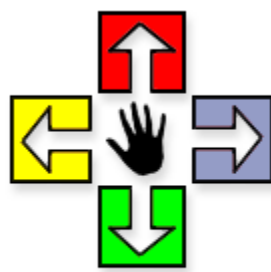


# Meeting the Needs of Students with Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties



**Special Needs  
Technology  
Assessment  
Resource Support  
Team (START)**

Annapolis Valley Regional School Board

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Division of Student Support Services, Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education  
Programming for Individual Needs: Using Technology to Enhance Students' Differing Abilities,  
1996

## CLOSE-UP

### **MEETING THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL/BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES**

*Kevin is in junior high this year and is a member of the school track team. This year is going fairly well for Kevin. He placed first in the regional track meet and will be representing his school at the provincial track meet in the spring of next year. Kevin is a student with emotional-behaviour difficulties. In many respects, he is a typical grade seven student; however, he displays significant difficulty staying on-task and paying attention in class. He occasionally has severe emotional outbursts and must be removed from the classroom*

*Second term report is almost ready to go home and Kevin is showing progress both academically and socially since first term report. His junior high school is fully equipped with a computer lab and the teacher, as well as Kevin himself, attribute much of his improvement to increased computer assisted learning opportunities. Computer assisted learning is reducing Kevin's frustration level and inappropriate off-task behaviour. The computer provides Kevin a patient, non-critical, motivating teacher and tutor. He enjoys working in cooperative learning situations because it is easier to attend and he can ask his peers for assistance when needed. For Kevin, less self-discipline is needed to attend to two other students than to an entire class.*

*Kevin regularly attends a social skills group with a number of other students in the guidance counsellor's room. There social skills strategies for conflict resolution are taught. Kevin is putting great effort into practising these skills when engaged in the cooperative learning groups in the computer lab. The counsellor is allowing Kevin to take part in the peer tutoring program in the neighbouring elementary school's computer lab, but only if he demonstrates acceptable behaviours among his peers in the computer lab. Kevin is highly motivated to act appropriately as he strongly desires to participate in the peer tutoring program.*

*Kevin still has his off days, but they are fewer in number. His parents and teachers report that Kevin is a much more cooperative and productive student this year.*

# MEETING THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL AND/OR BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES

Students with emotional difficulties may demonstrate some of the following characteristics during their development. Students with emotional/behavioural disorders show one or more of the following behaviours and characteristics to a *significantly different degree* than generally accepted age, ethnic or cultural norms *over a long period of time* and in a variety of settings.

## CHARACTERISTICS

- low self-esteem
- difficulty building/maintaining interpersonal relationships
- compulsive behaviour
- withdrawn behaviour
- verbal and/or physical aggression
- excessive fear or anxiety
- depression
- poor social skills
- academic problems
- inappropriate crying
- temper tantrums
- non-compliant behaviour
- low motivation
- inattention and impulsivity

- poor self-control
- difficulty solving social and academic problems
- difficulty categorizing and organizing information in a logical format

## TECHNOLOGY - RELATED STRATEGIES

### Computers

- When possible choose interactive computer-based activities over traditional instructional methods.
- Use computers as reinforcers for appropriate behaviour during free time, but not during instructional time. Note: Using computers as reinforcers should not be the primary use.
- Use computer games that do not have competitive, aggressive or destructive themes to provide opportunities for developing social interaction and intellectual skills as well as good work habits.
- Help students to build their social skills by placing them in dyads when working on computer activities. A working dyad is usually preferable to working alone or in small groups. \*Computer software used should have a high correlation to instruction.
- Try to use software with these features:
  - colorful graphics, animation and sound
  - step-by-step instruction
  - immediate reinforcement
  - neutral corrective feedback
  - low key reteaching methods that do not emphasize failure
  - interactive features
  - capability to adjust response rate
  - record keeping
- Use computerized record keeping programs to monitor student's behaviour. Daily and/or weekly records and progress graphs have positive effects on student's behaviour and can be used to communicate with other team members.

- Enhance students' self-esteem by allowing them to use word processing software (with speech feedback if needed) to produce polished written assignments.
- Train students interested in computers to become peer tutors to other students or teachers.
- Use simulation and various problem-solving software to help students strengthen their problem-solving skills. You may have to pre-teach problem-solving strategies before student can apply problem-solving skills in interactive computer programs.
- Use commercially available inter/intrapersonal problem solving and decision making software to help students become better prepared to deal with real life experiences.
- Allow students to use software packages such as time managers or daily schedulers with alarm reminders to help them manage upcoming activities and assignments.
- Use spreadsheets to help older students with scientific and mathematical problem-solving.
- Use databases to help students gather and organize data.
- Use virtual reality software. When the cost of virtual reality (VR) systems decreases virtual reality will be as popular as the VCR is in schools today. Interactive VR technology presents the perfect environment for students to learn and practice prosocial skills. A VR environment allows students to make good and bad decisions, and experience the consequences in a three dimensional simulated world which helps to prepare students to deal with situations of the real world.

## **Software for Social Skill Development**

There are many commercial software programs available to teach social skills, problem solving and decision making. Table 4 on the following page lists a number of these programs.

## SOCIAL SKILLS SOFTWARE

**TABLE 4**

<b>SOFTWARE</b>	<b>SKILL LEVEL</b>	<b>PUBLISHER</b>
• Choices, Choices: On the Playground	Preschool Elementary	Tom Snyder Productions
• Blueprint for Decision Making	Elementary Secondary Adult	Lawrence Productions
• Choices, Choices: Taking Responsibility	Preschool Elementary	Tom Snyder Productions
• Where in the World in Carmen Sandiego?	Elementary Secondary	Broderbund Software Inc.
• Following Directions: Life Skills Series (Set 1)	Secondary Adult	Hartley
• On the Job: Life Skills Series (Set 1)	Secondary Adult	Hartley
• The Mirror Inside Us: Life Skills Series (Set 1)	Secondary Adult	Hartley

## GENERAL STRATEGIES

Below is a list of general classroom management strategies to use with students having emotional/behavioural difficulties. For further information about school wide discipline, classroom management, problem solving and program planning refer to the document **Programming for Individual Needs: Behavioural Challenges, A Supportive Shared Approach (1996)**.

- Ensure student knows what is expected of him, establish expectations and rules.
- Post established rules in a location where student can easily see.
- Come to prior agreement with the student on consequences for broken rules and apply these consistently.
- Praise appropriate behaviour as it occurs.
- When using tangible reinforcers to improve student behaviour, ensure they are age appropriate and motivating for the student.
- Help student to develop social skills, self-control and self-esteem.