

DOINGWHATWORKS



Presentation

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Teaching Social Skills to Students with Behavior Problems

July 2009

Topic: Reducing Behavior Problems

Practice: Modify Environment

Highlights

- Providing explicit instruction on relevant skills such as social problem solving, appropriate attention seeking, and self-management can reduce classroom disruption and promote student learning.
- Instructional strategies may include concrete examples, continual practice, and teacher feedback.
- Reinforcement should be awarded during, or immediately following positive behavior. If immediate reinforcement is not feasible, teachers can use “token” awards.
- This kind of instruction does not have to be segregated into separate programs but can be integrated into everyday instruction

Full Transcript

Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to the overview on teaching social skills to students with behavior problems.

Slide 2: Out of Control

Every day Mr. Weir's class follows a predictable pattern. Every few minutes, he has to stop teaching because of students who are acting out. Like many teachers, he spends about a third of his class time managing student behavior. In spite of all the time he's spending, his students' behavior never seems to change. He's beginning to suspect that the problem isn't that his student's are unwilling to behave but that they don't know how to.

Slide 3: Unable to behave

While it is important to clearly state behavior expectations in class, and doing so will help in many cases, some students simply don't know how to meet those expectations. Providing explicit instruction on relevant skills such as social problem solving, appropriate attention seeking, and self-management can promote the social and academic growth of both the students causing disruption and those around them. In addition, all students can benefit from lessons that help them deal with bullies, make friends, cope with stress, control anger and frustration, and communicate effectively with others.

Slide 4: Identifying students

It is helpful to identify students who would benefit from explicit skills training during regular class-time or through supplemental enrichment programs. Teachers can recommend targeted interventions for students who are routinely aggressive or those who are withdrawn and lack friends. Teachers and staff can also carefully observe a student to see if there are any circumstances where he or she is able to perform the behavior in question or if the student shows consistent difficulties in adapting to social situations or following rules.

Slide 5: Instructional strategies

Explicit instruction of relevant skills and appropriate behavior is strengthened and supported by instructional strategies that include concrete examples, continual practice, and teacher feedback.

Slide 6: Modeling

Modeling is an important aspect of any instructional approach. When teachers and staff consistently model good manners, social responsibility, honesty, caring, respect, and consideration of others' feelings, young students imitate them and begin to generally apply these attitudes in their interactions with others.

Slide 7: Student practice

Students need opportunities to practice new social skills. Role-play exercises are especially effective for younger children, while assigned roles and responsibilities gives students structured opportunities to put social skills into practice. Breaking down each behavioral skill into concrete, teachable steps can help students learn how to put new behaviors into practice.

Slide 8: Teacher feedback

Teacher feedback can increase students' understanding of what is expected of them. A briefly worded feedback that includes positive options for behavior is an efficient way to manage disruptive behavior. Feedback is also warranted when students demonstrate good behavior. Praise draws attention to the good behavior and encourages the student to keep it up. Rewarding or penalizing an entire class for individual actions is a powerful motivator for positive behavior.

Slide 9: Immediate reinforcement

Reinforcement should be awarded during or immediately following positive behavior. Immediate rewards may be a word of praise, a sticker, or some other act or item that can be quickly dispensed without interrupting the flow of instruction. If immediate reinforcement is not feasible, teachers can use "token" awards. These are symbolic rewards, such as marks on the board, which are collected over a period of time and turned in for later rewards.

Slide 10: Encouraging self-motivation

An ultimate goal of any behavior program is for student behavior to be self-motivated. Otherwise, students may revert to old patterns in the absence of rewards. Gradually diminishing the external rewards while helping students monitor their own behavior can promote internal motivation for appropriate behavior.

Slide 11: Infusing into everyday teaching

Teaching social skills does not have to be segregated into separate programs but can be integrated into everyday instruction. Teachers can design academic lesson plans that use real-life issues as the context for academic subject matter while drawing connections with social-emotional learning and positive character values. This approach can be useful for schools that have widespread, chronic issues around a particular behavior or lack the time or finances to add a stand-alone course to the curriculum.

Slide 12: A calmer classroom

Mr. Weir isn't spending a third of his class time dealing with discipline anymore, but is using that time to go over the actual curriculum. The whole class is more focused and attentive, and performance is up across the board. Students who had felt intimidated are interacting more with their classmates, and some of the kids he had the most difficulty with have started encouraging other kids to behave better both in and outside of class.

Slide 13: Learn more

To learn more about teaching social skills to students with behavior problems, please see the additional resources on the Doing What Works website.