

For Substitute Teachers

WORKING WITH STUDENTS WHO MAY PRESENT CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

General

- **First Do No Harm.** Your primary job is student safety.
- **Remember Confidentiality!** Student issues should not be discussed at home or in the public arena.
- **Treat all students with dignity and respect.**
- **Leave your sympathy at home; these children don't need it. They need your encouragement and positive vibes.**
- **Use "people first" language.** Students should not be defined by their disability.
- **Be positive.** Remember that a teacher's behavior sets the tone for the kid's behavior.
- **Be patient and flexible.** If things don't go exactly like the lesson plan, that is OK!
- **Remember you are not there to change the world in one day. You are there to keep it from blowing up.**
- **Don't be afraid to ask for help.**
- **Know who the "go to" people are (e.g. lead teachers, school psychologist, counselor and principal) and use them for support.**
- **Keep your sense of humor, but be careful that students, especially those who are prone to volatility, do not feel you are making fun of them.**
- **If you must talk with parents, be positive even regarding negative situations. Discuss their child only.**

In the Classroom

- **Arrive on time and find out what is expected of you (your role) versus trying to guess at it.**
- **Spend time looking at sub plans for references to Behavior Plans. If something is referenced and you cannot find the "plan", ask someone to help you find it. Special education teachers and special education assistants are good people to ask.**
- **Read behavior plans and use them as best as you can.**
- **If at all possible, call the teacher at home in advance to find out about students with special needs (e.g. medical needs, special transportation, behavior plans). Check with the teacher as to "what works" with certain students.**
- **Try to maintain established routines.**
- **Review and make sure your students know you have reviewed any "CHAMPS" posters or behavioral expectations that are posted in the room.**
- **Follow the lead of classroom staff as they know the students and environment better than you. Allow the teaching assistants who work with the students to do their job.**
- **Always greet the students at the door with a smile and word of welcome.**
- **Put your cell phone away. Don't sit at the desk or computer...and expect a good day....observe what the students are working on....help where/when needed.**
- **Circulate around the room...it increases engagement and helps keep behaviors positive.**
- **Give lots of positive reinforcement to the group and to individuals.**
- **If you are not working well with a student, ask for "HELP".**
- **When applicable, request information on how to work with students specifically in the general education setting.**

For Individual Students

- **If possible, request a written list of triggers, positive redirections, and basic "Do's and Don'ts" for each individual student.**
- **Learn and call students by their first names. Ask them to introduce themselves to you so that you can establish some modicum of a working relationship.**

- It is very important to try to establish a positive relationship with the students.....they will respond more positively if they know you care.
- Give lots of reinforcement, even for the slightest accomplishments. A smile, an encouraging word can go a LONG WAY. Use at least 5 positives for every direction or correction.
- Be calm and do not raise your voice with students.
- Know your role. You are a friendly adult; you are not the student's friend.
- When working with students who experience autism:
 1. Less talking is better.
 2. Visuals help with transitions and routines.
 3. Structured learning activities are important.
- Be patient and watch what is happening before "jumping the gun" or reacting too quickly. Assess what is happening with a student before making a decision to help or not. Often help or assistance is not needed or wanted, especially from a stranger. Also many student goals are to accomplish tasks independently.
- If the student needs to move, offer them some movement options (run a note to the library, take a brain break, pair and share or walk around the school w/whole class).

Escalated or Noncompliant Students

- Know that disabilities are not fixed with discipline. You are a care provider not a justice enforcer.
- Avoid power struggles. If you enter into a win/lose situation, both you and the student will lose.
- Remember, students act out for reasons that make sense to them at the time. Rather than negativity, students who are acting out need clear direction, encouragement, and positive reinforcement.
- Your escalation will cause student escalation, so the first person you need to de-escalate is yourself.
- Recognize that when people, including you and students, become escalated their problem solving skills and verbal skills decrease significantly.
- Respond to escalating situations by giving the student time/space and cutting down the amount of language you use or expect from the student.
- There is power in using a student's name.
- When students are losing control, offer choices (more than two).
- Do not take challenging behaviors personally. Remember many students are still learning to be appropriate. We are working to teach them appropriate behaviors. Just as you would not take it personally if a student got a math problem wrong, try not to take it personally if a student refuses to do their work or uses foul language.
- Take a breath. Sometimes this simple act that takes 1.5 seconds helps everyone calm down. Do not be in a rush to make things happen the way you want. If you can manage to take a breath and think it through, the student may feel less pressure, calm down and be more willing to interact positively.
- Emotions are contagious. Let the student "catch" your calmness and security.
- Prompt the student and then walk away. Continue to monitor for 10-15 seconds and prompt again if needed. DO NOT hang over the student. Give the student some space and time to comply.
- Know your own triggers. It is easier to understand what might trigger students if you understand what triggers you.
- Mandt training should be provided to substitutes working with students who may become volatile.
 1. Always treat students with dignity and respect
 2. A teacher's positive relationship with a student is the single most effective factor in minimizing emotional crises, threats of violence, and need for physical interaction.
 3. Be mindful of what your facial expression is saying.
 4. Consider distancing the student from the trigger. Consider adjusting your distance from a student who is directing anger at you.
 5. Listening to a student who is escalating may decrease escalation.
 6. Ask yourself if the student's needs are being met.
 7. Ask yourself what may be triggering the student to act out.
 8. In a crisis use the least amount of interaction necessary for safety.