

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 “Civil Rights Act for Persons with Disabilities”

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 guarantees equal opportunities in education and employment for all people with disabilities. The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) under guidelines of the Department of Education enforces Section 504, which prohibits organizations which receive federal funds from discriminating against otherwise qualified individuals on the sole basis of a disability. The law calls for federal funds to be withheld if discrimination does occur.

Section 504 protects all persons with a disability who

- have a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits (permanently or temporarily) one or more major life activities*
- have a record of such an impairment, or
- are regarded as having such an impairment.

*Major life activities include functions such as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, working, caring for oneself, and performing manual tasks.

In addition to school-age children who are eligible for special education services under IDEA, Section 504 also provides for students with communicable diseases, attention deficit disorders (ADD/ADHD), behavior disorders, chronic asthma, severe allergies, physical disabilities, and diabetes.

Some basic educational requirements of this law are:

1. No child with a disability can be excluded from a public education because of his or her disability;
2. Every child with a disability is entitled to a *free appropriate public education* (FAPE) regardless of the nature of his or her disability;
3. Children with disabilities must be educated with non-disabled students to the maximum extent appropriate to their needs;
4. Procedural safeguards must be established so that parents and guardians can object to evaluation and placement decisions regarding their children;
5. State or local educational agencies must identify and locate unserved children with disabilities.

A student or parent has the right to file a complaint if he or she believes discrimination has occurred. Initially, the complaint should be filed with the school or school district's Section 504 compliance officer. It can also be filed with the Office for Civil Rights (OCR). The OCR will conduct an investigation of the complaint and issue a Letter of Finding, either with a "no violation" conclusion or identifying violations and specifying corrective actions.

From Connecticut, complaints should be addressed to: U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 33 Arch Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02110-1491, (617) 289-0111. An Office of Civil Rights complaint can now be filed online at the Department of Education Web site at <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html>



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ADHD Video Games: Building Better Focus Through Fun Alternative Treatments

Computer games that may actually build focus and concentration skills in your child with attention deficit disorder (ADD ADHD).

by Rick Hodges

Most parents fret when their child stays glued to a video game or computer for hours, and they fret for good reason. The gaming industry has been built on violence and frenzied action. In one of the most popular games, *Grand Theft Auto*, players tear drivers out of their cars to mug them, and run over pedestrians.

What if electronic games could help children with attention deficit disorder (ADD ADHD) increase focus for tasks that they find boring?

They might. Parents, therapists, and educators can choose from several new games and devices on the market that may train distracted children or adults to pay more attention. Some connect the user's brain to the home computer through high-tech sensors and allow the person to control the action on the screen, not with a fast finger or a keyboard but with his brain waves. Call it joystick neurofeedback.

Using this method to improve concentration isn't a new idea. Therapists have used the technology for decades. Some games trace their development to National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) technology that measures the brain waves of pilots as they use flight simulators. Today, experts in psychology and technology are finding new ways to link the brain with a computer, and manufacturers are creating software and equipment designed for home users.

Manufacturers and experts agree that the games are only a tool to train a child to pay attention in distracted children, not a treatment for ADHD. Medication and behavior therapy is the gold standard for improving symptoms of the condition.

"The games have the potential to increase attention stamina," says Rohn Kessler, Ph.D., of Boca Raton, Florida, who works with children with attention deficit. "They aren't a quick fix or a one-step solution, but I have seen distracted kids increase their ability to focus."

ADDitude screened a few of the more intriguing games. Here's what we found.

Captain's LogAhoy!

With Captain's Log, you can become the captain of your own brain, instead of letting impulses and distractions take you off course.

Therapists and educators have used Captain's Log to help children and adults with AD/HD and other cognitive challenges since 1985. The software is now used in all 50 states and 23 foreign countries, according to the manufacturer, BrainTrain of Richmond, Virginia.

BrainTrain calls Captain's Log a "computerized mental gym," which works with any standard computer-control device, like a mouse or a keyboard, or with a joystick or game controller. With more than 30 "brain-training" games and exercises, Captain's Log offers a variety of options for helping some students improve concentration, memory, and self-control.

HOW IT WORKS: A child or adult chooses which games he wants to play based on his needs, whether it be improving his inattention or controlling impulsive tendencies. Once the user punches in his preference, a game pops up on the screen. You might be required to match two cards from memory or two similarly colored animals. The pace and length of the games are varied, and visual and audio distractions are thrown in to increase the challenge. The program advances to the next level automatically when the student has mastered the previous level. Captain's Log generates detailed reports so that professionals or parents can trace a student's progress, and it produces certificates as rewards for students as they improve.

Captain's Log developer Joseph Sandford, a psychologist with a computer programming background, originally created the software to help patients who had traumatic brain injury. Therapists soon realized that it may increase attention in people with AD/HD.

For more information, log on to braintrain.com. A trial version of the software is available.

Play Attention

Peter Freer was frustrated in trying to help his students overcome attention problems. Combining his teaching experience with his background in educational technology, Freer created [Play Attention](#), a system that enables children and adults with AD/HD to connect their brain waves directly to a home computer to hone their ability to stay focused.

"They can actually see what's happening to their brain waves as it occurs," says Freer, CEO of Unique Logic + Technology, the Asheville, North Carolina, manufacturer of the game.

HOW IT WORKS: The user puts on a helmet embedded with sensors and learns to control the action on the screen with his brain waves. Focusing on a flying bird causes it to fly higher; distraction causes the bird to fly lower. Another exercise enables a person to work on his long-range focus by building a tower with moving blocks. A challenging exercise involves sitting at the controls of a spaceship, deflecting the white asteroids that are flying toward it. This helps develop discriminatory processing and impulse control.

While a teacher, therapist, or coach can only describe what focus feels like to someone with AD/HD, Play Attention lets the user experience what being attentive actually feels like.

A student can even play the game while doing homework. Wearing the helmet and choosing, say, the plane game, the student can do an assignment and gauge his attention level by looking at the plane's flight pattern.

For more information, log on to playattention.com. A demonstration disk is available.

SmartDriver

Sitting behind the wheel of a car can be a dangerous place for someone with impulsive or inattentive behavior, especially a teenage driver without much experience. [SmartDriver](#) helps any driver, or future driver, with focus problems to keep his thoughts on the road.

The game works with or without a steering wheel for computer driving simulators. "The kids love SmartDriver because they get to drive," says Joseph Sandford, who created the game. Unlike the typical driving video game, SmartDriver requires patience and responsibility, not a love of hairpin turns. "There are stretches where you have to stay under the speed limit."

HOW IT WORKS: The game isn't a driving simulator - you "drive" the car from outside of the car as in a typical video game, not from inside it - but you must follow the rules of the road and heed speed limits, traffic lights, and other vehicles. Like Captain's Log, SmartDriver adds enough lights and sounds to keep a young user interested.

For more information, log on to braintrain.com. A trial version of the software is available.

S.M.A.R.T. BrainGames

Instead of designing games for building concentration skills, the [S.M.A.R.T. BrainGames](#) system converts any home video or computer game into a neurofeedback device.

Using new technology developed by NASA, the S.M.A.R.T. ("Self Mastery and Regulation Training") BrainGames system includes a state-of-the-art, wireless, handheld game controller. It looks and works like any other game controller, with one exception - it receives brain wave signals from a headset worn by the player.

HOW IT WORKS: The headset tracks the frequency of the user's brain waves while he plays. When the player exhibits low-frequency patterns during, say, a car race at the track, his car slows and other cars pass him. That gets his attention, so he concentrates, producing higher-frequency brain waves. His car then speeds up - positive reinforcement for his cerebral change. The idea is that the higher-frequency pattern will continue even after kids stop playing the game.

NASA's tests of the technology showed that it works about as well as traditional biofeedback equipment used in clinics, but with an important twist - children like it better.

"The main difference we see between the groups is motivation - the children in the video game group enjoy the sessions more, and it's easier for parents to get them to come to our clinic," said Olafur Palsson, Ph.D., of Eastern Virginia Medical School in Richmond, a co-inventor of the NASA system.

It may also encourage children to play G-rated video games, which work best with the system, says Lindsay Greco, a vice president at CyberLearning Technologies. "The games that don't work well are the shoot-'em-up, blood-and-guts kind, because there is poor forward motion," says Greco. Games that involve steady motion, like driving a car or flying an airplane, work best.

For more information, log on to smartbraingames.com.

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What is Executive Function?

By NCLD Editorial Staff

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"Executive function is a set of mental processes that helps connect past experience with present action. People use it to perform activities such as planning, organizing, strategizing, paying attention to and remembering details, and managing time and space.

If you have trouble with executive function, these things are more difficult to do. You may also show a weakness with working memory, which is like "seeing in your mind's eye." This is an important tool in guiding your actions.

As with other learning disabilities, problems with executive function can run in families. It can be seen at any age, but it tends to become more apparent as children move through the early elementary grades. This is when the demands of completing schoolwork independently can trigger signs of a problem with executive function.

The brain continues to mature and develop connections well into adulthood. A person's executive function abilities are shaped by both physical changes in the brain and by life experiences, in the classroom and in the world at large. Early attention to developing efficient skills in this area can be very helpful. As a rule, it helps to give direct instruction, frequent reassurance, and explicit feedback.

How Does Executive Function Affect Learning?

In school, at home, or in the workplace, we're called on all day, every day, to self-regulate behavior. Executive function allows us to:

- Make plans
- Keep track of time and finish work on time
- Keep track of more than one thing at once
- Meaningfully include past knowledge in discussions
- Evaluate ideas and reflect on our work
- Change our minds and make mid-course corrections while thinking, reading, and writing
- Ask for help or seek more information when we need it
- Engage in group dynamics
- Wait to speak until we're called on

What Are the Warning Signs of Executive Function Problems?

A student may have problems with executive function when he or she has trouble:

- Planning projects
- Comprehending how much time a project will take to complete
- Telling stories (verbally or in writing), struggling to communicate details in an organized, sequential manner

- Memorizing and retrieving information from memory
- Initiating activities or tasks, or generating ideas independently
- Retaining information while doing something with it, for example, remembering a phone number while dialing

How Are Problems with Executive Function Identified?

There is no single test or even battery of tests that identifies all of the different features of executive function. Educators, psychologists, speech-language pathologists, and others use a variety of tests to identify problems. Careful observation and trial teaching are invaluable in identifying and better understanding weaknesses in this area.

What Are Some Strategies to Help?

There are many effective strategies to help with the problem of executive function challenges. Here are some methods to try:

General Strategies

- Take step-by-step approaches to work; rely on visual organizational aids.
- Use tools like time organizers, computers or watches with alarms.
- Prepare visual schedules and review them several times a day.
- Ask for written directions with oral instructions whenever possible.
- Plan and structure transition times and shifts in activities.

Managing Time

- Create checklists and "to do" lists, estimating how long tasks will take.
- Break long assignments into chunks and assign time frames for completing each chunk.
- Use visual calendars at to keep track of long term assignments, due dates, chores, and activities.
- Use management software such as the Franklin Day Planner, Palm Pilot, or Lotus Organizer.
- Be sure to write the due date on top of each assignment.

Managing Space and Materials

- Organize work space.
- Minimize clutter.
- Consider having separate work areas with complete sets of supplies for different activities.
- Schedule a weekly time to clean and organize the work space.

Managing Work

- Make a checklist for getting through assignments. For example, a student's checklist could include such items as: get out pencil and paper; put name on paper; put due date on paper; read directions; etc.
- Meet with a teacher or supervisor on a regular basis to review work; troubleshoot problems.

Functional Behavioral Assessment and Positive Interventions: What Parents Need to Know

Many children have inappropriate behaviors that are part of their disability. These behaviors may make it difficult to learn, cause harm to the child or others, or isolate a child from his or her peers. Some children have behaviors that they can't control, such as tics for a child with Tourette syndrome or self-harming behaviors for some children with developmental disabilities. Some children may be sad or anxious. Others simply have not learned positive ways to have their needs met. In any of these instances, the behaviors interfere with the children's ability to learn the skills they need to be successful.

We can teach appropriate behavior skills to children! To do so, we need to understand problem behaviors, such as where they occur and what purpose they serve for a child. The process of learning about how children develop problem behaviors is called *functional behavioral assessment (FBA)*. If we learn about the behaviors and know when and where they are likely to happen, we can plan positive strategies to teach new behaviors. These strategies are called *positive behavioral interventions*. Teachers and parents will use the information from an FBA to help a child learn new skills. The goal is to teach children how to manage their own behaviors.

This overview will help parents understand functional behavioral assessments and positive interventions. You have a very important role in this assessment, because you have information about your child that no one else has. When you understand the process, you can work effectively with the rest of the team. You will have the tools to make decisions when a functional behavioral assessment is proposed for your child. What you know about your child will be used to help develop effective instruction.

Thinking about behavior

Adults often have two different approaches to dealing with problem behaviors. These different approaches are based on different beliefs. One belief is that the child *is a problem*, and the other is that the child *has a problem*.

The child is a problem

Billy is a 12-year-old sixth-grade student. He refuses to do his schoolwork, and then his teacher does not know what to do. He becomes angry when the teacher reminds him to get to work. He screams, swears, and even throws his work on the floor so the teacher will leave him alone. The teacher may think Billy is lazy, mean, or disrespectful. The teacher may feel angry or threatened. Adults who are angry often use punishment or threats: "Do it or else." We do not always realize that children do not think about their problem behaviors the way we do.

When we punish often, children may see us as uncaring. Some may come to fear or avoid us. Others may become even louder and angrier because of the punishment. Children who do not back down when arguing with adults often receive increasingly harsh punishments. Many adults think children should not be permitted to win disagreements. Children, on the other hand, often say things they do not really mean because they are angry. They may refuse to give up even if they lose privileges or are suspended from school.

When a child is suspended from school for problem behaviors, some people think of it as "good medicine for bad behavior." They think the removal teaches the child a lesson and that the child will change the problem behaviors as a result.



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But what if that child does not like going to school? He or she may learn that using problem behaviors is a good way to earn a vacation from school. The child may actually want what we think is a punishment.

The child has a problem

Billy, the 12-year-old described earlier, has behaviors that need to change. Let's assume we have assessment data that give a clearer picture of Billy. We find that he reads at a second-grade level. He was sexually abused at age three by a neighbor. Billy is angry over his parents' recent divorce and continuing custody battle. He is worried about where he will live.

Clearly Billy's problem behaviors must change. They are serious and interfere with learning. What we decide to do about the behavior, however, comes from how we feel about it and whether we believe it is willful. That is where a functional behavioral assessment comes in. It can help us to identify why Billy is frustrated and angry, so we can help him to learn the skills he needs. A reasonable person would have a hard time believing that punishment alone could help Billy succeed.

Positive Behavioral Interventions

Positive: characterized by or displaying approval, acceptance, or affirmation.

Behavior: what we do.

Intervention: an action that changes a course of events.

(Adapted from Merriam Webster's Tenth Collegiate Dictionary.)

The 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states:

The IEP Team shall, in the case of a child whose behavior impedes the child's learning or that of others, consider the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports, and other strategies, to address that behavior.

IDEA Section 614 (d)

Positive behavioral interventions are used before problem behaviors occur. To develop positive interventions, the team must understand why a child has problem behaviors and what strategies might be helpful. Many different strategies can be used to reduce problem behaviors in school: changing where a child sits in the classroom, adjusting the schoolwork, rewarding the child for positive behaviors. The child's teacher may speak in a different

tone of voice to help the child remain calm. Adults may try to keep calm when the child is angry. The goal is to stop or reduce the problem behaviors so that punishment does not become necessary.

Here is an example: The teacher knows that Mary is more likely to argue with the teacher when she sits next to Mark. If the teacher thinks Mary argues because she wants Mark to notice her, there are several things the teacher can do. She can separate Mary and Mark so that Mary does not try so hard to get his attention. She can also teach Mary more positive ways to gain Mark's attention and provide positive reinforcement for using the new behaviors.

Behaviors are governed by their consequences

John has a fight (behavior) and is suspended from school (consequence). If John loves school and can control the behavior, the consequence is negative because he has to give up something he wants (school). If John dislikes school, however, he may see that same consequence as positive. He may learn that fighting is a good way to be sent home. The next time John does not want to be in school, what behavior is he likely to use?

Many of us have learned to deal with problem behaviors by doing nothing until they occur. After a child uses the behaviors, we punish. Punishment does not teach new skills, though. Its goal is to stop problem behaviors from continuing. If we do not teach a child what to do instead, the child will probably continue to misbehave. Any time a child uses a behavior that is successful in meeting a need, the behavior is likely to be repeated. The behavior serves a *function* for the child.

Most people agree that we need to have consequences for problem behaviors. We must also focus on teaching the positive behavior skills we would like to see. If we can understand the function of problem behaviors, we can teach a child more positive behaviors that serve the same function, and the problem behaviors are no longer needed.

What is a functional behavioral assessment?

A Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) is a process for collecting information. The data the team collects are used to help determine why problem behaviors occur. The data will also help identify ways to address the behaviors. Functional behavioral assessment data are used to develop a positive behavioral intervention plan. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 specifically requires an FBA whenever a child with a disability

has his or her current placement changed for disciplinary reasons. This does not mean that we should not think about FBA at other times, too.

The evaluation requirements of IDEA make it clear that children must be evaluated in all areas related to the suspected disability. This means that if your child has problem behaviors that are not improving, your child may need an evaluation to examine the behaviors more closely. You may request an FBA at any time if your child's problem behaviors are becoming worse, or when the team cannot explain to you why the problem behaviors occur.

There are many reasons a child might misbehave. Some have to do with the nature of the child, such as allergies to dust, foods, or plants. A sinus infection, headache, or toothache can also lead to problem behaviors. Some children have a medical diagnosis, such as bipolar disorder or attention-deficit/hyper-activity disorder that affects behavior. The team's responsibility is to collect data to help it understand why a child has problem behaviors.

The people who complete the functional behavioral assessment use different ways to collect data. School staff may interview you and your child. They observe your child in different settings, such as the lunchroom or classroom, or on the playground. They gather reports from teachers and others. The team reviews your child's records, including any assessments you would like to share.

The results of this process should lead to a hypothesis about why problem behaviors occur. A hypothesis is an educated guess, based on the data the team has gathered. Assessment results are used to develop a positive behavior intervention plan.

Behaviors are context-related

Most behaviors are related to their context. This means that behaviors often result from what is happening in the child's world or environment. These are just a few of the factors that may lead to problem behaviors:

- a disagreement between children
- the number of children in a classroom
- the quality of peer relationships
- the size of the classroom
- medicine changes
- the difficulty of schoolwork

Other things, such as who is present and what their expectations are, also affect behaviors. Behaviors may also

be a problem when a child is emotionally upset and cannot handle the demands of the environment.

Behaviors serve a function

Problem behaviors usually serve a function, or purpose, for the child. Sometimes we see problem behaviors when a substitute teacher is in the classroom. In this case, we must be careful not to assume that the child doesn't like the teacher or that the child wants to show off for friends. Perhaps the child likes his or her regular teacher and is upset when she is not there. Or the child may be anxious about what to expect with a new teacher. A child who is upset about having a new teacher may use problem behaviors in order to be placed in a less stressful setting. Some children would rather be in a time-out space than in their classroom.

Unfortunately, consequences that improve the behaviors of most students do not work with all. Sending a child to the principal's office, for example, can be ineffective if the consequence does not address the complex function of a child's behavior.

What a child does (the behavior) and *why* a child does it (the function) may be unrelated. Skipping school and getting good grades are two very different behaviors. Yet they may serve the same function for different children—gaining adult attention. Two children may both want to be noticed by their parents; one may study hard to have good grades while the other skips class. They do very different things to get the attention they want. While the function of both behaviors is positive (parent attention), skipping class is not an acceptable way to be noticed.

Behaviors are influenced by events in the environment (antecedents)

What happens in an environment affects behavior. The size of a classroom, the number of students, transitions, or early morning bus incidents are all antecedents that might affect a child's behavior.

It is important to know what leads to both positive and negative behaviors. If teachers and parents understand the conditions that lead to problem behaviors, then changing the conditions may reduce the need for the behaviors. Positive teaching strategies such as providing structure, routine, and rewards for appropriate behaviors help to increase positive behavior skills.

Steps in conducting a functional behavioral assessment

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 does not define how a functional behavioral assessment is done. The process may vary with the needs of each child. However, several specific steps are always part of this kind of assessment. The process begins with identifying the specific behaviors that must change. If a child has many problem behaviors, it will be important to focus on the most serious one or two behaviors. The problem behaviors are described in a way that helps everyone to understand exactly what the behaviors are. These are typical steps:

1. *Identify and agree on the behavior(s)* that most need to change.
2. *Determine where the behaviors occur and where they do not.* Identify what may contribute to the behaviors. The team will ask these kinds of questions:
 - What is unique about the environments where behaviors are not a concern?
 - What is different in the places where the problem behaviors do occur? Could they be related to how the child and teacher get along? Does the number of other students or the work a child is asked to do cause the problem? Could the time of day or a child's mood affect the behaviors? Was there a bus problem or a disagreement in the hallway?
 - Are the behaviors likely to occur in a specific set of circumstances or a specific setting? What events seem to support the problem behaviors?
3. *Collect data* on the child's performance from as many sources as possible.
4. *Develop a hypothesis* about why problem behaviors occur (the function of the behaviors). A hypothesis is an educated guess, based on data. It helps predict where and why problem behaviors are most likely to occur, and where and why they are least likely to occur.
5. *Identify other behaviors that can be taught* that will serve the same function for the child.
6. *Test the hypothesis.* The team develops and uses positive behavioral interventions that are written into the child's IEP or behavior intervention plan.
7. *Evaluate the success of the interventions.* Change or fine-tune as needed.

If children have behaviors that place them or others in danger, they may need a crisis intervention plan. Crisis interventions should be developed before they are needed. The team should decide what behaviors are crises and what they (and the child) will do in a crisis. By having a plan that guides actions, teachers can help children through difficult emotional situations.

Behavior intervention plan

An effective behavior intervention plan (often called a behavior support plan or positive intervention plan) is used to teach or reinforce positive behaviors. Typically, a child's team develops the plan. It usually includes:

- skills training to increase appropriate behavior
- changes that will be made in classrooms or other environments to reduce or eliminate problem behaviors
- strategies to replace problem behaviors with appropriate behaviors that serve the same function for the child
- supports for the child to use the appropriate behaviors

A positive behavior intervention plan is not a plan to determine what happens to a student who violates a rule or code of conduct. That would be more appropriately called a discipline plan or a punishment plan.

School discipline policies

The IEP team determines whether the school discipline policies need to be amended for a child, or whether the consequences need to be different from those written into the policy. This decision should be based on evaluation and a review of the records, including the discipline records or any manifestation determination review(s) that have been completed by the school. A child's IEP or behavior intervention plan should focus on teaching skills.

Sometimes school discipline policies are not successful in correcting problem behaviors. That is, the child does not learn what the school staff intended through the use of punishments such as suspension. The child may learn instead that problem behaviors are useful in meeting a need, such as being noticed by peers. When this is true, it is difficult to defend punishment, by itself, as effective in changing problem behaviors.

One of the most useful questions parents can ask when they have concerns about the discipline recommenda-

tions for their child is “Where are the data that support the recommendations?” Special education decisions are based on data. If school staff wants to use a specific discipline procedure, they should check for data that support the use of the procedure. For instance, if your child has been repeatedly suspended from school for a problem behavior, has suspension taught your child the skills he or she needs to learn?

Zero-tolerance policies

Many school districts have zero-tolerance policies that provide immediate negative consequences for specific behaviors. Such policies simply do not provide effective consequences for all children who violate them. If a child with a disability violates a zero-tolerance policy, the consequence may or may not be effective, given that child’s needs. Consequences for problem behaviors must not discriminate against a child based on his or her disability. The IEP team is responsible for determining whether exceptions need to be made to the written school district discipline policy for a student, or whether the student needs a different consequence for misbehaviors than is written into the school discipline policies. Instructional goals may need to be written into the IEP to help remediate the problems a child is having in following school discipline policies.

While some administrators may not want to make exceptions to school wide discipline policies established for all students, exceptions are sometimes necessary. Some students who are unable to conform their behavior to the school expectations may need to have individualized consequences that will be more effective in supporting positive behaviors.

In the U.S. legal system, the consequences for breaking a law are generally based on an evaluation of the events around the violation. Yet schools often have one discipline standard for all students regardless of individual needs. They may use the same consequences for all students. Parents must carefully examine school policies to help determine whether modifications need to be made to meet the needs of their child.

Examples of behavioral intervention strategies

Schools use the following common strategies to help reduce problem behaviors and teach children positive behavioral skills.

Stop, Relax, and Think teaches children how to think about the problem they are having and find a solution. Children learn the steps:

1. Define the problem.
2. Decide who “owns” the problem.
3. Think of as many solutions as possible to solve the problem.
4. Select a solution to try.
5. Use the solution.
6. Evaluate its success.

After children understand the steps, role-play and practice can help the process become habit. Helping children to recognize their own response to stress (clenched hands, voice tone, etc.) may become part of the instruction needed to use this strategy effectively.

Planned ignoring is useful in stopping behaviors that are annoying. For example, it is useful for students who yell or interrupt the class to attract the teacher’s attention or that of students who are not prepared for class. Planned ignoring acknowledges that children’s problem behaviors serve a function. If the purpose of a problem behavior is to gain adult attention, then not providing attention means that the behavior does not work. The behavior lessens over time and eventually disappears. Ignoring non-serious behavior is especially useful for parents when their child is having a tantrum for attention. Many adults find it difficult to ignore behaviors, however, especially if the behaviors interrupt what the adult is doing. Also, attention-seeking behaviors often get worse before they eventually go away.

Planned ignoring is not suitable for behaviors that are extremely disruptive. It also may not work if other children laugh at the problem behaviors the adult is trying to ignore. Some behaviors, including those that are unsafe or that include peer issues such as arguing, can grow quickly into more serious behaviors. It may not be possible to ignore these kinds of behaviors. Planned ignoring should never be used for unsafe behaviors. As children grow older and want attention more from their friends than from adults, planned ignoring is less useful.

Preventive cueing (also called signal interference) lets a child know when he or she is doing something that is not acceptable. Teachers or parents can frown, shake their head, make eye contact, point to a seat for a wandering

child, or snap their fingers, to let the child know he or she needs to pay attention or to stop the problem behaviors. When using preventive cueing it is important not to smile or look pleased with a child. Preventive cueing may be used in steps, depending on the behaviors and how often they occur or how serious they are. For instance, a hand motion may work the first time or two, but it may need to be combined with eye contact or a shake of the head for the next offense.

Proximity control means that a teacher or adult moves closer to the child in a gentle way. If the teacher does not get the child's attention by using cues, then he or she may move closer to the student or give the lesson while standing near the child's desk.

Touch control, meaning touch that is not resisted, is a nonverbal guided intervention. It is used to direct a student toward positive behavior. For example, a teacher may gently place a hand on a child's shoulder to steer the child back to his or her desk. Touch control should never be used with children who react angrily or when school policy does not permit its use. If a child's records show that he or she has a history of violence, has been abused or maltreated, is anxious, or has a mental illness or psychosis, touch control should not be used, unless specifically agreed to by a physician or psychologist.

Humor directed either at the teacher or the situation—never at the child—can defuse tensions as well as redirect children. Humor must never be used to demean a child or be used in a manner that might encourage others in the class to ridicule the child.

Nonverbal warnings give a child the opportunity to regain control without being singled out for a verbal reprimand. For example, a teacher might place a colored warning cue card or a note on a desk as he or she moves through the room, or hold up the number of fingers that corresponds to the rule being challenged.

Discipline privately. Many children see it as a challenge when teachers attempt to discipline them in front of their peers. Children rarely lose these challenges, even when adults use negative consequences. Young people can gain stature from peers by publicly refusing to obey a teacher. A child is more likely to accept discipline if his or her peers are not watching the process.

Positive phrasing lets children know the positive results for using appropriate behaviors. As simple as it sounds, this can be difficult. Teachers and parents are used to fo-

cus on misbehavior. Warning children about a negative response to problem behaviors often seems easier than describing the positive impact of positive behaviors. Compare the difference between positive phrasing and negative phrasing:

Positive phrasing: "If you finish your reading by recess, we can all go outside together and play a game."

Negative phrasing: "If you do not finish your reading by recess, you will have to stay inside until it's done."

Positive phrasing helps children learn that positive behaviors lead to positive outcomes. This, in turn, can help them gain control of their behaviors.

I-messages, described by Thomas Gordon in his 1974 book *Teacher Effectiveness Training*, helps children learn about how their problem behaviors affect others. It also demonstrates the importance of taking responsibility for one's own behavior. For example, parents or teachers will use language like "I'm upset when . . ." not "You are bad when . . ."

When a child has a good relationship with parents and teachers, I-messages can help him or her to understand how the problem behaviors affect adults. If the child dislikes the teacher, though, using I-statements can be a problem. It may even help the child to more effectively annoy the teacher.

Behavior shaping acknowledges that not all children can do everything at 100 percent. If a child does not turn in papers daily, expecting that papers will be turned in 100 percent of the time is not realistic. By rewarding small gains and reinforcing the gains as they occur, children learn how to stick with a task and to improve the skill.

Clear routines and expectations let children know what comes next in their school day, reducing anxiety or fear. Teachers who post and review the rules daily establish expectations for behavior during the day.

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Additional Contact Information

For additional information on positive behavioral interventions and functional behavioral assessment as well as related topics, contact the following:

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School Accommodations and Modifications

Some students with disabilities need accommodations or modifications in their educational program in order to be successful in school. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its regulations do not offer a definition for an accommodation or modification. However, there is general agreement as to what the terms mean.

An accommodation allows a student to complete the same assignments as other students, but permits a change in the timing, formatting, setting, scheduling, response or presentation. An accommodation does not alter what the test or assignment measures. Examples of accommodations include a student who is blind taking a Braille version of a test, or a student taking a test alone in a quiet room.

A modification adjusts the expectations for an assignment or a test. It permits a change in what a test or assignment measures. Examples include: a) a child is permitted to complete only part of a standard; b) a child is given an alternate assignment at a different level instead of the standard assignment.

Accommodations or modifications should be written into a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Some children may have a disability that is not severe enough for them to receive special education. An option for this child may be to develop a Section 504 Plan. Section 504 is a federal law that prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities. A Section 504 plan may list the changes needed in a child's educational program for him or her to be successful. Any changes must be based on the child's disability and fulfill the purpose of meeting individual needs. It's important to include the student, if appropriate, when discussing accommodations and modifications. A first step is to ask the child what would be helpful in classes where he or she is having difficulty.

Below are examples of modifications and/or accommodations. These ideas may be helpful when educating students with disabilities. Keep

in mind that any accommodation or modification an IEP team or Section 504 team chooses must be based on individual needs. Accommodations or modifications must be provided if written in the child's IEP or 504 plan.

Textbooks and Curriculum

Books

- Provide alternative books at a simpler reading level.
- Provide audiotapes of textbooks. Have the child follow the text while listening.
- Provide summaries of chapters.
- Provide high interest reading material at or slightly above the student's comfortable reading level.
- Use peer readers.
- Use marker to highlight important text sections of assignments.
- Use word-for-word sentence fill-ins.
- Provide two sets of textbooks. Keep one at home for the forgetful student.
- Use index cards to write down major themes.
- Provide the student with a list of discussion questions before reading the material.
- Give page numbers to help the student find answers.
- Provide written materials in alternative formats such as Braille or large print.

Curriculum

- Shorten assignments to focus on mastery of key concepts.
- Shorten spelling tests to the most functional words.



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- Substitute alternatives for written assignments (clay models, posters, panoramas, collections, etc.).
- Specify and review often exactly what the student will need to learn to pass.
- Modify expectations based on student needs (e.g., “When you have read this chapter, you should be able to list three reasons for the Civil War.”).
- Give alternatives to long written reports (e.g., several short reports, preview new audiovisual materials and write a short review, give an oral report).

Classroom Environment

- Review the classroom rules frequently.
- Evaluate classroom structure against the student’s needs (flexible structure, firm limits, etc.).
- Keep workspace clear of unrelated materials.
- Keep classroom quiet during intense learning times.
- Reduce visual distractions in the classroom (mobiles, etc.).
- Provide a computer for written work.
- Seat the student close to the teacher or a positive role model.
- Permit use of a study carrel. (Have more than one so that a student is not singled out.)
- Seat the student away from windows or doorways.
- Provide a clear view of the chalkboard, teacher, movie screen, etc.
- Keep extra supplies of classroom materials (pencils, books) on hand.
- Use alternatives to word puzzles or word finds.
- Maintain adequate space between desks.

Instruction and Assignments

Directions

- Use both oral and printed directions.
- Give directions in small steps and in as few words as possible.
- Number and sequence the steps in a task.
- Have student repeat the directions for a task.

- Provide visual aids.
- Show a model of the end product of directions (e.g., a completed math problem or quiz).
- Stand near the student when giving directions or presenting a lesson.

Time/transitions

- Alert student several minutes before a transition from one activity to another is planned; give several reminders.
- Provide additional time to complete a task.
- Allow extra time to turn in homework without penalty.
- Provide assistance when moving about the building.

Handwriting

- Use worksheets that require minimal writing.
- Use fill-in questions with space for a brief response rather than a short essay.
- Provide a “designated notetaker” or photocopy of other student or teacher notes. (Do not require a poor notetaker or a student with no friends to make this arrangement.)
- Provide a print outline to accompany each videotape of filmstrip.
- Provide a print copy of assignments or directions written on the blackboard.
- Omit assignments that require copying, or let the student use a tape recorder to dictate answers.

Grading

- Use daily or frequent grading averaged into a grade for the quarter.
- Weight daily work higher than tests for a student who performs poorly on tests.
- Mark the correct answers rather than the incorrect ones.
- Permit a student to rework missed problems for a better grade.
- Average grades out when assignments are reworked, or grade on corrected work.

- Use a pass-fail or an alternative grading system where the student is assessed on his or her own growth.

Tests

- Go over directions orally.
- Teach the student how to take tests (e.g., how to review, to plan time for each section).
- Provide a vocabulary list with definitions.
- Permit as much time as needed to finish tests.
- Allow tests to be taken in a room with few distractions (e.g., the library).
- Read test materials to the student, and allow oral responses.
- Divide tests into small sections of similar questions or problems.
- Use recognition tests (true-false, multiple choice, or matching) instead of essays.
- Allow the student to complete an independent project as an alternative test.
- Give progress reports instead of grades.
- Grade spelling separately from content.
- Provide typed test materials, not tests written in cursive.
- Allow take-home or open-book tests.
- Provide possible answers for fill-in-the blank sections.
- Provide the first letter of the missing word.

Math

- Allow the student to use a calculator without penalty.
- Group similar problems together (e.g., all addition in one section).
- Provide fewer problems on a worksheet (e.g., 4 to 6 problems on a page, rather than 20.).
- Require fewer problems completed to attain passing grades.
- Use enlarged graph paper to write problems to help the student keep numbers in columns.
- Provide a table of math facts for reference.

- Tape a number line to the student's desk.
- Read and explain story problems, or break problems into smaller steps.
- Use pictures or graphics.

Other

- Use Post-it notes to mark assignments in textbooks.
- Check progress and provide feedback often in the first few minutes of each assignment.
- Place a ruler under sentences being read for better tracking.
- Provide overview of long-term assignments so the student knows what to do, and due dates.
- Break long-term assignments into small steps, with daily monitoring and frequent grading.
- Have the student practice presenting in a small group before presenting to the class.
- Hand out worksheets one at a time.
- Sequence work, with the easiest part first.
- Provide study guides and study questions that directly relate to tests.
- Praise student for recording assignments and due dates in a notebook.
- Draw arrows on worksheets, chalkboard, or overheads to show how ideas are related, or use other graphic organizers such as flow charts.

Behavior

- Arrange a "check-in" time to organize the day.
- Pair the student with a student who is a good behavior model for class projects.
- Modify classroom policies that may discriminate against the student (e.g., provide frequent breaks for the student who cannot pay attention for long periods of time)
- Use nonverbal cues to remind the student of rule violations.
- Amend consequences for rule violations (e.g., reward a forgetful student for remembering to bring pencils to class, rather than punishing the failure to remember).

-
- Reinforce (often) when a student displays positive behavior.
 - Develop an individualized behavior intervention plan that consistent with the student's ability and skills.
 - Increase the frequency and immediacy of reinforcement.
 - Arrange for a student to leave the classroom for a designated "safe place" when highly stressed.
 - Develop a system or a code word to let a student know when behavior is not appropriate.
 - Ignore behaviors that are not seriously disruptive.
 - Develop interventions for behaviors that are annoying but not deliberate. For example, place a small piece of foam rubber on the desk of a student who continually taps a pencil on the desktop.
 - Be aware of behavior changes that relate to medication or the length of the school day; modify expectations if appropriate.

Frequently Used Accommodations and Modifications

Materials/Books/Equipment:			
Access to Computer	Calculator	Manipulatives	Supplementary Visuals
Alternative Text	Consumable Workbook	Speech to Text Devices	Highlighted or Color Coded Texts
Alternative Worksheets	Large Print Text	Spell Check	Word prediction or Voice Recognition Software
Tests/Quizzes/Assessments:			
Alternative Tests	Oral Testing	Simplify Test Wording	
Extra Credit Options	Pace Long Term Projects	Student Write on Test	
Hands-on Projects	Preview Test Procedures	Test Study Guide	
Limited Multiple Choice	Prior Notice of Tests	Extra Time–Tests/Projects/Written Work	
Objective Tests	Reduced Reading	Rephrase Test Questions/Directions	
Orally Read Tests/Directions	Shortened Tasks		
Grading:			
Audit Course	No Handwriting Penalty	Modified Grades Based on IEP	
Grade Improvement	Pass/Fail		
Organization:			
Assignment Pad	Desktop List of Tasks	List Sequential Steps	Provide Study Outlines
Assign Partner	Electronic Organizers	Pencil Box for Tools	Templates for Written Work
Daily Assignment List	Extra Space for Work	Post Assignments	Give One Paper or Section at a Time
Daily Homework List	Folders to Hold Work	Post Routines	
Environment:			
Adaptive Work Space	Preferential Seating	Minimizing or Structure transitions	
Clear Work Area	Study Carrel	Reduction of auditory or visual stimulation	
Behavior Intervention/Support:			
Behavior Contracts	De-escalation Strategies	Set/Post Class Rules	
Break Between Tasks	Emergency Plan	Chart Progress and Maintain Data	
Contingency Plan	Peer Supports/Mentoring	Modeling Expected Behavior by Adults	
Cue Expected Behavior	Positive Reinforcement	Parent/Guardian Sign Homework	
Daily Feedback to Student	Proximity/Touch Control	Parent/Guardian Sign Behavioral Chart	
Instructional Strategies:			
Assign Study Partner	Immediate Feedback	Provide Models	Have Student Restate Information
Check Work in Progress	Mimed Clues/Gestures	Review Directions	Provide Notes/Outline to Student
Concrete Examples	Multi-Sensory Approach	Review Sessions	Provide Student With Vocabulary Word Bank
Cueing/Prompts	Number Line	Use Manipulatives	Support Auditory Presentations with Visuals
Extra Drill/Practice	Personalized Examples	Use Mnemonics	Visuals to Support Instruction
Highlight Key Words	Pre-teach Content	Computer Supported Instruction	

Student: _____ Last Name, First Name DOB: _____ mm/dd/yyyy District: _____ Meeting Date: _____ mm/dd/yyyy

Program Accommodations and Modifications - INCLUDING NONACADEMIC AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES/COLLABORATION/SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL

<p>Accommodations and Modifications to be provided to enable the child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To advance appropriately toward attaining his/her annual goals; - To be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; - To participate in extracurricular and other non-academic activities, and - To be educated and participate with other children with and without disabilities. <p>Accommodations may include Assistive Technology Devices and Services</p>	<p>Sites/Activities Where Required and Duration</p>
<p>Materials/Books/Equipment: _____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>Tests/Quizzes/Assessments: _____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>Grading: _____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>Organization: _____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>Environment: _____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>Behavioral Interventions and Support: _____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>Instructional Strategies: _____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>Other: _____</p> <p>_____</p>	

Note: When specifying required supports for personnel to implement this IEP, include the specific supports required, how often they are to be provided (frequency) and for how long (duration)

Frequency and Duration of Supports Required for School Personnel to Implement this IEP include: _____



High Expectations

How do we encourage the school to help our children reach the goals we've set for them?

1. Expect that your child will be valued as a human being whose rights are respected.
2. Appreciate those who provide service for your child and actively participate in planning those services.
3. Know there is a law that says your child has a right to an appropriate public education where he or she can make meaningful educational progress.
4. Show the school what the child can do at home; could you schedule a home visit, videotape your child displaying a particular skill, or show work completed at home to the teacher?
5. Share a "snapshot" of your child in a brief, usable format.
6. Describe why and how your vision for your child makes sense to you.
7. Share your ideas with the school, and be open to ideas from the school; no one knows it all; brainstorm.
8. Use your best people-skills.
9. Educate yourself about the special education process. Learn how to turn your child's needs into measurable goals and find services to achieve those goals.
10. Be willing to try something for a given amount of time and measure its effectiveness.
11. Discuss meaningful and effective inclusion. You may want to ask such questions as:
 - *Are there higher expectations for children who are fully included in the regular education classroom?*
 - *In what environment does my child learn the best? Which subjects?*
 - *What accommodations might help my child participate with other children?*
 - *If my child is included for social reasons, where and how will the academic subjects be taught?*
 - *Does inclusion mean the same thing from year to year?*
12. Discuss assistive technology (AT) devices and services. AT may be the key that provides access to instruction and peer interaction.
 - *AT must be considered annually at the IEP team meeting.*
 - *If the IEP team thinks AT may benefit a child, the school must evaluate to see what technology the child needs in order to learn.*
 - *If, through evaluation, AT is needed, those devices and services must be written on the IEP.*

Expect the Best

Dreaming, hoping, and seeing potential where others may or may not – that's the role of the parent. Believe in the capability of your child, cultivate patience and view your child's future with anticipation and optimism. Remember, children often live up to our expectations. What we do for them today has lifelong implications and benefits.





Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is “an educational approach to teaching, learning, and assessment, drawing on new brain research and new media technologies to respond to individual learner differences,” according to the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST). The purpose of UDL is to improve students’ access to the general curriculum.

UDL has three main principals:

1. Provide multiple, flexible methods of presentation.

This principal applies to how the curriculum is designed and what teaching methods are used to present it. For example, information is presented in a variety of ways (not just lecture) that involve multiple senses.

2. Provide multiple, flexible methods of action and expression.

Students should be able to demonstrate what they have learned in a variety of ways, such as multiple choice tests, essays, oral exams, etc.

3. Provide multiple, flexible options for engagement.

Engagement means giving students the right degree of challenge and motivation. Some students may need little structure and support, while others may require more direction and guidance.

In a UDL classroom, the focus is on flexibility and alternatives. Consequently, there is no “one right way” to do it and no two classrooms will look the same. In all cases, however, the goal is to present information in a variety of ways such as group work, hands-on activities and multimedia presentations. Technology, which can eliminate many barriers to learning, is often used.

When applying UDL techniques, curriculum designers and teachers must consider all types of diversity, such as, individual skills, learning styles and preferences, gender, culture, abilities, and disabilities. The following techniques can help all students to participate and learn:

- Room and equipment should be physically accessible to all students
- Information should be presented using large visual and tactile aids
- The curriculum content should be made relevant to the students’ lives
- Content should be presented without using unnecessary jargon or complexity and should accommodate a wide variety of language skills
- Computer software and Web sites should be accessible to all students, including those using assistive technology

- Flexible, digital curricula should include such things as study questions, chapter outlines, vocabulary lists, and background information.
- Student should be given ongoing feedback and opportunities to make corrections
- Assessments should have minimal time constraints, when appropriate

Parents do not always have control over what curriculum is used in their child's classroom. They can, however, take steps to help promote UDL in their child's school.

Parents can ask their child's teachers if they are familiar with the concept of UDL. They can make sure their child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) includes related goals that will give their child the same access to the curriculum as other students.

UDL helps all students, with and without disabilities, to access, participate in, and progress in the general curriculum. By embedding alternatives and flexibility into the curriculum, students are able to learn and show their knowledge in a variety of ways that match their unique learning styles. UDL removes barriers so students are more able to reach their full potential.

Adapted From: *A Parent's Guide to Universal Design for Learning (UDL)*. Pacer Center, 2006.

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The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) Public Law 10/-446

The major purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act is to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. The many changes align the provisions of IDEA with No Child Left Behind. The regulations for IDEA assure children with disabilities and their parents the following basic rights:

1. A Free, Appropriate, Public Education (FAPE):
 - Free – no cost to parents
 - Appropriate – suited to the individual needs of the child
 - Public – provided by or paid for by the public school system
 - Education – including extracurricular activities – what this law is all about!

2. Appropriate Evaluation:
 - Evaluators must be knowledgeable and trained.
 - A variety of instruments and procedures must be used to gather information about the student. Input from the child’s parents must be included.
 - Tests and other procedures must be selected and administered so as not to be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis.
 - There is a 60-day timeframe from the receipt of parental consent for initial evaluation until the evaluation is conducted, except in CT State regulations establish a 45-school day timeframe from time referral is received to the implementation of the IEP.

3. Individualized Education Program:
 - Each child with a disability who is eligible for special education and related services must have an IEP, a written statement that is developed, revised and revised in accordance with the law.

4. Least Restrictive Environment:
 - “...the presumption that children with disabilities are most appropriately educated with their nondisabled peers...unless the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and service cannot be readily achieved.”

5. Parent and Student Participation in Decision Making:

- Parents participate by:
 - Attending and participating in the PPT meeting
 - Giving consent for evaluation and initial placement of their child
 - Helping the team understand their child
 - Helping design the IEP
- Students participate by:
 - Helping design the IEP
 - Expressing preferences and interests, particularly during transition planning

6. Procedural Safeguards:

- Safeguards to ensure:
 - That the rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected.
 - That students with disabilities and their parents are provided with the information they need to make educational decisions.
 - That procedures and mechanisms are in place to resolve disagreements between parties.
- Procedural Safeguards include:
 - Prior written notice
 - Parent consent
 - Independent Education Evaluation
 - Parent access to educational records
 - Dispute Resolution Options