



INCLUSIVE STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS BEHAVIORAL NEEDS FOR STUDENTS WITH IEPs

The Impact of Behavior, Bias, and Adult Practice

Before school teams and individuals begin to identify strategies and develop systems to support students whose behavior interferes with their learning or the learning of others, adults must first examine their own biases and beliefs about student behavior in addition to examining the social norms of the school community. Specifically, the term “behavior” must be recognized as a social construct and individuals must recognize how bias influences their understanding of “behavior” before appropriate and meaningful support and instruction can be put into place. Too often terms like “challenging,” “inappropriate,” and “disruptive” are used to describe the behavior of individual students without an examination of how bias and social norms impact the decision-making process. Adults must also recognize how bias influences their association or confirmation of specific student populations and their behavior. For example, when a Black student is off-task during class, an adult might label that behavior as disruptive and consider it an indicator that the Black student does not care about their education so disengages from the student. In comparison, when a White student is off-task in class, an adult might consider that behavior as an indicator that the student needs more support or guidance and provide that additional support or guidance. These slight differences in beliefs lead to significantly different responses; therein lies the potential harm of bias.

Without an understanding of bias and social norms, the services and supports provided to students may be ineffective and lead to disciplinary and punitive outcomes. Such negative responses to student behavior can further marginalize students and remove them from opportunities to access and engage in learning. Additionally, these negative responses can subject the students to potential harm through teasing or bullying by others, lead to a poor sense of self, lead other students to believe the student does not belong, or even cause physical or emotional harm through poorly applied physical restraint.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, through the support and guidance of Dr. Markeda Newell, has developed resources to assist educators in identifying and addressing bias as they engage in educational problem-solving and decision-making activities. When considering “behavior” needs of students, Dr. Newell provides a framework for how adults can identify the different ways bias shows up and guidance to assist teams with decision-making processes. The Culturally Responsive Problem-Solving Framework helps adults fully understand how the relationships, communication, and expectations they establish in the learning environment either support individual student needs or further exacerbate and trigger more intensive responses from a student. Use of the framework to guide decision-making will lead to the identification of services and supports that meet the “needs” of individual students and reduce adult practices that further marginalize underrepresented groups.

The Culturally Responsive Problem Solving framework should be fully understood and utilized as IEP teams plan and implement positive behavior strategies and supports for students with IEPs. To view full online modules, videos, and problem solving guides, please visit the [Wisconsin DPI Culturally Responsive Problem Solving web page](#).

Reflection and Application Activities

The following reflection and application activities were developed to build the knowledge, skills, and systems of adults so they can assist students with accessing, engaging, and making progress in age or grade level curriculum, instruction, environments, and activities.

1. Review the [Culturally Responsive Problem-Solving an Evidence Based Approach](#) module.
 - What beliefs or attributions do school staff have about students with significant behavioral needs?
 - How does thinking of the problem as lying outside of the student help to improve services and support for students with significant behavioral needs?
 - What does a strength-based approach look like when talking about and supporting students with significant behavioral needs?
 - Identify a statement that is often said about a student with significant behavioral needs that is untrue, unfounded, or unalterable. How can you reframe that statement to help problem solving teams focus on solutions that provide better support and services to the student?
2. Ask team members to complete the [Understanding Microaggression](#) module.
 - How does race impact beliefs about and responses to student behavior?
 - How do microaggressions show up in day to day interactions with students who demonstrate significant behavioral needs?
 - How does racial or disability based implicit or explicit bias show up when teachers are talking about or interacting with students with significant behavioral needs?
 - What can individuals do to address microaggressions and bias when they show up in day to day interactions with students and staff?
3. Review the [Culturally Responsive Problem Solving Guide: An Evidence Based Guide for Team Practice](#).
 - What are your team and staff norms when problem solving or discussing students with significant behavioral needs? How might

you revise norms to move from a deficit-based to strength-based dialogue?

- When a staff member shares a concern about a student, how can staff support each other to help identify actionable changes in adult behavior, school environment, or services and support provided to students?
- What processes are used to ensure the identification of student needs are focused on instruction, classroom management, student skills, and teacher skills?
- Based on race or other attributes of the student, how does bias show up when decisions are made for interventions for students with significant behavioral needs?
- How does bias show up in collecting or analyzing progress on behavioral supports the student receives?

4. Watch [Dr. Markeda Newell's video](#).

- How does the content of this presentation relate to beliefs, supports, and services provided to students with significant behavioral needs?

5. Take the [Implicit Association Test](#) (IAT).

- The IAT is an online test that identifies biases based on race, gender, religion, etc. The test is free and confidential, and it provides immediate results.



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