Early Childhood Behavior Management

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To Cite This Case Study Unit	Hardy J., Brown J., Skow K., & the IRIS Center. (2015). Early childhood behavior management. Retrieved from https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf_case_studies/ics_ec_behavior_mgmt.pdf
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Licensure and Content Standards

This IRIS Case Study aligns with the following licensure and program standards and topic areas.

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)

CAEP standards for the accreditation of educators are designed to improve the quality and effectiveness not only of new instructional practitioners but also the evidence-base used to assess those qualities in the classroom.

- Standard 1: Content and Pedagogical Knowledge

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

CEC standards encompass a wide range of ethics, standards, and practices created to help guide those who have taken on the crucial role of educating students with disabilities.

- Standard 1: Learner Development and Individual Learning Differences
- Standard 2: Learning Environments
- Standard 7: Collaboration

Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC)

InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards are designed to help teachers of all grade levels and content areas to prepare their students either for college or for employment following graduation.

- Standard 3: Learning Environments
- Standard 10: Leadership and Collaborations

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)

NCATE standards are intended to serve as professional guidelines for educators. They also overview the "organizational structures, policies, and procedures" necessary to support them.

- Standard 1: Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Dispositions

The Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices (DEC)

The DEC Recommended Practices are designed to help improve the learning outcomes of young children (birth through age five) who have or who are at-risk for developmental delays or disabilities.

- Topic 3: Environment
- Topic 4: Family
- Topic 5: Instruction

Early childhood teachers identify challenging behaviors as one of the most difficult aspects of their jobs and one for which they feel the least prepared. This is reflected by the fact that program directors or elementary school administrators report that many early childhood teachers lack the skills necessary to address challenging behaviors. Teachers can prevent many challenging behaviors from occurring by developing effective classroom rules. This includes systematically teaching the rules and encouraging children to follow them, a practice that can have a significant effect on children's behavior and create a more positive classroom environment. Often, preventing challenging behaviors from occurring in the first place is a more effective practice than addressing them after they occur. Doing so might also prevent negative outcomes, such as academic failure and peer rejection, for those students who engage in challenging behaviors.

This Case Study addresses a number of the Division for Early Childhood's (DEC) Recommended Practices (see below). The Recommended Practices provide guidance to early childhood professionals working with young children birth through age five who have or are at-risk for developmental delays or disabilities. They also provide guidance to the families of these children related to the most effective ways to improve children's learning outcomes and development.

Environment

E1. Practitioners provide services and supports in natural and inclusive environments during daily routines and activities to promote the child's access to and participation in learning experiences.

Family

F1. Practitioners build trusting and respectful partnerships with the family through interactions that are sensitive and responsive to cultural, linguistic, and socio- economic diversity.

F2. Practitioners provide the family with up-to-date, comprehensive and unbiased information in a way that the family can understand and use to make informed choices and decisions.

Instruction

INS4. Practitioners plan for and provide the level of support, accommodations, and adaptations needed for the child to access, participate, and learn within and across activities and routines.

INS5. Practitioners embed instruction within and across routines, activities, and environments to provide contextually relevant learning opportunities.

INS6. Practitioners use systematic instructional strategies with fidelity to teach skills and to promote child engagement and learning.

INS9. Practitioners use functional assessment and related prevention, promotion, and intervention strategies across environments to prevent and address challenging behavior.

Leadership

L13. Leaders promote efficient and coordinated service delivery for children and families by creating the conditions for practitioners from multiple disciplines and the family to work together as a team.

Resources

Division for Early Childhood. (2014). *DEC recommended practices in early intervention/ early childhood special education 2014.* Retrieved from http://www.dec-sped.org/ recommendedpractices

Fox, L., & Smith, B. J. (2007). *Promoting social, emotional and behavioral outcomes of young children served under IDEA.* Issue Brief. Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children.

What a STAR Sheet is…

A STAR (STrategies And Resources) Sheet provides you with a description of a well-researched strategy that can help you solve the case studies in this unit.

About the Strategy

Behavior expectations are program- or school-wide goals for children's behavior. They are general guidelines for children's expected behavior and apply across all settings.

Rules define the behaviors that teachers want children to demonstrate. They should be expressed in concrete, observable, and measurable terms and might vary depending on the setting (e.g., classroom, lunchroom, outside).

What the Research and Resources Say

- Establishing clear behavior expectations and rules is a proactive approach that involves systematically teaching and encouraging children to behave appropriately (Barbetta, Norona, & Bicard, 2005).
- Preventing the occurrence of inappropriate behaviors by establishing behavior expectations and rules is more effective and efficient that addressing inappropriate behaviors as they occur (Barbetta, Norona, & Bicard, 2005; Jack & Lindeman, 2012).
- Children who understand what is expected of them are more likely to display appropriate behavior (Alter & Conroy, n.d.).
- Establishing clear behavior expectations and rules builds a strong classroom community, promotes physical and emotional safety, and helps children develop confidence and competence (Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, Joseph, & Strain, 2003; Mosier, 2009).
- Behavior expectations and rules can help children understand appropriate ways to behave in different settings (Stormont, Lewis, & Beckner, 2005).

Understanding the Relationship Between Expectations and Rules

Behavior expectations are typically program- or school-wide. Once the program or school has established behavior expectations, the teacher can create rules that reflect these expectations. For example, a common early childhood behavior expectation is "Be safe." This is an abstract concept that can mean a variety of things. Teachers can define what they mean by "Be safe" by creating rules that define behaviors in concrete, observable, and measurable terms. For one teacher, this might mean "Use walking feet."

The graphic below provides examples of classroom rules that a teacher might develop to reflect a program's behavior expectations.

Behavior Expectations	Rules	
Be Safe	**Use Walking Feet**	**Sit On Swings**
Be Responsible	**Follow Directions**	**Put Toys Away**
Be Respectful	**Take Turns**	**Use Quiet Voices**

Communicate with Families

When children enter a program or school, staff should share behavior expectations with their families. Teachers might also want to ask those families about the behavior expectations they have at home. Through sharing this kind of information, teachers and families can attempt to create consistency across settings.

Resources

Alter, P. J., & Conroy, M. A. (n.d.). Preventing challenging behavior in young children: Effective practices. *Recommended Practices.* Retrieved on December 5, 2014, from: http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/do/resources/documents/rph_preventing_challenging_behavior.pdf

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Mosier, W. (2009). Developmentally appropriate child guidance: Helping children gain self-control. *Texas Child Care Quarterly,* Spring, 2–7. Retrieved on December 8, 2015, from http://www.childcarequarterly.com/pdf/spring09_selfcontrol.pdf

Stormont, M., Lewis, T. J., & Beckner, R. (2005). Positive behavior support systems: Applying key features in preschool settings. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 37*(6), 42–49.

About the Strategy

Developing rules is the process of clearly defining the appropriate behaviors that educators want children to demonstrate.

What the Research and Resources Say

- More than forty years of research indicate that developing rules is an effective practice (Gable, Hester, Rock & Hughes, 2009; Hester, Hendrickson, & Gable, 2009).
- Rules should be few in number, stated positively, age-appropriate, easy to understand, and easy to enforce (Gable, Hester, Rock, & Hughes, 2009; Hester, Hendrickson, & Gable, 2009).
- When teachers create classroom rules that are stated positively and describe expected behavior, students engage in less disruptive behavior (Kerr & Nelson, 2010).

Considerations for Developing Rules

When developing rules, there are a few factors that teachers should keep in mind. They should be sure to create rules that are:

- **Age appropriate** — When they develop classroom rules, teachers must consider the typical behaviors of children in the age group with which they are working and what the children can understand. Rules that are appropriate for toddlers might not be appropriate for preschool children or children in the early elementary grades. The table below illustrates how the rules might vary for different age groups.

Behavior Expectation	Age Group	Rule
Be Responsible	Toddler	Put toys away
	Preschool	Clean your center
	Early Elementary	Keep your work area neat

- **Culturally responsive** — Teachers should make an effort to learn about the culture and customs of the children and families in their care. This knowledge can help them understand the role that culture plays in determining appropriate behaviors, which in turn can inform the rules and instructional practices that teachers choose to implement. There are occasions when teachers and children might not have a common understanding of behavior expectations (e.g., showing respect) and the corresponding rules. Although teachers should honor children's culture, they must think carefully about when to adjust their rules to accommodate a family's individual cultural practices and when to focus explicitly on teaching children the differences between expectations at school and in their homes or communities. Below are two examples: One in which a teacher adjusts her rules to accommodate a family's cultural practice and another in which the classroom rules are different from the family's cultural practice.

  ○ In this case, the teacher develops a rule that accommodates a child's cultural norms and practices.

Example: Some teachers define the behavior expectation "Be respectful" as "Look at me when I'm talking." However, in some cultures making eye contact with adults is considered disrespectful. In such cases, when the classroom rule clashes with the children's cultural norm, the teacher can create a different rule that addresses the behavior expectation but also takes into consideration the children's perspective (e.g., "Use listening ears").

- In this case, the teacher establishes a classroom rule that differs from the children's cultural norms.

Example: It is the common for teachers to develop the rule "Take turns talking." However, some cultures value overlapping conversation. In this case, teachers might choose to establish a classroom norm even though it conflicts with the children's cultural norms. Teachers need to make sure not to condemn any cultural values but rather to emphasize that the rule in this classroom is that we respect others by not talking when they talk.

Criteria for Developing Rules

When they create rules for early childhood settings, teachers should follow the guidelines below. Rules should be:
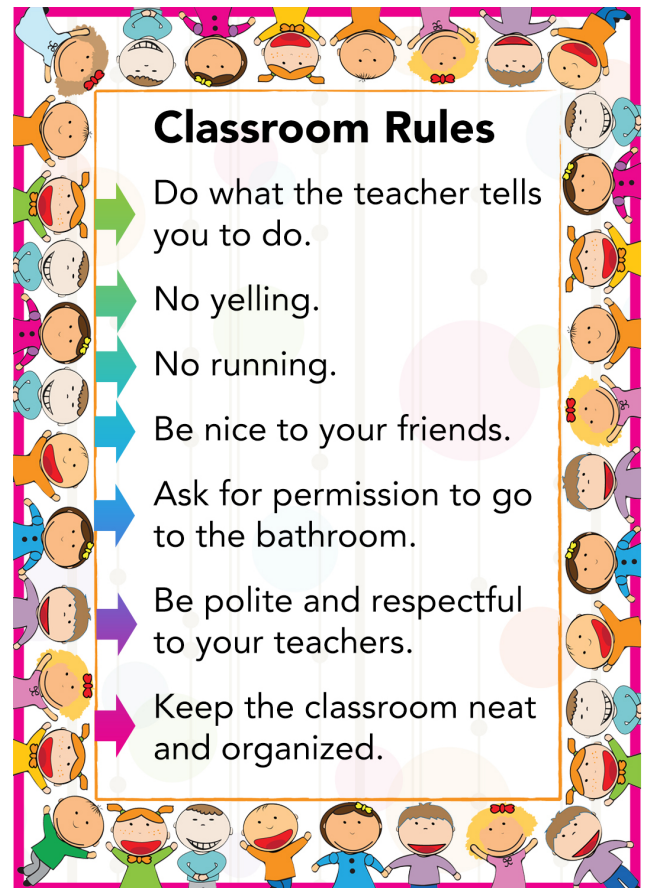
- **Positively stated:** Rules should tell children what to do rather than what not to do. For example, a rule stating "Use walking feet" is more appropriate than one that simply says "Don't run."
- **Few in number:** Teachers should create no more than five rules for each setting. This is especially important because children have to learn the rules for multiple settings (e.g., classroom, playground).
- **Simple and specific:** Rules should be stated clearly, in as few words as possible, and using language that the children can understand. For example, "Put toys away" is more appropriate for younger children than "Clean up after yourself."
- **Measurable and observable:** Because any adult working in the setting should be able to determine whether a child is following a rule, the rule should define a behavior that can be seen and counted or timed. For example, "Sit on the swing" is more easily observed and measured than "Be safe."

Below are examples of two sets of classroom rules. Compare them and notice the differences.

The rules below were created using the guidelines above. Notice that there are only three rules and they are all positively stated, use simple and specific language, and are measurable and observable.

The rules below were created without using the guidelines above. Notice that there are more than five rules, some are stated negatively, many use complex language and too many words, and some are not measurable or observable.

CLASSROOM RULES

FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

USE QUIET VOICES

USE WALKING FEET

Classroom Rules

Do what the teacher tells you to do.

No yelling.

No running.

Be nice to your friends.

Ask for permission to go to the bathroom.

Be polite and respectful to your teachers.

Keep the classroom neat and organized.

Tips for Developing Rules

- When possible, develop rules that are consistent across settings. For example, the rule "Use quiet voices" should be applicable in a variety of settings (e.g., classroom, hallway, bathroom).
- Allow older children to help develop the classroom rules. By doing so, they will more likely feel a sense of ownership and follow the rules. However, the teacher will need to guide children in this discussion because they often offer a list of rules such as "Don't run with scissors," "Don't stab anyone with scissors," and "Don't push." Teachers can help children put their ideas into categories and make them positive rules about what they can do.

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About the Strategy

Intentionally and systematically teaching rules is the process of thoughtfully and purposefully teaching children the classroom rules and the underlying behavior expectations.

What the Research and Resources Say

- When they teach classroom rules, teachers must consider the age of the children in the classroom (NAEYC, 2009).
- Children need to be systematically taught how to follow each rule, and instruction should continue until they understand what each rule means (Gable, Hester, Rock, & Hughes, 2009; Hester, Hendrickson, & Gable, 2009).
- Teachers should model how to follow each rule (Hester, Hendrickson, & Gable, 2009).
- Teachers should visually display and review the rules and provide opportunities for the children to practice them (Hester, Hendrickson, & Gable, 2009).

Strategies for Teaching Rules

Display the Rules

Once the rules are developed, they need to be displayed so that teachers and children can refer to them throughout the day. In early childhood settings, rules should:

- Be posted at children's eye level so they can easily see and reference them when needed
- Include a visual to illustrate each rule so that young children, who typically are not yet reading, or children who speak a different language than the one used in the classroom can quickly reference the rules

> **For Your Information**
>
> - Teachers can use a variety of resources to create visual supports, including photographs, picture symbols, clipart, line drawings, and physical objects.
> - Teachers should consider the needs of their students and individualize visual supports. Some children respond better to photographs of themselves and their peers engaging in the rules, while others prefer line drawings.

Teach the Rules to the Children

Although displaying rules is an important first step to help children understand what is expected of them in the classroom, teachers must also intentionally teach the rules. To do this they should:

- Use clear, child-friendly language that is simple and concrete (e.g., "We clean up" instead of "We clean up after we make messes with paint and glue").
- Provide examples and nonexamples (e.g., for "Use walking feet," demonstrate walking and not walking).
- Discuss why the rules are important (e.g., "Why is it important to use walking feet?").

- Tell the children what happens when they follow the rules and when they do not follow the rules.
  - Example for following the rules: "Children, if we put our toys away quickly, we will have more time to play outside."
  - Example for not following the rules: "Children, it is taking a long time for us to put away our toys. That means we are going to have less time to play outside."
- Use a variety of teaching tools (e.g., discussions, role-play, puppets, books, songs, videos, and technology).
- Introduce the rules in the child's home language if bilingual staff are available.
- Check periodically to see whether children understand the rules. If a child cannot identify the rule being discussed or demonstrated, he or she may need additional instruction.

Ideas for Teaching Rules

- Teachers and children can create a classroom rules book. Photos of the children can be used to demonstrate each rule.
- Children, along with their families, can create a list of home rules on a cutout of a house. This allows teachers to note the similarities and differences between home and classroom rules.

Talk Quietly   Walk

Review the Rules

Once teachers have taught the rules, they need to frequently review them throughout the day, such as:

- During large-group activities to provide daily reminders about the rules
- Prior to transitions when children often have difficulty remembering the rules (e.g., "Remember our hallway rule, 'Quiet voices.'")
- When one or more children are having difficulty following the rules (e.g., "I see running in the classroom. Remember, our rule is 'Use walking feet.'")

For Your Information

When teaching rules to young children:
- Review the rules often (daily)
- Keep the instruction brief (3–5 minutes)

References

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About the Strategy

Encouraging appropriate behavior refers to the use of behavior strategies to teach and reinforce expected behavior and adherence to classroom rules. To be effective, these strategies need to be used within the context of a supportive and nurturing relationship and classroom environment.

What the Research and Resources Say

- When teachers use behavior reflections (neutral, non-judgmental statements describing children's behavior), children learn that they can receive teacher attention for routine actions as opposed to extreme behavior (e.g., perfect behavior, biting) (Kostelnik, Soderman, Whiren, Rupiper, & Gregory, 2014).
- More than 40 years of research indicate that *praise* (i.e., positive descriptive feedback) for appropriate behaviors and *planned ignoring* of minor inappropriate behaviors are effective practices for encouraging and supporting positive behavior in children (Gable, Hester, Rock, & Hughes, 2009; Hester, Hendrickson, & Gable, 2009).
- The use of praise (i.e., positive descriptive feedback) can increase the occurrence of appropriate behavior, promote positive teacher-child relationships, and foster a supportive learning environment (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002; Hester, Hendrickson, & Gable, 2009; Gable, Hester, Rock, & Hughes, 2009).
- Planned ignoring is only effective for eliminating inappropriate behaviors that are aimed at seeking attention (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002; Gable, Hester, Rock & Hughes, 2009; Hester, Hendrickson, & Gable, 2009).

Strategies To Encourage Appropriate Behavior

Teachers can use a number of strategies to encourage children's appropriate behavior and to respond to inappropriate behavior. The four strategies listed below are just a few that teachers can use to encourage children to follow the rules and engage in appropriate behavior. The first, behavior reflections, is a preventive strategy that provides children with attention when they are engaged in ordinary activities. The last three—positive descriptive feedback, planned ignoring, and redirection— are ways for teachers to increase the occurrence of children's positive behavior or to decrease the occurrence of their negative behavior.

Behavior Reflections

Behavior reflections are neutral, non-judgmental statements in which the teacher describes or refers to the everyday activities in which a child engages. This type of statement demonstrates to the child that the teacher is interested in what the child is doing. Teachers can use behavior reflections to build rapport with children and to establish a positive and supportive classroom environment.

When to use: Teachers should use behavior reflections when they are able to comment on something that is important to the child or children. This is often done when children are engaged in everyday activities that have meaning for them (e.g., drawing).

Example: A teacher might observe a child painting at the easel and say, "Fiona, you're using many colors in your painting." Note that the teacher is simply describing on what the child is doing, rather than providing positive feedback (e.g., "That's a beautiful painting.").

Benefits of Using Behavior Reflections

- Provides children with teacher attention
- Teaches children that they do not have to engage in extreme behaviors (e.g., excelling in an area, engaging in acting-out or destructive behaviors) to get attention
- Decreases the likelihood that children will seek attention with negative behaviors
- Helps teachers to establish a positive environment
- Helps teachers build rapport with the children
- Signals to children that teachers are interested in them and what they are doing
- Provides children with opportunities to interact and engage with the teacher if they choose to
- Helps children build feelings of self-worth

Positive Descriptive Feedback

Positive descriptive feedback refers to calling attention to a child's appropriate behavior with a brief, positive, specific description of what the child is doing. For older children, positive descriptive feedback can also include written statements. Because it is specific, this type of feedback helps children know exactly what behavior teachers would like to see repeated.

Guidelines for Providing Positive Descriptive Feedback

- Deliver while the child engages in the behavior or immediately after
- Be specific about the behavior you are praising
- Deliver the positive descriptive feedback with genuine feeling and emotion, conveyed through tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language
- Deliver the positive descriptive feedback when you are close to the child (e.g., within arm's length) and/or at her or his eye level when possible
- Deliver the positive descriptive feedback in a consistent manner (each time the behavior occurs)
- Vary the verbal statements
- Highlight improvement as well as mastery

When to use: Positive descriptive feedback should be offered when a child is engaging in appropriate behavior or immediately after.

Examples

Teachers often use general statements, such as "Good job" or "Nice work" to acknowledge a child's behavior. Notice in the examples below that the teachers provide feedback that is specific and descriptive of the child's behavior.

> *Example 1:* When Cameron hangs his coat in his cubby, the teacher can acknowledge it by saying, "Cameron, you did a good job hanging up your coat all by yourself."
> (Note: The teacher delivered positive descriptive feedback immediately after Cameron engaged in the behavior and was specific about what he did.)

> *Example 2:* When the teacher observes Patrick washing his hands before lunch, she can give him positive feedback with a thumbs-up and say, "Patrick, good for you. You remembered to wash your hands before lunch."
> (Note: The teacher delivered positive descriptive feedback while Patrick engaged in the behavior.)

> *Example 3:* Paige cleaned up the blocks in the center but not the toy animals. The teacher comments, "Paige, you are doing a better job cleaning up your center. You put the blocks back on the shelf."
> (Note: The teacher used specific positive descriptive feedback and highlighted improvement.)

Tips: Consider the age of children when reinforcing them for following the rules. Positive descriptive feedback might sound different for toddlers than it does for older children. For example, a teacher might provide positive descriptive feedback to a toddler by saying, "Liam, nice walking feet." However, a teacher might provide positive descriptive feedback to an older child engaging in the same behavior by saying, "Rosa, thank you for using your walking feet in the hallway." Although both statements are descriptive and provide positive attention, they are clearly geared towards children of different ages.

Planned Ignoring

Planned ignoring occurs when a child engages in minor inappropriate behavior to get attention and the teacher intentionally does not attend to the behavior.

When to use: This strategy should only be used when a child engages in minor inappropriate behavior to get adult attention and when the teacher is confident that the child will eventually stop engaging in the behavior on his or her own. Planned ignoring should ***never*** be used when a child is engaging in unsafe behaviors (e.g., biting, hitting, climbing). This strategy is more appropriate for children age four and older. This strategy works best when paired with positive descriptive feedback for the appropriate behavior.

Example: When the teacher is talking to other children, Presley often interrupts. The teacher decides to use planned ignoring to eliminate this behavior. When Presley interrupts her the first time, the teacher says, "You need to wait your turn" and ignores Presley's behaviors after that. As soon as the teacher notices that Presley is waiting her turn, the teacher says, "Presley, I like the way you're waiting. Keep it up."

Things To Know about Planned Ignoring

- When the teacher starts ignoring a child's inappropriate behavior, the frequency and intensity of that behavior will initially likely increase. In other words, the teacher should expect the behavior to get worse before it gets better.
- Planned ignoring requires that the teacher has a lot of patience and good self-control.
- If a teacher decides to use planned ignoring to eliminate a child's behavior, she must use this strategy every time the child engages in the behavior. Even providing the slightest amount of attention to this behavior (e.g., a disapproving look) can reinforce it and result in the child continuing to engage in the inappropriate behavior.
- Consistency is key. Planned ignoring works best when all staff who interact with the child—as well as with family members, when possible—ignore the problematic behavior.
- The teacher should immediately provide positive attention when the child stops the inappropriate behavior and engages in an appropriate behavior. For young children, positive attention should be provided when the child engages in as little as 3–5 seconds of appropriate behavior.
- The teacher should never use planned ignoring for a behavior that is harmful to the child or to other children.
- Before using planned ignoring, the teacher should make sure that:

  ◦ The physical and social-emotional needs of the child have been met.
  ◦ The child has the skills he or she is expected to use (e.g., waiting, controlling tantrums) when the teacher is ignoring the behavior.

Redirecting

Redirecting is a preventive strategy for directing a child from an inappropriate behavior before it escalates to an alternative behavior that is more appropriate.

Steps To Redirect Behavior

1. Before redirecting the child's attention, the teacher should first let the child know that the behavior he or she is engaged in is not appropriate. The teacher should do this in a way that does not focus too much attention on the inappropriate behavior.
2. Clearly describe the desired or alternative behavior.
3. When the student engages in the appropriate behavior, provide positive descriptive feedback.

When to use: This strategy can be used when a young child is off task, uses materials inappropriately, talks out of turn, or becomes upset.

Example: If the teacher sees a child splashing the water in the sink, he can redirect the child to an appropriate behavior such as washing hands by saying "Ainsley, I see that you are playing in the water. The sink is for washing hands. Here's some soap. Why don't we wash our hands?" When the child washes her hands, the teacher can say, "Nice hand-washing."

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IRISCENTER™

Early Childhood Behavior Management
Considerations for Special Populations

About the Strategy

Dual language learners are children who are learning two or more languages, either simultaneously (within one year of being born) or sequentially (beginning after three years of age).

Children with disabilities are those who are entitled by law to services under one of 13 disability categories (listed below) or who qualify for services under the category of developmental delay.

- autism
- deaf-blindness
- deafness
- emotional disturbance
- hearing impairment
- intellectual disability
- multiple disabilities

- orthopedic impairment
- other health impairment
- specific learning disability
- speech or language impairment
- traumatic brain injury
- visual impairment (including blindness)

What the Research and Resources Say

- As a result of differences in culture and language, children who are dual language learners might engage in inappropriate or challenging behaviors because they do not understand or are not familiar with classroom rules (Barton & Banerjee, 2013).
- When teachers use visuals supports, children are often more independent and require fewer adult prompts (Meadan, Ostrosky, Triplett, Nichna, & Fettig, 2011).
- For some children, particularly those with disabilities, tangible reinforcers are effective for increasing the frequency of desired behaviors (Duncan et al., 2000).

Strategies To Implement

Many of the guidelines discussed on the Intentionally and Systematically Teaching Rules STAR Sheet are also recommended practices for children who are dual language learners and children who have disabilities. However, these children often need additional supports to help them understand and follow the rules. Below are four supports that are effective for encouraging appropriate behavior in these special populations or for any children who require extra support.

Simplifying the Rules

Simplifying the rules is the process of stating the rules in the most concrete and straightforward terms possible.

When to use: This strategy is most helpful for children who have difficulty understanding the rules (e.g., children with an intellectual disability or developmental delays, dual language learners). This is also helpful for very young children.

Example: The classroom rule when leaving a center is "Clean up your center." The teacher might need to simplify this rule for some children and state it as "Put toys away." For other children, it might need to be stated even more explicitly (e.g., "Put the blocks on the shelf.")

Visual Supports

Visual supports refer to visual representations of the rules, such as photographs, picture symbols, written words, clipart, line drawings, or physical objects.

When to use: Teachers should use visual supports to display, teach, and reinforce the rules. Teachers can also use these to remind children of the rules. Although, visuals are recommended for all preschool children, they also can be very beneficial for older children who are dual language learners or have special needs.

Example: Sofia usually has difficulty using her quiet voice in the classroom. When she does use her quiet voice, the teacher points to a photo that represents the rule while saying, "Sofia, I like how you are using your quiet voice in the center."

Tips for Creating Visual Supports

- Determine what type of visual support is appropriate for the child.
  - A child's age or development level affects the type of visual supports he or she can understand. The following is a list of supports from the most concrete to the most abstract: objects, photos, symbolic pictures, line drawings, text
  - Children have a variety of needs and preferences. Use the type of visual support that best meets the needs and preferences of the children in the class. When necessary, combine different types of visual supports (e.g., photographs and line drawings) to accommodate as many children as possible.
- Make sure that the visual support clearly represents the rule or expected behavior.
- Include written text with photos, pictures, and line drawings.
- Consider how the visual supports will be used to determine size, how durable the support should be, and whether it should be portable.

Below are two types of visual supports that teachers can use to display, teach, or reinforce the rules.

Rules poster: A visual support that contains the rules and is displayed in the classroom; text is paired with a photo or an illustration that represents the rule.

Flip book: Visual support that is small and portable (e.g., can fit on a key ring or a lanyard). The flip book can be carried by the teacher or the child in different settings and can be pulled out to remind the child of the rules.

Collaborate with Families

Teachers can collaborate with families to choose the visuals to include on visual supports for their children. They can also make duplicate copies of these supports to share with families so that they can use them at home to teach and reinforce rules

Explicit Teaching

Explicit teaching refers to providing instruction on a behavior expectation or rule in a highly structured manner. During explicit instruction, the teacher:

Step 1.   Clearly identifies the expectation or rule (e.g., "Sit with your hands in your lap.")

Step 2.   Models it with examples and nonexamples (e.g., The teacher demonstrates sitting with her hands in her lap. Next, she demonstrates a nonexample by sitting with her hands on top of her head.)

Step 3.   Provides opportunities for guided practice with teacher feedback (e.g., "Show me how you sit with your hands in your lap.")

Step 4.   Provides opportunities for independent practice (i.e., practice in naturally occurring routines and activities)

When to use: This strategy is most helpful for children who have difficulty understanding the rules (e.g., children with an intellectual disability or developmental delays, dual language learners).

Example: Braxton is having difficulty following the rule "Use quiet voices." The teacher takes him aside and goes through Steps 1–3 listed above. Later that day, as the children are lining up to go to the restroom, the teacher reminds Braxton to use his quiet voice as they walk down the hall.

Targeted Positive Reinforcement

Targeted positive reinforcement refers to providing more frequent positive descriptive feedback, a tangible reinforcer (e.g., sticker), or an activity reinforcer (e.g., line leader) to encourage a child to engage in the appropriate behavior more often or when expected.

When to use: This strategy should only be used when the teacher has:

- Determined that the child understands the rule
- Determined that the child has the ability to follow the rule
- Tried using frequent positive descriptive feedback, planned ignoring, and redirection without success

Example: During circle time, Raul has difficulty following the rule "Look at the teacher." Instead, he often turns away from the teacher and plays with the objects on the shelf behind him. After determining that Raul understands and can follow the rule, the teacher uses positive descriptive feedback to increase his engagement, but without success. The teacher decides to reinforce Raul when he is following the rule by giving him a sticker.

For Your Information

- If the teacher is not sure that the child understands the rule, he or she should first simplify the rule or explicitly teach the rule.
- Reinforcers are often unique to an individual. What one child finds reinforcing another child might not.
- To be effective, reinforcers should be delivered immediately after the child engages in the appropriate behavior.
- Once the child is following the rule, the reinforcer should be used less and less frequently over time.

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About the Strategy

Challenging behavior refers to any repetitive behavior a child engages in that 1) interferes with the child's or his peers' learning, or 2) negatively affects his social interactions with peers and adults. This includes behaviors such as verbal or physical aggression, tantrums, noncompliance, property destruction, withdrawal, and self-injury.

What the Research and Resources Say

- Young children with developmental delays often display or are likely to display challenging behavior (Fox, Clark, & Dunlap, 2013).
- A significant number of young children (10–30%) display challenging behavior (Smith & Fox, 2003).
- Negative outcomes associated with challenging behavior include school failure, peer rejection, unpleasant family interactions, and poor social-emotional outcomes (Fox, Clark, & Dunlap, 2013; Powell, Fixsen, Dunlap, Smith, & Fox, 2007).
- Children typically engage in challenging behavior to gain attention, to access a preferred object or task, or to escape or avoid an undesired task or person (O'Neill et al., 1997; Durand & Carr, 1987).
- By determining *why* a child is engaging in an inappropriate behavior, the teacher can determine which strategy(ies) will best address the child's behavior (Dunlap et al., 2006).

Strategy To Implement

For children with significant challenging behavior, teaching and reinforcing the rules is often not sufficient for increasing appropriate behaviors and reducing rule infractions or challenging behaviors. In these cases, it is necessary to develop a behavior support plan. Ideally, this plan should be developed by a team that includes the child's teachers, the child's family, and behavior support professionals.

Behavior Support Plan

A child with persistent challenging behavior will likely benefit from a behavior support plan (BSP)—an individualized intervention plan whose purpose is to eliminate the child's challenging behavior. When they develop this plan, classroom staff should collaborate with the child's family. Developing a behavior support plan, sometimes referred to as a behavior intervention plan (BIP), involves the steps outlined below.

| **Define the Challenging Behavior** | Explicitly or clearly define the behavior such that it is measurable, can be identified by two or more observers, and can be identified across time and in different settings or contexts. |

| **Collect Information** | This includes interviews with any teachers or other professional staff that interact with the child, and interviews with the family. It also includes conducting observations in several contexts (e.g., classroom, playground), making sure to note what happens immediately before and after the challenging behavior |

| **Determine the Function of the Behavior** | Use the information collected to determine why the child engages in the challenging behavior (e.g., to get attention, to get a desired object, to avoid a disliked task). |

| **Create the Behavior Support Plan** | The plan must include three key components:
• Preventitive strategies — strategies to prevent the challenging behavior from occuring
• Replacement behavior (or a new skill) — explicit descriptions of the behavior the teacher wants the child to engage in (e.g., asking for the toy instead of hitting a peer to get it), which the teacher will need to intentionally teach
• Response strategies — responses to challenging behavior when it occurs and reinforcement of the desired behavior |

Once the behavior support plan has been developed, school staff and families can begin using it to address the child's challenging behavior. It is important that all personnel at the school or program respond consistently to the child's challenging and desired behaviors in the way described in the plan. If personnel implement the plan inconsistently, the challenging behavior will probably persist and might even get worse.

Collaborate with Families

The family should be a full partner in creating a behavior support plan. They should be encouraged to share and discuss practices that work at home, their own concerns about their child's behavior, and what strategies are realistic to implement at home.

Information for Audrey's Behavior Plan

Define the challenging behavior: The rule for naptime is "Be quiet and stay on your cot." At naptime, three-year-old Audrey cries loudly, rolls around on the floor, and yells, "I don't want to take a nap!"

Collect information: Below are a few relevant pieces of information that the teacher collects.

- Observations — Immediately before naptime, the children go to the restroom. Audrey is always the last one to finish and return to the room. When she returns, all the other children are already on their cots. Audrey begins by whining, "I don't want to take a nap" and quickly escalates to yelling, crying, and rolling around the floor. The teacher stays with Audrey trying to calm her or takes her out of the room.
- Family interview — When asked about naptime on the weekends, the mother reports that she no longer makes Audrey take a nap because of her tantrums. Instead of napping, Audrey continues playing with her toys. The mother also reports that Audrey goes to bed at night without any problems on both weekends and school nights.

Determine the function of the behavior: Based on the information collected, the teacher determines that the most likely cause (i.e., function) of Audrey's challenging behavior is most likely to avoid naptime.

Create the behavior support plan: The teacher decides that the focus of Audrey's behavior support plan should be to prevent her tantrums through the use of preventive strategies. The teacher realizes that some three-year-olds do not require a nap but still benefit from quiet time. Because of this, the teacher's goal is to help Audrey remain quiet at naptime so as to not disturb the other children who wish to sleep.

1) Prevention strategies:
   a. Let Audrey know that she doesn't need to sleep at naptime, she only needs to lay or sit quietly on or next to her cot.
   b. Offer to let Audrey take something quiet of her choice (e.g., book, favorite toy, puzzle) to her cot. The teacher can collaborate with the family about a quiet item that Audrey can bring from home to have at naptime.
   c. Sit in close proximity to Audrey during naptime; provide attention (e.g., rubbing back) when she is being quiet.
2) Replacement behavior (or new skill): Audrey will lie or sit quietly on her cot during naptime.
3) Response strategies:
   a. If Audrey starts to tantrum at naptime, the teacher reminds her that she doesn't need to sleep, she only needs to lay or sit quietly. The teacher reminds Audrey of her choices of an item to take with her. If she continues to escalate:
      i. Audrey needs to be removed from the room. So that she does not find this reinforcing, she needs to be placed with another staff member who only minimally engages with her, and she should only be allowed to interact with her chosen naptime item.
      ii. Additionally, because Audrey again avoided naptime, the teacher once more will strongly focus on preventive strategies the next day.

Information for Audrey's Behavior Plan (continued)

b. If Audrey lies quietly on her cot during naptime, the teacher allows her to help prepare snacks, which immediately follows naptime. Not only does this reward Audrey's behavior but it also allows her to get up from naptime a little earlier. (Over time, this reinforcer can be faded—first changed to a sticker and then to positive descriptive feedback only.)

The behavior support plan will need to be frequently evaluated to make sure it is effective. If the child's behavior is not improving, the plan will need to be revised. However, it is important for school personnel and family to understand that the child's behavior might not change quickly. It is also important to understand that some behaviors will get worse before they improve. Therefore, it is important to not give up after implementing the plan for only a few days.

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About the Strategy

Partnering with or engaging families refers to establishing positive relationships with families through reciprocal exchange of information, ongoing open and honest conversations, and collaborative decision-making.

What the Research and Resources Say

- Positive relationships between teachers and families help create a supportive context, which allows teachers to address the children's challenging behaviors should they arise (Fettig & Ostrosky, 2011).
- When teachers have established positive relationships with families, it is easier to address any behavioral issues that arise (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Corso, 2012).
- Developing a positive collaborative relationship with parents is a critical step in addressing a child's challenging behaviors (Fettig, Schultz, & Ostrosky, 2013; Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Corso, 2012).
- Positive family-program connections have been linked to academic achievement gains, greater academic motivation, and improved socio-emotional skills across all young children, including those from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds (McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Powell, Son, File, & San Juan, 2010).

Establishing a Positive Relationship with Families

It is beneficial for teachers to establish positive relationships with the families of the children in their classroom. When teachers do so, parents are more likely to be involved in their child's development and learning. Additionally, when teachers have a positive relationship with parents, it is much easier to discuss and work together to address a child's challenging behaviors. The following five components are important for establishing positive relationships with families.

- Communication — Be warm, friendly, and honest. Teachers should not only provide information about the child but they should also solicit information from families because families are experts in their child. It is also important that teachers discuss and ask about the child's development and behavior using terms that the parents understand, taking care to avoid educational jargon.
- Respect — Respect the culture, customs, and values of the families with whom they interact. When teachers respect families' culture, customs, and values, families are more likely to trust the teacher and engage with them. Teachers should also recognize each family's strengths.
- Trust — Create an atmosphere of trust in which parents feel like they can safely share information and that it will be kept confidential, unless it involves the safety of the child or another individual. Teachers should also be honest and straightforward when sharing information with families.

- Commitment—Be committed to supporting the children and their families. Teachers can do this in a number of ways, such as by making themselves available to discuss issues and concerns with the families or by making referrals to other agencies when necessary.
- Equality—View parents as equal partners and seek their input when making decisions related to their child (e.g., challenging behavior, academics, social-emotional development).

Tips for Establishing Positive Relationships

- Communication with families should occur regularly throughout the year.
- Teachers should remember to share information with families about all of their child's successes, including how they follow the rules, how they interact with peers, and how they participate in class activities.
- Teachers can invite families to class celebrations and activities.
- To gain a better understanding of the families' culture, customs, and values, teachers can start dialogues about these topics. Teachers can also invite families to share information about their culture or custom with the class. This might involve a family member reading a book, singing a song, or preparing food.

Sharing Rules with Families

Once teachers have established classroom rules, they should communicate those rules to the families. They can do this by:

- Providing a written copy of the rules for the parents to have at home. In addition, teachers can offer to share visual supports so that families can use them at home to teach and reinforce rules.
- Discussing with families what behaviors are expected at school and why those behaviors are important.
- Discussing similarities and differences between home and school rules. This allows teachers and families to work together to help children understand the expectations of the different environments.

Tips Related to Rules

- Teachers should make an effort to learn about the culture and customs of the children in their care. This can help inform the rules that teachers develop. Additionally, teachers can ask families about the rules they have at home and what behaviors they think are important at school.
- Teachers can encourage families to establish household rules. They can also share with families the process they used for creating classroom rules (e.g., phrasing the rules positively, keeping the rules few in number and simply stated).
- Teachers can collaborate with families to choose the visuals to include on visual supports for their children. They can also make duplicate copies of these supports to share with families so that they can use them at home to teach and reinforce rules.

Informing families about classroom rules can open an important dialogue about developmentally appropriate behavior expectations for young children and effective ways to encourage them to follow classroom and home rules.

Communicating about Challenging Behaviors

Many teachers find it difficult to discuss a child's challenging behaviors with his family. However, if a teacher has established a positive relationship with each child's family, it is typically easier to discuss challenging behaviors when they arise. To address a child's challenging behaviors, a teacher should work collaboratively with the child's family members to:

- Arrive at a common understanding of the challenging behavior — Teachers and parents should discuss and exchange information about the child's behavior at school, at home, and in the community. This results in the teacher and the parents having a fuller picture of the child's behavior and the possible reasons for its occurrence (i.e., the function of the behavior).
- Select strategies — Once the teacher and families have shared information and feel as if they have some idea about why the child is displaying the challenging behavior, they can work together to select strategies to use to improve the child's behavior.
- Implement the behavior support plan at school and home — The teacher should implement the strategies with fidelity (that is, as intended by its designers) at school. Additionally, if possible the families can implement these or similar strategies at home or in the community. Keep in mind that some parents will need support to do this. This support might include the teacher modeling the strategy, sharing materials such as a reward chart, and discussing and problem solving implementation issues.

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Scenario

Ms. Allegra is preparing for her second year of teaching kindergarten. She has transferred from a suburban school with little student diversity to an urban school with many students from a variety of cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds. Ms. Allegra's new school has three school-wide behavior expectations: be respectful, be responsible, be safe. She needs to develop classroom rules that align with these behavior expectations, keeping in mind the age of the students and the diversity of her classroom. Ms. Allegra welcomes the opportunity to work on her classroom rules because the ones she had last year were not very effective.

Possible Strategies

- Behavior Expectations and Rules
- Developing Rules

✎ Assignment

1. Review the Case Study Set Introduction and STAR Sheets for each possible strategy listed above.
2. Briefly describe two factors Ms. Allegra needs to consider when developing her classroom rules.
3. List the four criteria for developing classroom rules.
4. Help Ms. Allegra to develop a new set of classroom rules that align with her school's behavior expectations.

Scenario

For the past five years, Ms. Kiersten has taught second grade. This is her first year teaching in an inclusive three-year-old classroom. As in the past, she has developed classroom rules and posted them on the wall. Although she does not have a lot of experience working with younger children, she is aware that, because they are young, she needs to review the rules each morning. She also gives the children periodic reminders throughout the day when she sees one of them not following a rule. She would like to have a more orderly classroom, but this is hard to accomplish when so many of the children are not following the rules.

Possible Stragegies

- Behavior Expectations and Rules
- Developing Rules
- Teaching Rules
- Partnering with or Engaging Families

✎ Assignment

1. Review the STAR Sheets for each possible strategy listed above.
2. List at least three reasons why the children might not be following Ms. Kiersten's rules.
3. To help the children learn and understand the rules better, briefly describe three actions Ms. Kiersten might take.
4. How can Ms. Kiersten share these rules with families?

Scenario

Mr. Joseph is a teacher in a four-year-old preschool room. He has done a great job explaining and displaying his classroom rules. He reviews these rules each morning during circle time, during transitions, and when one or more children are having difficulty following the rules. Though most of the children are doing a good job adhering to the classroom rules, Ricky is having difficulty.

Ricky is constantly asking questions during small-group time. Although Mr. Joseph finds Ricky's questions—"Where do bears sleep?" "Do fish drink water?" and "Does grass grow on the moon?"—interesting, this behavior does not give the other children a chance to participate in the activity. Ricky's behavior also violates the classroom rule "Take turns." Mr. Joseph would like to help Ricky learn how to wait his turn during small-group time so that other students have a turn to ask questions.

Possible Strategies

- Teaching Rules
- Encouraging Appropriate Behavior

✎ Assignment

1. Review the STAR Sheets for each possible strategy listed above.
2. Although most children follow the rules the majority of the time, Mr. Joseph would like to do more to encourage appropriate behavior. Describe one strategy that he can use to accomplish this.
3. Mr. Joseph would like to help Ricky learn to wait his turn during small-group time.
   a. Which of the strategies do you think Mr. Joseph should use to address Ricky's behavior? Explain why you chose this strategy.
   b. Choose a second strategy that Mr. Joseph could use to address Ricky's behavior. Explain why you chose this strategy.

Scenario

Ms. Ashley is a teacher in a three-year-old preschool room. She has taught the classroom rules to the children and reviews them daily. One of them, Rose, generally follows the rules but consistently has a hard time cleaning up after free play. When Ms. Ashley announces that it is time to go outside and reminds the children, "Put the toys away," Rose immediately runs to the door, leaving behind a pile of toys. Typically, Ms. Ashley has to give Rose three reminders before she cleans up her toys, and the whole class has to wait for her to finish. Ms. Ashley would like to help Rose learn to clean up her toys after free play.

Possible Activities

- Behavior Expectations and Rules
- Teaching Rules
- Encouraging Appropriate Behavior
- Partnering with or Engaging Families

✎ Assignment

1. Review the STAR Sheets for each possible strategy listed above.
2. Ms. Ashley would like to help Rose learn to clean up her toys after free play.
   a. Which strategy would best address Rose's behavior? Explain why.
   b. On Tuesday, Rose was playing in the art center during free play. She cleaned up her crayons and paper, but she left the glue stick and the pom-poms on the table. Provide an example of what you would say and do when implementing the strategy you selected.
3. Ms. Ashley feels as though she needs to discuss Rose's behavior with her family. List at least two things that Ms. Ashley and the family should discuss in regard to addressing Rose's behavior.

Scenario

Mrs. Johnson has taught preschool in Bakerstown for fifteen years. Recently, one of the large churches in town sponsored a considerable number of immigrants who have relocated to Bakerstown from Lithuania. Mrs. Johnson's preschool now serves a large number of these children, many of whom—like their families—have quite limited English skills, making communication difficult. Mrs. Johnson expects all of the children in her classroom to follow the rules and behave appropriately, but she feels like some of them, particularly the new arrivals from Lithuania, are having trouble doing so. Although Mrs. Johnson has had the same classroom rules for the last twelve years and they have always been effective, she now believes that she needs to rethink her rules and how she teaches and reinforces them.

Possible Strategies

- Behavior Expectations and Rules
- Developing Rules
- Considerations for Special Populations
- Partnering with or Engaging Families

✎ Assignment

1. Review the STAR Sheets for each possible strategy listed above.
2. Mrs. Johnson is unfamiliar with the cultural practices and customs of her Lithuanian students.
   a. How might this play a role in the children's difficulty following the rules?
   b. How can Mrs. Johnson learn more about the children's cultural practices and customs?
3. Describe at least three strategies Mrs. Johnson can use to teach and reinforce the rules for the Lithuanian children as well as those from other diverse backgrounds?

Scenario

Ms. LaTasha is a teacher in an inclusive preschool classroom with twelve typically developing children and six children with developmental delays or disabilities. Though most of the children are responding well to her classroom rules, two of them frequently engage in behavior that is disruptive or aggressive.

Nevaeh, who is almost five, has a developmental delay. She is quiet and mild mannered and is well liked by her peers. However, Nevaeh has difficulty staying focused during large-group activities. Though during these activities, the rule is "Eyes on the teacher," Navaeh is often engaged in behaviors such as trying to talk to her neighbor, taking her shoes off, or lying on the floor.

Cyan is a four-year-old boy who exhibits persistent challenging behavior. He scratches, bites, hits, and kicks his peers when they have a toy that he wants. Most of the time, the other children give him the toy. Ms. LaTasha talks with Cyan's mother and learns that he is an only child who typically does not have to share his toys. However, Cyan's mother has similar concerns when friends come over to play: She has noticed that he is aggressive with them when he has to share his toys.

✎ Assignment

1. Review all the STAR Sheets.
2. Choose one or more strategies that Ms. LaTasha could use to increase Nevaeh's appropriate behavior during large group activities. Explain why you chose the strategy(s).
3. Ms. LaTasha would like to create a behavior support plan for Cyan.
   a. Discuss why this strategy is or is not appropriate for Cyan.
   b. Complete the table below. For the first three items, use the information provided in the scenario above. For the last item, propose prevention strategies, replacement behavior (or new skill), and response strategies that you think would be effective.
   c. Discuss why it is important for Ms. LaTasha to collect information from Cyan's mother about his behavior?

Information for Cyan's Behavior Support Plan	
Define Cyan's challenging behavior.	
Collect information. (List the two types of information collected about Cyan in the scenario above the findings for each.)	
Determine the possible function of the behavior. (Why do you think Cyan is engaging in the challenging behavior?)	
Create a behavior support plan for Cyan that includes: 1) Prevention strategies 2) Replacement Behavior (or new skill) 3) Response strategies	