



Addressing Challenging Behaviors

Please note that this micro-credential should ONLY be completed if you have a student exhibiting challenging behaviors. For this micro-credential, a **challenging behavior situation** involves a severe classroom event that may occur once or recur, interrupting teaching and learning for a significant amount of time.

Competency

The educator is familiar with various student supports and applies them to support students from diverse backgrounds and groups with flexibility.

Key Method

The educator understands how to address challenging behaviors by analyzing specific situations involving **individual** students and matching appropriate strategies for learner success. The educator collaborates with other adults, as needed, to formulate a plan that supports learners.

Method Components

For our purposes, a **challenging behavior situation** involves a severe classroom event that may recur, interrupting teaching and learning for a significant amount of time. This challenging behavior is often repeated, and therefore, it is something the teacher and class need to create an action plan to overcome.

Addressing Challenging Behaviors

Although challenging behaviors disrupt the learning environment and can be minor, our focus in this micro-credential is on several challenging behaviors. What is severe in one situation may not be in another. Typically, severe challenging behaviors pose a risk to the safety and well-being of the student, their peers, or the adults in the classroom. These behaviors often require immediate intervention and involve the assistance of other staff.

Examples of severe challenging behaviors include:

- **Physical aggression:** Hitting, kicking, biting, pushing, or inflicting other physical harm on others.
- **Self-injurious behaviors:** Cutting, burning, head-banging, or other actions that cause harm to oneself.
- **Threats of violence:** Verbal or written threats to harm oneself or others.
- **Property destruction:** Intentional damage to school property or the belongings of others.
- **Severe tantrums or meltdowns:** Prolonged screaming, crying, or aggressive behavior that is difficult to de-escalate.
- **Elopement:** Running away from school or the classroom without permission.

These behaviors disrupt the learning environment and cause significant distress. Addressing severe challenging behaviors promptly and comprehensively is crucial to ensuring the safety and well-being of all students.

Addressing Challenging Behaviors

Addressing challenging student behaviors begins with establishing a solid relationship with each learner. Achieving this involves understanding what students value, how they learn best, and their individual goals.

When faced with challenging student behaviors, the educator should recognize that such behaviors are not personal but rather stem from the student fulfilling a specific function. The root causes of behaviors are often other issues, such as family, peer, medical, or non-school-related problems the learner is trying to overcome. If the learning environment is one that educators strive for, it is a safe place, and therefore, the child may feel safe exhibiting challenging behaviors. In many ways, it is a sign they are asking for help. Identifying the root cause of challenging behaviors is the first step in effectively and positively addressing behavioral challenges. There is often more

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than one root cause, and determining the most influential is part of developing a plan. The process demands empathy, dedication, and perseverance. Root causes can originate from various areas.

- What could be happening in the child's home?
- What types of trauma may the child have experienced?
- Is this student sheltered or food insecure?
- Are the students' basic needs, other than food and shelter, being met?
- Are there cultural factors that should be considered?
- Are there language barriers between the student and the school, and between the parents and the school?
- Is this student able to access the content being taught?
- Does the student have any physical or other health concerns that may be a factor?
- Is the student getting enough sleep, or are there other health issues?

Once the root cause is identified, solutions should be explored in an action-based approach.

Important note: If you suspect a student is experiencing abuse or neglect, act swiftly and responsibly. Follow school and district-specific protocols to report immediately and inform your school administrator or designated child protection staff member of your concerns. Remember, prompt action can be vital in ensuring the child's safety and well-being, and your role is to report, not resolve, such issues.

Solutions to Challenging Behaviors

Classroom management for challenging behaviors can be frustrating. If left unaddressed, it can also lead to a cycle of failure and anger. The cornerstone of classroom management is relationships, particularly when repairing harm caused by engaging in challenging behaviors.

Strategies to foster positive responses to what is often referred to as challenging behaviors are:

- **Avoid power struggles** with students. If the student brings an adult into a power struggle, the student often emerges with the upper hand, and the adult develops and intensifies hard feelings.
- **Stay calm** and do your best to keep emotions out of it. If you need to take a break before dealing with the behavior, do so. Take a moment to reflect and calm down before responding.

- **Offer choices.** For example, instead of saying, “Sit down now,” say, “You can either sit at your desk or join us on the carpet; you have 3 minutes to decide.” This gives them a choice and lets them feel like they have some control over their situation. It also gives them time to make the right choice.
- **Model respect and manners** every chance you get. Say 'please' and 'thank you,' and practice active listening with your students. Every student in your class should feel valued and cared for.
- **Specific Praise.** When offering praise, be specific. Instead of saying, “Good job,” say, “I like how you walked to the bathroom, thank you.”
- **Ask for help.** Whether it is from the administration, a behavioral specialist, or a colleague in your union, do not take on the burden of challenging behaviors alone.

Teamwork

A team can create a more positive and supportive learning environment for all students by utilizing frameworks like Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and restorative practices. These approaches actively work to dismantle biases that disproportionately affect students of color.

At the heart of teamwork is a commitment to analyzing student behaviors, understanding their underlying root causes, and implementing targeted interventions as a team. Below are the frameworks and strategies for collaborating with colleagues and families to ensure every student thrives.

- **Continue to analyze student behaviors:** A thoughtful analysis of behavior helps us understand why a student may be struggling and allows us to tailor our responses accordingly, while being mindful of the potential impact of cultural differences and implicit biases.
- **PBIS:** This framework focuses on teaching positive behaviors and establishing a school-wide culture of support and encouragement, emphasizing cultural responsiveness and equity.
- **MTSS:** This approach provides tiered levels of intervention, ensuring that students receive the appropriate support based on their individual needs while also monitoring for and addressing any disproportionate representation of students of color in disciplinary actions.
- **Restorative practices emphasize repairing harm and building relationships, fostering a sense of community and accountability**

while acknowledging the historical and systemic factors that may contribute to conflict and disproportionate discipline.

- **Teamwork:** Collaboration with colleagues and families is essential for developing comprehensive solutions and providing consistent support. The focus should be on building trust and understanding across cultural differences.

The current education trend is moving from zero-tolerance policies to more supportive, equitable, and rehabilitative ones. Despite this awareness and the movements driving change, the national school discipline data continues to show that students with disabilities and students of color are disproportionately suspended or expelled.

Adhering to any existing individualized education programs (IEPs) or behavior intervention plans (BIPs) developed for students who exhibit challenging behaviors is crucial when working with them.

Sometimes, even following the theory still doesn't work in certain situations or moments. When this may occur, call for assistance, remain as calm as possible, and attempt to de-escalate with a quiet, respectful tone. If possible, discuss the issue privately with the student to avoid embarrassing them. When help arrives, and things are calm, document what occurred and work on mending the situation.

Supporting Research

Evertson, C.M., & Weinstein, C.S. (2013). Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues. New York, NY: Routledge.
https://www.academia.edu/823019/Handbook_of_classroom_management_Research_practice_and_contemporary_issues

Marzano, R.J., & Marzano, J.S. (2003). The Key to Classroom Management. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
<https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/the-key-to-classroom-management>

Project Ideal. (2013). Classroom Management Introduction.
<http://www.projectidealonline.org/v/classroom-management-introduction/>

Strickland-Cohen, M.K., Newson, A., Meyer, K., Putnam, R., Kern, L., Meyer, B. C., & Flammini, A. (September 2022). Strategies for De-escalating Student Behavior in the Classroom. Center on PBIS, University of Oregon. www.pbis.org

Resources

Readings

[De-Escalation: How You Can Help Defuse Potentially Violent Situations](#)

[4 Proven Strategies for Teaching Empathy | Edutopia](#)

[4 Steps to Discussing Challenging Behavior With a Student | Edutopia](#)

[Implicit Bias, Stereotypes, & Microaggressions | NEA](#)

[IRIS | Page 8: Individualized Services & Supports](#)

[Peak Stage](#)

[The Role of Educators in Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect](#)

[Setting SMART Goals](#)

[Seven culturally responsive classroom management strategies - Resource hub for schools and districts](#)

[Strategies to Support Student Goal Setting in the Classroom](#)

Solutions

[Classroom Management Strategies for Difficult Students - AMLE](#)

[Classroom Management Strategies for Difficult Students](#)

[4 Proven Strategies for Teaching Empathy | Edutopia](#)

[Relationship Building Through Culturally Responsive Classroom Management | Edutopia](#)

[Teacher Behavioral Strategies: A Menu | Intervention Central](#)

[Twenty Classroom Management Strategies and Techniques](#)

[25_Sure_Fire_Strategies_for_Handling_Dif.pdf](#)

Root Causes of Behavior

[Checklist for identifying target behavior](#)

[Behavior Strategies to Support Intensifying Intervention](#)

[Too Rough, Too Rowdy: External Causes of Student Misbehavior \(Opinion\)](#)

[Why Do Children Misbehave? Finding the Root Causes of Classroom Misbehavior - Insights to Behavior](#)

Teamwork

[Multi-tiered System of Support](#)

[Multi-tiered System of Support Getting Started](#)

[Classroom Management: Working with Parents](#)

Videos

[▶ Behavior Management | How to Handle Disruptive Behaviors in Your Class...](#)

[▶ Challenges In The Classroom Series: Work Refusal](#)

[▶ How To Manage Disrespect in your Classroom](#)

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

For our purposes, a challenging behavior situation involves a severe classroom event that may occur once or recur, interrupting teaching and learning for a significant amount of time.

To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a proficient score in Parts 1 to 3.

Addressing Challenging Behaviors

Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

300 to 500 words

Describe your current philosophy when responding to challenging classroom behaviors.

Include the following in your description:

1. Describe essential background information about your classroom to help the reviewer understand the learning environment. Please include the following:
 - Grade Level
 - Subject Area
 - Special Student Needs
 - Include learning disabilities, giftedness, English Language Learner status, or other standard accommodations within the group.
2. Describe how you currently respond to challenging behaviors.
3. How might your beliefs about appropriate behavior influence your interpretation of student actions in the classroom?
4. How do the above beliefs translate into specific classroom management strategies or approaches?
5. Identify specific cultural influences or assumptions you hold that affect how you perceive and respond to student behavior.

Passing:

The response addresses all four components required as outlined above.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following 3 artifacts as evidence of your learning.

*Please do not include any information that will make you or your students identifiable to your reviewers.

Artifact 1: Real-Life Example and Analysis **300-500 words**

Addressing Challenging Behaviors

Describe a challenging behavior situation you are currently experiencing with a student in your classroom. Your description should include the following details:

The Situation:

- Briefly describe the specific behavior(s) exhibited by the student.
- Include the time, place, and any relevant context surrounding the behavior.

Root Causes:

- Analyze potential underlying causes of the behavior.
- Consider academic challenges, social-emotional needs, home environment, or medical conditions.

Initial Response:

- Describe your immediate reaction to the behavior.
- Was it a verbal response, physical intervention, redirection, or something else?

Strategies Implemented:

- Explain the specific strategies you put in place to address the behavior.
- Did you use behavior modification techniques, positive reinforcement, communication with parents, or other approaches?

Rationale for Responses:

- Why did you choose these particular responses?
- How did they align with your classroom management philosophy, school policies, or the students' individual needs?

Impact on Other Students:

- How did the challenging behavior and your response affect the rest of the class?
- Did other students become distracted, upset, or involved? Did they model positive or negative behavior in response?

Resumption of Teaching and Learning:

- How did you refocus the class and get back to instruction?
- Did you need to modify your lesson plan or provide extra support to students?

Artifact 2: Goal and Action Plan

Develop a SMART goal and action plan to address the challenging behavior identified in Artifact 1.

- Create the SMART goal and ensure it is
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Attainable/Achievable
 - Relevant/Realistic

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- Time-bound
- Develop your action plan that includes the following:
 - Timeline of particular steps you, the student, and any other stakeholder will take to make progress
- Collaboration
 - Identify a trusted colleague and discuss your plan of action with them. Ask them to help you revise your plan to utilize your strengths and to ensure it is realistic.
- Teaching/classroom management strategies
 - List the specific strategies you will implement to support the student and yourself.
- Support needed
 - Identify any necessary support to implement your plan and include a timeline.
- Professional learning, self-directed learning, or research
 - List any professional learning or research you will complete.
- Student Supports
 - Describe any accommodations, modifications, or additional supports you will provide to help the student succeed.

Throughout your action plan, reflect on how each step will contribute to achieving your goals.

Artifact 3: Implementation Analysis

Implement the plan outlined above, then record and reflect on how the student's behavior has changed. Include the following in your analysis:

Recap of Challenging Behavior:

- Briefly summarize the specific challenging behavior you targeted with your SMART goal. (Example: "The targeted behavior was Student X's frequent interruptions with off-topic comments and questions during instruction.")

Strategies Implemented:

- List the key strategies you employed to address the challenging behavior. (Examples: "Implemented a visual cue system for raising hands," "Used proximity control," "Provided preferential seating.")

Goal Attainment:

- Clearly state whether you achieved your SMART goal.
- If you did not meet your goal, specify how close you came to achieving it.

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Adjustments for Success:

- Analyze your data and identify specific adjustments you could make to your plan to better achieve success in the future. (Examples: "Increase reinforcement frequency," "Modify the visual cue system," "Involve parents in the plan.")

Celebrations (if goal met):

- Describe how you will celebrate your success and acknowledge the student's progress if you meet your goal. (Examples: "Verbal praise," "Small reward," "Sharing success with parents/class.")

Plan Fidelity:

- Reflect on whether you implemented your plan precisely as intended.
- If not, identify factors that interfered with full implementation. (Examples: "Lack of time," "Unexpected events," "Need for additional support.")

Utilized Supports:

- Describe in detail any supports you used to implement your plan.
- Include student supports (e.g., accommodations, modifications), professional learning you engaged in, support from colleagues or other professionals, and other relevant resources.

Additional Essential Information:

- Share any other observations, insights, or data that are crucial to understanding the results of your plan.

Lessons Learned and Future Changes:

- What would you do differently if you could start the action plan over? (Examples: "Start with more intensive interventions," "Gather baseline data sooner," "Involve the student in goal setting.")

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Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: Real-life Example and Analysis	The response is thoughtful and addresses all questions outlined in the section requirements, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Situation • Root Causes • Initial Response • Strategies Implemented • Rationale for Responses • Impact on Other Students • Resumption of Teaching and Learning 	The response is thoughtful, but it is missing one of the section requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Situation • Root Causes • Initial Response • Strategies Implemented • Rationale for Responses • Impact on Other Students • Resumption of Teaching and Learning 	The response is thoughtful, but is missing two or more of the section requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Situation • Root Causes • Initial Response • Strategies Implemented • Rationale for Responses • Impact on Other Students • Resumption of Teaching and Learning
Artifact 2: SMART Goal and Action Plan	The goal is SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant to the educator, and time-bound), addressing challenging student behavior. The action plan contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeline • Collaboration • Teaching/Classroom management strategies 	The goal is SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant to the educator, and time-bound), addressing challenging student behavior. The action plan is missing one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeline • Collaboration • Teaching/Classroom management strategies 	The goal is not SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant to the educator, and time-bound) and does not address challenging student behavior. OR The action plan is missing two or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeline • Collaboration

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support needed ● Professional Learning ● Student Supports that are relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support needed ● Professional Learning ● Student Supports that are relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teaching/Classroom management strategies ● Support needed ● Professional Learning ● Student Supports that are relevant
<p>Artifact 3: Implementation Analysis</p>	<p>The analysis is concise, thoughtful, and addresses all questions outlined in the section requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recap of the challenging behavior ● Strategies implemented ● Goal Attainment ● Adjustments for success ● Celebrations ● Lessons Learned 	<p>The analysis is concise and thoughtful, but lacks one of the requirements below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recap of the challenging behavior ● Strategies implemented ● Goal Attainment ● Adjustments for success ● Celebrations ● Lessons Learned 	<p>The analysis is concise and thoughtful, but it needs one of the following requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recap of the challenging behavior ● Strategies implemented ● Goal Attainment ● Adjustments for success ● Celebrations ● Lessons Learned

Part 3 Reflection

350-550 words

Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.

Please reflect on your professional learning as you complete this micro-credential. Be sure to address the following questions in your response:

1. How has this process affected your current and future classroom practice of addressing challenging behaviors?
2. Has your learning impacted your future classroom practice related to equity when addressing challenging behaviors? Why or why not?
3. How might you share your discoveries about addressing challenging behaviors with your colleagues?
4. In addition to working on your SMART goal, what do you hope to accomplish or learn about addressing challenging classroom behaviors?

Passing:

The response addresses all guiding questions with descriptions that relate to the educator's current setting.