TEACHER'S RESOURCE GUIDE

Second Edition

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Table of Contents

I. Introduction 7

II. Interventions 9

A. Memory, Abstractions, Generalizations, and Organization

Behavior Number

1. Is disorganized 9
2. Has limited memory skills 13
3. Has difficulty understanding abstract concepts 16
4. Fails to find locations in the building 18
5. Does not respond appropriately to environmental cues 20
6. Does not stay in assigned areas for specified time 22
7. Needs verbal questions and directions frequently repeated 24
8. Demonstrates difficulty with visual memory 29
9. Demonstrates difficulty with auditory memory 31
10. Does not demonstrate an understanding of directionality 33
11. Has difficulty concentrating 34
12. Perseverates - does the same thing over and over 39
13. Fails to demonstrate logical thinking 41
14. Has difficulty retrieving, recalling, or naming objects, persons, places, etc. 43
15. Demonstrates visual perception problems 46
16. Has difficulty classifying. 48
17. Fails to generalize knowledge from one situation to another 49
18. Demonstrates confusion 51
19. Remembers information one time but not the next. 53
20. Requires slow, sequential, substantially broken-down presentation of concepts 55
21. Fails to remember sequences. 57

B. Listening

Behavior Number

22. Does not listen to or follow verbal directions 60
23. Does not hear word endings, does not hear key words such as “do not,” etc. 65
24. Does not direct attention or fails to maintain attention to important sounds in the immediate environment 69
25. Has difficulty differentiating speech sounds heard 72
26. Is unsuccessful in activities requiring listening 73
27. Attends more successfully when close to the source of sound. 77
28. Requires eye contact in order to listen successfully 81
29 Does not listen to what other students are saying 84

C. Speaking

Behavior Number

30. Has difficulty imitating speech sounds. 87
31. Omits, adds, substitutes, or rearranges sounds or words when speaking 89
32. Distorts or mispronounces words or sounds when speaking (not attributed to dialect or accent) 91
33. Does not use appropriate subject-verb agreement when speaking. 93
34. Has a limited speaking vocabulary. 95
35. Uses inappropriate verb tenses when speaking 99
36. Speaks dysfluently 101
37. Does not complete statements or express complete thoughts when speaking 104

D. Reading

Behavior Number

38. Does not comprehend what he/she reads 108
39. Fails to finish assignments because of reading difficulties. 112
40. Fails to demonstrate word attack skills 115
41. Fails to recognize words on grade level 117
42. Loses place when reading 119
43. Has difficulty with sound-symbol relationships 121
44. Has difficulty with phonics skills when reading 122
45. Omits, adds, substitutes, or reverses letters, words, or sounds when reading 124
46. Fails to demonstrate word comprehension. 126
47. Reads words correctly in one context but not in another 129
48. Does not read independently. 130
49. Does not discriminate between similar letters and words 132
50. Does not know all the letters of the alphabet 133
51. Understands what is read to him/her but not what he/she reads silently. 134
52. Has difficulty recalling the sequence of events in stories read. 136
53. Does not demonstrate an understanding of alphabetical order. 138
54. Has difficulty identifying the topic sentence and main idea when reading 139
55. Does not demonstrate an understanding of contractions and compound words 141
56. Fails to demonstrate glossary and dictionary skills 142
57. Has difficulty finding supporting details when reading 144

E. Writing

Behavior Number

58. Performs assignments so carelessly as to be illegible 146
59. Fails to copy letters, words, sentences, and numbers from a model at a close proximity 148
60. Fails to copy letters, words, sentences, and numbers from a model at a distance 151
61. Fails to use capitalization correctly when writing 153
62 Uses inappropriate spacing between words or sentences when writing 155
63. Reverses letters and numbers when writing 156
64. Fails to write within a given space. 158
65. Fails to punctuate correctly when writing 160
66. Does not use appropriate subject-verb agreement when writing 162
67. Does not compose complete sentences or express complete thoughts when writing . . . 164
68. Fails to correctly organize writing activities. 168
69. Omits, adds, or substitutes words when writing 170
70. Fails to form letters correctly when printing or writing 172
71. Fails to use verb tenses correctly when writing 174
72. Uses inappropriate letter size when writing 176

F. Spelling

Behavior Number

73. Fails to use spelling rules 178
74. Has difficulty with phonetic approaches to spelling 180
75. Omits, substitutes, adds, or rearranges letters or sound units when spelling words 182
76. Has difficulty spelling words that do not follow the spelling rules 184
77. Does not use word endings correctly when spelling or omits them 186
78. Spells words correctly in one context but not in another 187
79. Requires continued drill and practice to learn spelling words 189

G. Mathematical Calculations

Behavior Number

80. Has difficulty solving math word problems 191
81. Fails to change from one math operation to another. 194
82. Does not understand abstract math concepts without concrete examples 196

83. Fails to correctly solve math problems requiring regrouping (i.e., borrowing and carrying) 198
84. Works math problems from left to right instead of right to left 200
85. Fails to follow necessary steps in math problems 202
86. Fails to correctly solve math problems involving fractions or decimals. 205
87. Fails to demonstrate knowledge of place value 207
88. Confuses operational signs when working math problems 208
89. Fails to correctly solve problems involving money 209
90. Fails to correctly solve problems using measurement 211
91. Does not understand the concept of skip counting 213
92. Cannot tell time 214
93. Fails to correctly solve math problems requiring addition. 215
94. Fails to correctly solve math problems requiring subtraction 217
95. Fails to correctly solve math problems requiring multiplication 219
96. Fails to correctly solve math problems requiring division. 221
97. Does not remember math facts. 223
98. Does not make use of columns when working math problems 225

H. Academic Performance

Behavior Number

99. Does not perform or complete classroom assignments during class time 227
100. Fails to complete homework assignments and return them to school 233
101. Fails to perform tasks or assignments independently 238
102. Performs classroom tests, quizzes, or tasks at a failing level 241
103. Does not prepare for assigned activities or daily routines 243
104. Does not remain on-task for the required length of time 248
105. Does not perform academically at his/her ability level 253
106. Does not read or follow written directions. 258
107. Is reluctant to attempt new assignments or tasks 261
108. Requires repeated drill and practice to learn what other students master easily. 264
109. Does not function appropriately in the presence of verbal and physical stimuli in the classroom. 266
110. Rushes through activities or assignments with little or no regard to accuracy, quality, or neatness 268
111. Fails to make appropriate use of study time 272
112. Begins an assignment or activity before receiving or reading complete directions or instructions or fails to follow directions or instructions 277
113. Changes from one activity to another without finishing the first, without putting things away, before it is time to move on, etc. 281
114. Does not begin assignments after receiving directions, instructions, etc. 284
115. Does not complete assignments after receiving directions, instructions, etc. 287

I. Interpersonal Relationships

Behavior Number

116. Makes inappropriate comments or unnecessary noises in the classroom 289
117 Fights with other students 293
118. Becomes physically aggressive with teachers 296
119. Makes unnecessary physical contact with others 299
120. Makes inappropriate comments to teachers 301
121. Responds inappropriately to praise or recognition from other students or teachers 304
122. Is easily angered, annoyed, or upset 306
123. Agitates and provokes peers to a level of verbal or physical assault 312
124. Has little or no interaction with teachers. 314
125. Has little or no interaction with peers 317
126. Makes inappropriate comments to other students 320
127. Responds inappropriately to typical physical exchanges with peers 323
128 Does not respond appropriately to friendly teasing (e.g., joking, name calling, sarcastic remarks, etc.) 325
129. Is not accepted by other students. 327

130. Bothers others who are trying to work, listen, etc. 330
131. Responds inappropriately to others' attempts to be friendly, complimentary, sympathetic, etc. 334
132. Refuses to share possessions or materials 336
133. Does not allow others to take their turn or participate in activities or games, etc. 339
134. Does not demonstrate the ability to resolve conflict situations 341
135. Does not make appropriate use of free time 343
136. Fails to work appropriately with peers in a tutoring situation 345
137. "Gets back" at others when he/she feels that someone has wronged him/her 347
138. Writes and passes notes 350
139. Tattles 351
140. Grabs things away from others. 353
141. Interrupts the teacher or other students 355

J. Depression/Motivation

Behavior Number

142. Has unexcused absences 358
143. Has unexcused tardiness 360
144. Blames other persons or materials to avoid taking responsibility for his/her mistakes or failures. 362
145. Does not participate or demonstrate an interest in classroom activities or special events that are interesting to other students 364
146. Blames self for situations beyond his/her control 367
147. Expresses concerns or worries about school, home, or personal situations through words or pictures 368
148. Is not motivated by rewards 370
149. Responds inappropriately to constructive criticism or comments from others 371
150. Tries to avoid situations, assignments, responsibilities 373
151. Demonstrates self-destructive behavior 376
152. Threatens to hurt self or commit suicide. 378
153. Indicates that no one likes him/her, no one cares about him/her, etc. 380
154. Ignores consequences of his/her behavior 383
155. Does not smile, laugh, or demonstrate happiness 386
156. Cheats 388
157. Throws temper tantrums 390
158 Is tired, listless, apathetic, unmotivated, not interested in school 392
159. Indicates that he/she does not care or is not concerned about performance, grades, report cards, graduating, consequences of behavior, etc. 394
160. Is overly critical of self in school-related performance, abilities, personal appearance, etc. 396
161. Frowns, scowls, looks unhappy during typical classroom situations 398
162. Needs immediate rewards, reinforcement, or gratification in order to demonstrate appropriate behavior 400
163. Does not care for personal appearance. 402
164. Is pessimistic 405
165. Physically runs away from personal or school experiences 407
166. Cries in response to personal or school situations 409

K. Inappropriate Behavior Under Normal Circumstances

Behavior Number

167. Behaves inappropriately when others do well or receive praise or attention 411
168. Does not behave in a manner appropriate for the situation 413
169. Acts impulsively without apparent self-control 415
170. Exhibits sudden or extreme mood changes 417
171. Is unpredictable in behavior 419
172. Makes sexually related comments or engages in inappropriate behavior with sexual overtones 422
173. Moves about unnecessarily 424

174. Becomes overexcited. 427
175. Lies, denies, exaggerates, distorts the truth 430
176. Speaks in an unnatural voice 432
177. Speaks incoherently 433
178. Engages in nervous habits 435
179. Destroys school, teachers', or other students' property 437
180. Does not accept changes in an established routine. 440
181. Reacts physically in response to excitement, disappointment, surprise, happiness, fear, etc. 443
182. Engages in inappropriate behaviors related to bodily functions 445
183. Becomes pale, may vomit, or pass out when anxious or frightened 447
184. Demonstrates phobic reactions. 449
185. Does not change from one activity to another without difficulty 451
186. Cannot fasten articles of clothing 453
187. Does not change clothing for physical education 454
188. Does not demonstrate appropriate mealtime behavior 456

L. Rules and Expectations

Behavior Number

189. Uses obscene or profane language 458
190 Does not demonstrate the ability to follow a routine 462
191. Does not take appropriate care of personal property. 465
192. Steals or forcibly takes things from other students, teachers, the school building, etc. . . .468
193. Engages in inappropriate behaviors while seated 471
194. Does not follow directives from teachers or other school personnel 474
195. Brings inappropriate or illegal materials to school 476
196 Responds inappropriately to redirection in academic and social situations 478
197. Does not follow school rules 480
198. Demonstrates inappropriate behavior on the school grounds before and after school. . .483
199. Does not follow classroom rules 485
200. Does not wait appropriately for an instructor to arrive 487
201. Does not wait appropriately for assistance from an instructor. 488
202. Does not demonstrate appropriate use of school-related materials 490
203. Does not demonstrate appropriate care and handling of others' property 493
204. Does not raise hand when appropriate 496
205. Demonstrates inappropriate behavior going to and from school 498
206. Does not take notes during class when necessary 500
207. Is preoccupied with drugs or alcohol or possesses or uses drugs or alcohol at school . .502
208. Blurts out answers without being called on 504
209. Interrupts others 507
210. Talks to others during quiet activity periods 510
211. Leaves seat or assigned area without permission 512
212. Does not come to or is not ready for an activity at the specified time 515

M. Group Behavior

Behavior Number

213. Demonstrates inappropriate behavior when moving with a group. 518
214. Behaves more appropriately alone or in small groups than with the whole class or in large group activities 520
215. Demonstrates inappropriate behavior in a small academic group setting 523
216. Does not demonstrate appropriate behavior in the presence of a substitute authority figure 526
217. Demonstrates inappropriate behavior in a large academic group setting 529
218. Has difficulty working effectively in a group situation 532
219. Does not demonstrate appropriate behavior in group games 536

III. Forms 539

I. Introduction

The increased learning and behavior problems that are being encountered by educators in our schools are the result of the changing nature of our society. We are seeing an increase of students being referred to as "At-Risk" as well as an increase in the day-to-day problems encountered by the students we refer to as "typical" or "average."

By anyone's perception, it must be recognized that the number of students we consider in need of intervention in our schools is increasing at an alarming pace. In 2004, the poverty rate rose to 12.7% from 12.5% in 2003, indicating that 1.1 million more Americans live at the poverty level. More than 13 million U.S. youngsters, nearly 18% of all children under the age of 18, are poor. They account for 35% of the poor population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2004). In our country, families with children represent the fastest growing segment of the homeless population, constituting approximately 40% of the people who became homeless (Shinn and Weitzman, 1996). Reports issued in the mid-1980s indicated that an estimated 50% of homeless children and youth were not attending school regularly. In response to these findings, Congress passed the McKinney Act in 1987 (Duffield, 1997). Significant improvement has been documented in school access and enrollment: approximately 86% of homeless children and youth now attend school regularly (Anderson, Janger, & Panton, 1995).

At least half of all the children in our schools are faced with divorce or separation before they are 18 years of age. Between 1970 and 1996, the proportion of children under 18 years of age living with one parent grew from 12% to 28% and about 4% did not live with either parent (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996). Approximately 3 million child abuse reports are received by local child protective services (CPS) agencies each year (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1998). Every year about 1.3 million 8th through 12th grade students drop out of school nationwide (Dropouts a Drain, 2005). Only 70% of all students in public high schools graduate. Of those that graduate, only 32% leave high school qualified to attend four-year colleges (Greene & Forster, 2003). These figures suggest that the student who is considered "At-Risk" is rapidly leaving the status of minority and is becoming the majority of students in our schools.

It would seem an impossibility to define "At-Risk" in a manner that would satisfy all perceptions of the "At-Risk" dilemma. It is certain that "At-Risk" means different things to different people. To the teacher, "At-Risk" may mean the student is "At-Risk" for failure which will result in retention at the end of the year. To the social worker, "At-Risk" may mean that an abused child is "At-Risk" for becoming an abusive parent. To a social or economic analyst, an "At-Risk" child is one who is born out of wedlock, grows up in poverty, and is likely to repeat the cycle.

For many of our students, the six hours a day at school are the best hours of the day to develop the improved self-esteem that comes from succeeding both behaviorally and academically. For many students who are left to the influences of a troubled society and troubled parents, school in general, and our teachers in particular, are those students' last best hope for learning appropriate behavior. A positive intervention program designed to teach students more appropriate behavior to better ensure their success as youth and adults is a must in today's schools.

Teachers need the skills to help our students learn more appropriate behavior and our students need to become more responsible, more self-controlled, and more successful in their behavior and academic school experiences. Students must know what behavior is necessary and the positive and negative consequences which will follow in order that they may make responsible decisions. In this respect, the following positive intervention strategies are designed to teach students the behaviors they need in order to be in control of the consequences in their lives rather than victims of their own behaviors and the consequences which follow. Students must learn what is best for them, which makes them responsible and puts them in charge of their own future.

The *Teacher's Resource Guide* was developed in response to requests for intervention strategies for the most common learning and behavior problems encountered by educators in their classrooms in order to meet the needs of today's students. The intervention strategies listed for the learning and behavior problems identified in the manual are those that education personnel have found most effective with the student who is in need of more success in general education classrooms. A wide variety of interventions are provided for each learning and behavior problem contained in the manual. The variety of interventions allows the educators involved in teaching to choose the interventions most likely to contribute to each individual student's success. A primary expectation is that much more consistency of behavioral and instructional interventions will be attained when the *Teacher's Resource Guide* is used by those educators working with the student to find a common set of interventions to be used across classrooms and educational environments in which the student performs. This consistency of intervention on the part of all teachers working with the student is likely to markedly enhance student success.

The *Teacher's Resource Guide* was developed to be used:

- As a resource by educators to assist them in individualizing instruction and behavioral interventions for their students.
- As a guide to assist in the application of the principles of behavior and teaching prescribed in teacher education methods courses.
- To enhance the skills of the educator in meeting the wider variety of learning and behavior needs of students in general education classrooms.

The concept of identifying the most common learning and behavior problems and intervention strategies grew out of years of inservice and teacher consultation where teachers earnestly asked the question over and over again, "What do you do with a student who . . . ?" It is obvious that our educators

genuinely want to provide an appropriate learning and behavioral support program for those students in need, and the *Teacher's Resource Guide* is designed to provide the necessary intervention strategies to support their efforts.

This individualized approach for teaching appropriate behavior places an emphasis on the student learning responsibility for behavior. To do this, the student must see the relationship of behavior to the consequence which follows. The student must understand that it is his or her behavior which determines the consequences and that it is he or she who makes the consequence occur - not the teacher, the principal, or the school. In order to accomplish this learning process, the *Teacher's Resource Guide* uses natural/logical consequences for appropriate as well as inappropriate behavior. If work was not complete during work time, rather than putting the student's name on the chalkboard, the student would have to complete the work during recess or some other recreational time. By the same token, work completed within quality expectations and before the end of the required time would result in the student having the opportunity for time to engage in an enjoyable activity or work with a peer.

Every attempt was made to provide interventions which are likely to contribute to the most positive classroom atmosphere. Additionally, the selection of interventions strategies took into account those interventions which reflected the positive professionalism expected of all educators in our schools. The intervention strategies included in the guide are those which have been found to be most consistent with college and university training programs in teacher education and tend to greatly enhance the principles of behavior intervention and individualizing instruction presented in training programs.

This individualized approach offers teachers various ways to work specifically with students who are "At-Risk" and at the same time maintain a structure and positive environment for all students. Contained herein is an individualized program designed to meet the needs of those students who have previously slipped between the cracks or, of greater concern, have simply been punished for their inappropriate behavior by other intervention programs.

This approach and the collected interventions are based on the premise that students must learn appropriate behavior and that schools must "teach appropriate behavior" with the same attention that is given to subjects such as math, science, and reading. In today's society we can no longer debate the question of who is responsible for the student's appropriate behavior; we as educators can only assume that "teaching appropriate behavior" must become a part of our curriculum of the future.

Some interventions in this manual apply to most students and should be considered first in order to provide a more general approach to problem reduction. Other interventions are more specific and should be individually selected for students based on the appropriateness of the intervention to the situation.

Lastly, this manual was purposely developed to create a positive learning environment where students are primarily rewarded for appropriate behavior, productivity, and accuracy, as opposed to a punitive learning environment where students function under the threat of punishment for infractions of the rules.

The authors' philosophy of education is, simply. . . "To do what we can to help each student achieve the maximum success possible." This intervention manual was developed to support this philosophy for today's student in our schools.

Thanks go to all those educators across our country who have shared their knowledge and concerns for their students' success. Special thanks to all the administrators, school psychologists, counselors, special educators, and general educators who helped us gather information so necessary for choosing the most common learning and behavior problems contained in the manual. Kathy Wunderlich contributed significantly to the writing, organization, and editing of the *Teacher's Resource Guide* and, as always, made this project both successful and a joy to undertake. And to Billy, who continues to be an inspiration and source of hope for those of us working with all those children who can be so successful if we will just help them do so; God bless you Bill. Always take care.

SBM

The above data references are collected from the following sources:

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II. Interventions

1 Is disorganized

1. Model organization and appropriate use of work materials (e.g., putting materials away before getting others out, having a place for all materials, maintaining an organized desk area, following a schedule for the day, etc.).

2. Allow natural consequences to occur (e.g., work not done during work time must be made up during recreational time, materials not maintained will be lost or not serviceable, etc.) as the result of the student's inability to organize or use materials appropriately.

3. Allow the student to finish an activity unless it will be disruptive to the schedule.

4. Assess the quality and clarity of directions, explanations, and instructions given to the student.

5. Assign a peer to work with the student on specified activities to make certain the student has the materials necessary to do the activity.

6. Encourage the student to develop a habit of asking himself/herself, "Do I have everything?" before leaving the house each morning.

7. Have the student leave necessary materials at specified activity areas.

8. Assist the student in finding a method of organization that works best for him/her (e.g., subject folders, tabbed binder, checklist, etc.).

9. Communicate with parents (e.g., notes home, phone calls, etc.) to share information concerning the student's progress. The parents may reinforce the student at home for being organized/prepared for specified activities at school.

10. Develop monthly calendars to keep track of important events, due dates, assignments, etc.

11. Do not accept excuses. The student must understand that, regardless of the reasons, it is necessary that he/she takes responsibility for not turning in a math assignment, losing pencils, etc.

12. Have the student chart the number of times he/she is organized/prepared for specified activities.

13. Encourage the student to develop an awareness of himself/herself and the environment. Instruct the student to step back and ask himself/herself, "What materials do I need to complete this assignment?" "Have I put my assignment in the correct folder?"

14. Have the student list five qualities of an organized person. Have the student choose one of those qualities to work on each week for five weeks.

15. Encourage the student to keep necessary materials for specified activities together (e.g., gym clothes in a gym bag in the car, backpack with all school-related materials by the door, etc.).

16. Reduce distracting stimuli (e.g., place the student on the front row, provide a carrel or quiet place away from distractions, etc.). This is used as a means of reducing distracting stimuli and not as punishment.

17. Encourage the student to manage his/her daily performance as if he/she were self-employed. This should increase his/her motivation to be organized and fulfill his/her responsibilities.

18. Encourage the student to put items that should be taken to work/school in a designated place (e.g., in front of the door, at the bottom of the stairs, etc.).

19. Choose different people (e.g., counselor, paraprofessional, peer, etc.) to help the student maintain organization of assignments, materials, etc., at school.

20. Provide the student with an appropriate place to store/secure personal property (e.g., desk, locker, closet, etc.). Require the student to store all property when not in use.