The Big Book of
Behavior Management, K–5

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Positive, Proactive, Prosocial Interventions and Prevention Strategies

David Campos

Kathleen McConnell Fad

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

David Campos began his career in education more than thirty years ago, when he started teaching second grade. He earned his PhD from The University of Texas at Austin, specializing in learning disabilities and behavior disorders. His scholarship focuses on instructional design and delivery, childhood health and wellness, and LGBTQ children and adolescents. He has written books on childhood loneliness, childhood obesity, and inspiring creativity in students, among others. He lives in San Antonio, Texas.

Kathleen McConnell Fad has a PhD in learning disabilities and behavior disorders from The University of Texas at Austin. Kathy was a general and special education teacher before working as a college professor and a consultant specializing in emotional and behavioral disorders. Her publications focus on practical strategies for teachers, counselors, and educational specialists. Kathy's most recent books, also coauthored with David Campos, provides teachers with important information and easy-to-use interventions for childhood loneliness and anxiety. She lives in Austin, Texas.

PART I

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

INTRODUCTION

What's in This Chapter

- Who We Are and Why We Wrote This Book
- Why Behavior Interventions Are Important
- How Our Interventions Relate to Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)
- What's in This Book—And How to Use It
- Special Features

Your Needs and Wants

I need to know why I have to change the way I deal with behavioral challenges.
I want to know why the interventions are important before I use them.

Questions to Think About as You Read the Chapter

- What are your behavioral expectations for your students?
- What are your biggest behavioral challenges in your classroom?
- How effective are PBIS, MTSS, or other behavioral systems in your classroom?

When people refer to classroom management, they are typically describing a system for teaching, managing, and responding to students' behavior. If student behavior is not managed successfully, the learning environment may be so chaotic, unstructured, and ineffective that teachers cannot teach and students cannot learn. The National Council on Teacher Quality's (NCTQ) report on *Training Future Teachers: Classroom Management* (2013) shared that classroom management was "the top problem" identified by teachers. The report's comments on new teachers are particularly striking: Many new teachers are especially "ill-equipped to move beyond behavioral challenges and into the heart of instruction" (NCTQ 2013, p. 2). In other words, of all the issues teachers face, classroom management is at or near

the top of the list, and the result is that teachers are having difficulty teaching because of behavioral issues in the classroom.

The challenges teachers face related to classroom management and responses to misbehaviors are complicated by the issue of teacher education and training. Teachers who took a student behavior survey did not feel they were receiving adequate training to implement behavioral management techniques (EAB Executive Briefing, 2023). Whether the training is at the preservice or in-service level, teachers recognize that they need more professional development specific to behavioral issues.

In addition, the behavioral issues facing classroom teachers have changed. A large majority of teachers said in the EAB survey that their students are behind in developing self-regulation and relationship-building skills compared to pre-COVID students. Even more troubling is a report based on teachers' feedback that students are targeting them with "disruptive behavior and that classroom incidents involving physical violence more than doubled since the beginning of the pandemic" (EAB Press Release, 2023). There has been a dramatic increase in disruptive behavior, and the EAB survey reported that districts and campuses often lack clear and consistent behavior management guidelines as well as preparation and support for teachers as they manage disruptive behavior.

The survey also reported a disconnect between teachers' and administrators' beliefs: The teachers' belief is that more students have significant behavioral issues and demonstrate disruptive behaviors, while administrators tend to believe that behavior problems are confined to a small number of students. There is more agreement between administrators and teachers on factors that contribute to disruptive behavior. Commonly cited factors include family trauma, mental health conditions, changes in parenting, an inadequate amount of play or recreation time, and overexposure to electronic devices (EAB District Leadership Forum, 2019; Fad & Campos, 2021).

As we have tried throughout the years to teach, support, and assist teachers, we keep coming back to the fact that without support for behavior management, effective academic instruction suffers. Moreover, even the most positive, prosocial, and preventative behavior management cannot prevent all misbehavior in the classroom. Even highly educated, well-trained, effective teachers will have to respond to specific misbehaviors. While many problems can be prevented, it is not possible to foresee and prevent every disruptive, annoying, interfering, antisocial, defiant, difficult, negative behavior from occurring in classrooms. Our role, then, is to help teachers prevent as many of these misbehaviors as possible, but also provide them with a resource to help them respond effectively when the behaviors do happen—to support their efforts to teach other prosocial, positive behaviors students can learn instead.

This book aims to be that resource. You probably picked it up because you're having problems with misbehaviors in your classroom. You may have one or more students who are driving you crazy. We get it. You're not alone. We had struggles of our own. Based on our experiences and research,

we developed a seven-component model that we used to formulate fifty interventions that can help you. The interventions are time-savers that require minimal preparation. You can implement the interventions immediately, one or multiple at a time (depending on the child), throughout the day, across classroom settings, and with diverse groups of students. When used consistently, the strategies can increase student academic engagement and productivity.

Who We Are and Why We Wrote This Book

Before we get into the details of those interventions, let's back up a moment and share more about who we are and how we got to the topic of behavior management. We are former classroom teachers who have taught general and special education populations. Together, we have decades-worth of experience working with children, preservice teachers, and classroom teachers. We have been interested in children's behavior in the classroom for some time. After all, we both have doctorates in behavior disorders. Kathy has written books on research-based strategies for students with special needs. Many of her recommended interventions focus on instructional delivery, student socialization, and academic development. David's books, on the other hand, are aimed at helping teachers better meet the needs of students who are regularly marginalized. His suggested approaches are designed to promote emotionally safe classrooms that advance students' academic outcomes. After writing books separately, we collaborated to write two books for teachers and school counselors on childhood loneliness (Fad & Campos, 2021) and childhood anxiety (Campos & Fad, 2023). Our interests in these two topics came from many conversations we had about children's mental health in schools. Specifically, we noticed an increasing number of students who struggle to focus their attention on instruction and activities, behave according to teachers' expectations, and interact positively with their peers. We found empirical studies that confirm our observations, which you will see cited throughout this book.

Through our research on childhood loneliness and childhood anxiety, we concluded that many children today come to school with a fragile sense of well-being. By that we mean they are exposed to stressful life events such as parental incarceration or food insecurity. Accessible media exposes them to wars, social upheavals, and regular instances of incivility. Social media is pervasive in their lives; youth today are on their devices for many hours a day.

We find that many children today lack the social skills typically used to make and keep friends who could be a source of emotional support. Many also have not learned healthy coping skills to help them process and manage stressful situations. Furthermore, children's well-being is inseparable from their parents' well-being. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) (2022) explains:

> Parents and caregivers and other supportive adults who are expected to be the safe haven for children are, themselves, increasingly struggling to cope and be nurturing and emotionally available to their

children . . . As a result, infants and young children experience stress both directly and vicariously, and without the maturity to process their experiences, they often adapt by internalizing the impact.

All of this is to say that many children are at school stressed, which negatively affects their behavior in the classroom. Additionally, children with emotional behavioral disorders and anger and aggressive tendencies are included in the general education classroom. Teachers today who need help with behavior management need research-based interventions that positively impact students. Punishing, shouting at, commanding, removing, or publicly shaming students—just penalizing them, in other words—is not a long-term solution. These practices do not teach good behavior. Nor are these practices reasonable to use on children who have gone through or are experiencing recurring stress and maltreatment. Making them suffer for breaking rules and social conventions is sure to compound matters, kickstarting a cycle of misbehavior followed by punishment that leads to misbehavior that follows with punishment and so forth. We wrote this book to help teachers prevent misbehaviors using positive, prosocial, and proactive practices, not penalization. For small classroom tips that help, see figure I.1.

Why Behavior Interventions Are Important

If students misbehave regularly, they don't learn. It's that simple. The impact of problematic behaviors can lead to poor academic performance and dropping out of school (Yoleri, 2013). The welcome news is that teachers can influence student behaviors. Research finds that students have improved learning outcomes when their teachers use a behavior management plan that prevents disruptive behaviors (Ratcliff et al., 2010; Watson et al., 2016).

Over a third of teachers report that students' behavior problems interfere with their teaching, which is understandable considering that their time is reallocated from instruction to attend to misbehaviors (Kirkpatrick et al., 2022). A 2019 EAB study found that 1,400 elementary school teachers reported losing—on average—2.5 hours of their instructional time per week to deal with children's disruptive behaviors (Bronstein et al., 2021). Misbehaviors also negatively impact teachers' mental health, job retention, and perceived school safety (Black & Fernando, 2014; Bronstein et al., 2021; Närhi et al., 2017). Psychologists have found that dealing with behavior problems is a major cause of stress that often leads to teachers leaving the profession (Kirkpatrick et al., 2022; Simpson et al., 2020).

Interventions in the classroom are critical. Good behavior interventions support students' academic and social-emotional learning, which results in increased instructional engagement and on-task behaviors and decreased discipline problems, such as off-task behaviors and disruptions. When teachers spend less time reacting to disruptive behaviors, they can focus attention on developing students' abilities to follow instructions, complete

assignments, and process content, which helps students learn (Hamsho & Eckert, 2021).

Interventions also help students develop skills for self-regulation, coping with stress, and maintaining social relationships. Children who regularly misbehave often have impaired social relationships with peers, which keeps them from working collaboratively and developing friendships (McDaniel et al., 2017). Understandably, children do not want to play with, befriend, or work with other students they believe can harm them. Children who have social skills deficits regularly display behavior problems (McDaniel et al., 2017). Young children who have low social competence have increased chances of developing internalizing and externalizing behavior problems (Sheaffer et al., 2021). They need to be taught interpersonal skills, prosocial behaviors (like sharing, helping, cooperating), and self-management strategies.

At the extreme end of interpersonal relationship misbehavior is bullying. Children who bully risk suicidal ideation, violent behavior in adulthood, and long-term psychosomatic problems. Victims of bullies can experience poor academic achievement, internalizing problems, low self-esteem, headaches, sleep difficulties, and suicidal ideation (Bjärehed et al., 2021). By contrast, when students have positive social relationships with their classmates, they have higher academic engagement and achievement (McDaniel et al., 2017).

Overlooking misbehavior and discipline problems is never a good solution. It often leads to serious consequences. Without behavior intervention, children can continue to be difficult, defiant, and disruptive as they progress through school, and in many cases, their behaviors become more problematic (McDaniel et al., 2017). Behavior problems often increase with age, resulting in greater likelihood for developing antisocial behavior, substance abuse, and delinquency (Bjärehed et al., 2021). All this puts students at risk for further unfavorable outcomes, which include developing mental health conditions and dropping out of school (Hamsho & Eckert, 2021).

Figure I.1

Little Things That Work

Don't forget to . . . stop talking sometimes.	**Remember to . . .** listen.	**It doesn't take much to . . .** laugh.

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How Our Interventions Relate to PBIS and MTSS

In the area of behavior management, two comprehensive programs that emphasize positive approaches to teaching and maintaining prosocial, positive behaviors are used in schools nationwide. Because our recommended preventative practices (chapters 2, 3, and 4) and our fifty interventions are also positive, proactive, and prosocial, we want to explain the two programs and how our model can be used in tandem with them.

PBIS

One of the most promising educational initiatives of the past several years is the development and dissemination of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports system, known widely as PBIS. PBIS is being used nationwide for several reasons, all of which work toward the big-picture goal of supporting positive behaviors on campuses. Banks and Obiakor (2015) summarized the characteristics of PBIS: (a) using data-based decision-making related to behavior, (b) developing a set of behavior expectations, both schoolwide and classroom related, (c) teaching common behavioral expectations, and (d) acknowledging positive, appropriate behaviors. These common characteristics are based on positive actions and positive goals related to improving student behavior on campuses. In addition, they and many other authors recognize two other goals of PBIS: decreasing inappropriate behaviors and reducing office discipline referrals, primarily through prevention.

MTSS

Another recent initiative related to positive behaviors in schools is the MTSS model (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support), often referred to as tiered interventions. MTSS is a framework designed to support students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs. It has four key components: screening, multi-level prevention, progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making. According to the Center of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (2024), the multi-level prevention system comprises three tiers of intensity for both academic and behavioral intervention, which include programming and supports for Tier 1, all students; Tier 2, students in small groups who have targeted needs; and Tier 3, students who do not respond to Tier 2 interventions and have ongoing, intensive needs.

At Tier 1, interventions are designed to teach and model appropriate behavior and agreed-upon supports aligned to students' needs. A positive school climate and consistent supports are essential. At Tier 2, educators implement agreed-upon interventions for students who need additional support. The interventions should be supported by research and regularly evaluated for effectiveness. Tier 3 interventions provide support to those students who need more intensive, specialized supports. At this level, those students with persistent, chronic behavioral issues should be provided with individualized interventions and data should be reviewed on their efficacy.

OUR INTERVENTIONS

When teachers think of these systems of intervention as separate entities, it can be overwhelming. In our experience, teachers often get bogged down or overwhelmed by the system and its monitoring component. They often lose sight of the daily basics: what they can and should do to teach positive, prosocial behaviors and prevent misbehavior. Our priority in helping teachers with behavioral issues is to provide well researched, practical ideas for prevention. However, we recognize that not all misbehavior can be prevented. That's why we developed interventions for the most common misbehaviors that disrupt teaching and learning in the classroom. These interventions are also based on the principles of PBIS and can be used in elementary classrooms at Tiers 1, 2, and 3 of intervention.

HOW WE DESIGNED THE INTERVENTIONS

This book provides you with the tools to build relationships with students, manage their behaviors, and help them develop appropriate social-emotional skills. We identified the behavioral problems that teachers struggle with the most, then created practical and easy-to-use interventions based on what researchers find is most effective when dealing with those behaviors. We wanted interventions to teach—not correct—behaviors, which, if used with fidelity, would develop students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral skills. From our research, we found that teachers' instruction is most disrupted by students who demonstrate the behaviors found in the figure I.2.

Figure I.2
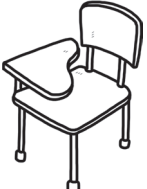
Top Ten Student Behaviors That Disrupt Instruction

1. Talking out	The student talks without permission, sometimes interrupting, bothering others, and making inappropriate comments.
2. Moving around	The student leaves their seat or work area without permission.
3. Arriving late/delaying start of classwork	The student is often tardy to school or slow to begin to work.
4. Failing to cooperate with others	The student has difficulties working with others, cooperating in groups, and getting along.
5. Failing to complete assignments/avoiding work/often unorganized	The student fails to complete assignments, especially independent work.
6. Refusing to follow directions	The student refuses to follow classroom rules and procedures, including teacher directions, and may argue when given directions.
7. Avoiding social interactions/isolating themselves	The student avoids interactions with others and does not ask to join activities or try to include others.
8. Failing to cope with typical classroom expectations because of worries and perfectionism	The student has difficulty coping and expresses worries and fear of failure; they may procrastinate or stop trying.
9. Tantrumming to get their way	The student tantrums, cries, or yells when they don't get their way.
10. Violating classroom norms to the point of negatively impacting others	The student escalates their behavior to uncivil and/or threatening behavior.

With these behaviors in mind, we created our fifty interventions using a model that consists of seven research-based components that use positive, proactive, and prosocial practices. The components are also based on our experiences and discussions with teachers, specialists, and school leadership teams over the fundamental elements of effective behavior intervention. Teachers can use these seven essential components as starting points when considering solutions for other challenging behaviors, too. Any behavior intervention, for that matter, can be written and implemented using one or more of the seven components. See the components and their descriptions in the figure I.3.

Figure I.3

Seven Essential Components of Behavior Intervention

	COMPONENT	WHAT WE MEAN
	Use your attention and relationship	• Be mentally present with students. • Be physically nearby and focused on them (proximity matters!). • Meet their wellness needs. • Commit to strengthening bonds with them. • Balance instruction with appreciating their personality traits.
	Signal, warn, restate expectations	• Use cues as reminders. • Use visuals or auditory signals. • Remind students of expectations and consequences.
	Teach and reteach	• Teach prosocial behaviors that students have not learned. • Teach positive behaviors instead of expecting them. • Reteach prosocial behaviors that students do not use consistently.
	Be flexible: change activities, resources, or delivery	• Vary instruction to keep students motivated. • Use student interests and learning styles in activities. • Maintain consistent routines and procedures but adapt teaching methods to give students something to look forward to.
	Change the environment	• Rearrange the classroom to meet the needs of individuals and groups of students. • Address movement, seating, materials, etc.
	Use positive reinforcement	• Use a consequence system with rewards for prosocial behaviors and/or meeting goals. • Respond to positive, prosocial behaviors with descriptive praise. • Have charts and menus that list privileges that students can earn.
	Provide choices; respect individuality	• Give students choices and options. • Let students decide when and how to use their earned consequences. • Allow students choices about movement, seating, assignments, etc.

Icon source: Istock.com/Turac Novruzova; Istock.com/Iuliia Konovaliuk; Istock.com/Turac Novruzova; Istock.com/ourlifelooklike-balloon; Istock.com/owattaphotos; Istock.com/Sudowoodo; and Istock.com/Artem Stepanov

As an example of how the components of our model are incorporated into an intervention, see the image below of Study Buddies (Intervention 22, in Part IV, found on p. 139).

<div style="border:2px solid teal; padding:1em;">

INTERVENTION 22: STUDY BUDDIES

Misbehavior: Failure to Complete Assignments

Essential Components of Behavior Intervention Addressed

- Teach/reteach
- Be flexible
- Use positive reinforcement
- Provide choices

Need:

- *Study Buddies* Cards

Know:

Students often do not complete assignments because they can't remember the assignment, can't find their materials, or are just so unorganized it is difficult for them to do their work. They often need help with organization, but busy teachers do not always have the time to help them. Teaching students to help each other is a great way to provide support while continuing instruction in the classroom.

Do:

1. Each week assign students to pairs as study buddies. Do this thoughtfully and vary your assignments.

2. Copy and laminate the *Study Buddies* Cards (figure 7.26) so that each student has one.

3. Before the start of the day or lesson, give each student a *Study Buddies* Card.

4. Ask students to put their name and their buddy's name on the card. Set the timer for three minutes (give or take, depending on your students' ages) and have them check supplies and homework. Be clear about what supplies are needed and what the homework was. Put a tally mark on the tally sheet next to each Buddy pair that does their check.

5. In the afternoon, ask students to do a *Study Buddies* check of homework assignments and books/papers that need to go home. Again, give them a tally mark for completion.

6. At the end of the week, provide incentives for study buddies who completed their cards each day and helped keep each other on track.

</div>

We also kept some important criteria in mind when designing the fifty interventions Each of them meet those criteria, descriptions of which follow.

Positive. Negative, punitive approaches do not change behavior. Teaching positive new skills is a lot more productive than eliminating negative ones. (Not to mention that spending a school day in a negative frame of mind is tiring and demoralizing.)

Prosocial. Teachers have to promote positive social behaviors. They have to *teach* behavior, in other words, not just manage or control it. Many students come to school lacking basic social skills that teachers expect them to know. But if the students have not been taught those skills elsewhere, then it is left to schools to teach them. Knowing how to join or leave a group, how to share an idea, and how to give a compliment are basic skills that will be new learning for some students.

Research based. Some interventions might be cool and cute and fun, but if there is no research to support their use, they can be a waste of time. If there is no good reason to expect success, it is better not to use an intervention at all.

Practical. Classrooms are busy places and teachers need access to interventions that are easy to understand, simple to implement, quick to apply, and get results. Interventions should not require complicated lesson plans or long, drawn-out explanations. Instead, they should include ready-to-use forms, tools, and visual examples.

Varied and individualized. Not all students respond to the same interventions in the same way. Even when students do respond to an intervention, their behavior change may not last. So, teachers need a varied and expansive menu of strategies that they can use with a diverse class of students. Not everything works or works the first time. Teachers need options so that when they need to try something new, it is an easy transition to another available intervention.

Respectful and sensitive. Teachers increasingly recognize the impact of social stressors and recurring maltreatment on some students. Mental health issues are a serious and increasingly critical issue for modern-day students. Behavior interventions must be thoughtful, considerate, sensitive, and respectful, while still maintaining high expectations for students.

Culturally and socially accepting. No judgment or suppositions should be included in the interventions' explanations, directions, examples, or reproducible forms. Interventions should demonstrate a lack of bias in all discussions and suggestions. Because some students have a history in school that has not been positive, interventions should start with the relationship between the teacher and the student.

Enjoyable. Interventions that include humor, games, and interactive options encourage teachers to be consistent in using them. If activities are enjoyable, they are more likely to be used often enough to make a difference.

What's in This Book—And How to Use It

While we know that you likely need help with the behavioral challenges in your classroom, it is hard to gauge the kind of reader you are. So we're going to differentiate our instruction here, and ask you to choose the best place for you to start based on your needs. Keep in mind that this book is divided into four parts:

- Part I is an introduction and describes our rationale for how to think about children's behavior and misbehavior.

- Part II is about preventing misbehaviors and presents good practices for creating a positive learning environment.

- Part III discusses our model and supporting research.

- Part IV presents our fifty interventions.

PART I: INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Chapter 1 discusses our definitions of behavior and misbehavior and asks you to reflect on your own definitions and expectations. We consider some reasons why children misbehave in the classroom and discuss classroom culture and individualism. You'll learn some ways to help students feel included, valued, and comfortable in your classroom. Chapter 2 explains what we mean by "positive, proactive, and prosocial practices." You'll learn how to make your behavior management radiate positivity.

PART II: PREVENTING MISBEHAVIORS

Chapter 3 offers recommendations for setting up your behavior management system. You'll learn how to establish rules, use consequences, communicate, and be assertive, consistent, and respectful. Chapter 4 discusses skills that help students prevent misbehavior, including academic skills, self-regulation skills, and calming skills. You'll learn some ideas for teaching, modeling, and practicing those techniques with students.

PART III: INTERVENTION

Chapter 5 goes into more depth about our seven-component model, first outlined in the figure on page 11 (and again in figure 5.1). You'll learn why you should follow our model. Chapter 6 goes into more depth about the top ten misbehaviors we selected. You'll learn how we came up with that list and why other behaviors aren't on it.

This section includes instructions for using the interventions, a matrix to help you choose which intervention to use based on what it addresses, and the details of all fifty interventions. The interventions address the most common misbehaviors in the classroom. The interventions are positive, proactive, and prosocial because each incorporates one or more essential components for behavior management. With no time-consuming lesson plans to write or forms to create, the reproducible pages that accompany the interventions are immediately useable and include forms, charts, tickets, prompts, reminder cards, and much more. The prevention and intervention recommendations contained here make for a valuable toolbox for any teacher.

Special Features

In each chapter, we provide special features that offer reading guidance and helpful behavior management tips. These will help you relate the content to your own experience, consider even more positive actions you can take, and reflect on your growth:

- The box at the beginning of each chapter includes brief notes about what content you'll find there and what needs the chapter addresses, along with some questions to keep in mind as you read.

- **Little Things That Work** boxes offer quick reminders to take care of yourself, your attitude, and your approaches.

- **Classroom Connections** boxes present practical ideas to use in the classroom.

- **Pow! How? Now!** boxes appear at the end of each chapter. Rather than provide you with a summary of what you just read, we would like you to think about what you have read, how it changes what you think and do, and what steps you will take next.

CLASSROOM CONNECTION

Teachers should help children face problems of everyday life, especially at school. To help students commit to tasks rather than pout, waste time, or disrupt others when they feel overwhelmed, one teacher writes on the board what they can do:
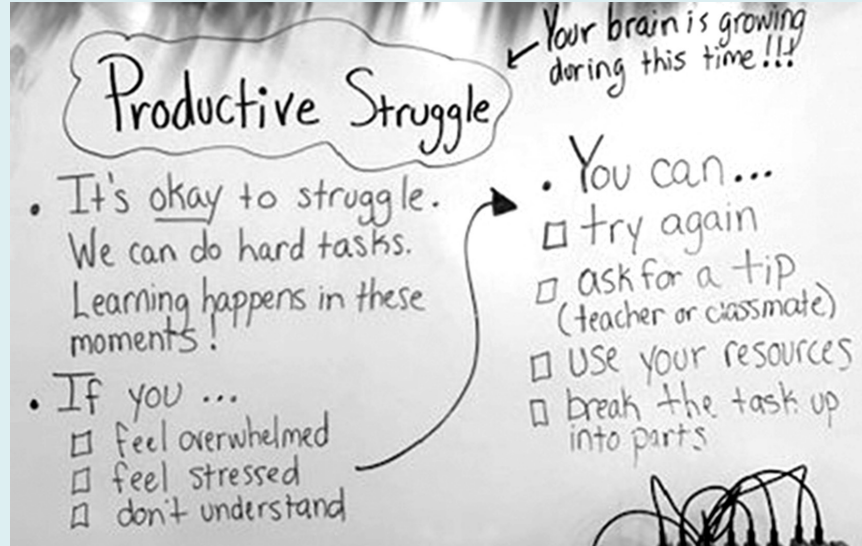
Image source: Julie Howe. Used with permission.

Pow! How? Now!	
POW!	What are your reactions to what you read so far?
HOW?	How will you use this information?
NOW!	What does this mean, especially with your most challenging students?

Icon source: Istock.com/nazarkru and Istock.com/lineartestpilot

DEFINITION AND CAUSES OF MISBEHAVIOR

What's in This Chapter 🔍

- Teacher Needs
- *Behavior* and *Misbehavior* Defined
- Classroom Culture and Individual Differences
- Factors That Lead to Misbehavior

Your Needs and Wants ☆☆

I need to know more about what is meant by the term *misbehavior*, and I need to understand some reasons why children misbehave in the classroom. I want to know some ways to help students feel included, valued, and comfortable in my classroom.

Questions to Think About as You Read the Chapter 💡

- What professional development on behavior management has been most effective for you?
- How does your school or district define misbehavior? Do you agree with that definition?
- What are some reasons your students misbehave?

This chapter addresses teachers' need for a plan that helps them with managing student behavior. It defines *behavior* and *misbehavior* as they are used in this book. And it wraps up with a discussion on cultural and individual differences and on factors that lead some children to misbehave, so you can understand why it's important to use behavioral approaches that do not insult or demoralize children.

Teacher Needs

A behavior management plan that increases academically engaged behaviors and decreases behavior problems is essential for teachers. Without one, a larger pool of children will be off task, disengaged, and disruptive. Teachers who use techniques and interventions to cultivate calm, productive, active, and engaging learning environments also help children develop social emotional skills. Research finds that teachers who effectively manage challenging behaviors positively impact students' emotional stability (Brokamp et al., 2019) and sense of self-efficacy (Floress & Beschta, 2018).

But even though teachers recognize that behavior management is the hardest part of teaching, it is *the* area in which they receive the least training (Hirsch et al. 2019), and they lack the resources and support to adequately address misbehaviors (Hoffman & Kuvalanka, 2019). A survey of one thousand three hundred public school teachers revealed that nearly half mentioned their need for information and training on how to support student well-being and did not have enough control over classroom management strategies (Charles Butt Foundation, 2022). Another study found that less than half of teachers reported participating in professional development focused on managing student behaviors, and of those who did, only 62 percent considered it useful (Hirsch et al., 2019). New teachers do not fare any better in behavior management. They also report not having knowledge, preparation, and mastery of prevention and intervention strategies (Simpson et al. 2020), which contributes to their feeling anxious, helpless, and incapable of affecting student behavior (Hirsch et al., 2019).

This need for training, resources, and support may contribute to teachers inadvertently cultivating environments that invite misbehavior, especially when teachers overreact to inappropriate conduct, seem uncaring, or use management strategies inadequately or inconsistently (Bronstein et al., 2021; Hoffman & Kuvalanka, 2019).

Behavior and *Misbehavior* Defined

Before we move further, let's talk about what we mean by *behavior* and *misbehavior*. There is an obvious definition of behavior—the way someone behaves. However, that definition does not provide a clear, complete description of student behavior in classrooms. For the purposes of this book, we use the IRIS Center (2012) definition of behavior specific to education:

> *Behavior* is something that a person does that can be observed, measured, and repeated. When we clearly define behavior, we specifically describe actions (e.g., Sam talks during class instruction). We do not refer to personal motivation, internal processes, or feelings (e.g., Sam talks during class instruction to get attention). (p. 3)

When behavior is defined as an action a student takes, teachers can describe it and collect and summarize data about it. They can ask and answer questions about it: How often does it occur? Is it increasing or decreasing? When does it occur? What does it look and sound like? Moreover, clearly defining a behavior allows teachers to determine the environmental conditions when it occurs (e.g., Does it only happen at one time of day? With a specific person? In one subject area?). When teachers have information on a student behavior, they can contemplate the purpose of the behavior, the motivation for the behavior, the feelings behind the behavior, the student's history and personal characteristics, demographic information, student records, and so on. In other words, they can hypothesize about the behavior based on what they observe and learn. Then, they can decide what to do next.

The definition of school or classroom *misbehavior* is not nearly as clear cut. *Misconduct*, *discipline problems*, and *disruptive behaviors* are labels found throughout the research literature that have various definitions (Sun & Shek, 2012). This is problematic. If teachers and administrators do not agree on which behaviors are misbehaviors, how can they design an equitable and consistent system of expectations and range of responses to misbehavior? Because different cultures and ethnic groups have specific expectations for behavior, how do teachers agree on what constitutes misbehavior? While there are requirements and protections for students with disabilities related to misbehaviors, are these always clearly understood and implemented? Dealing with misbehavior is complicated.

For our purposes, we describe *misbehaviors* as those that interfere with or disrupt teaching and learning, are likely to have a negative impact on students' or teachers' well-being, interfere with healthy social relationships, and/or damage the positive climate of the classroom. We also believe that misbehaviors in daily doses can be demoralizing, exhausting, and discouraging to teachers—not to mention that students who regularly misbehave risk peer alienation and loss of trust and belief in teachers and the value of education. As figure 1.1 shows, even small efforts to reach out can be useful classroom management tools.

Figure 1.1

Little Things That Work

Don't forget to . . . compliment the tough student.	Remember to . . . find something to like about each student.	It doesn't take much to . . . smile.

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CLASSROOM CONNECTION

Model and practice your behavioral expectations regularly so that all students understand them. Students can role-play the expectations and alternate with a contrasting portrayal. They can also role-play a variety of social skills. Role-playing has been shown to be an effective method of teaching children from diverse backgrounds. Edwards writes that role-playing helps students "become more attentive to the various voices in the classroom and to recognize differences and similarities among them" (Edwards, 2004, p.341). Using headbands is one way to get students to assume roles to play. For example, if you are teaching students to listen to each other, you could give a "talker" headband to one student and a "listener" headband to another. Then, have them role-play listening (e.g., the talker looks at the partner, stands nearby but not too close, uses a conversation noise level, etc. while the other looks at the talker, stands closely, nods, and so forth). After a few minutes of practice, have them switch roles. Headbands could also be used to role play asking for and giving help, sharing (e.g., how to politely borrow someone else's supplies, how to grant permission for supply use, how to use someone else's supplies with care, etc.), and including others in activities (e.g., how to invite others to join lesson discussions, social conversations, and outdoor play).

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Classroom Culture and Individual Differences

Addressing cultural issues and individual differences in the classroom can make some teachers nervous. They might worry about saying or doing the wrong thing or maybe stress over not doing enough. But this discussion does not have to be frightening or overwhelming. Taking a commonsense,

positive approach can make a big difference in the classroom without compromising anyone's beliefs or sense of safety and well-being. Weinstein et al. (2003) suggest that we recognize some basics related to culture. They write, "First, we must recognize that we are all cultural beings, with our own beliefs, biases, and assumptions about human behavior," and "second, we must acknowledge the cultural, racial, ethnic, and class differences that exist among people" (p. 270). The good news is that everyone can acquire cultural knowledge. Some steps to acquire this knowledge are simple and others are more complicated, but teachers can start by being willing to learn. Knowledge about your students' backgrounds and experiences and their cultural expectations related to relationships and discipline can help you develop successful classroom management expectations. You can build a style of interaction that is comfortable for both you and students. For example, students who are recent immigrants and have been exposed to violence need calm learning environments. They need teachers who manage the classroom with predictability (i.e., teachers who administer routines, rules, and procedures consistently and fairly), interact with students patiently with a smile (no sudden surprises or loud overreactions), and protect them from what could be embarrassing or troubling situations.

All students should feel like they belong and should know that they are in an environment that will help them succeed. This concept of inclusiveness has been a focus of special and general education teaching teams for many years, as they have worked toward the successful inclusion of students with disabilities into general education environments. Because school success is not just about academics, positive social experiences, including relationships with others and behaviors that facilitate learning, are critical. The value of inclusion is consistently recognized and appreciated by the school community, especially parents and families. Educators, of course, realize that schools and classrooms in the US are often very diverse and include not just students with disabilities, but also students whose linguistic, cultural, racial, economic, and ethnic characteristics may vary from many of their classmates and/or from their teachers.

Long et al. (2019) point out some related demographic information that impacts student behavior and classroom management, including these facts:

1. Many public schools serve a majority of students whose eligibility for free and reduced lunch indicates their economic disadvantage, which can impact their background, experiences, and behavior.

2. Despite an increase in the number of students with diverse backgrounds, the majority of the teaching force is still overwhelmingly female, White, monolingual, and economically middle class. This contradiction is not problematic in and of itself, but it has the potential to challenge both teachers' and students' understanding of each other's norms and expectations.

3. Long et al. (2019) go on to point out this statistic: According to US public school data, some schools with a majority of low income and ethnically or racially minority students often rely on exclusionary discipline practices. Because office discipline referrals historically

overrepresent students with disabilities and Black students, infusing strategies that consider students' cultural, linguistic, economic, gender, and disability-related characteristics into PBIS systems and tiered interventions can have a positive impact, reducing referral rates.

Following are a few important steps teachers can take to ensure that *all* students feel included, valued, and comfortable in their classrooms.

Build and maintain authentic relationships with students' families. This is especially important for those students whose families may not feel connected to the education system or the community. This process involves not just communication when problems arise but also positive outreach to get to know them *before* problems arise. For example, call, write, or visit the parents or guardians of each student in your class and, if possible, begin doing so as soon as school starts. Make the contact brief but positive. During planning period or whenever you have a quick break, make calls or write postcards to be mailed, send home a compliment with your school contact information in students' backpacks, or walk out to the pickup line or corner bus stop and meet the parents there. Set a goal of making contact with each family by the end of the first two weeks of school.

Have high expectations for all students. Teachers should communicate clear and consistent behavioral expectations for all students. These expectations should be reasonable, and students who need additional support and instruction should be provided with both. As we discussed in the definitions of behavior and misbehavior, it is important that teachers and administrators agree on what constitutes misbehavior and expectations that are reasonable. School-wide and district-wide behavior systems like PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) and MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports), which we described in the introduction, rely on educators' agreement on positive behavior standards, what behaviors constitute misbehaviors, reasonable school-wide and classroom expectations, and consistent responses to both expectations and misbehaviors. While teachers certainly have their own expectations and input into group norms, it is not acceptable for teachers to disregard the economic, social, cultural, linguistic, and disability characteristics of the communities they serve. Reasonableness and consistency are important so that all students feel safe and secure in the knowledge that while they are expected to meet standards of behavior, they will be treated fairly and with kindness and acceptance.

The keys to this strategy are simplicity and clarity. Several times in this book, we suggest the use of a looks like/sounds like chart to show students exactly what is expected of them. Teachers can take this one step further by adding a third column to the chart: "How can I help you?" Telling a student that you will support them as they learn a new behavior will be helpful to both of you. The student will likely feel more comfortable asking for help when they do not understand rather than moving forward aimlessly. Figure 1.2 is an example of a chart that shows behavior expectations for group work.

Figure 1.2

Group Work

Looks Like	Sounds Like	How can I help you?
		HELP
Taking turns Sharing materials Staying with your group	One person talking at a time Giving each other feedback Asking questions	Repeat the directions and write them on the board Help me start I need a buddy to check my work I need someone to tell me how much time I have left

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Listen respectfully. Listening is key for teachers. While it is sometimes difficult to listen when there is so much commotion in the classroom, it is important that students feel heard. Whether through speech or body language, teachers should convey that they are reasonable and that they care about all of their students. One strategy is to use one of these phrases in response to student questions: "Great question. I have time to answer that right now," or "Great question. I can't answer that right now, but here's a question cone. I'll be back to answer when I have a moment." Use a mini cone, a plastic cup, or a cardboard cube (each with a question mark on it) as the signal. Do your best to return with an answer within a few minutes.

Follow through. Teachers need to do what they say they will do in order for students to trust them. Consistency helps students know what to expect. Chapter 2 discusses establishing expectations and following through with consequences, which help students see why and how everyone will be treated fairly and consistently. Posting a problem/solution chart and using it as a teaching tool is an excellent way to ensure consistent follow-through. See the example below for a chart that addresses some common classroom misbehaviors. Have a discussion with the students to come up with student solutions before explaining what the teacher solutions (consequences) will be if their solutions don't work. The disruptive behaviors are written in the "problems" column, and the consequences are listed in the "solutions" column. After documenting and discussing the behavioral issues you've seen with students and how you will address them (with student input), explain that the solutions need to be fair and consistently followed. Figure 1.3 can serve as a reminder to everyone what will happen under what circumstances.

Figure 1.3

Problems and Solutions

PROBLEMS	STUDENT SOLUTIONS	TEACHER SOLUTIONS
A student is keeping others from learning by making loud noises.	We can ask the student to please be quiet. We can ask the student if they need help. We can signal the student with a "sh" sign.	I can put a quiet sign on the student's desk to remind them to be quiet. I can stand near the student. I can ask the student to move to the quiet area to work.
A student is saying mean things to others.	We can ask the student to stop saying mean things. We can move away from the student. If the student keeps saying mean things, we can tell the teacher.	I can talk to the student in the hallway and remind them about the expectation to be kind to others. I can ask the student to write an apology note to the classmate they were mean to. If the student keeps being mean, I can call their parent or guardian and explain how they have been treating their classmates.

Be a team player. While it may seem like this suggestion, which refers to your interactions with colleagues, doesn't impact students, it likely does in several important ways. Consulting with other teachers, specialists, and the school leadership team provides insight and knowledge, especially about students with special needs, students experiencing stressful family or community situations, and students who may not have other positive connections in their lives. Talk to parents, caregivers, and prior teachers of students who are struggling; they often have valuable knowledge that can be used to support the student. In turn, you can share what you've learned about the student with their future teachers or specialists.

Factors That Lead to Misbehavior

It has been reported that teachers have agonized over behavior problems in mainstream classrooms for a long time (Busacca et al., 2015), but a recent survey found that teachers believe that behavior problems in classrooms have been increasing steadily for the last few years (Hoffman & Kuvalanka, 2019). Teachers can expect challenging behaviors to be present in one out of five children (Stichter et al., 2009), which is problematic given that misbehaviors significantly affect *all* students in the classroom. The reality is that there are many reasons that behavior problems present themselves in

the classroom. Knowing factors that lead to misbehavior can help teachers design interventions that meet individual student needs. Here are some:

The student has a disability. There is a strong likelihood that the student's disability will affect their behavior during instruction, especially if they have an emotional behavioral disorder, autism spectrum disorder, or ADHD. By definition of those disabilities, children will likely have behavior and social skills challenges. Up to 80 percent of students with disabilities demonstrate problem behaviors (Kirkpatrick et al., 2022).

The student has undiagnosed mental health issues. Some children misbehave because they have undiagnosed mental health issues. They are not yet identified as having an emotional behavioral disorder (such as oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, or mood and anxiety disorders), but their behaviors nonetheless present as criteria for such a diagnosis. So, they have serious behavior problems at school, which includes having difficulty with social relationships. They may not show empathy or respect for peers; they may be pessimistic; they may react poorly to stress (e.g., they tantrum when they do not get their way), and so on. These behaviors contrast with indicators of good mental health, like effectively using self-regulation and coping skills, showing positivity, and building social relationships (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2022). The CDC emphasizes that poor mental health and patterns of symptoms can develop into mental disorders.

The student has difficulty adjusting to school. Children may have difficulty adjusting to school and the classroom for a number of reasons (Yoleri, 2013). They may not want to, or know how to, or find it difficult to conform to rules and routines and therefore avoid teachers' expectations for attention, task completion, and emotion regulation. Some students may not enjoy their physical environment, classmates, or teacher and act out their disapproval.

Students believe they are not respected. Behavior problems may emerge when children feel that teachers do not respect them as valued members of the learning community or do not give them deserved attention, honor, consideration, concern, appreciation, care, and admiration (Caldalerra et al., 2021; Tomlinson, 2011). Expect behavior problems when classroom management practices do not correspond to the needs of the students. For example, a first grader may have continuous outbursts because he feels shame when his teacher moves his card or clip to a color that represents misbehavior and is on public display for the day. Fifth graders may protest with misbehavior when the teacher punishes the whole class because of the actions of one student.

The instruction is too teacher focused. Children will disrupt instruction when lessons and activities are teacher centered, use too many worksheets, and follow dreary routines. Teachers are likely to witness misbehavior when they teach without empathy and enforce no-talking rules throughout the day; keep students seated in rows; and use topics, materials, and books that bore children. One study

found that students were better behaved and most engaged when their teachers implemented interactive lessons and collaborative group activities than when they were coerced to focus all their attention on the teacher and had individual seatwork to complete (Zoromski et al. 2021). Evidence suggests that the format of student work (i.e., independent, paired/partner, or small group) is strongly associated with engagement rates.

Parenting style affects the child's behavior. Parenting styles (i.e., how parents discipline their children) also have a big impact on children's behavior. A large body of research finds that parents who are very harsh or very permissive are more likely to have children who are aggressive and anxious than parents who are not (Dempster et al., 2012; Mak et al., 2020; Vučković et al., 2021). Psychologists have found that parents who are authoritative and punitive, discipline inconsistently, or lack warmth or positive involvement tend to have children with behavioral problems (Loona & Kamal, 2012). It also seems that parents who have high degrees of stress levels tend to have negative parenting styles, which often leads to internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems (Mak et al.). As a side note, internalizing behaviors are those that are focused inwards (like when children are depressed or have excessive worry), and externalizing behaviors are presented outward, such as when children are defiant, hostile, or physically aggressive.

Problems in the student's community affect their behavior. Community violence (i.e., witnessing violence in the community, being a victim of such violence, or being subject to both) can negatively impact children's behavior (Kersten et al., 2017). Research finds that children who are regularly exposed to violence in their community are more likely to report behavioral and psychological problems (internalizing, externalizing, and PTSD symptoms) than children who are not (Al'Uqdah et al., 2015; Mohammed et al., 2015). So, some children's misbehavior in the classroom may be attributed to what they witness in the streets, the neighborhood, and other public spaces (Darawshy et al., 2020).

Pow! How? Now!	
	What are your reactions to what you read so far?
	How will you use this information that you just read?
	What does this information mean, especially with your most challenging students?

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