

Matching Interventions to Behavior Needs

Purpose and Background: When data-based decision-making teams determine that students need behavior support, it is often because they have been showing behavior patterns that put them at risk for developing more severe, intense, or frequent behaviors of concern. Internalizing behavior patterns tend to be less obvious to observe (e.g., students who are withdrawn, anxious, or lonely) while externalizing behavior patterns tend to be more easily observed (e.g., students who are disruptive, aggressive, or defiant). Interventions focus on addressing different needs, so it is important to delineate behavior into categories beyond internalizing and externalizing¹. Understanding the context of a student’s behavior of concern helps teams identify how to best address that area of need. This may include considering form (i.e., what does this behavior look like?), purpose (i.e., how is this behavior serving the student?), and demands (i.e., under what conditions does the student demonstrate this behavior?).

Behaviors of concern could fit into any of the areas of need listed in the table below, so teams should use multiple sources of data to understand the form, purpose, and demands of a student’s behavior before selecting an intervention. The table also demonstrates how grouping areas of need into categories allows schools to provide more effective and efficient instruction to groups of students with common behavioral needs. The interventions listed are examples and should not be considered an exhaustive list or specific recommendations.

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Area of Need and Intervention Focus	Example Intervention Options
<p>Self-regulation Interventions address externalizing behavior patterns that often stem from difficulty understanding expectations, managing impulsive tendencies, and directing behavior toward meeting those expectations. Interventions may include components specific to self-awareness, goal setting, and self-management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goal setting• Self-monitoring• Self-graphing
<p>Social interactions and problem solving Interventions address externalizing behavior patterns, which may co-occur with internalizing behaviors, that involve difficulties forming and maintaining relationships, effectively interacting with others, and problem solving with others. Interventions may include components specific to perspective taking, communication, and problem solving.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behavior contract• Social skills group• Restorative meetings or circles

¹ McDaniel, S. C., Bruhn, A. L., & Estrapala, S. (2024). Social, emotional, and behavioral supports in schools: Linking assessment to tier 2 intervention. Guilford Press.

Area of Need and Intervention Focus	Example Intervention Options
<p>Emotional regulation Interventions address self-awareness of internalizing behaviors and teach skills to express and manage emotions outwardly. Interventions may include components specific to emotional awareness and coping skills to support behavior patterns in which feelings, thoughts, and actions are directed inward.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-group counseling • Individual counseling • Check, Connect, Expect²
<p>Co-occurring academic and behavior needs Interventions address externalizing behavior patterns, which may co-occur with internalizing behaviors, that involve difficulty meeting academic expectations. Interventions may include components that address needed academic skills while also teaching behaviors that allow students to effectively manage challenging academic contexts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensified academic instruction on needed skills • Breaks are Better (<i>BrB</i>)³
<p>Interfering behaviors Interventions support externalizing behavior patterns that are often associated with deliberate disregard for others and rules which students are expected to demonstrate and capable of performing as they have no other underlying needs. Interventions may include components related to relationship-building, mentoring, and self-management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-In/Check-Out (<i>CICO</i>)⁴ • Check and Connect⁵ • Check, Connect, Expect

Note: The resources and opinions shared have not been vetted by the TDOE and are not an endorsement on quality or content of these materials or any vendor.

² McDaniel, S. C., Flower, A., & Cheney, D. (2011). Put Me in, Coach! A Powerful and Efficient Tier 2 Behavioral Intervention for Alternative Settings. *Beyond Behavior*, 20(1), 18–24.

³ Boyd R. J., Anderson C. M. (2010). *Breaks are Better implementation manual*. University of Oregon.

⁴ Crone, D.,A., Hawken, L.S., & Horner, R.H. (2010). *Responding to problem behavior in schools* (2nd Edition). Guildford Press.

⁵ Sinclair, M. F., Christenson, S. L., Evelo, D. L., & Hurley, C. M. (1998). Dropout Prevention for Youth with Disabilities: Efficacy of a Sustained School Engagement Procedure. *Exceptional Children*, 65(1), 7–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001440299806500101>.