**PS340: Exceptional Needs Children**

**Unit 4 Discussion Board Lecture**

The reading assignments in Unit 4 illustrate the importance of setting up the physical classroom environment in order to prevent interfering and unwanted behaviors and to create a more effective learning environment. In Unit 3, you were introduced to proactive approaches intended to prevent interfering behaviors that included the design of rules, routines, and schedules. Applied behavior analysis and its theories and approaches were also introduced.

In Unit 4, you will explore applied approaches to creating effective learning environments. The physical set-up of the classroom will be discussed in terms of antecedent approaches to preventing interfering and unwanted behaviors. The effects of rules, routines, and schedules on student success will be examined. The Trinity of Behavior and its use in addressing behaviors that interfere with student success will be introduced.

When planning classroom space, the teacher must consider the physical arrangement of the teacher’s desk and supplies, students’ desks, technology and other equipment, and other furniture and learning spaces. Visibility, movement, minimization of distractions, and personal spaces are four factors teachers should consider when determining the spatial layout of the classroom.

With these four factors in mind, the teacher’s desk should be easily accessible to children, but it should be off to the side or in the back of the room. The effectiveness of classroom seating arrangements depends on the nature of the interactions that teachers plan to have with their students.

Student desks might be arranged in rows, clusters, or semi-circles (often called U shapes).

* The most traditional approach to classroom seating is to organize student desks in rows and columns, which increases on-task behaviors and decreases off-task behaviors when students are expected to work independently.
* Cluster seating arrangements allow student-student interaction.
* Semi-circle seating arrangements allow for both teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction.

Rules and routines are part of a proactive approach to behavior and classroom management and can help prevent behavior problems in the classroom. The number of rules should be kept to a minimum, and rules should be stated simply and positively.

Routines help create an orderly environment in the classroom. Teachers should establish routines for beginning and ending the day, as well as for distributing and collecting materials, handing in work, using the restroom and water fountain, requesting help, and finishing work early.

Schedules help students know what to expect during the instructional day and during particular class periods. Schedules help structure the learning environment to support students so they can function more independently in the classroom. An effective classroom schedule fuses basic structure with flexibility, which permits the teacher to respond to unforeseen events and accommodate students with exceptionalities.

Transitions help students move through the schedule of activities effortlessly and with minimal distractions. Effective transitions help the teacher to minimize disruptions, increase instructional time, and maintain optimal learning conditions. Teachers should model the appropriate way for students to transition between activities and then have students practice it. Teachers should actively supervise transition times, which may include scanning, moving, and interacting behaviors.

The classroom management system is one of the most important factors in successful teaching and learning. The most effective classroom management plan begins with an effective teacher who delivers instruction so as to maximize learning outcomes.

Lee Canter’s *Assertive discipline* is a systematic behavior management approach that helps teachers be consistent with behavior expectations and provides appropriate consequences for student behavior. Assertive discipline places great emphasis on “catching students being good” and then providing them with feedback and reinforcement.

Canter’s approach requires teachers to recognize that they can and do have an effect on student behavior in the classroom; that they must display an assertive response style; that they have to develop discipline plans that contain good rules and clear consequences; that they provide students with instruction concerning their discipline plans; and that they provide students with instruction on how to behave appropriately.

Haim Ginott believes that teachers are an essential element in classroom management and that teachers who demonstrate self-discipline serve as models for students. Further, he believes that teachers can create classrooms with “congruent communication” by doing three things:

1. Modeling communication that is consistent with students’ emotions and environment.
2. Using cooperative learning techniques.
3. Using discipline instead of punishment.

Jacob Kounin developed a behavioral management model based on early intervention and effective classroom management skills. Kounin’s approache hinges on teacher enthusiasm, maintaining student engagement with the material, awareness that response to one student’s behavior can have a ripple effect throughout the classroom, and conveying the idea that one has “eyes in the back of his head,” to name a few.

Fred Jones believes that teachers need to learn two major skill clusters: body language and a group-based incentive system. Body language, which accounts for 90% of effective discipline, includes eye contact, physical proximity to students, stance, display of appropriate facial expressions, and use of gestures, such as a thumbs-up to indicate approval of a behavior.

The second skill cluster consists of the use of a group-based incentive system and the use of “Grandma’s rule.” The preferred activity time (PAT) incentive system allows a group of students to gain access to activities they enjoy. Grandma’s rule (Premack Principle) consists basically of a “first this – then that” method of behavior control, for example, “Eat your vegetables, then you can have dessert.” In the classroom, students finish less desirable tasks and then are rewarded with PAT.

Jones also suggests that by having classrooms that are organized, including seating arrangements and rules and routines, teachers can minimize the need for interventions to address interfering behaviors.

**Functional Behavioral Assessment**

The Trinity of Behavior Management

The three-step process that a teacher uses to define a student’s inappropriate behavior, identify the function of the behavior, and develop intervention strategies is known as the *Trinity of Behavior Management*. It consists of (a) conducting a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA), (b) completing a Functional Behavior Analysis (FA) (if necessary), and (c) implementing a behavior intervention plan (BIP).

Teachers must define behaviors and identify causes, or the functions, of the behaviors before they can effectively manage the interfering behaviors of students. The process of identifying and defining target behaviors, and hypothesizing the probable function of those behaviors, is carried out through the use of the FBA.

A FBA is a problem-solving process for identifying the antecedents (triggers) and consequences (reinforcement, in this case) of a behavior through the collection of data during direct observation. The analysis of the graphed data allows the behavior analyst – or teacher – to identify the probable function (purpose) the behavior serves for the individual. A FBA is conducted when (a) a student with a disability is suspended or removed from school for more than 10 days, (b) a student’s educational placement has been changed, or (c) when behavior goals and/or objectives have been added to a student’s individualized education program (IEP).

Under a universal design for classroom management, schools should conduct FBAs for all students displaying interfering behaviors. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) does not provide any operational definition or standardized procedures for developing and implementing FBAs.

In Unit 4, you will learn the importance of operationally defining the behavior of concern; understanding cultural influences on behavior and the importance of using culturally-responsive assessment methods; collecting antecedent-behavior-consequence (A-B-C) data during direct observations; identifying the most important dimension (or characteristic) of a behavior to record; and utilizing appropriate data recording approaches to obtain accurate and reliable data.

Unit 4 presents some of the major approaches in ABA to understanding the function of behavior leading to the design of function-based BIPs. The information contained in this unit will be the foundation upon which we will build the remaining information in the course!

Thank you for viewing your Unit 4 lecture!