

Introduction to Behavior Management in

Introduction to Behavior Management in Special Education

Special Education

(A concise, easy-to-read guide for teachers, paraprofessionals, and support staff)

1. Why Behavior Management Matters

Reason	What It Looks Like in the Classroom
Promotes Learning	Reduces disruptions, giving all students more instructional time.
Ensures Safety	Prevents harm to the student, peers, and staff.
Supports Legal & Ethical Obligations	Aligns with IDEA, Section 504, and school-wide policies.
Builds Positive Relationships	Encourages trust, respect, and motivation for students with diverse needs.

2. Core Principles

Principle	Key Idea	Practical Tip
Prevention First	Anticipate triggers and design the environment to reduce them.	Use clear visual schedules, organized work areas, and predictable routines.
Positive Reinforcement	Increase desired behaviors by rewarding them.	Choose immediate, specific, and meaningful reinforcers (e.g., praise, token, preferred activity).
Consistency & Predictability	Apply rules and consequences the same way every time.	Keep a behavior log and share expectations with all staff and families.
Individualization	Tailor strategies to each student's strengths, needs, and functional behavior assessment (FBA) results.	Develop a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) that reflects the student's unique profile.
Data-Driven Decision Making	Use systematic observation to guide interventions.	Record frequency, duration, and antecedent-consequence patterns weekly.

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Principle

Key Idea

Practical Tip

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Collaboration

Involve teachers, paraprofessionals, and regular team meetings to review data and adjust plans. families, and related service providers.

3. Foundations of a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)

1. Identify the Target Behavior

- Write it in observable, measurable terms (e.g., “throws a pencil within 10 seconds of receiving a math worksheet”).

2. Collect Baseline Data

- Use ABC charts (Antecedent?Behavior?Consequence) or scatterplots for at least 3–5 days.

3. Analyze Patterns

- Look for common triggers (time of day, task difficulty, sensory input) and maintaining consequences (attention, escape, access to items).

4. Develop a Hypothesis

- Example: “When a student is given a demanding reading task (antecedent), he covers his ears and leaves his seat (behavior) to avoid the task and receives a short break (consequence).”

5. Write the FBA Report

- Include: behavior definition, data summary, hypothesis, and recommended interventions.
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4. Building a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)

BIP Component

What to Include

Clear Goals

Specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time?bound (SMART) objectives.

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BIP Component

What to Include

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Preventive Strategies

Environmental modifications, schedule adjustments, pre-teach expectations.

Teaching New Skills

Explicit instruction, modeling, role-play, and practice of alternative behaviors.

Reinforcement System

Type (social, tangible, activity), schedule (continuous ? intermittent), and fading plan.

Response to Problem Behavior

Tiered consequences (e.g., verbal reminder ? loss of privilege ? brief time-out), always linked to the function of the behavior.

Crisis Management

Safe, legally compliant procedures for severe aggression or self-injury (e.g., de-escal