

Collecting Comprehensive Data

Every teacher has experienced a situation where students' behaviors prevent them from learning and negatively impact their classmates' learning as well. When these behaviors continue, educators are faced with a problem that is more complex than it may appear on the surface. Traditionally educators would assume that disruptive or uncooperative behaviors lead to drops in academic achievement, but as we learn more about the interplay of cognitive and emotional learning, educators have discovered that a lack of academic and/or social and emotional skills often drives problem behaviors. Working under this premise, what can educators do?

The first and easiest step is to use a checklist to be sure you are asking questions that will get the right people in the room to address challenging behaviors.

Some checklist questions include:

- What are the child's strengths?
- How long have the behaviors been observed?
- Do the challenging behaviors exist in all classes?
- What times of day are the challenging behaviors present?
- What triggers the behaviors?
- What is the function of the behaviors (what does the child get out of the behaviors)?
- Where does the child struggle?
- Are there family/life challenges?



What data do I have on this student?

- Math proficiency
- Literacy
- Social emotional skills
- Family situation
- Historical academic performance
- Individualized education plan (IEP)

Who needs to be in the room to design an action plan?

- Classroom teachers
- RTI Coordinator
- Guidance Counselor
- Assistant Principal of Instruction
- School nurse
- School Psychologist

Answering these questions will provide the first layer of information toward designing an effective improvement plan. In a surprising number of cases, teachers report that students who use challenging behaviors to avoid classwork are often attempting to deflect attention from problem areas, academic and social/emotional. Analyzing triggers for disruptive behavior and cross-referencing assessment data might reveal that a student is acting out to cover her inability to read the word problems in math and needs more intensive social emotional learning support. This pinpointed data will help classroom teachers and families focus on building the skills needed for success.