

# Introduction



We created the second edition of *Practical Ideas That Really Work for Students With Disruptive, Defiant, and Difficult Behaviors* for educators who deal with students displaying challenging behaviors in the classroom. The goal is to provide teachers with a resource that is easy to use and has a wide range of practical intervention ideas. Students who exhibit problem behaviors require effective teachers and also teachers that are effective classroom managers. The behaviors targeted in this book are grouped into three categories:

- **Disruptive:** Behaviors that cause turmoil, confusion, or disorder. For example, a student who constantly talks out and disrupts the teacher's instruction.
- **Defiant:** Behaviors that oppose, resist, or challenge authority. For example, a student who threatens other students or the teacher.
- **Difficult:** Behaviors that are hard to manage and prevent the student from getting along with others. For example, a student who teases other students.

## Background Information

The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), known as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), brought about significant changes in the proficiency requirements for all students, including those with disabilities. Most students in special education are expected to meet the same educational standards as other nondisabled students. In addition, most students with disabilities are educated in general education classrooms, by general education teachers, using the same curricula and materials as nonidentified students. It is therefore critical that identified students comply with teachers' instructions, work cooperatively as part of a group, and participate actively in learning activities so they succeed in the general education environment.

In 2003, under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, more than 6 million students, ages 6 through 21 years, were provided with special education and related services. This number represented 9.1% of the U.S. general population in the same age group. The *28th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, 2006*, vol. 1, (U.S. Department of Education;

2009), indicated that of all students served, 7.9% were identified with an emotional disturbance (ED). Despite having behavior problems, most students in the ED category spend their school day in general (or regular) education classrooms. The annual report indicated that only 17.2% of ED students were served in separate environments, and that approximately 78% of them spend some time in general education.

Many students, in addition to those identified in the ED category of special education, who exhibit disruptive, defiant, and difficult behaviors are not identified with a disability or served in special education under any category. Teachers, however, recognize that, despite their “unidentified” status, many students can be consistently disruptive, defiant, or difficult, and their behavior often interferes with their learning and with teachers’ instruction.

## Response to Intervention

The Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) encourages implementing a Response to Intervention (RTI) approach, which should be used for all students experiencing difficulty in school. With this approach, students are provided with a series of increasingly intensive, individualized instructional interventions before being referred for special education assessment and services. General education staff play a critical role in the design and delivery of interventions provided in the RTI model, with support from special education personnel. They should also monitor the interventions, and regularly gather and review data related to improvement. RTI models propose a three-tiered process of student intervention:

**Tier One:** Primary intervention is high-quality, research-based, whole-group instruction, combined with general screening processes.

*Practical Ideas That Really Work for Students With Disruptive, Defiant, and Difficult Behaviors* contains a screening assessment to identify students’ challenging behaviors. All ideas are supported by scientifically based or peer-reviewed research, and many can be implemented as whole-classroom or whole-school strategies.

**Tier Two:** The second level of intervention includes research-based, small-group, or individual instruction in specific areas of weakness.

*Practical Ideas That Really Work for Students With Disruptive, Defiant, and Difficult Behaviors* contains an intervention plan that can be used to show which interventions have been implemented and how the student has responded to those interventions. When using the RTI model, it is critical for schools to diligently track students’ response to interventions.

**Tier Three:** The third level of intervention is individual supports, with more intensive instruction through individualized programming.

Data collected during the RTI process should be used for assessment purposes. Schools must therefore document that a student was provided appropriate instruction by qualified personnel before the student is identified with a disability. *Practical Ideas That Really Work for Students With Disruptive, Defiant, and Difficult Behaviors* contains interventions designed to target specific behaviors in three general areas: disruptive behaviors, defiant behaviors, and difficult behaviors. Many of the ideas are appropriate for individualized interventions with students who are served through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and for students served in other settings, such as alternative education classrooms or placements.

## Components of the Materials

*Practical Ideas That Really Work for Students With Disruptive, Defiant, and Difficult Behaviors* provides an assessment system and set of intervention ideas for students with emotional disturbance, conduct disorder, or students with challenging behaviors. The ideas in this book are intended for use with students in pre-kindergarten through Grade 4 and include two main components: An evaluation form and a manual.

### Evaluation Form, Including a Rating Scale, Review of Prior Interventions, Intervention Plan, and Ideas Matrix

The Rating Scale, on page 2 of the Evaluation Form, is a criterion-referenced measure for evaluating challenging behaviors that affect student learning. The items on the scale are specific descriptors that correlate to three general challenging behavior areas that, if teachers do not effectively manage, will lead to students’ academic failure. The Ideas Matrix, on pages 5 and 6 of the Evaluation Form, provides a systematic way of linking the results of the Rating Scale to interventions. The

Review of Prior Interventions, on page 3, assists educators in determining what interventions have already been implemented, along with their successes. The Intervention Plan, on page 4, is a record-keeping tool educators can use to document targeted behaviors, interventions and ideas used, and intervention evaluations. We hope educators will use the Ideas Matrix and Intervention Plan as tools for selecting and documenting effective interventions to meet each student's unique needs.

### A Manual of Practical Ideas

The ideas aim to assist teachers in trying a wide range of individual, whole-classroom, or whole-school strategies to improve behavior. The ideas were developed to meet the needs of students with a range of challenging behaviors at varying support levels. The manual contains an explanation of each idea, along with reproducible worksheets, examples, illustrations, and tips designed for easy implementation.

## Development of the Rating Scale

The criterion-referenced Rating Scale in the Evaluation Form is intended for use by teachers to rate students in pre-kindergarten through Grade 4 who exhibit disruptive, defiant, and difficult behaviors. The measure was designed to assist teachers in conducting a careful and thorough assessment of the specific challenging behaviors in three major areas, leading to the selection of appropriate intervention strategies.

### Item Development

The three broad categories of challenging behaviors exhibited by students include disruptive behaviors, defiant behaviors, and difficult behaviors. Although there is no single definition or classification system that addresses all the challenging behaviors exhibited by students, we considered items from several sources. First, we included items that relate to the federal definition of serious emotional disturbance, because this disability category is most closely related to student behavior problems. Second, we included items that are descriptive for Oppositional Defiant or Conduct Disorder listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders—Fourth Edition—Text Revision* (DSM-IV-TR; American Psychiatric Association, 2000), because students with these two diagnoses often

experience behavioral difficulties in school. We also conducted a literature review and included items that were most commonly cited in the literature. *This scale is not intended, nor should it be used, for diagnosis.*

### Field-Testing the Rating Scale

The criterion-referenced Rating Scale was designed to assist teachers and other professionals in conducting a careful, thorough assessment of the specific challenging behaviors students exhibit that interfere with learning. It can also assist educators in the selection of intervention strategies. The Rating Scale is divided into three areas:

- Disruptive Behaviors
- Defiant Behaviors
- Difficult Behaviors

The Rating Scale consists of nine items for each of the three areas, for a total of 27 items. Educators can use the scale's 4-point Likert scale to complete a rating, with 1 meaning the student *never or rarely* exhibits the behavior and 4 meaning the student *consistently* exhibits the behavior. For each of the three areas, the range of possible scores is 9 to 36; the higher the score, the more significant are the student's behavior problems related to that area.

The criterion-referenced measure was field-tested with 212 students in elementary and secondary schools in Texas. Seventy-one of these students were identified as exhibiting challenging behaviors (i.e., identified as having an emotional or behavior disorder, or a teacher stated that the student had an undiagnosed behavior problem) and 141 had typical behaviors. Of the students identified with challenging behaviors, 61 students were male and 10 were female. Three students were African American, 10 students were Hispanic/Latino, 52 were White, 4 were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2 were Other Ethnicity or Race. Of the students not identified as struggling learners, 67 students were male and 74 were female. Fourteen students were African American, 20 were Hispanic/Latino, 79 were White, 26 were Asian/Pacific Islander, 1 was Native American/Eskimo/Aleut, and 1 was Other Ethnicity. The students were in kindergarten through Grade 11.

An item analysis was conducted using the sample of students identified with challenging behaviors. Before the analysis was performed, these students' mean total scores for the three areas measured by the scale were correlated with age. Correlations ranged from .023 to

.18; therefore, no age groupings were made and all data were analyzed together. The resulting reliability coefficients were .83 for Disruptive Behaviors; .79 for Defiant Behaviors; and .87 for Difficult Behaviors. The magnitude of these coefficients suggests that the rating scale contains minimal test error and that users can have confidence in its results.

In addition, we compared the mean ratings of the three subscales for the two groups (students identified with challenging behaviors and students with typical behaviors) using a *t* ratio. Our hypothesis was that students identified with challenging behaviors would be rated higher than students with no diagnosis. Because we made three comparisons, we used the Bonferroni method to adjust the alpha level and set alpha at .01. In each case, the mean differences between the two groups were large enough to support our hypothesis. The probability in all cases was  $< .001$ . We can conclude that the Rating Scale is sensitive enough to discriminate between the two groups.

## Development of the Manual

In our discussions with them about the development of this manual, regular and special education teachers and supervisors consistently emphasized the need for materials that are practical, and quick and easy to implement in the classroom. We appreciated their input and worked hard to meet their criteria as we developed the ideas in this book. In addition, we conducted an extensive review of the literature and focused on ideas that are supported by data documenting their effectiveness. The result is a book with 35 ideas, almost all with reproducible masters available as a hard copy and on the accompanying CD, and all grounded in our research and collective experience, as well as that of the many educators who advised us and shared information with us. Our goal is to provide interventions that will improve students' behavior in school and make them more ready to learn.

The ideas in the manual are organized in the following manner. First, we included ideas that will help educators build relationships with students, either at the classroom or the whole school level. Next, we included ideas that will help educators organize their classroom and school to reduce problem behaviors and promote learning. These ideas include establishing rules and setting up procedural routines. The next three areas include class-wide positive reinforcement, communication techniques, and individual reinforcement.

Examples include setting up a Great Job Board or giving students coupons for demonstrating targeted behaviors. We provide ideas that will promote building relationships among peers as well as ideas that will help aggressive students or those who have lost control examine their behavior and calm down. Finally, we include contracts and forms that educators can use with individual students to set up systems to target and correct problem behaviors.

Assessment often provides much useful information to educators about the strengths and deficits of students. However, unless the information gathered during the assessment process improves classroom management, which helps make instruction more effective, its usefulness for teachers is limited. With this in mind, we designed an Ideas Matrix (see pages 5 and 6 of the Evaluation Form) so that educators can make a direct link between the data generated by the Rating Scale and classroom-focused instruction. We believe this format conforms to our intention of providing information that is practical and useful.

## Directions for Using the Materials

### Step 1: Collect Student Information

The first step is to complete the first page of the Evaluation Form for the student who exhibits problem behaviors. As an example, Joanne's completed Evaluation Form is provided in Figure 1. Fill out pertinent information about the student being rated, including name, birth date, age, school, grade, rater, and educational setting. In addition, record the dates the rater observed the student and the amount of time the rater spent with the student. Definitions for the three behavior categories addressed in the evaluation form are also included on the first page.

We recommend that teachers collaborate when completing the form and deciding which interventions to implement. The Evaluation Form can also be used as part of the prereferral process to document and evaluate the results of those interventions.

### Step 2: Rate the Challenging Problems of the Student

The Rating Scale, on page 2 of the Evaluation Form, divides items into the three previously discussed behavior categories. Directions for administering and

scoring the items are explained, and check boxes are provided to mark items that require immediate intervention (i.e., items with a score of 3 or 4).

**Step 3: Choose the Ideas to Implement**

Page 3 of the Evaluation Form contains a space to summarize the scale and to record prior interventions. After choosing the area or areas to target for immediate intervention (i.e., items with a score of 3 or 4 on the Rating Scale), turn to the Ideas Matrix (on pages 5 and 6) and select one or more interventions that correspond to that problem.

For example, in Figure 1, Joanne received the highest rating in one item related to the Disruptive Behaviors area (Item 4) and two items related to the Difficult Behaviors area (Items 6 and 8). Her teacher has targeted these areas and has chosen Ideas 6 (Mentors), 26 (Good Buddies), and 32 (How Did I Do?) from the Ideas Matrix.

**Step 4: Read and Review the Practical Ideas That Have Been Selected**

The ideas are discussed at length in terms of their intent and implementation. After selecting the idea that is matched to the needs of the student, plan the implementation. Integrate these individual ideas into an overall classroom management plan, and incorporate them into instruction.

Although the Rating Scale and the Ideas Matrix might convey the sense that this approach is intended for use on a clinical, one-to-one basis, the information can be effectively used with larger groups of students. In fact, many of the most effective ideas designed for students with challenging behaviors often work effectively with all students and ensure that classroom management as a whole is more effective. These ideas can be implemented with the entire class, which will eliminate the need to create separate ideas for individual students. There are also ideas that entire schools may want to adapt to help improve school climate.

**Step 5: Evaluation**

After implementation, complete the assessment cycle by evaluating the results of the intervention strategy. By following a model that begins with the assessment of need, leads to the development of an instructional plan, follows with the implementation plan, and concludes with the evaluation of its effectiveness, you can

ensure a responsive educational program that enables students to learn to manage their own behavior effectively. Correlate the information within this manual with annual goal setting to improve overall behavior and classroom management.

Page 3 of the Evaluation Form includes a Summary of Scale and a Review of Prior Interventions. List the three most serious behavior problems that will be targeted for immediate intervention, and list interventions previously implemented to avoid duplication. Page 4 of the Evaluation Form includes an Intervention Plan. Use this form to assist in the idea evaluation and summarize pertinent information to use in the planning process. In Figure 1, Joanne had the highest scores in two areas: Disruptive Behaviors and Difficult Behaviors. Her teacher targeted items 4 (Disruptive), 6 (Difficult), and 8 (Difficult) as particular areas of concern because these items were rated as 3 or 4. The teacher completed the Intervention Plan by noting in the first column the items or behaviors with which to begin intervention. In the second column, Joanne’s teacher described the intervention and provided the idea number she will use to assist in the intervention. The third column documents the time period and, if applicable, how often the intervention will occur. For example, the teacher is planning to use Idea 32 weekly for 1 month, and Idea 24 bimonthly for 2 months. The next-to-last column states the evaluation criteria in measurable terms. Finally, the last column provides a place for the teacher to check whether the student meets the evaluation criteria. Below the table are two spaces for the teacher to list the student’s strengths and space for recording who will implement the interventions.

**Research Supporting the Practical Ideas**

Because *No Child Left Behind* requires that interventions be based on scientific, peer-reviewed research, we have conducted a rigorous review of the literature. To meet the NCLB requirement, we have also linked each idea in the manual to one or more references, including those which used an intervention and a control group, used a multi-baseline design, reviewed and synthesized the literature, and explored relationships among variables. This allows professionals to easily identify the source of the scientific research supporting each idea or the need to implement a strategy to improve a skill or set of skills. Educators can use

the strategies and interventions in the manual with confidence, knowing they are well supported in professional literature.

The following references are presented alphabetically. After each reference is a list of the practical idea or ideas in the manual that are supported by that reference. The references provide interested professionals with relevant information related to research and prior practice as well as necessary information for locating the original research.

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## Ideas

## Supporting References

<b>1</b>	Better Together	13, 15, 16, 19
<b>2</b>	Start Off Right	15, 19, 22
<b>3</b>	Good Relationships	15, 19, 22
<b>4</b>	Something Good	13, 15, 19, 22
<b>5</b>	Ask Me About My Day	15, 19, 22
<b>6</b>	Mentors	15, 19, 21, 22
<b>7</b>	Prevent Problems	19, 22
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