

Responding to Challenging Behaviors

- **Avoid escalation.** In responding to challenging behavior, it is important that teachers do not engage in actions that escalate or maintain the behavior, such as responding too strongly to that inappropriate, attention-seeking conduct.
- **Strategic approaches.** Teachers are more effective when they employ developmentally appropriate strategies, such as redirection, encouraging the child to take a break, and planned ignoring. The teacher better curtails unwanted behavior by directing the child to visual supports, such as posted classroom rules or to an agreed-upon, pre-arranged oral cue, such as a secret word like “turtle” or “breathe”.
- **Logical consequences** should be stated by the teacher with the intention of redirecting the child to use another behavior. An example could be, “If you throw the dress-up clothes, that tells me you are finished here. We always clean up when we are finished. Are you ready to put the costumes away in the bin?”
- **Problem-solving process.** Teachers can also have an established problem-solving procedure—including environmental supports, such as a comfy time-out spot and calming, reflective auditory and visual cues—in place in the classroom for children to work through their process.

Individualize interventions. It is important to develop individualized interventions to persistent and profound challenging behaviors through a team approach.

Teacher’s role includes:

- Collecting data
- Participating in the development of a behavior-support plan
- Implementing the strategies in the classroom
- Assisting in monitoring the implementation and outcomes of the plan

Positive attention. The teacher should provide positive attention to the child once the challenging behavior ends, and the child begins to behave appropriately.

Positive attention could include:

- Playing with the child
- Talking with the child
- Providing affection.
- Commenting on and descriptively encouraging the new, appropriate, positive behavior, such as, “You are doing a great job of waiting patiently for your turn.”

References:

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>

Hemmeter, M., Fox, L., & Snyder, P. (2014). *Teaching pyramid observation tool for preschool classrooms manual, research edition*. Baltimore, Maryland: Brookes Publishing Co.