

## **UNDERSTANDING AND DEALING WITH CHALLENGING STUDENTS**

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This two day (10 hour) workshop, designed for up to 40 participants, provides all members of the school community a "sampling" of topics to increase their awareness of the characteristics, needs, and alternative intervention strategies which work with students with social, emotional, and behavioral problems. Although it is an awareness level training, participants are provided with some practical techniques they can immediately apply in their school setting. It is applicable for any staff member who works in an environment with children or youth who have, or are at risk of developing, social, emotional, and/or behavioral problems.

### **COURSE CONTENT**

#### **MODULE #1**

##### **\* NATURE OF EMOTIONAL HANDICAPS**

Many staff members are confused when confronted by inappropriate behavior and may believe that the child is simply choosing to behave "badly". In this segment, staff are provided with information which helps them understand the various types of emotional problems and behaviors which are symptomatic of particular disturbances. They learn that many times children do not choose to act inappropriately, but rather, can't control or manage their behavior/emotions without outside intervention.

Staff become familiar with the characteristic behaviors of Disruptive Behavior Disorders (ADHD, Oppositional, Conduct), Mood Disorders (Mania, Depression), and Personality Disorders (Odd/Eccentric; Dramatic/Emotional; Anxious/Fearful). They begin to recognize the need for a "prescriptive" approach as the success of interventions is linked to their efficacy with a particular type of behavior.

##### **\* PURPOSE & PHILOSOPHY OF INTERVENTIONS**

Staff explore the purpose behind employing any intervention; the ultimate goal being to shape, change, or modify behavior while setting an example of standards and insuring a safe environment. Participants are made aware of the range of alternative intervention strategies which can supplement traditional discipline and behavior management programs.

#### **MODULE #2**

##### **\* THE CONFLICT CYCLE**

Exploration of the cyclical nature of conflict; demonstrating how the way the student perceives, thinks, and feels is manifested in behavior, evokes a response from an adult/peer, and begins a cycle of escalation. Beginning with examining visible and invisible stressors which impact student behavior in the school environment, staff then

look at the difference between acting up and acting out behaviors. They learn that the student's behavior frequently generates in observers similar emotions and behaviors. For example, aggressive behavior evokes counter-aggressive behavior. Staff learn what they can do to interrupt this cycle and begin a verbal de-escalation process.

### MODULE #3

#### \* BEHAVIORAL FIRST AID (SURFACE MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES)

Behavioral first aid strategies are simply ways of labeling what good classroom managers instinctively do to proactively and reactively address student behavior. However, it is critical that staff learn how typical behavior patterns, timing, student motivation and student perceptions can all influence the choice and outcome of interventions. By developing a shared vocabulary of names/labels to the techniques and examining when they should be used and when they are contraindicated, staff can begin to plan interventions thereby increasing their effectiveness. Additionally, by creating a shared intervention vocabulary, consistency between staff members is promoted.

### MODULE #4

#### \* TEACHING THE SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

Prosocial skills training helps staff learn how to shift their focus from what the student is doing incorrectly to determining what skills the child needs to learn. For example, a student may get into frequent fights because he/she doesn't know how to respond appropriately to teasing (or even if he/she cognitively knows how, he/she has never practiced or successfully used this skill). In order to effect a long term behavioral change, the student must be taught and given the opportunity to practice new behaviors just as if he/she was learning an academic task. Participants will become familiar with the critical elements of both formal and informal prosocial skills training including: task analysis, modeling, role playing, guided and independent practice, and transfer of training.

#### \* COPING WITH THE PHYSICALLY ACTING OUT CHILD

Explores the four levels of crisis development and the appropriate staff responses to each. Staff will learn how to identify the level of the student's distress through their verbal and non-verbal behaviors. They also discover how mismatches between behavior and staff response have the potential to escalate crisis situations. Participants learn the importance of non-verbal communication and verbal de-escalation. Strategies for how to de-escalate confrontations between students are also explored.