

Supporting Behavior Inclusively:

A Brain-Based, Humanistic Model

We use a relationship-first, brain-aligned model that views behavior as communication and redesigns classrooms to support every learner with dignity and compassion.

This approach centers on humanistic behavioral supports—an inclusive, relationship-driven model rooted in brain-based science and trauma-informed practices. It moves beyond compliance-based systems like rewards and punishments, instead fostering belonging, autonomy, and emotional regulation by redesigning environments, curriculum, and relationships to meet the diverse needs of all students. Students are seen, heard, and valued—not managed, but supported with dignity and compassion.

Our behavioral philosophy promotes inclusive education by treating behavior as a form of communication, not misbehavior. Grounded in neuroscience and a deep respect for student dignity, it builds classrooms where students don't have to earn their place—they already belong.

HOW OUR APPROACH TO BEHAVIOR PROMOTES INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

1. IT REDESIGNS SYSTEMS THAT CENTER HUMAN DIVERSITY

Shift from student control to environmental responsibility

Traditional discipline models locate the problem in the child. This principle challenges that by repositioning behavior as a mirror of systems, not individuals. It encourages educators to examine the broader context—classroom routines, expectations, curriculum, and relationships—to identify barriers and create more inclusive learning environments.

What This Looks Like in Practice:

- Design routines that support sensory, cultural, and developmental differences.
- Adapt curriculum to reflect diverse strengths and needs.
- Use language in IEPs and behavior plans that focuses on support rather than deficits.

2. IT USES CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR AS A DOORWAY TO CONNECTION

Prioritize attachment over compliance

Connection-based responses to dysregulation build safety and trust. This principle emphasizes attunement, emotional presence, and co-regulation—especially in moments of distress or misbehavior. Rather than isolating students, educators approach behavior as a relational signal.

What This Looks Like in Practice:

- Use co-regulation strategies like soft tones, close proximity, or shared breathing.
- Offer 'reset rituals' like a walk, drink of water, or quiet moment together.
- Stay emotionally present, even when a student is dysregulated.

3. IT CULTIVATES A CULTURE OF BELONGING

Foster inclusive peer and adult relationships

This principle centers the experience of students in the classroom. It replaces public shaming systems with dignity-affirming practices and models peer relationships that are rooted in connection, not control. Belonging becomes a foundation for learning, not a reward for behavior.

What This Looks Like in Practice:

- Eliminate clip charts, public call-outs, and token economies.
- Use private corrections and respectful feedback.
- Structure opportunities for peer mentoring and collaborative problem-solving.

4. IT IS GROUNDED IN NEUROSCIENCE AND EQUITY

Align behavior support with brain development and lived experience

This principle ensures behavior support is trauma-informed and brain-aligned. It helps educators recognize signs of dysregulation and shift from punishment to support. All students—especially those with histories of trauma or neurodiversity—benefit from a model that honors nervous system safety and emotional growth.

What This Looks Like in Practice:

- Avoid strategies like planned ignoring or exclusion.
- Use co-regulation and choice to support emotional safety.
- Integrate cultural responsiveness into behavior support.

5. IT SUPPORTS DIFFERENTIATION AND FLEXIBILITY

Personalize behavioral support like academic instruction

This principle embraces flexibility as a tool for equity. It recognizes that students need different pathways to regulation and engagement. Just as we differentiate instruction, we must also differentiate behavior support to match strengths, preferences, and needs.

What This Looks Like in Practice:

1. Offer choices, flexible seating, movement breaks, and regulation tools.
2. Adapt social-emotional teaching formats (visuals, games, stories).
3. Use student voice and strength-based planning to co-create solutions.

FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND RESEARCH

Aas, H. K., Uthus, M., & Løhre, A. (2023). Inclusive education for students with challenging behaviour: development of teachers' beliefs and ideas for adaptations through Lesson Study. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 39(1), 64–78.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2023.2191107>

Avila, B. R. (2021). *Seeing autism: Connection through understanding*. Synergy Autism Center.

Bryson, T. P., & Wisen-Vincent, G. (2025). *The way of play: Using little moments of big connection to raise calm and confident kids*. Rodale Books.

Cameron, C., McClelland, M. M., Grammer, J. & Morrison, F. J. (2024). Self-regulation and academic achievement. In M. Posner (Series Ed.) & M. Bell (Vol. Eds.), *Development at the intersection of emotion and cognition (2nd edition)*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association. <https://www.apa.org/pubs/books/child-development-intersectionemotion-cognition-second-edition>

Campbell, A. B., & Stauble, L. E. (2023). *Tiny humans, big emotions: How to navigate tantrums, meltdowns, and defiance to raise emotionally intelligent children*. HarperCollins.

Causton, J., & MacLeod, K. (2020). *From behaving to belonging: The inclusive art of supporting students who challenge us*. ASCD.

Cipriano, C., Strambler, M. J., Naples, L. H., Ha, C., Kirk, M., Wood, M., ... & Durlak, J. (2023). The state of evidence for social and emotional learning: A contemporary meta-analysis of universal school-based SEL interventions. *Child development*, 94(5), 1181-1204.

Croft, C. & Hewitt, D. (Eds.). (2024). *Children and challenging behavior: Making inclusion work*. Sparrow Media Group.

Davies-Janes, R. (Host). (2025, July). Moving from “What’s wrong?” to “What’s right?” with Dr. Shawn Ginwright [[Transcript of audio podcast interview](#)]. In *Compassionate Inquiry Podcast*. Compassionate Inquiry.

Delahooke, M. (2019). *Beyond behaviors: Using brain science and compassion to understand and solve children's behavioral challenges*. PESI Publishing & Media.

Desautels, L. (2023). *Intentional neuroplasticity: Our educational journey toward post-traumatic growth*. Revelations in Education.

Dignath, C., Rimm-Kaufman, S., van Ewijk, R., & Kunter, M. (2022). Teachers’ beliefs about inclusive education and insights on what contributes to those beliefs: A meta-analytical study. *Educational Psychology Review*, 34(4), 2609– 2660. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-022-09695-0>

Division for Early Childhood. (2017). Position Statement on Challenging Behavior and Young Children. Washington D.C.: Author.

Greene, R. W. (2016). *Raising human beings: Creating a collaborative partnership with your child*. Scribner.

Hemmeter, M. L., Snyder, P. A., Fox, L., & Algina, J. (2016). Evaluating the implementation of the Pyramid Model for promoting social-emotional competence in early childhood classrooms. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 36(3), 133-146.

Jones, L., & Patel, S. (2023). Towards an inclusive social and emotional learning: A systematic meta-analysis. *Journal of School Psychology*, 95, Article 102336. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2023.102336>

Korucu, I., Finders, J., Schnur, G., Bailey, C. S., Tominey, S., & Schmitt, S. A. (2022). Selfregulation in preschool: Examining its factor structure and associations with preacademic skills and social-emotional competence. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.717317>

Lory, C., Mason, R. A., Davis, J. L., Wang, D., Kim, S. Y., Gregori, E., & David, M. (2020). A meta-analysis of challenging behavior interventions for students with developmental disabilities in inclusive school settings. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 50(4), 1221–1237. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-019-04329-x>

McGuire, S. N. & Meadan, H. (2022). Social inclusion of children with persistent challenging behaviors. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 50, 61–69.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-020-01135-4>

Shanker, S. (2016). *Self-reg: How to help your child (and you) break the stress cycle and successfully engage with life*. Penguin Books.

Siegel, D. J., & Bryson, T. P. (2014). *No-drama discipline: The whole-brain way to calm the chaos and nurture your child's developing mind*. Bantam.

\The IRIS Center. (2005, 2022). *Addressing Challenging Behaviors (Part 1, Elementary): Understanding the Acting-Out Cycle*. Retrieved from
<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/bi1-elem/>

Tominey, S. (2019). *Creating compassionate kids: Essential conversations to have with young children*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2021, September). Inclusive strategies to address behavioral needs for students with IEPs [PBIS series]. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. <https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/educators/behavior-needs-supports>

TURN DISCIPLINE INTO CONNECTION

DISCOVER NOW

