

## **Lessons from the Field: Things to Do and Things to Stop Doing when Working with Students with Emotional and Behavioral Problems**

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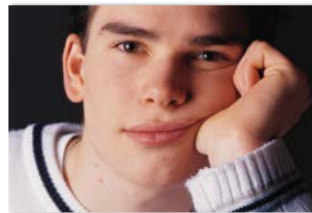
### **What We Learned**

- ❖ Beliefs are Powerful
- ❖ Language is Important
- ❖ Clear Expectations are Critical
- ❖ Use Point Sheets and Data Collection for Decision-making
- ❖ Problem-Solving Instead of Punishment
- ❖ The Importance of High Quality Instruction
- ❖ Develop Parent Partnerships
- ❖ Things You Should Never Do

## What Do You Hope to Achieve?

- ❖ Begin with the end in mind...
- ❖ What do we want our program/school/classroom to look like?
- ❖ How do we want children to treat one another?
- ❖ How do we want children to treat us?
- ❖ How do we want our students to remember us at the end of the year?
- ❖ How do we want our students to remember us in 10 years?

Take a minute to think about your classroom/ program/ school...



Why would students want to be there?



**We Believe**

**Staff CAN...**

- make positive and sometimes profound differences in the lives of our students
- talk positively about our students; their families, and our colleagues
- change student behavior by changing staff behavior
- examine the effectiveness of our efforts through progress monitoring

This slide features a blue vertical bar on the left with a decorative pattern of overlapping circles. A blue oval containing the text 'We Believe' is positioned at the top left. A large yellow rounded rectangle on the right contains the text 'Staff CAN...' followed by a bulleted list of four items.

**We Believe**

**Students CAN...**

- meet the expectations we set for them
- think before they act
- learn to manage themselves
- make positive changes in their lives
- be held accountable for their actions

*... if we take the time to teach them the skills they are lacking...*

This slide features a blue vertical bar on the left with a decorative pattern of overlapping circles. A blue oval containing the text 'We Believe' is positioned at the top right. A large yellow rounded rectangle on the left contains the text 'Students CAN...' followed by a bulleted list of five items. At the bottom of the yellow rectangle, there is a line of italicized text.

We chose to begin thinking about our students as the successes they would be in the future, not as the failures they have been in the past.



### A Positive Focus

*“In the past I was always looking to find any misbehavior that could lead to problems in my classroom. When I started looking at what my students were doing right, I started seeing students in a new light.”*



## Your Classroom/School

Make it a place where *students, parents* and *teachers* want to be and where they want to come to learn from you and from one another

Make it the Very BEST Place they can be in their day

## Think about having simple achievable goals



To develop a safe and civil learning environment



To create a rich and engaging curriculum



To treat parents as partners in the educational process

## The Power of Positive Language

*Words do more than deliver content*

Language may be a teacher's most powerful tool for helping students develop self-confidence and a sense of belonging. (Denton, 2008)

What kinds of feelings come with these words?

destroy	ugly	flunk	threat
jail	explode	hurt	complain
revenge	ruin	forbid	assault
mean	cheat	stupid	force

What kinds of feelings come with these words?

kindness	reward	play	achieve
forgive	improve	hope	success
joy	respect	calm	confidence
happy	honor	celebrate	grow

Your words have impact

*"I'm not sure you are Princeton material..."*

--told to Michelle O'Bama by her high school guidance  
counselor

## Work to Improve the Language You Use in the Classroom

- Tell students what to do (*not what to stop doing*).
- Praise publicly.
- Redirect and correct privately.
- Wait between directions.
- Focus on the positive 100% of the time.
- Check in with students about how they feel because how students feel about school is important.

How can you know what students think about being in your classroom/school/program?



***Ask them.***



**THE FIVE-QUESTION STUDENT SURVEY**




Students: Please complete this short survey, giving your honest thoughts about our classroom. No names, please; this is confidential.



















1. One thing I like about my classroom is  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. One thing I don't like about my classroom is  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. One thing that I would like to change in my classroom is  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. One thing that I would like my teacher to keep doing is  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. One thing that I would like my teacher to stop doing is  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Supporting Students with Emotional and Behavioral Problems: Prevention and Intervention Strategies by Lee Kern, Michael P. George, & Mark D. Weist. Copyright©2016 by Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co. All rights reserved.

**STUDENT SURVEY OF CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT**

Students: Please read each item and circle the response that shows how you feel using the following code:

 = Yes, I agree!       = I sometimes agree.       = I do not agree.

1. I feel comfortable and safe in my classroom.  
            
2. My teacher welcomes me to class and talks with me about my interests.  
            
3. I have friends in my classroom.  
            
4. I know the rules and routines in my classroom.  
            
5. My teacher notices me when I follow the rules and praises me.  
            
6. I know how to get help from my teacher if my work is too hard.  
            
7. One thing that I like best about my classroom is  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. One thing that I would like to change about my classroom is  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## Changing How We Speak

- ❖ Decide to make a change.
- ❖ Think in new language patterns.
- ❖ Take a breath and think before you speak.
- ❖ Catch yourself when using counterproductive language.
- ❖ Hold adults in the room accountable.
- ❖ Take data on language use.

### Teacher Language Assessment

Teacher:

Observer:

Record the teacher's statement under each heading.

+ = positive statement made to the class as a whole

S+ = positive statement made to an individual student

N = neutral statement (e.g., open your book to page 16, move your desks into a circle)

- = negative statement (e.g., reprimand, correction)

+	S+	Neutral	-

## Describe Centennial School with **One Word**

Students, parents, and teachers were asked in a survey to describe Centennial School with one word. Over 200 people responded to the survey.

### Top 5 Words

1. **hope**
2. **family**
3. **positive**
4. **helpful**
5. **fun**

Centennial School  
Lehigh University

## Take 5 Expectations

 **Be There Be Ready**


 **Be Responsible**

 **Be Respectful**

 **Maintain Personal Space**







 **Follow Directions**







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## Classroom Expectations


     	<p><b><u>Be There Be Ready:</u></b> Have materials available Enter room quietly and sit appropriately Remain in assigned area Focus eyes on speaker Hand in homework Know your schedule</p> <p><b><u>Be Responsible:</u></b> Participate in class Work quietly Keep area and notebook organized Focus on self Help peers Use an anger management strategy when upset Accept consequences</p>	<p><b><u>Be Respectful:</u></b> Remain quiet when others speak Raise hand to speak Use appropriate gestures Speak politely to others Wait patiently Encourage others to do well Use polite words to resolve conflict</p> <p><b><u>Maintain Personal Space:</u></b> Maintain appropriate social distance Use materials appropriately Stay safe</p> <p><b><u>Follow Directions:</u></b> Follow directions the first time Ask questions when confused</p>
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Centennial School  
Lehigh University

## Hallway Expectations

     	<p><b><u>Be There Be Ready:</u></b> Go directly to assigned area Report to area at appropriate time Enter rooms quietly and sit in seat</p> <p><b><u>Be Responsible:</u></b> Keep hallways neat Focus on self Have an escort, hall pass, or point sheet at all times Use an anger management strategy when upset</p>	<p><b><u>Be Respectful:</u></b> Respect school property Wait patiently Use polite words to resolve conflict Speak politely to others Use appropriate gestures, language, volume and greetings</p> <p><b><u>Keep Hands &amp; Feet to Self / Personal Space:</u></b> Keep hands and feet to self Maintain appropriate social distance Stay safe</p> <p><b><u>Follow Directions:</u></b> Follow directions the first time</p>
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## Ways to Teach Classroom Expectations

- ❖ Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse
- ❖ "Remind me..."
- ❖ Make posters
- ❖ Rule Unscramble
- ❖ Role Plays
- ❖ Draw pictures of rules
- ❖ "Rule of the Day" game
- ❖ Pre-correction / prompts
- ❖ Real-life pictures (take pictures of students following the rules / tape to desk)
- ❖ Develop social story for teaching rules
- ❖ Awards / Notes Home

## The Power of Point Sheets

- Identify Expectations
- Teach and Practice Pro-Social Behavior
- Reinforce New Skills
- Monitor student progress
- Communicate with Families



## Some Point Sheet Tips


- ❖ Use a 0, 1, 2 scale
- ❖ Use “earn” not “given”
- ❖ Establish achievable criteria 80%
- ❖ Review expectations prior to activity
- ❖ Consider performance across the whole period
- ❖ Evaluate performance privately at the end of the activity
- ❖ Record in excel and bankbooks at day’s end

**Daily Point Sheet**

Work completed (Y/N)	Y	Y	N	Y	N	40	Y	Y	Y	72	Y	Y	Y	104		
Expectations	Arriva l	A.M. Mtg.	Read	Read	Write	AM Rear d	Math	Specia l	Lunch	Reces s	Story	Scienc e	Center s	P.M. Mtg.	Total Pts.	Goal
<b>Be there, be ready.</b> (stay in seat/area)	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	26	22
<b>Be responsible.</b> (work quietly/ participate)	2	2	1	1	0	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	21	22
<b>Be respectful.</b> (raise hand/ use positive language)	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	23	22
<b>Be safe.</b> (keep hands and feet to self)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	25	22
<b>Follow directions</b>	2	1	0	1	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	19	22
Total (per period)	9	8	6	8	4	9	9	9	9	9	10	8	8	8	114/ 140	
Running Total Points	9	17	23	31	35	44	53	62	71	80	90	98	106	114	81	%
Problem Solving (Tally)			/			/									2	
Coping Strategies (Tally)						/							/		2	


## Point Sheet Caveats

*"I tried using a point sheet, but it doesn't work."*



Reinforcers	Feedback	Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Competing reinforcers exist within the token economy (e.g., excessive bonus points, "side deals")</li><li>• Points are not linked to meaningful rewards</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feedback is punitive and reproachful</li><li>• Feedback is vague and non-specific</li><li>• Feedback is not given at all until points are awarded</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expectations are not clearly defined</li><li>• Expectations are not frequently reviewed</li><li>• Expectations are described negatively</li><li>• Expectations are not consistently reinforced across staff</li></ul>

## Data: A starting point for teaching...



When we see the challenging behavior of our students as a reflection of their **skill deficits**, we have a starting point for teaching ... a starting point for building success.

## A few simple management strategies

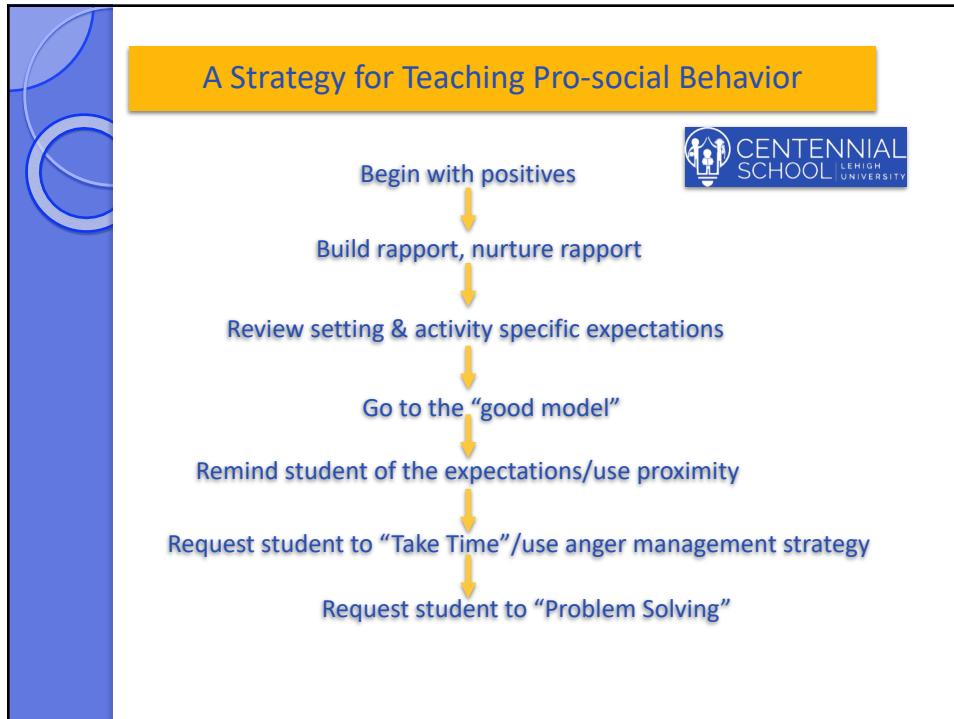
- ❖ Structure every minute of the day
- ❖ Eliminate “down time”
- ❖ Develop classroom routines
- ❖ Achieve consistency with teaching partners
- ❖ Minimize classroom interruptions
- ❖ Remain positive, proactive and preventive

## Model the skills you want to teach

- Patience
- Self-control
- Problem-solving
- Kindness
- Perseverance






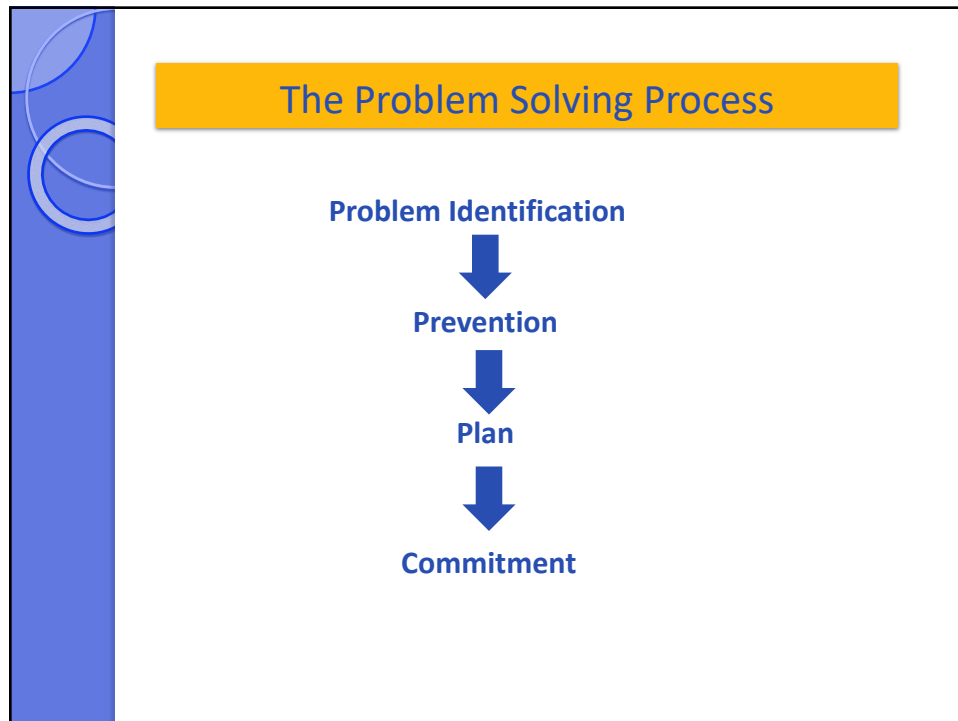


### Taking Time Strategy

I feel \_\_\_\_\_.  
(emotion or physical feeling)

I need to take time.





So, why Problem Solving?

- It is an instructive approach - applicable to all students.
- Allows input for learning, while holding students responsible.
- It targets student's skill deficits.
- It generates data for functional behavior assessment and development of behavior intervention plans.
- It increases academic time.

Adapted from Kern, George & Weist (2016)

A vertical block titled "So, why Problem Solving?" is centered on a white background. The title is in a yellow box. Below it, five bullet points are listed in blue text. At the bottom right, there is a citation: "Adapted from Kern, George & Weist (2016)".

Problem Solving	
Works when...	Is ineffective when...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Viewed as instructional</li><li>• Skills are taught</li><li>• Student participates in creating the plan</li><li>• Action plan is implemented by all team members</li><li>• New skills are prompted, recognized and reinforced</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Viewed as punishment</li><li>• Skills are assumed</li><li>• Teacher dictates the plan to student</li><li>• Action plan is inconsistently implemented by team members</li><li>• New skills are expected, but not acknowledged</li></ul>

**Learn to identify early warning signs**


Agitation/irritability

Refusal to comply with simple requests

Tears/pouting

Voice gets louder

Face gets red/ pacing



## Strategies for Managing Escalated Behavior

- ❖ Stay objective rather than reactive ...
- ❖ Look past the blustery behavior and see a child in crisis.
- ❖ Depersonalize the situation...change your response.
- ❖ Give the student a chance to regain composure ... and “save face”.

## Room Clear

*What is a room clear?*

An “emergency procedure” that removes other students from a potentially dangerous situation by escorting students who are not involved in a violent episode to a “safe place”.

## High Quality Instruction

A rich and engaging academic curriculum helps prevent the occurrence of problem behaviors and also prepares students for reintegration to home school environments.

## Academics: The “heart of the program”

- ❖ The academic curriculum supplies the milieu for teaching proper school and classroom behavior
- ❖ The academic curriculum should be designed to be accessible to students, to stretch their skills, capture their interests and cause them to be actively engaged

## Accountability

- ❖ Because completion of academic assignments is crucial for school success, we suggest you hold students accountable for their schoolwork.
- ❖ Understand that students sometimes engage in disruptive and otherwise inappropriate behavior to avoid academic tasks and that allowing them to escape work through inappropriate behavior serves to reinforce poor behavior.
- ❖ Teach students that unsatisfactory conduct in class does not release them of their responsibility for work completion.

## Establish Parent Partnerships

- ❖ Strength-based Intake Procedures
- ❖ Parent Corner
- ❖ Parent-Student handbook
- ❖ Community Liaison
- ❖ Open Door Policy
- ❖ Daily Written Communication
- ❖ Weekly Phone Contacts
- ❖ Parent Nights
- ❖ Honor Roll Breakfasts
- ❖ Spirit Days
- ❖ Awards Ceremonies
- ❖ Talent Show
- ❖ Spring Carnival
- ❖ Graduation Ceremony

## Work Through Difficult Situations

- ❖ Define a difficult situation as “ours” to solve
- ❖ Listen to understand
- ❖ Recognize many perspectives
- ❖ Document carefully
- ❖ Follow through with commitments

## Some Things We Stopped Doing

- ❖ Raise our voices at students
- ❖ Use sarcasm
- ❖ Use chain commands
- ❖ Speak disparaging about students
- ❖ Telling “war” stories about students
- ❖ Speak disparaging about parents
- ❖ Rough housing with students

### Some Things We Stopped Doing

- ❖ Circling agitated students with adult males
- ❖ Physically forcing students to comply with our demands and requests
- ❖ Grabbing students when they are upset, especially escalated
- ❖ Shouting directives and commands at one another during times of “crisis”

### Some Things We Stopped Doing

- ❖ Talking about students’ misbehaviors in the presence of other students
- ❖ Demeaning students’ efforts with such statements like, “You’re just being lazy,” or “Just try harder.”
- ❖ Assuming students “should know better”.
- ❖ Talking negatively about our fellow co-workers.




## Testament to three propositions

First, that kids—any kids—even ones with emotional and behavioral problems, do well in school **if they can...** and if they don't do well, it's likely because they **lack the skills** to respond adaptively to life's challenges.



Second, that children and youth with emotional and behavioral problems can learn to think before they act; that they can learn to control their emotions and make appropriate choices, and that they can be held accountable for their behavior

*...once we, the adults in their lives, take the time to teach them how to do so.*



And third, when students with emotional and behavioral problems learn to control themselves and make responsible choices, the adults in their lives won't feel the need to control them through aversive practices like seclusion rooms and physical restraint.