Reflecting on Challenging Behavior Through a Variety of Lenses
PRESENTERS

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Who is here today?

- Infant/Toddler, Preschool, School Age?
- Parents?
- Head Start, Early Head Start, State Preschool, Others
- Working with a child with “identified” or “unidentified” special needs, challenging behaviors
For Our Babies
Learning Outcomes

• Participants will:
  – Build reflective practices (self and group) for addressing “challenging behaviors” in young children
  – Develop skills for analyzing challenging behavior through a variety of “lenses”—specifically communication
  – Expand their “tool-box” and access to resources for supporting children with challenging behaviors
Challenging Behavior

What we are referring to when we say “challenging behavior” is:

- Any repeated pattern of behavior that interferes with learning or engagement in pro-social interactions with peers and adults.
- Behaviors that are not responsive to the use of developmentally appropriate guidance procedures.
- Prolonged tantrums, physical and verbal aggression, disruptive vocal and motor behavior (e.g., screaming, stereotypy), property destruction, self-injury, noncompliance, and withdrawal. (CSEFEL)
Challenging Behavior Communicates

• Communicates a message when a child does not have language.

• Used instead of language by a child who has limited social skills or has learned that challenging behavior will result in meeting his or her needs.
Challenging Behavior Works

• Children engage in challenging behavior because “it works” for them.

• Challenging behavior results in the child gaining access to something or someone (i.e., obtain/request) or avoiding something or someone (i.e., escape/protest)—this includes sensory issues
What is reflective practice?

- An ongoing, dynamic process of thinking honestly, deeply and critically about all aspects of professional practice with children and families
- It occurs spontaneously as well as in essential planned reflection time
- Reflective practice leads to action
Why reflect?

• Higher quality practice and better outcomes for children and families
• Awareness of values and beliefs
• More likely to challenge and change practices
• Leads to inclusive environments
• Promotes collaboration between professionals
BRAINSTORM
What are “reasons” for challenging behavior?
Reasons for Challenging Behavior

• Developmental surge
• Temperament
• Medical reasons—asthma, allergies
• Sleep Issues
• Hydration and nutritional Issues
• Biological differences, including sensory processing
• Social emotional environment
• Exposure to trauma and neglect
• Discontinuity between care program and home
• Lack of skill in communicating and interacting with others
• A combination of more than one above
There Are Many Variables to Explore

**Instruction**
Transitions, Cues, Prompts, Supports, Accommodations...

**Health**
Trauma, Illness, Stamina, Medication...

**Play**
Toys, Level of play, Opportunities, choice, Expectations...

**Friends**
Shared interests and experiences, Relationships...

**Learning Environment**
Schedules, Room arrangement, materials, Adaptations, Resources, Predictability...

**Outings/Events**
Places family goes, Activities...

**Interactions**
Communication to the child, Emotional support, Attachment...

**Home & Family**
Routines, Resources, Siblings, Environment, Respite, Predictability, Extended Family...
Understanding Communication in Children with Challenging Behavior
What is Communication

• Process of exchanging meaning between individuals
  – Vocalizations (grunts and cries).
  – Eye gaze (joint attention)
  – Body language (turning away)
  – Gestures (pointing, reaching, giving, pushing)
  – Facial expressions
  – Talking
Behavior is Communication

• Behavior *is* a form of communication

• The child is using their most effective strategy to tell us something (body language) to deliver a message

• It is up to us to be *detectives* in identifying what the child is trying to communicate
Disorder versus Difference
New Language Learners

• Learning a new language is a difference in language development
• Time it takes to learn a new language may vary from child to child (child’s age, personality, exposure)
Typical Behaviors
New Language Learner

• Not talking
• Difficulty following directions
• Reduced ability to express ideas and feelings
• Difficulty consistently responding to questions
Communication is Complex

• Receptive Language (language we hear)

• Expressive Language (language we use)

• Cognition (thinking and problem solving)

• Social Pragmatics (social rules)
The HOW and WHY of Communication

• Communicative behaviors can be described by the form (how) and the function (why)

  • HOW: The *form* (of behavior) the child uses to communicate

  • WHY: The function of the communication behavior
How a Child Communicates

Forms of communication

- Crying
- Eye gaze
- Gestures (pointing, pulling)
- Sounds
- Signs
- Talking
- Biting, throwing, hitting, tantrums
Why a Child Communicates

Functions of communication
- Request (object, activity, person)
- Label (object activity, person)
- Request help
- Social interaction
- Comment/Show
- Get Information
- Sensory stimulation
- Escape or Negate
Autism Spectrum Disorder

• Deficits in **social communication** and **social interaction** (across multiple contexts)
• Restricted and/or repetitive behavior or interests.
• Symptoms cause significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of current functioning
Screening for Autism (ASD)

- Many children with Autism Spectrum Disorder are still NOT being diagnosed till age 5, despite CONCERNS noted 2-3 years earlier
Systematic Observation of Red Flags (SORF)

- 13 Red Flags for Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Red Flags fall under THREE areas:
  1. Reciprocal Social Interaction (RSI)
  2. Communication (COM)
  3. Repetitive Behaviors & Restricted Interests (RBRI)
Reciprocal Social Interaction (RSI)

- Lack of appropriate eye gaze
- Lack of warm, joyful expression
- Lack of shared interest or enjoyment
- Lack of response to contextual cues
- Lack of response to name
- Lack of coordination of nonverbal communication

Wetherby, Woods, Allen, Cleary, Dickinson & Lord, 2004
Communication (COM)

- Unusual prosody
- Lack of showing
- Lack of pointing
- Lack of communicative vocalizations with consonants

Wetherby, Woods, Allen, Cleary, Dickinson & Lord, 2004
Repetitive Behaviors & Restricted Interests (RBRI)

- Repetitive movements with objects
- Repetitive movements or posturing of body
- Lack of playing with a variety of toys

Wetherby, Woods, Allen, Cleary, Dickinson & Lord, 2004
Understanding Sensory Processing Differences
Sensory Integration:

The organization of sensory input for use.

The many parts of the nervous system work together so that a person can interact with the environment effectively and experience appropriate satisfaction.
A CHILD’S VIEW OF SENSORY PROCESSING
STRATEGIES and RESOURCES
Process for Individualized Interventions

Step 1: Establishing a collaborative team and identifying goals

Step 2: Gathering information (functional assessment)

Step 3: Developing hypotheses (best guess)

Step 4: Designing behavior support plans

Step 5: Implementing, monitoring, evaluating outcomes, and refining plan in natural environments
Preventions are Powerful

• Preventions help the child be more successful with the environment, activity, or interaction
• Preventions might entail many of the strategies you already use in your classroom
• Preventions are individually selected and linked to the contexts and triggers for the behavior
Reflecting on Prevention Strategies

• How can the environment be changed to reduce the likelihood that challenging behavior will occur?
• What can be done to make challenging behavior irrelevant?
• What procedures can I select that fit in the natural routines and structure of the classroom or family?
• How can I build on what works?
• What can be done to help the child not respond to the trigger or change the trigger so it does not cause challenging behavior?
Escape
(e.g., activity, demands, social interaction)

Sample Prevention Strategies

• Modify expectations, materials, instructions, seating arrangements, ways child is expected to respond, etc., to reduce the need for escape.

• Review rules.

• Use choice, manipulatives, peer support, child interests

• Use visual supports, activity schedules, scripted stories, timers, first/then boards

• Reduce distractions or competing events, materials, etc.,
Obtain
(e.g., attention, object, activity)

**Sample Prevention Strategies.**

• Use activity schedule, scripted stories, visual schedules, or scripts to provide child with information on when access to desired object, event, interaction, or activity will occur.

• Use timers or reinforcement delay signal to let child know when access to activity, object, attention, etc., will occur.
Supporting Child with Communication and/or Social Needs
Observe the Hows and Whys

• Observe
  – Pay close attention to the child’s communication attempts
  – How are they communicating (most of the time)
    • body language, eye gaze, facial expressions
  – Why are they communicating
Let the Child’s Language Level be your Guide

• Receptive Language
  – Routine Directions (come here, sit down, clean up)
  – Single-step directions (go get the ball)
  – Multiple step directions (get the ball and ....)

• Expressive Language
  – Sounds
  – Signs
  – Words
  – Sentences
Build Vocabulary Skills

- Building Vocabulary Skills
  - Be specific to the noun or activity (e.g. bubbles)
  - Should you be teaching the word ‘more’?
- Best words for self help/advocacy
  - No
  - Stop
  - Help
  - All done
  - Specific importance to child
Teaching Vocabulary: Highlight Language

- Keep it simple
- Pick your Target
- Be dramatic, be expressive
- Label, Label, Label!

Say less, Stress, go Slow, Show
Repeat, repeat, repeat
Get face to face

• Reduces distractions
• Delivers the message clearly
• Allows caregiver to view child’s full response
  – Non-verbal, vocal, or verbal
Offer Choices

• Two choices is typically max
• Empowers children (especially when they can't have something)
• Prevention Strategy
• How to teach making choices
  – Name first item; show, shake
  – Name second item; show, shake
  – Ask “which one?”; alternate rocking
Offering Choices

• Choice can be offered using photographs, visuals, or actual objects.

• Offer explicitly and personally to the child.

• Choices should represent options of desirable activities or materials.
Offering Choices

Musical Truck
Barney Computer
Use Visuals

• Students with behaviour or communication challenges tend to be visual learners.
• Understand what they SEE better than what the HEAR.
• Environment is predictable
Why Visual Strategies?

• Supports communication
• Provides effective way to improve both receptive/expressive language.
• Assists in processing language, organizing thinking, remembering information.
Classroom places for visuals

- Schedules
- Calendars
- Step by step directions
- Choice boards
- Classroom rules
Following Directions
First, Then
Following Directions
First, Then

- Change book bin often
First, I put my lunchbox in my cubby and wash my hands.

Then, I go to circle.
Specific Directions

Sit on Carpet

Sit in Chair
Classroom Rules
Making Choices
Circle Time

- Story
- Books on tape
- Glove Play
- Puppets
- Flannel Board
- Instruments
Making Choices
Centers
Ending an Activity

Visual cue paired with auditory cue

Individualized glove with child preference
Visual Schedules

• Depict the major activities or steps of an activity.

• Assist the child in removing the visual once the activity is complete.
Activity Schedule
Real Objects

Head Start Center for Inclusion:
http://depts.washington.edu/hsccenter/modules-curriculum-modifications
Mini Schedule
Line Drawings

- sit on floor
- calendar
- weather
- pledge
- dance
Social Stories

• Provide a **script for the child** about social situations and expectations.

• Written from the **child’s perspective**.

• Includes **descriptive, perspective, and directive sentences**.

• Must **match the child’s** symbolic and receptive communication **level**.
I Can Be a SUPER FRIEND!
I like talking and playing with my friends at school.
If I want to join in play, I can ask, “Can I play with you?”

Can I play with you?
Super Friends ask to play.

Super Friends use also: use kind words, gentle hands & feet, and take turns.
I Can Be a SUPER FRIEND!
QUESTIONS