homework assignments.	
Initials	Used class time wisely.	
Initials	Understood the concepts covered.	
Initials	Contributed to class discussions and activities.	
Initials	Behaved appropriately.	
Initials	Respected the rights of other students.	
Initials	Respected authority.	

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date:_____

BEECHER ROAD SCHOOL
Woodbridge, CT 06525

CONDUCT REFERRAL

Notice to Parents/Guardian: The purpose of this report is to inform you of a disciplinary incident involving your child

Student Name: _____ Today's Date: _____
Grade: Date of Incident: _____ Teacher Name: _____

Reason(s) for Referral:

☐ Threatening ☐ Destruction of School Property ☐Rude/Discourteous/Uncooperative
☐ Hitting a Student/Teacher ☐Teasing ☐ Inappropriate Dress
☐ Disrespectful to Authority Figure ☐ Unacceptable Language ☐ Other _____

Action and Recommendation(s):

☐ Conference Held with Student ☐ Teacher Consequence ☐ Telephoned Parent
☐ Removed Student from Classroom ☐ Parent Conference Requested
☐ Financial Restitution ☐ Other: _____
TEACHER REPORT ☐ Logged in Power School

Date of Offense _____ Time of Offense _____ Location of Offense: _____

Description of offense:

Previous incidents involving student:

Corrective Efforts:

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT
Administrator _____ Date _____ Time _____

Action Taken

PARENT / GUARDIAN REPORT
☐ Please sign and return ☐ Need not be returned
Parent / Guardian Signature :
_____

Comments:

Responsive Classroom NEWSLETTER

Fall 2004 Vol. 16, No. 4

"Teacher-Child Problem-Solving Conferences", *Responsive Classroom* Newsletter, Fall 2004, Vol. 16, No. 4. Northeast Foundation for Children

Teacher-Child Problem-Solving Conferences

An adapted excerpt from *Teaching Children to Care* by Ruth Sidney Charney

Derek was a fifth grader who was avoiding writing. Whenever we had writing time, he would ask to go to the bathroom, and there he would linger. After observing this for a week, I decided to have a problem-solving conference with him.

A problem-solving conference is a technique for addressing a specific problem that a child is having. What makes it powerful is that it invites the child into a conversation and asks for the child's take on the situation. It begins with the teacher noticing the child's moods, actions, and interactions before helping the child come up with possible solutions. Conducted in a nonjudgmental way, the conference sets behavioral boundaries while giving children the opportunity for autonomous thinking.

About the Author

Ruth Sidney Charney has taught children in grades K–8 for over thirty years. She is a *Responsive Classroom* certified consulting teacher. She is the author of *Teaching Children to Care: Classroom Management for Ethical and Academic Growth, K–8* and *Habit sof Goodness: Case Studies in the Social Curriculum.*

Below are the basic steps that I went through in the conference with Derek. These steps are intended as guidelines to be adjusted to fit different situations. Some conferences take five minutes; others are spread out over several days. In some cases a conference leads to an immediate solution; in others the teacher and child need to revisit the issue several times.

One thing that is true of all problem-solving conferences, though, is that I always hold them away from the eyes and ears of the child's classmates. It's important

that the student has privacy for these talks, and that the teacher and child can both focus on the conversation without interruptions.

Step 1. Establishing what the teacher and student notice

A problem-solving conference begins with the teacher saying positive things s/he has noticed about the student—the student's interests, efforts, and goings-on. When we tell students we noticed what they've done well, we begin to establish a supportive connection, an essential step before talking about a behavior that isn't working.

With Derek, I began by saying, "I notice that you've had good ideas when we've brainstormed what we could write about. I also notice you pay attention and make helpful comments when kids share about their writing." I try to be specific in my noticings, and I name the "what," not the "why," of behaviors.

Next I say what behavior I've noticed that isn't working well. Here again, it's important to name specific, observable behaviors. I don't make judgments, interpret, or label. I simply describe, using a matter-of-fact tone.

"I notice that every writing time, you have to go to the bathroom," I said to Derek. I was careful not to say, "You want to avoid writing, so you say you have to go to the bathroom."

By naming the behaviors rather than interpreting them, I open the door for children to take note of their actions and offer their own interpretation. They are then more likely to take responsibility for their behavior.

After I say what I notice, I ask for the child's observations. I say simply "What do you notice?" in a neutral tone.

When I posed this question to Derek, he said, "I just have to go to the bathroom a lot."

"So you also notice that writing has become a bathroom time for you?"

"Yeah."

Derek was agreeing with my observation. If he had disagreed, I might have said, "Well, I notice that you want to go to the bathroom at every writing time. You notice that it's only sometimes. Maybe we should both notice extra hard for the next few days and then come back and compare." I would have made a plan with Derek for how to remember our observations. But I also would have continued with the conference. It's possible to proceed in addressing a problem while we continue to gather data.

Step 2. Naming the problem and the need to solve it

The next step is to help the child see why her/his behavior is a problem and to establish that the child wants to work with the teacher to solve it.

To Derek I said, "When you go to the bathroom every writing period, you lose important work time. By the time you get back, you have to hurry and often you only get about a sentence written."

"Yeah. There's not enough time."

"So your story doesn't get very far. For example, you don't have very much yet of the story you're writing now."

"Yeah. I only have the first page."

"I want you to be able to write complete stories that you can be proud of. So this seems like a problem we should work on. What do you think?"

"I guess so."

Here it's important for the teacher to express positive intent—for the student to get along with others, have friends, enjoy and take pride in his/her work, solve math word problems, or follow directions—and to show faith that the child will make progress.

Sometimes when we ask whether a child wants to work with us on the problem, we get only a slight nod or other gesture of agreement—which is fine. We go ahead. Other times, a child refuses adamantly: "No, I don't need help!" or "No, I don't think it's a problem." If this happens, it might be useless to push ahead with the conference. However, it's important that I state the expectations for behavior—for example, for the child to stop putting others down, to get work done, or to end aggressive behavior. I might say, "I see that it's hard to discuss this right now. I'd like to help. Let's see if the rude comments stop."

Step 3. Understanding the cause of the problem

When the student and I agree that there's a problem (even if there's only a moderate or muffled agreement from the student) and we agree there's a need to solve it, we explore the "why" behind the problem. I suggest possible causes based on an understanding of children's need to belong, feel competent, and have choices. I'm also aware that confusion or frustration about academics may be an underlying cause. I often use "Could it be…" questions to initiate this discussion.

To Derek I said, "When I see kids go to the bathroom at a particular time every day, I think they want to avoid something they don't like or that's hard for them. Could it be that writing seems hard for you this year?"

Derek grinned and said, "Sort of. It's sort of hard."

Children don't always give a clear answer to our "Could it be…" questions. A "yeah, maybe," a slight nod, or sometimes a "yes" disguised as a shoulder shrug may be all we get. But those signals let us know it's okay to go on.

With Derek, I probed further to get at why writing was hard for him. As happens with many children, I needed to name several possible causes before he heard one that sounded right. "Could it be that writing is hard because you have trouble thinking of ideas? Or could it be that you know your main ideas, but you get confused about what words to use? Sometimes writers worry about the spelling or the handwriting. Could that be true for you?"

"Sometimes I can't think of the words I want," Derek replied. Even when the cause of the behavior is very clear to me, I ask rather than assert. We gain children's confidence when we invite them to participate in the conversation. This confidence grows not because the teacher has brilliantly solved the mystery, but because the child was part of the process.

Step 4. Generating alternatives

"Do you think we could come up with some ways to help you remember the words you need?" I said next to Derek.

It often helps to list several alternatives before seizing upon one solution. In Derek's case, we decided together that he could brainstorm a list of words before starting a story. He could try some story mapping exercises. Or he could jot down main ideas before starting to write.

Step 5. Choosing one strategy to try

The conference ends with an oral or written agreement to try one of the alternatives. With several possible strategies on the table, I asked Derek to choose one idea to try. He chose to try brainstorming a list of words.

Always, it's important that students choose an alternative that they believe will work, not one that just pleases the teacher. Over the next days and weeks, the student and teacher both take note of whether the problem they identified gets resolved. If not, they learn from the experience and return to the list of alternatives to make a better selection.

The strength of this problem-solving approach is its openness to the child's perspective and ideas. We try to see children as they really are, exploring with them what they need in order to do better at school. Ironically the correct solution is not what's most important. What's most important is inviting the child into the conversation, searching together for solutions, and expressing faith in the child's ability to solve the problem.

You can read more about problem-solving conferences in:

Charney, Ruth Sidney. 2002. *Teaching Children to Care*. Greenfield, MA: NEFC.

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Buddy Teachers

Lending a hand to keep time-out positive and productive
by Ruth Sidney Charney and Alice Yang

It's language arts time in Mr. Jeffrey's third grade class. The children have settled into their writing assignments. Mr. Jeffrey is working with a small group when he notices Lucia across the room distracting her neighbors with chatter.

"Lucia, do your work and let others do theirs," he says in an even voice. Lucia quiets down, but a moment later takes out some fingernail polish, starts doing her nails, and offers to do her neighbors'. "Lucia, time-out," Mr. Jeffrey says calmly and firmly. Lucia goes to the time-out area but protests angrily. While in time-out, she bangs her feet loudly against a nearby bookcase, mutters insults about the teacher, and tries to catch her classmates' eyes. After a minute or two of this, Mr. Jeffrey says to another student, "James, go tell Ms. Daniels that we need her." James quietly leaves the room, returning shortly with Ms. Daniels.

Upon Ms. Daniels's arrival, Mr. Jeffrey says to Lucia, "You need to go with Ms. Daniels now." Wordlessly, Ms. Daniels escorts Lucia to her own classroom for a time-out there while Mr. Jeffrey continues working with the class.

Mr. Jeffrey and Ms. Daniels are buddy teachers, a pair of teachers in nearby rooms who have agreed to lend each other a hand with time-out, a nonpunitive strategy for helping children regain their self-control. In most cases, time-out takes place in the children's own classroom: A child who is not following the rules is calmly and matter-of-factly asked to go to a designated spot in the room for a minute or more to refocus before returning to the group. (To read about the positive use of time-out in the *Responsive Classroom* approach, see "Positive Time-Out".) But for those times when a student refuses to go to time-out, continues to act out while there, or resumes disruptive behavior upon returning to the group, teachers need a simple and effective way to handle the situation. Buddy teacher time-out is one such method.

Benefits of the approach

"Buddy teacher time-out can stop a negative cycle of behavior," says Gail Sperling, first and third grade teacher at Yavneh Day School in Cincinnati, Ohio. "Some children continue to be

stimulated by the other students in the room when they're in time-out, even if the teacher has taught children to focus only on themselves during this time," she says. "A change of scenery can help those children settle down." Other children might continue to act out with regular time-out as a way of testing the system. In these cases, says Gail, buddy teacher time-out shows them that the expectations for behavior are firm.

Another important benefit of buddy teacher time-out is that it allows the teacher to continue working with the class. With the buddy teacher taking care of the child for the moment, the teacher can continue with the lesson as planned. This shows the child and the rest of the class that disruptive behavior isn't going to derail the class's work.

Finally, buddy teacher time-out can help the teacher stay calm as well. "When you're at the end of your rope," says Gail, "having a buddy take the child gives you some distance." Later, when the teacher and child are both calmer, they can talk more constructively about the incident.

Tips for using buddy teacher time-out

Teach the procedure ahead of time

As with regular time-out, it's important to teach children the buddy teacher time-out procedure explicitly and give them opportunities to practice it.

Susan Smith, a third grade teacher at Rolling Hills Elementary School in Holland, Pennsylvania, introduces the procedure during the first weeks of school after introducing regular time-out. Just as with regular time-out, she explains that the purpose of buddy teacher time-out is to help children regain self-control. Keeping her message and tone of voice matter of fact, she talks with the class about how sometimes a person goes to time-out and still can't get calm. "I tell the children, 'When time-out in our own room isn't enough, we can try going to another room.'"

Then the class practices. Susan invites any child who wants to try a pretend buddy teacher time-out to do so. This year, over the course of several weeks, more than half the class went one at a time to sit for a few minutes in the time-out area in the buddy teacher's room.

Meanwhile, Susan and her buddy teacher also teach the rest of the class what to do if a classmate goes to a buddy teacher's room or a student comes to their room for a time-out. In both cases, the children are taught to keep doing what they were doing and not to interact with the child.

"All this practice makes the children feel that they know what to do, and it teaches them that time-out is for everyone," says Susan. It can help remove any stigma that children perceive around time-out, whether in their own room or another room.

Keep the talk to a minimum

In the opening example, Mr. Jeffrey does not argue, cajole, coax, or reason with Lucia. He simply gives her clear, brief instructions. The less the teacher engages with the student in this situation, the less interruption to the work of the class.

Similarly, Mr. Jeffrey does not make any extraneous comments to the messenger student or to Ms. Daniels. And Ms. Daniels does not ask what happened. She does not express sympathy for Lucia or scold her in any way. The job of the buddy teacher is to provide a safe haven for the student, not to interact with the child or process the incident. In any case, attempts to process or draw conclusions are seldom productive at this point.

Even the students are taught to be brief and to the point when they're asked to go get the buddy teacher. "Mr. Jeffrey needs you" or "Mr. Jeffrey says to please come to our room," a child might say, and leave it at that.

Show welcome when the child returns

After a while, perhaps at the end of the class period, the classroom teacher goes to the buddy teacher's room. If the child has regained control and is ready to rejoin the class, the two return to the classroom together. It's important at this point to convey welcome to the child and show that s/he is still liked and valued. "Have a seat at your desk, Lucia. We've just started our fish observations. I'll be over to help you in a minute," Mr. Jeffrey says with a smile. This conveys warmth and communicates Mr. Jeffrey's belief that Lucia can and will get back on task. Later, when Lucia and Mr. Jeffrey are both prepared to talk, they discuss what led to the need for a time-out. Mr. Jeffrey realizes that Lucia is a struggling writer and needs more support to initiate writing. The two talk about how Lucia will get that support in the future.

A reality of teaching

Teachers sometimes worry that needing to rely on a buddy teacher for help is a sign of incompetence. On the contrary, it's a sign of recognizing the reality of teaching. It's a simple fact that some children and some situations require greater intervention than can be provided by a single teacher who also needs to continue teaching the rest of the class. Turning to a colleague for help is a perfectly responsible way to make sure all children get the care and attention they need.

Common Questions about Buddy Teacher Time-Out

Isn't this a hassle for the buddy teacher?
Most teachers who have provided "buddy teacher service" say that the brief interruption is not a problem. Most children go to the buddy teacher's room quietly and recover quickly without incident. This is especially true if students in the buddy teacher's room know that their job is to leave the child alone.

Is it really safe for the buddy teacher to leave her/his class alone?
The two classrooms should be near each other so that the teacher only needs to be gone for about two minutes. The children should be taught that if their teacher needs to leave the room, then it's serious and their job is to keep working. However, if a teacher feels it's not safe to leave the

room, another adult, such as someone from the office, should take the child to the buddy teacher's room.

Wouldn't it be simpler to have the child go to the buddy teacher's room alone?
For safety's sake, it's important to keep an upset child within adult sight. Left alone, an upset child may never make it to the buddy teacher's room, may deface the hallway or bathroom, or may go outside the building.

What if the teacher her/himself escorts the child to the buddy teacher's room?
The trouble is this pulls the teacher's attention away from the class. It could also send the message that disruptive behavior gets more attention from the teacher than cooperative behavior.

Isn't it embarrassing for a student to have to leave the classroom and walk into another one?
Children often feel bad when they're not functioning well in a group. Teachers can't and shouldn't try to take away all the uncomfortable feelings. However, they can prevent a child from feeling further humiliated by the time-out procedure if they explicitly teach it to the class, have all the children practice it, and maintain a matter-of-fact demeanor when using it. It also helps to remind children often that we all forget the rules sometimes and that time-out is a way to help us get back on track while keeping the group safe.

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Seeing the "Inflexible-Explosive Child" in a New Light

Harvard University clinical psychologist Ross Greene has worked extensively with children, whom he has come to call "inflexible-explosive children." These are children who get frustrated very easily and often have explosive tantrums over seemingly trivial things. This July, Dr. Greene shared his insights about working with these children at NEFC's Responsive Leadership Institute in Greenfield, MA. In the following article, we report on some of Dr. Greene's key points.

Seeing the "Inflexible-Explosive Child" in a New Light

It's a typical afternoon in your classroom. The children are busy working on their art projects. You get their attention and tell them they have five minutes to finish up so the class can move into reading time. Five minutes later, most of the children are quietly getting their reading books out. Some are grumbling, reluctant to stop the art activity. One or two are trying to negotiate a few extra minutes of art time. Nothing unusual here.

But once in a while, you may have the child who simply won't budge. We'll call this child Karen. When you tell Karen again to put away the art, her face gets red and contorted. She hurls the art materials against the floor, yells expletives, and kicks her chair.

There is clearly something different about the Karens in our classes. Ross Greene, a Harvard University clinical psychologist who has worked with such children for 20 years, calls them "inflexible-explosive" children. While all children get frustrated sometimes, inflexible-explosive children – boys and girls – get frustrated far more easily than others do. They blow up or melt down over seemingly trivial things. During one of their episodes, they are genuinely unable to control their thinking and behavior. It's as if their brain has entered an altered state.

The unpredictability, frequency and intensity of inflexible-explosive children's explosions often alienate their classmates and cause deep pain to themselves, their families, and the adults they work with. A large number of these children are diagnosed with conditions such as oppositional defiant disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. But beyond knowing these labels, how do we help these children become more flexible and handle frustration more successfully?

"Unfortunately, there is no bible on how to deal with these children," says Greene. Experience has shown that standard behavior management strategies, such as using rewards and punishments, don't work very well to prevent or manage explosions in these children. The good news, says Greene, is that once we understand why these children behave as they do, new ideas for helping them may begin to emerge.

A lack of skills

The most important thing to know about inflexible-explosive children is that they don't want to be inflexible or explosive, according to Greene. Their meltdowns aren't intentional or planned, not a way to manipulate adults, get attention, test limits or engage in a power struggle. Indeed, watch a child during a meltdown and you'll see how miserable he or she is feeling. No child would want to feel that way. Listen to the child afterwards, and you'll often hear how sorry he or she is for having lost control. So lack of motivation to behave is not the problem.

Rather, Greene has learned that these children "lose it" because they lack the thinking skills needed for coping with frustration – skills such as expressing needs and desires effectively, delaying gratification, shifting from one mindset to another, thinking through possible solutions, and moving beyond rigid, black-and-white thinking to seeing the grays in a given situation. "Just as some children lag in acquiring reading skills and other children do not develop great athletic skills, still others … do not progress to the degree we would have hoped in the skills of flexibility and frustration tolerance," writes Greene in his book *The Explosive Child*.

What does this mean for teaching? Lots. If lack of motivation is not the problem, then attempts at motivating these children to control their tempers or punishing them for losing their tempers make no sense. If lack of skills *is* the problem, then we need to help create an environment that best allows children to catch up on these skills.

Increasing the odds of success

To be sure, helping an inflexible-explosive child is not a matter of following a simple recipe. It takes careful observations and assessments of the child, tailoring of strategies to fit the child, skill and art on the part of the adults, and a lot of effort. Progress may sometimes be slow or uneven. But, in his talk at the Responsive Leadership Institute, Greene outlined several steps that can increase the odds of success when working with an inflexible-explosive child:

Make sure all the adults who interact with the child work together. A lot of adults can help the child manage frustration, but it only takes one adult to make the frustration worse. So it's

important that teachers, other school staff, and parents all reach a common understanding of the child and agree on the same strategies to try.

Reduce demands on the child's tolerance for frustration. Choose your battles. Is it really important for the child to do *everything* you'd like him or her to do? Probably not, at least not yet. Demanding that the child rise to all your expectations now will only add to his or her frustration. Better to focus on one or two key issues at a time and let the others go for now. Some teachers and parents have found it helpful to prioritize using Greene's three-basket approach. It goes like this: ·

- Basket A – These are non-negotiable behaviors, things that are so important that the child must do them when you say to do them. Risk meltdowns for things in this basket only.
- Basket B – These are behaviors that you're willing to negotiate on. You're not willing to risk a meltdown for these, but they're important enough for the child to learn to handle eventually. Make a plan for working on these slowly with the child.
- Basket C – These are behaviors that, when you step back and look at the big picture, really aren't important for now. Drop these for the time being. Don't even mention them to the child.

One educator's experience using the basket approach

Get to know – in advance – which specific situations tend to frustrate the child and make some changes. Does the child get upset every time he or she is asked to do written math problems? Does working in small groups tend to cause trouble? Does the child get upset when he or she has to do the same activity for longer than a few minutes? If these are basket B behaviors, can you alter the assignment or task in some way that reduces frustration for the child, yet still achieves the main purpose? Let's say you want your class to write a paragraph on the story they've just read. But you know that Tina has trouble writing paragraphs and usually ends up throwing her pencil and yelling, "Writing is stupid!" If the purpose of the assignment is to get the child to reflect on the story, a reasonable alteration for Tina may be to have her tell her reflections orally to you or another student, with you or the student writing them down. If the purpose of the assignment is to reflect on the story *and* practice writing, could Tina dictate her thoughts, write one sentence, then have the listener write down the rest?

Learn to read the warning signs of a meltdown and take quick action to avert it. Signs may include sudden crankiness, whining, loss of energy, a certain look in the eyes, a change in voice, words like "I'm bored," "I'm tired," or "I hate you!" Maybe you back off, give the child some time to chill. Maybe you distract the child, directing his or her attention to something less frustrating. Or you can feed the child some words to help him or her articulate what's so frustrating. You can also coach the child in remembering what to do when frustrated. There's no one way to head off a meltdown. The trick is to know the child, have a repertoire of responses, and rehearse them ahead of time – in your own head and, if appropriate, with the child.

More on coaching

See past what comes out of a child's mouth during a meltdown. A lot of what a child says or screams in the grip of frustration is just "mental debris," says Greene. Taking the child's words personally, getting angry, or punishing him or her for offensive language will only further fuel the meltdown. Hard as it may be, the best thing to do is to read the child's behavior as a sign that his or her ability to think rationally is low or nonexistent. This is a time for keeping cool and helping the child find a way through his or her frustration.

An approach that opens doors

If there's one thing to remember about inflexible-explosive children, it's that they would behave well if they knew how, Greene emphasizes. This new way of seeing things is exciting because it opens doors, says Ruth Charney, a co-founder of the Northeast Foundation for Children who has taught children and teachers for nearly 30 years. It lets us think past labels and try to understand what's going on in the child's head. It lets us ask what specific skills the child needs to have to behave a certain way, then think about how we can, in a nonjudgmental way, help the child learn and practice those skills one manageable step at a time. While the approach is far from a quick or guaranteed fix, it takes us in the right direction. Says Charney, "I've seen teachers energized where before they were demoralized."

Using "Baskets": A School Counselor Comments "

The basket approach helps avoid so many complications," says Rebecca Winborn, a clinical social worker and a counselor at the Atrium School in Watertown, Massachusetts. Harvard University clinical psychologist Ross Greene, who has worked with inflexible-explosive children for 20 years, suggests this approach as a way to decide when to stand your ground with a child, when to negotiate, and when to let things go.

What should go into which basket depends on the child and other specifics of the situation. "What are the resources this child has to bring to this challenge? What are realistic expectations for this day, this moment?" These are the questions to ask when deciding what to put in which basket, says Winborn, who has used the approach with children at school as well as with her own son.

Safety issues, of course, go into basket A. For a young child, says Winborn, an example might be that the child holds your hand when crossing the street. No matter how hard he or she protests, you insist on holding hands. If the child has a meltdown, you both endure it because staying safe while crossing the street is so important.

Basket B is also for high priority behaviors, but ones that you judge to be negotiable and that you're willing to take some time to work on. Basket B is where the child learns the important skills of problem solving, often by compromising, according to Greene. Let's say David always wants to choose which game to play during recess. If he doesn't get to choose, he explodes. During a calm time, teachers can introduce David to the idea of compromise and help him use it: "How about you choose the game on Mondays and Wednesdays, and let others choose on the other days."

And basket C? That's for everything else – things to put aside completely for now. In some cases, basket C might include writing in cursive (in the scheme of things, delaying learning cursive may not be such a big deal), sitting still for 15 minutes (it's probably fine to let the child get up and move around after only 5 minutes), letting the child come to storytime with a doodle pad when the other children are asked to come empty-handed (explain to the class that Monica listens better when her hands are busy). Basket C should be very full, at least at first, says Greene. "Basket C helps us work toward the goal of reducing your child's global frustration…, which should pay dividends the next time he does become frustrated," he writes in *The Explosive Child*.

Does putting things in baskets mean you permanently excuse the child from certain important behaviors? Certainly not. You can and should increase expectations of the child as his or her skills for handling frustration increase. And, says Winborn, "It's not a matter of losing your sense of authority. It's helping children learn to make the decisions they need to make."
What about fairness? Is it fair to the other children that Tommy or Julie or Justin gets to do some things they don't get to do? "I've never seen children struggle with that. Adults struggle with that more," says Ruth Charney, a co-founder of the Northeast Foundation for Children with 30 years of teaching experience. Children are in fact very good at perceiving that different people have different needs and that "fair" means everyone gets what he or she needs. Fair means honoring our differences. The great thing about having a basket B and C for inflexible-explosive children, says Winborn, is that "their rigidity is honored."

Coaching at the Brink of Meltdown: Two Educators Reflect

There's a moment, when a child is teetering on the brink of meltdown, when teachers have a golden opportunity to teach frustration-coping skills through careful coaching.

Ruth Charney, a co-founder of the Northeast Foundation for Children and a teacher of nearly 30 years, says the keys to using this kind of coaching successfully are to use simple language, teach one clearly attainable skill at a time, give the child a clear action to take, and practice the action with him or her.

Charney talks about Sheila as an example. Asked to do something – tie her shoes, come indoors, or turn off the computer – Sheila would complain venomously before understanding what she was being asked to do or why. Her teachers realized that Sheila didn't know how to ask questions calmly and respectfully. So they provided her with language to use to respectfully request an explanation, namely, "Could you explain why I need to _____ (tie my shoes, come in, turn off the computer, etc.)?" They modeled the appropriate tone of voice. Then they practiced this with her during her calm times.

The teachers also knew that even with practice, Sheila would do it wrong sometimes. So they agreed that when Sheila slipped into verbal attacks when asked to do something, the teachers would say "Kachunk, rewind the tape," signaling to Sheila that she'd make a mistake and could try again. This was a quick, simple, nonjudgmental way to give her another chance to choose the effective way to handle the situation, says Charney. The method helped. "Ninety percent of the time she would speak more respectfully with adults," Charney says. "We worked on one skill. We changed that behavior." Then they could move on to her verbal skills with peers. "There were probably a hundred things she had to learn. But we worked on one at a time."

Rebecca Winborn, a clinical social worker and a counselor at the Atrium School in Watertown, Massachusetts, remembers working with Tim, an unusually bright kindergartner with strong verbal skills. Tim had a problem when anyone said he was wrong or made him feel less than the top kid around. Tim liked to play a certain card game with lots of complicated rules. When the other children challenged his understanding of the rules, he would break down into a long, intense tantrum. His teachers and other involved adults decided that it was important for him to be able to play the game without tantrums, which meant he had to learn to accept that the other children's understanding of the rules could be right and his could be wrong.

Tim's teachers learned to recognize his warning signs of meltdown. Just when things were getting tense during a game, they'd step in to help him deal with the moment. "It looks like this is difficult for you," they'd say. "Here are some choices you have. If you want to stay in the game, you'll need to understand that Andy knows the rules. Or you can leave the game." Sometimes Tim would choose to leave. Sometimes he'd choose to stay. Sometimes he'd have a tantrum, in which case he'd be removed from the game. Over the course of the year, as Tim became more able to gauge his own frustration level and more aware of the cost of meltdowns, he was able to stay in the game more and more often. But it took the teachers stepping in and offering a roadmap for coping. "With caring coaching from parents and teachers, he was

increasingly able to learn what the difficult situations were and what to do," says Winborn. Certainly the goal is to teach children to see the roadmap on their own more often. But while they're learning, they need others to do this work for them, says Winborn.

Like all strategies to handle difficult behaviors in children, this approach isn't a guarantee. But it can help, and it's one for educators to add to their repertoire.

Guiding Principles of Responsive Classroom

The social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum.

How children learn is as important as what they learn: Process and content go hand in hand.

The greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interaction.

Knowing the families of the children we teach and working with them as partners is essential to children's education.

To be successful academically and socially, children need a set of social skills: cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control.

Knowing the children we teach – individually, culturally, and developmentally – is as important as knowing the content we teach.

How the adults at school work together is as important as their individual competence. Lasting change begins with the adult community

How the adults at school work together is as important as their individual competence: Lasting change begins with the adult community.