

**Beyond Treats and Timeouts:  
Humanistic Behavioral Supports in Inclusive Classrooms**

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**Abstract**

Schools face a different set of challenges today than they did years ago. In the inclusive classroom, teachers rate behavior as one of the most significant issues they face. This article examines the widespread behavior management systems found in elementary schools across the United States, and offers a critique of these systems in order to help create more inclusive educational contexts. We utilize current research to examine the social and emotional consequences of punishments and rewards. We provide a new set of behavioral strategies for both the classroom and individual students. These strategies are intended to minimize the deleterious effects of more traditional practices while positively supporting classroom community, desired behavior, and improving the whole school culture.

**Key Words:** humanistic behavioral supports, inclusive education, positive behavior support, supporting challenging behavior

*Jayden, a third-grade student, arrived late and subsequently missed breakfast. She is already in a mood. She is supposed to be joining morning meeting, but instead remains at her desk, kicking the mud off of her shoes. The teacher invites her to the rug and Jayden calls back loudly, "Shut up— leave me alone!" Jayden's green card is removed to display her yellow card on the class behavior chart. Later, during math centers, students are using manipulatives to create patterns. A classmate tells Jayden she is "doing it wrong." Jayden ignores him. He repeats it, "You are doing it wrong" and he says to the teacher, "Jayden is not following directions." She throws the stack of cubes, hitting him hard in the face. The teacher then states, "Jayden, pull a card." Now Jayden's section on the behavior chart is red. She, along with everyone else, realizes she will not participate in choice time. Instead will be sitting at her desk. She begins to cry.*

It is important to reflect upon this behavior program. Has Jayden's self-esteem improved? How does it impact her perceptions about school, teachers, and classmates? How does it impact the atmosphere or social relationships in an inclusive classroom? Has it increased her motivation and learning?

### **Laminated Rules and Elaborate Sticker Systems: State of Practice in Schools**

As in Jayden's classroom, it is common to notice laminated rules, elaborate sticker charts, group point totals, and intricate red, green, and yellow systems. Schools have programs to reward behavior, whereby students earn coupons and, at assemblies, are recognized for good behavior. Research suggests that classrooms are becoming more inclusive (U.S. Department of Education, 2012), resulting in students who have a larger behavioral range. This varies from non-confrontational behaviors, such as shutting down, to more challenging behaviors such as fighting with classmates, running outside, or hurting oneself. Common punishments range from losing tokens or removal from class activities, to losing recess or receiving detention or suspension. More extreme responses consist of exclusion, seclusion in a timeout room, or restraint (Skiba & Peterson, 1999) and occur more frequently for students with disabilities (LeBel, Nunno, Mohr & O'Halloran, 2012; Ryan & Peterson, 2004; USGAO, 2009; USDE, 2012). Therefore, as schools continue to include students with a wider range of behaviors, greater attention must be paid to proactive behavior policies and interventions (Nooruddin & Baig, 2014).

Elementary and middle schools have increasingly implemented the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) structure (Flannery, Guest, & Horner, 2010; Jackson & Panyan, 2002). This system provides a framework to simultaneously create a learning culture and teach behavior expectations through collaborative teams collecting data, implementing, and evaluating strategies (Safran & Oswald, 2003) and requires embedded training for school teams in order to establish and sustain positive, safe, and consistent practices for all students (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010).

Evidence-based strategies for supporting behavior are organized within a three-tiered continuum that is based upon a student's responsiveness to intervention techniques (OSEP, 2012). Recent research has shown that the implementation of PBIS evidences improvements in student behavior (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010; Horner, Carr, Halle, McGee, Odom, & Wolery, 2005; Kratochwill, Hitchcock, Horner, Levin, Odom, Rindskopf, & Shadish, 2010; Strickland & Horner, 2014). In this article we aim to shed light on some of the unintended consequences of common rewards and punishments. We provide more humanistic behavioral

strategies within the context of PBIS that inclusive educators can adapt and utilize in their classrooms and schools. These suggestions can be put directly into students' Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs).

### **A Timeout from Timeouts: The Emotional Consequences of Punishments**

*Jace, a first-grade student with autism, is upset. He has begun screaming and biting his arm. The teacher asks him to “gather himself.” The teachers attempted several interventions, including looking at the schedule and giving him a number line to finish his math. After 10 minutes, he is still refusing. The paraprofessional gently picks him up, brings him into the timeout room, and closes the door. The screams from behind the door grow more intense. A timer is set, and he is to remain in the timeout room for 5 minutes.*

Imagine you felt out of control...if you were angry or upset. Imagine someone physically removed and put you into a room to calm down. Would your frustration and anxiety decrease? Most of us would actually become *more* agitated, scared, or anxious if placed in an isolated room. The same reaction is likely true for students. “Students with special needs are at a greater risk of school exclusion [and punishment] than those without disabilities, especially ...students with autism or emotional and behavioral disorders” (Colker & Waterstone, 2011, p. 239).

There are many concerns with the use of time out or exclusion. First, behavior exists for a reason. “Children may misbehave because they are embarrassed, bored, angry, over-stimulated, overwhelmed, hungry, frustrated, or depressed. They may need more attention, less attention, more challenging work, less difficult work, an escape, or an emotional outlet” (Colker & Waterstone, 2011, p. 251). Thus, the logic behind providing a punishment in order to calm, support or reduce tension, instead of determining the cause of the behavior is in question.

Second, exclusion and punishment are less effective than positive behavior supports at producing long-term reduction in problem behavior (Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013) despite being the most common responses to conduct disorders (Sprick, Borgmeir, & Nolet, 2002). Exclusion can also have many other deleterious effects, such as negative impact on attendance, higher rates of dropout (Sprick, Borgmeier & Nolet, 2002), increased aggression, vandalism, and truancy (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

Third, when exclusion is repeatedly utilized, a cycle is created. Students work harder and act out less when they feel they belong and are respected by teachers and peers (Lewis, Schaps, & Watson, 1996; Nooruddin & Baig, 2014). But when a student is excluded from a classroom, the message received is, “You don’t belong here” or, “Your membership is contingent on your behavior.” Students react negatively to this message and the cycle of exclusion continues. Kohn articulates this point:

Our initial response to an unwanted behavior is to react, to correct what we perceive to be unacceptable, inappropriate behavior... the person exhibiting the behavior has lost control and those who are in charge—in control—are responsible for regaining it through the application of methods...specifically designed for this purpose. (Kohn, 2006, p. 136)

It is reasonable to desire control in the classroom, as disruptive behavior can interrupt or stop lessons (Psunder, 2005). The concern, however, is that when the method for control does

not work educators tend to become frustrated and utilize increasingly punitive methods for control. Kluth (2010) argues, “This punitive approach almost always serves to distance the teacher from the student and certainly fails to strengthen their relationship. It is ironic, but true, that the more a teacher may try to control a situation, the more out of control that situation may become” (p. 22). Additionally, punishment may cause a counter attack resulting in more emotional trauma than learning, student feelings of defeat, and impaired teacher-student relationships (Barbetta, Norona & Bicard, 2005).

### **Candy Coated Control: Rethinking Rewards**

Most of us can clearly see the problems with punishments, but what about rewards? Rewards are provided for completing good work, following directions, and complying with class norms. They are intended to support positive school environments. However, Kohn, suggested that rewards and punishments only work in the short term. Educators need to ask, “Work to do what?” and “At what cost?” (Kohn, 2006). Rewards produce only temporary compliance. They buy obedience (Kohn, 2006). Rewards, like punishments, are used to manipulate actions. Educators want students to be kind, caring, and motivated intrinsically. However, rewards and reinforcement, such as points or stickers, often decrease intrinsic motivation (Cameron & Pierce, 1994; Sutherland, 1993). Schwartz (1990) explains:

First, predictably it gains control of [an] activity, increasing its frequency. Second, when reinforcement is later withdrawn, people engage in the activity even less than they did before reinforcement was introduced (p. 10). Individual rewards also have other unintended consequences. When given out, this action typically has a punishing effect on students who do not receive the reward. To illustrate, when tokens are given out for quiet voices, the talkative student is essentially punished.

Whole class rewards are also dependent upon behavior. For example, students might earn marbles for good behavior and when the jar becomes full the class is rewarded with a pizza party. Contrast that with celebrations connected to the curriculum that are not contingent upon student behavior. A writer’s workshop celebration allows sharing of writing, honoring of authors’ books, and eating pizza. Much preparation occurs; students create invitations and signs, order food, and work diligently to publish. While both involve pizza and celebration, the writer’s celebration creates feelings of belonging and a sense of academic accomplishment. There is not pressure contingent upon behavior to earn the party and all students can look forward to this event.

Instead of these artificial rewards (i.e., stickers, treats, or parties), researchers advocate using natural rewards (i.e., internal sense of accomplishment or making a friend) (Kohn, 2006) and verbal praise that provides specific feedback about learning tasks (Barbetta, Norona, & Bicard, 2005; Nooruddin & Baig, 2014). Connecting and talking to students with warmth and respect and celebrating academic achievements and classroom community are far more powerful than controlling with rewards.

### **Humanistic Behavioral Support**

Humanistic behavioral support demands locating the problem of challenging behavior not with the student, but within the context, the curriculum, the instruction, and the social landscape. When misbehavior occurs, consider the most humanistic response. Can you privately correct,

support, or calm the student? Can you use humor, defuse the situation, or clarify directions? Can you provide more choice, create a more engaging activity, or increase levels of challenge? For similar examples of asking different questions in order to rethink student behavior, see Table 1.

The term humanistic behavioral supports encompass the interventions that inclusive educators can use that provide practical alternatives to the traditional taken for granted behavioral systems that often involve rewards and punishments. These supports are rooted in a variety of evidence-based practices that we outline in the following strategies section. This approach of humanistic behavioral supports emerged from humanistic education and is associated with the psychology movement of Maslow and Rogers. For this article, we define humanistic behavioral supports as the valuing of behavioral diversity within the classroom community. Embracement of such supports abandons the idea that normalcy is ideal and children must be quiet and compliant to be seen as valued members and learners. Instead, humanistic behavioral supports aim to see the whole student while proactively creating and maintaining an environment that meets individual student need. We see students as experts on themselves and so we should utilize their preferences whenever possible. We respond to behavior as communication of needs or desires and act from a place of compassion. Upon enactment, these values foster long-term social development and a more conducive learning environment for all students.

### **Strategies for Educators in the Inclusive Classroom**

The following section provides strategies for the primary tier of PBIS intended to creatively support all students in all settings (Horner, 2010) by proactively setting a positive stage for learning. The goal is to develop a classroom environment whereby each student experiences belonging, connection, and safety—sending a message that students work together to create a cohesive team of learners. Research suggests certain instructional practices often cultivate “alienating institutions” (Osterman, 2000, p. 360) and that the sense of belonging is positively correlated to behavior, motivation, and quality of learning (Lewis, Schaps & Watson, 1996). In order to create this necessary culture of belonging and encourage meaningful learning, we suggest the following strategies to use in the inclusive classroom: (a) utilize students as problem solvers; (b) design responsive curriculum; (c) create comfortable learning environments; (d) provide choice; and (e) cultivate relationships.

#### **Utilize Students as Problem Solvers**

When a student becomes out of control, we often try to implement a behavioral management program that helps students comply with classroom rules. We do something to rectify the situation. Kohn (1996) argues, “Our responses to things we find disturbing, might be described as reflecting a philosophy of either doing things *to* students or working *with* them” (p. 23). By working with students, teachers can transform their orientation to position students as expert problem solvers. This involves asking students what they need to be successful in a certain situation. Allow students to brainstorm solutions to problems, and implement their ideas. Students can even collect data on the implementation of their ideas and compare their data with data the teacher has collected, which establishes student ownership of the process and encourages self-monitoring (Barbetta, Norona, & Bicard, 2005). We also suggest teachers implement positive change to the classroom culture by encouraging students to work as a group.

Table 1

*Asking New Questions about Behavior*

Challenging Behavior	Deficit Thinking Questions	New Questions
Constantly moving	Why won't Zoey sit crisscrossed during read aloud time?	How can I re-structure the read aloud experience so Zoey can move and learn simultaneously?
Talking	Why is Liam interrupting during math when I am trying to teach a lesson?	How can I create interactive discussions during lessons, sending the message that meaningful participation is valued?
Singing	Why does Mia continue to hum during reading workshop when I've told her that this is an independent work time?	What sensory supports can I make available to Mia so that she is productive during reading workshop, but also does not distract others in our learning community?
All about me	Why does James continue to talk about activities and things he has done outside of school when we're exploring new science topics?	How can James share his background knowledge about science to motivate those around him? How can being a "science expert" support James' reading of nonfiction texts?
Shutting down	Why does Jazz bury her head when unfamiliar adults speak to her?	How can we support Jazz to develop relationships and interact effectively with new adults?
Asking why	Why does Ashley constantly challenge me by asking why?	What research opportunities can we build into learning experiences that allow Ashley to develop intricate knowledge about the "why" of concepts being studied?
Challenging/arguing	Why does Isaiah constantly bicker with classmates during playground time?	What social skills might need to be taught to allow Isaiah to play and engage in cooperative learning groups effectively?
Running	Why does Aiden scream and run out of the class?	Does Aiden have an effective communication system? What does this behavior communicate? Is the academic tasks differentiated to meet Aiden's needs?
Self-injurious behavior	Why does Chloe pick her fingers until they bleed and do other things that just hurt herself?	What is the function of this behavior? Did I Talk with Chloe about this behavior. If she's not sure, how can we help her self-monitor to determine the underlying purpose of this behavior?
Rough with support staff	Why does Jack swat the paraprofessional when she is just trying to re-explain the directions?	Is the paraprofessional providing too much academic and social support in close proximity? How can we fade support? How can we teach Jack to ask for support when he needs it?

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For example, using processes like peer mediation or whole class meetings can be powerful ways for students to come together and cohesively develop new strategies and ideas (Barbetta, 1990; Smith & Daunic, 2002). Empirical research shows students who engaged in

explicit problem solving were able use these skills to achieve target goals and behaviors (Agran, Blanchard, Wehmeyer, & Hughes, 2002).

### **Design Responsive Curriculum**

Research demonstrates that a mismatch between the complexity of academic task and ability level leads to increased frequency of inappropriate behavior (Center, Deitz & Kaufman, 1982; Evertson & Harris, 1992; Kern, Delaney, Clarke, Dunlap, & Childs, 2001). Brian, a student who found reading difficult, has a diagnosed learning disability and had a great deal of off-task behavior. However, a hands-on science unit that explored the life cycles of mealworms allowed him to share personal stories about animals on his family farm and piqued his interest to read nonfiction texts. By incorporating responsive and differentiated content, this student's academic and social profile shifted from being labeled as a nonreader and behavior problem to an engaged reader and valued learner. Research demonstrates implementing engaging curriculum that offers variety of activities, materials, and difficulty level prevents behavioral issues (Epstein, Atkins, Cullinan, Kutash, & Weaver, 2008).

Brian reminds us that curriculum is embedded within the larger context and serves to create student behavior. Research echoes the connection between both instruction and academic performance to behavior (Sutherland & Wehby, 2001). "How students act in class is so intertwined with curricular content that it may be folly even to talk about classroom management or discipline as a field unto itself" (Kohn, 1996, p. 21). Instead of focusing the problem on Brian, it is advantageous to "improve the quality and challenge level of the curriculum" (Rademacher, Schumaker & Deshler, 1996). Some of the more common reasons for challenging behavior are the result of the curriculum, instruction, or a lack of modification. Inactivity and challenging behavior is often caused by curriculum that is boring, is too focused on written tasks, has unclear expectations, lacks meaningful social interaction, lacks connection to students' interests, or is not differentiated. One of the first places to start is to address each of these issues by planning engaging, differentiated lessons that meet the academic and social needs of all students.

### **Create Comfortable Learning Environments**

Inclusive educators now support students with a range of sensory needs. When these needs are not met student behavior often communicates this frustration. Consider your own needs and behaviors. Have you ever needed to tap your pen or experienced an uncontrollable need to move in the middle of a meeting? Just needed a snack or water in the middle of working? Our students need options to obtain the sensory input they desire to calm their bodies and minds in order to feel comfortable enough to participate meaningfully. We suggest making fidget objects available to the entire class, as well as for individual students, to provide needed sensory input. Students who need proprioceptive input seek information about their body positioning, and can benefit from using a weighted lap pad or vest, and doing "heavy work" like picking up book baskets or moving chairs between learning activities. Another idea is to change certain traditional rules and allow students continued access to drinks, healthy snacks, or gum. The goal is to determine the sensory diet specific children need, and offer those choices to all students in order to create successful learning opportunities.

Creating an environment where movement naturally supports students who need to move is also important in the inclusive classroom. Teachers can utilize a mini-trampoline that students



can use to wake up their bodies after long stretches of instruction. Use tape to create a track that weaves around the room to allow students to go on a “thinking walk.” Or, design a hopscotch grid on the floor so students can take a “jumping break.” Provide students the option to take a three-minute “talk walk” with a writing partner to discuss the text features of their current nonfiction books. When working for extended periods of time, stop for a yoga break. Affix a therapy band to the bottom of chairs so students can bounce their feet with minimal noise. These options creatively honor students’ need to move.

In the inclusive classroom students with more significant behavioral issues are often supported by a paraprofessional. The support provided can be extremely valuable, but can also have a direct impact on behavior. Unintentional over-support can cause students to respond negatively. To avoid this, consider giving the student choice about how they are supported by the paraprofessional, or simply move away, fade support, and rarely sit next to the student. Teaching the student to ask for support is preferable to assuming it is needed (Causton & Tracy-Bronson, 2015).

Researchers suggest that encouraging students to work in multiple locations (e.g., at various desks, on the floor, at learning centers) contributes to engagement in learning tasks (Epstein et al., 2008), thereby proactively reducing behavior issues. Beyond thinking about desk arrangement, work areas can be set up around the room for group learning experiences. Use pillows and stools to create learning nooks on the sides of bookshelves. Be sure to seat students with disabilities in different locations; do not cluster students together for ease of support. Classroom arrangement and purposeful seating matters (Epstein et al., 2008) and is associated with increased productivity in learning and decreased behavioral issues.

Offer lighting choices for students. Allow students to sit at spaces with lamps for bright lighting. Turn off select rows of lights for darker areas, and use natural in other areas. Students might choose to read with flashlights or book lights. Music also serves to create a pleasing atmosphere. Using songs to change the tempo and beat of the classroom helps students distinguish between structured or unstructured activities. Try music without lyrics during reading or writing workshop. Use a short dance party to help students refocus, before or after challenging tasks. These ideas align with research showing choices offered during academic activities increases motivation while disruptive behavior decreases (Kern, Mantegna et al., 2001).

### **Provide Choice**

Research indicates increasing student choice decreases inappropriate behaviors (Kern, Mantegna, et al., 2001). Student choice in the materials and flexibility in format or specific academic task to complete (Kern, Bambara, & Fogt, 2002) are effective strategies. For one student who moves frequently, window markers proved to be an excellent strategy to have her write lists, brainstorm, or plan out her writing assignments. Using washable markers on non-porous desks also benefited students who liked to stand while working. Flexibility in writing format can be offered by using a vinyl shower curtain and white board markers or writing with chalk on the sidewalk, serving to instantly engage students and decrease potential behavior as they practice difficult math facts.

Providing choice in body positioning is another strategy. Students can be given the choice of doing some assignments “graffiti style” by taping paper onto the walls, working while standing up. Some students prefer to work with clipboards. Another working-way choice is “Michelangelo style” where a worksheet is placed under the desk, and students lay on their back

to write. Simply adjusting the height of some desks or utilizing music stands provides additional

opportunity for student choice. Use a sit disc or a therapy ball instead of a chair. Embedding choice in body positioning, or in the sequence of activities to tackle (Kern, Mantegna, et al., 2001), is effective for student focus and academic success and reduces off-task behaviors.

### **Cultivate Relationships**

Positive interactions with teachers are associated with increased student emotional regulation, following of expectations, and motivation (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). “A positive approach invites people to enter into the same sort of relationship that most of us treasure: ongoing, with mutual affection and regard. We professionals we have routinely overlooked the significance of relationships” (Lovett, 1996, p. 137). Relationships are vital to supporting behavior (Epstein et al., 2008). Building these student-teacher relationships takes time and can be done in many forms. Use the fist-to-five strategy, which allows students to indicate where they are emotionally by holding up numbers on their hand. Have students place a note in a mailbox to communicate any issue; teachers can touch base with individuals as needed or have a class meeting about larger problems. Implement quick free writes using prompts such as “Today I’m feeling...” or “What I’m thinking about lately...” and encourage students to share what they’ve written. Share reflective comments. Throughout the day or class period, teachers can take notes on positive student actions (e.g. peer interactions, academic accomplishments, thoughtful insights) and write a complimentary note about it to the student. This strategy can also be used by all students and staff, helping to develop an emotionally and socially aware classroom culture. Research indicates that employing strategies to build students’ social and emotional development contributes to increased interactions, attitudes toward school, and performance, thereby reducing problem behaviors (Zins et al., 2004).

These strategies allow inclusive educators to design a learning environment from the onset that supports all learners. The aim is to develop classroom spaces where students feel a sense of belonging, through tapping into students’ potential as problem solvers, designing curriculum that is response to needs, creating comfortable learning environments that have embedded choices, and creating relationships. Educators must also proactively design and implement strategies aimed at supporting individual students.

### **Strategies for the Individual Student**

The second tier of PBIS provides supports to individuals not responsive to the initial tier, often identified as interventions for that particularly challenging student. What follows are more ways to creatively think about individual students who have more significant behavioral needs. They are as follows: (a) use strengths and preferences; (b) discover the communicative intent and meet the student’s need; (c) rethink paraprofessional support; and (d) keep it private.

### **Use Strengths and Preferences**

Ben is a seventh-grade student who struggles with written expression and has an

identified intellectual disability; he is also an excellent artist. During the Folktales unit in his English class, Ben initially spent much of his time with his head down and was unresponsive to teacher cues to take notes. That is, until the special educator mentioned that he might be more successful if he were allowed to draw his notes. Research suggests, “Triggers can result from a mismatch between the . . . academic demands and students’ strengths, preferences, or skills” (Epstein et al., 2008). Adjusting the learning activities to meet students’ needs promotes engagement and on-task behavior (Epstein et al., 2008). After implementation, Ben was not only much more engaged in the unit, but was also able to describe details of major scenes from the tales on the culminating assessment. Additionally, Ben enjoys routines and schedules. If a significant change occurs in his schedule for which he is not prepared, he can become frustrated and dismissive of redirection attempts from teachers. Therefore, it is calming for him to know the daily structure. Finally, he prefers to be supported by friends. So his team has a peer meet him at the bus to review the picture schedule. Now each of these strategies (i.e., peer support and drawn notes) is included within his IEP.

### **Discover the Communicative Intent and Meet Student Need**

Hayden, a student in second-grade with a label of emotional disturbance, was continually tapping a classmate in a bothersome manner. Instead of assuming that Hayden was trying to be obnoxious, the paraprofessional interpreted the behavior as an attempt to initiate interaction. The paraprofessional whispered to Hayden, “Do you want to move closer and talk with Sarah? Just say Hi.” Hayden moved closer, and said Hi. Sarah responded and a conversation began between the students. Effective inclusive educators can see that student behavior is often a desire to communicate and facilitate interaction between peers.

Learn the communicative intent by asking the student. One teacher said, “It must mean something when you bang your head. What does it mean?” Another strategy is to simply watch and make hypotheses with a mission to discover the purpose. Consider joy, choice, control, sense of belonging, relationships, interdependence, autonomy, frustration, or access to communication as potential purposes of behavior. Consider what the student might be attempting to gain or escape from the behavior. Consider also that behavior is often a function of disability. Assume that the student does not have malicious intent, but is trying to have needs met. In fact, there is strong empirical evidence suggesting behavior is linked to a mismatch between student’s needs and the classroom expectations, activity, schedule, or environment (Epstein et al., 2008). Once you have identified what a student needs, see Table 2 for ideas of associated teaching strategies to implement that will support positive behavior and focus on the learning experience.

### **Keep It Private**

Supporting student behavior in a private manner is important to consider. Be sure not to publicly display charts, stickers, stars, light colors, or anything that shows the level of individual student behavior. These systems are comparative in nature and often can publicly humiliate individual students who fall outside the margins of what we consider acceptable behavior. Instead of publicized behavior charts, consider holding a private conference, passing discrete notes, or redirecting the student with a whisper. This maintains confidentiality, preserves positive teacher-student relationships, and protects student dignity.

Table 2

*Give Them What They Need*

For a student who...	Give them...	For example...
Talks a lot	More opportunity to talk	Talk-walk, think-pair-share, debate, turn-and-talk, assigned “ask the expert” title, book clubs, “speed dating” partner discussions
Moves a lot	More opportunity to move	Stand and write, graffiti, Michelangelo style, dance party, back to back, yoga breaks, in-house mini-trampoline
Wants to lead	More opportunity to lead	Line leader, paper passer, helper, pointer, class monitor, discussion facilitator
Appears shy	More support with social interactions	Write ideas before joining the group, clock partners, think-write-share
Is resistant	More choices	Choose writing utensil, type or color of paper, types of manipulatives, type of assignment product (i.e. traditional essay, creative nonfiction, computer presentation, video project)
Has tantrums	Time to calm and then a plan when finished	When you are ready, let’s write down your first step
Bullies others	More opportunities to strengthen friendships	Tables at lunch based on interest, supported conversations with peers, participate in peer problem-solving meetings or peer mediation
Shuts down	More ways to express frustration	Break cards, a white board to write/draw feelings, headphones to listen to music and sort out feelings
Makes noise	Opportunities to make noises	A mouse pad to drum on, repetitive lines in read aloud
Interrupting	Opportunities to share during lessons	Turn and talk, say something, social break, cooperative learning groups
Issues with assigned seating	Opportunities to select the best way to work	Use a clipboard on the floor, use a music stand, write Michelangelo style, do graffiti style work

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### **Strategies for the Crisis Situation**

As an educator, it can be scary when a student becomes out of control behaviorally. We recognize these situations occur and offer ideas to help in those extremely challenging situations. These tertiary tier strategies also provide an encompassing mindset for inclusive educators who work with students who require more specialized supports in inclusive settings. These strategies are as follows: (a) be empathic; (b) act from a place of love; and (c) create a crisis plan.

#### **Be Empathetic**

Teachers who respond to challenging behavior in humanistic ways try to understand what it might feel like to be in a similar situation. The last time you were out of control, angry or upset, what did you want or need? Did you need a trusted friend, a break, a walk, or to cry? Most of us want humanistic support. In these situations, Kluth (2010) explains:

When a student is kicking, biting, banging her head, or screaming, she is most likely miserable, confused, scared, or uncomfortable... The most human response at this point is to offer support: to act in a comforting manner, and to help the person relax and feel safe. Teaching can come later... the educator must listen, support and simply be there. (p. 2)

In challenging situations, intentionally create an empathetic disposition that conveys to the student your unwavering support and make your presence a calming source.

#### **Act From a Place of Love**

When faced with a student's challenging behavior, imagine that you are a parent of this child, or someone who deeply loves this child. Consider how you would react from that perspective. By reacting from a position of love and acceptance, the response will be with kindness, patience, and humanity rather than with punishment or control. Experts believe a crisis response must express compassion for all involved (Augustine, 1995).

#### **Create a Crisis Plan**

Inclusive educators often create a crisis plan for any type of emergency, particularly for times that they must react to extremely challenging behavior. Research indicates that a crisis intervention plan offers a coordinated approach for responding to serious incidences (Bender & McLaughlin, 1997; Poland, 1994; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Create a crisis binder that includes a note so that in an emergency situation any adult in charge can follow specific directions for the class. Determine a neutral place where the class could go (e.g., media center), and have independent work prepared for students. This allows the inclusive teacher to be available for an individual student, while maintaining the highest level of safety for the rest of the class in times of crisis.

### Conclusion

One of the goals of inclusive education is to help students learn to live, work, and play together. Most inclusive educators strive to have students learn through intrinsic motivation, eventually developing a system of self-regulation in order to become either independent or interdependent with both academic and social skills. To do this well it is important to assess the outcomes of behavioral management practices and programs inclusive schools are using. Do they foster belonging and community for all? What practices can be adjusted to offer a more supportive and humanistic character? Are the current practices working? And working to do what? Ginott (1993) offers these empowering thoughts:

I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal...it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, a child humanized or de-humanized. (pp. 15-16).

Each inclusive educator has the ability to reflect upon current practices and implement more humanistic behavioral supports. By embracing the aforementioned strategies, and valuing the behavioral diversity within the classroom we begin to support the whole student. Truly connecting and treating ALL students with dignity, respect, and love will prove to be the most effective behavioral support for inclusive teachers allowing all students to focus on learning.

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