Evidence-Based Behavior Management Strategies for Children With ADHD in a Preschool and Kindergarten Classroom Setting

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What are Behavior Management Strategies?

Behavior Management refers to the use of intervention strategies that includes the principles of reinforcement and punishment with the focus on increasing the frequency of desirable and appropriate behaviors and decreasing the frequency of problematic and disruptive behaviors. A behavior intervention is a set of strategies that are developed to improve a student's age-appropriate behaviors. The early childhood special educator must monitor and assess the student's age-inappropriate behaviors. She must first identify the antecedent event that occurred outside of the classroom, address the behavior that is demonstrated in the classroom and then determine an age appropriate consequence for the student. The early childhood special educator must implement evidence-based interventions that are directly related to students' targeted behavior. Once the interventions are implemented, the early childhood special educator must monitor their effectiveness and modify whenever necessary.

Why are Behavior Management Strategies Important for Students with ADHD?

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, ADHD is classified under Attention Deficit and Disruptive Behavior Disorders. Therefore, students with ADHD often do not have sufficient control over their thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Preschool and kindergarten-aged students often display impulsivity and the inability to regulate their behavior. This may be due to academic and situational demands that appear overwhelming to the student. Students who exhibit repeated outbursts or demonstrate frequent impulsive behaviors are likely to experience school failure and the eventual diagnosis of an emotional behavior disorder. The purpose of starting and implementing behavior management strategies in preschool and kindergarten is because students with ADHD function best in a highly structured environment with clear expectations, concise directions, and routines. Once these are established, students are able to better monitor and self-regulate their behaviors in the classroom. Students with ADHD will need further teacher assistance to remain engaged, focused and on-task in the classroom. Students with ADHD will need further teacher assistance to remain engaged, focused and on-task in the classroom. Once these are established, students are likely to experience school failure and the eventual diagnosis of Disruptive Behavior Disorders. Therefore, students with ADHD need further teacher directions, and routines. Once these are established, students are likely to experience school failure and the eventual diagnosis of ADHD.

Behavior Management Strategies for Students With ADHD

Behavior management and modification techniques to guide and motivate individuals to change their actions or interactions in certain settings. Teachers of students with ADHD use behavior management at the classroom level to alter their inappropriate behavior in a given setting and redirect it to promote and strengthen more suitable behaviors during a classroom situation.

Motivation: Motivation is what causes students to operate, behave, and perform. Motivation involves the biological, emotional, social, and cognitive forces that activate behavior. Teachers that use different forms of motivational tactics in their classroom have greater success in altering and modifying the behavior of their students with ADHD.

- Intrinsic Motivation: engaging in behaviors because it is personally rewarding to the individual. In the classroom, a teacher in an early-primary classroom may encourage collaboration or ownership of their environment to increase intrinsic motivation. For young students with ADHD, the teacher should provide ongoing feedback and praise to the students, making them comprehend which behaviors are appropriate or inappropriate while encouraging intrinsic motivation.

- Extrinsic Motivation: an individual is motivated to perform or act to earn a reward or avoid punishment. Students with ADHD are provided with tangible objects when being rewarded for appropriate behavior, and loss of privileges or other punishments to clearly define when they are acting inappropriately in the classroom context. In the classroom, a teacher may establish a reward-system such as a behavior chart, sticker board, or a behavior contract to help students monitor and modify their own behavior. This in turn will give them greater responsibility.

Routine: Students with ADHD often have executive function deficiencies. Therefore, these students struggle with organization and time management skills. Establishing a simple routine in school and at home allows opportunities for these students to focus, stay organized, and succeed academically and behaviorally. To reinforce routines in preschool and kindergarten, teachers typically post routines with picture cards and symbols so students easily comprehend expectations during the day. Teachers can assist during transitions with verbal reminders or music sounds to ease the changing process. Routines that are continued at home ensure that students know what is expected of them at all times. A student’s positive reaction to a predictable routine may also lead to a decrease in his or her off-task behavior.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) is a systematic approach that facilitates the social, culture and behavior supports that all school aged children need in their lives. This system is started early in school and can be administered all the way through high school

- PBIS uses a variety of strategies to help the students complete a core elements of social and behavioral skills that are needed for their success. Within the classroom, students receive this support when working individually or within small groups.

- There are three different tiers of PBIS Supports, that allow the students to move through the program and gain the skills need for their adapting social and academic progress. They are the primary tier, secondary tier, and the tertiary tier. The tiers start with the basic information or skills that the student must learn and then is more in-depth coverage of skills as the student advances in his or her learning.

Reinforcement Strategies

- Flexible seating: Have the students be able to move around the room. Use adapted seating with stimulation supports such as yoga balls, wheeled chairs, and wobble chairs.

- Goal-setting: Assist the student in setting up achievable goals for each topic, task, or classroom activity.

- Non-verbal supports: Tapping on the shoulder, desk, or a pat on the student’s back.

- Visual and Environmental Prompts: Having a visual such as an activity schedule to remind the students of the work to be completed.

- Music: Play calming music playing during work times or play a specific song when changing the task or moving on to a new activity.

- Reward system: If the student reaches his or her goals, he or she can gain an intrinsic reward such as receiving extra reading time or receiving extra time at the computer with a preferred classmate.

- Daily notes or emails sent home: Send home reminders of what was worked on and how the parents can incorporate the strategies in their household.

Conclusions

Addressing the needs of students with ADHD can be often complex. It requires time and energy to assess the students’ unique necessities as well as their surrounding environments. Effectively teaching young students with ADHD often requires numerous behavior management strategies and interventions both in and outside of the classroom. When teachers, parents, and other educational professionals collaborate and reinforce agreed upon approaches, these students will succeed in areas of academics, behaviors and social skills. Overall, extensive training and awareness for all individuals involved in the students’ academics and areas of behavior management strategies will promote long-term success for preschool and kindergarten students with ADHD in the classroom setting.

Bibliography


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