

Best Practices for Addressing Behaviours of Concern



Pearson

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Behaviours, behaviours, behaviours... They are all around, and many times they are hard to address. Educators are bombarded each and every day with varying behaviours and many times are overwhelmed by the amount that they face in their classrooms. These behaviours of concern can totally compromise a classroom if they are not identified and addressed to minimize or distinguish their presence within the educational setting.

Behaviours of concern are those behaviours that are addressed on a daily basis and within the classroom setting. These are not behaviours that would typically result in a student being sent to the office. These behaviours are reported or discussed as: in-class incidents, teacher-managed incidents, level 1 incidents, minor infractions. The behaviours, strategies and techniques are ones that would be used by a teacher to "handle their own business" or "handle behaviours in house."

These types of behaviours would range from anger and cheating to blurting out and not having needed materials. These types of behaviours are not considered office referral type behaviours, but for lack of a better term, "annoying." When students are not motivated or become disorganized it is frustrating for a teacher and in turn frustrating for the student. These lower end behaviours on the Behaviour Scale are the ones that happen the most and therefore can be extremely difficult to handle day in and day out, especially when it is the same students doing the behaviour(s).

An example of these high-frequency behaviours and their occurrence would be a large urban district that has an enrollment of 53,000 students. From this population, 41,000 teacher-managed/ in-class incidents were recorded which represents 77% of the population. This would show that nearly 8 out of every 10 students would display a Behaviour of Concern. But is that really true? No, when the data is drilled-down it shows that a very small fraction of the population, what can be called habitual students, accounted for nearly 12% of the incidents. This shows that if those students become a focus and their behaviours identified, it should provide an educator more time to teach and less time managing behaviour.

From a quick poll of teachers in the Spring of 2015, it was found that there were 3 behaviours that rose to the top for teachers in regards to their frequency and high need to be distinguished. They were: Disrespect, Lack of Motivation, and Blurting Out. All of these behaviours have ways that educators might respond and ways that they could respond. The action that is taken towards these behaviours can make all the difference.

First, the issue of disrespect. It can be handled many ways and if handled in a very reactive manner the educator might return the disrespect, give ultimatums, or respond negatively in front of the entire class. All of these could exacerbate the behaviour. A few ways one could respond is by talking privately with the student, discuss different ways to handle situations beside being disrespectful, or redirect the student to another

topic or activity. This could reduce the chances the behaviour escalates.

Secondly, students who show a lack of motivation can be very hard to reach. Responses to this behaviour can be assigning more work to punish the student, busy work, or using disingenuous praise. These can be very natural reactions to the behaviour but it may be better to try some cooperative group work, emphasize the strengths of the student, or use a task analysis/chunking approach. These may better serve the student as well as maintain some motivation by them.

Finally, when looking at blurting out, which was rated as the most common and bothersome, again natural instincts can emerge and those can create more problems for the teacher and student. These first reactions may be to lose patience with the student, attack the student instead of the behaviour, or use the shhh technique. These may work short term but again may make the behaviour worse. One could use very descriptive answer techniques and remind the students of these techniques or challenge the class to be disruption free for a certain period of time. All of these were reactive techniques that might be done or could be done by the educator, but it is important to note the proactive approaches that can be taken to manage many behaviours including the three mentioned.

Whether it be the three specific behaviours mentioned or the myriad of other behaviours that are displayed there are some excellent proactive strategies that can be beneficial to employ. Here are a few:

1. Be a positive role model;
2. Have clearly defined expectations;
3. Exhibit an enthusiasm for learning;
4. Find multiple ways to engage students; and
5. Build positive relationships with student.

This short list of five can go a long way in providing a very effective and efficient learning environment for everyone.

The technique and strategies may vary from behaviour to behaviour, but the commitment and passion to helping students doesn't. That commitment and desire to make a difference in a student's life will be the catalyst that helps when providing strategies, consequences, etc. for a student. So no matter if it is listed as a behaviour of concern or not, all behaviours concern professionals. The ultimate goal is to help alleviate those behaviours that create barriers for students to be productive members of the greater community.

About the Author

Adam Bauserman has nearly 20 years of experience in education as both a general education and special education teacher as well as a behaviour specialist and instructional specialist. His experience has been in Colorado, Indiana, and Texas. He has also served as an instructor at Ball State University and a state project coordinator for the state of Indiana. Adam joined Review360 in 2014 as an implementation specialist. His role is to train and support all stakeholders utilizing Review360 by providing ongoing educational professional development.

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