



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Reducing Disruptive Behavior: A Multifaceted Challenge

Michael H. Epstein, Ph.D. • March 2009

Topic: Reducing Behavior Problems

Highlights

- Professor Michael Epstein, the chair of the expert panel that authored the IES Practice Guide, “Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom,” reviews the five recommendations of the Practice Guide.
- The Practice Guide offers practices for general education teachers and school administrators.
- The recommendations aim to promote positive student-student and student-teacher social interactions as a basis for student learning and academic growth.
- In schools characterized by diverse student populations, teachers and administrators need to develop cultural awareness to be able to better understand student needs.
- Ongoing data collection is critical for the success of any intervention.

About the Interviewee

Michael H. Epstein, Ed.D., is the Director of the Center for At-Risk Children’s Services and William E. Barkley Professor of Special Education at the University of Nebraska. He received his doctoral degree in special education from

the University of Virginia. He has been employed as a teacher of children with behavior and learning problems, a director of educational programs for students with disabilities, and a university professor. Dr. Epstein has extensive training and experience in emotional disturbance, scientifically-based school and family focused behavior interventions, academic functioning of children with ED and randomized field trial research methodologies. He has received over 18 million dollars in external grants, has published over 230 professional papers, has served as a consultant to various state and federal agencies and foundations, has served as a reviewer for numerous professional journals, and is the founding editor of the *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*. He chaired the IES practice guide panel on managing behavior (Epstein, M., Atkins, M., Cullinan, D., Kutash, K., Weaver, R., Woodbridge, M., Yu, J., and Wagner, M. (2008). *Reducing behavior problems in the elementary school classroom: A practice guide*. Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education). He is the author of the Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale and the Scale Assessing Emotional Disturbance and co author of *Outcomes for Children and Youth with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders and Their Families* and *Making Schools Safe and Violence Free*.

Full Transcript

My name is Michael Epstein. I'm the William Barkley Professor of Special Education at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

The Practice Guide was written for general education teachers and school administrators. The purpose of the Practice Guide is to provide a set of tools for teachers to use to prevent and also manage disruptive, noncompliant, defiant behavior.

The first recommendation is for teachers to identify the specific problem behavior and what occurs before and after the behavior. To this end, it is recommended that teachers collect data on the frequency of the behavior, where the behavior occurs, what are the conditions under which it occurs. Also, it is important for teachers to understand what occurs before the behavior and what occurs following or reinforcing the behavior.

Recommendation two is written to teachers so that they can modify the classroom environment so that it'll lead to decreases in inappropriate behavior. The third recommendation is to acknowledge that some students do not have the skill set to demonstrate appropriate social skills, to demonstrate appropriate problem solving, to work in groups in an appropriate manner, that they don't know how to self-manage their own behavior. To this end, we suggest that teachers teach these behaviors directly by modeling these behaviors for students, for allowing students the opportunity to practice these behaviors, and that when the students practice these behaviors that teachers provide critical feedback.

Recommendation four was written to acknowledge that many times with behavior issues in a classroom that teachers feel that they're an island unto themselves and that they have to deal with that. And so, we

suggest that it's important in the school for classroom teachers to reach out to other teachers individually and collectively so they can be mentored on how to manage behavior and discipline issues. We also suggest that teachers reach out beyond the school to behavior experts in the school district and in the community to develop professional partnerships. The third part of the recommendation is that teachers reach out to parents and family members to become true partners in developing plans to manage the behavior of their children in school and home settings.

The fifth recommendation recognizes the importance to implement schoolwide discipline plans when necessary. There are times when inappropriate behavior enters the classroom because of issues and problems in the lunchroom, in the hallway, and on the playground. And teachers, alone, are challenged to do something when the behavior transports itself into the classroom. This requires the development of the schoolwide strategy. To this end, we suggest that school teachers and administrators form a school improvement team that would look into this area.

There were three basic principles that guided our work as we prepared the document. The first is to acknowledge that school is a social experience, and that, in order to facilitate positive behavior and to facilitate learning, that it's very important that positive social interactions occur. And to that end, it's critical that there be positive student-student interactions and that there be positive student-teacher interactions. The second principle is that schools need to become more culturally competent, that the student body in American schools is changing on a yearly basis, and that schools and school administrators and teachers need to become more expert on the cultural experiences and cultural backgrounds of the students that they teach. And the third principle is that schools need to be driven more on data and to make decisions based on the data that they collect on what occurs in the school settings and also the academic and behavioral outcomes that are produced in individual classrooms and in the school as a whole.