

Approaches to Managing Challenging Behavior in Children

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Challenging Behavior

“Behavior emitted by a learner that results in self-injury or injury to others, causes damage to the physical environment, interferes with the acquisition of a new skill, and/or socially isolates the learner”

Doss & Reichle (1991)



Prevalence: Challenging Behavior in Children

- Approximately 10-15% of all typically developing preschool children have chronic mild to moderate levels of behavior problems.

(Campbell, 2005)

- Children who are poor are much more likely to develop behavior problems with prevalence rates that approach 30%

(Qi & Kaiser, 2003)

- Challenging behavior has been among the top concerns of educators for over 20 years (Rose & Gallup, 1995).

- The proportion of preschool children meeting the criteria for the clinical diagnosis of ODD (Oppositional Defiant Disorder) ranges from 7% to 25% of children in the United States, depending on the population surveyed.

(Webster-Stratton, 1997)



Social and academic outcomes of problem behavior

- Children who are identified as hard to manage at ages 3 and 4 have a high probability (50:50) of continuing to have difficulties into adolescence

(Campbell & Ewing, 1990; Egeland et. al, 1990; Fischer, Rolf, Hasazi, & Cummings, 1984)

- Early appearing aggressive behaviors are the best predictor of juvenile gang membership and violence (Reid, 1993)

- When aggressive and antisocial behavior has persisted to age 9, further intervention has a substantially diminished chance of SUCCESS. (Dodge, 1993)



Social and academic outcomes of problem behavior

What started getting us interested in preventing and intervening early with respect to problem behavior

- Early appearing aggressive behaviors are the best predictor of juvenile gang membership and violence

(Reid, 1993)

- When aggressive and antisocial behavior has persisted to age 9, further intervention has a substantially diminished chance of success. (Dodge, 1993)



Young Children with Challenging Behavior

- Are rejected by peers
- Receive less positive feedback
- Do worse in school
- Are less likely to be successful in kindergarten



- Preschool children are **three times more likely to be “expelled”** than children in grades K-12 (Gillman, 2005)
- Faculty in higher ed early childhood programs report that their graduates are least likely to be prepared to work with children with persistently challenging behavior (Hemmeter, Santos, & Ostrosky, 2004)-
- There are evidenced-based practices that are effective in changing this developmental trajectory . . . The problem is not what to do, but rests in ensuring access to intervention and support (Center for Evidence Based Practices: Young Children with Challenging Behavior)



Effects of toughened school discipline (Mayer, 1995)

- Increased vandalism
- Truancy
- Tardiness
- Aggression

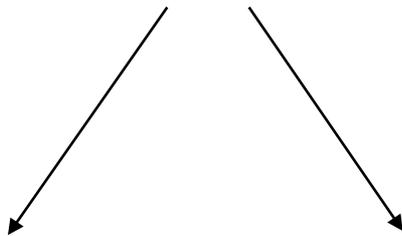


Forms of Challenging Behavior

AGGRESSIONS	TANTRUMS	SELF-INJURIES
Hitting Scratching Kicking Biting Pinching Throwing objects	Crying Screaming Whining	Scratching Biting Pinching Self-choking Eye-gouging

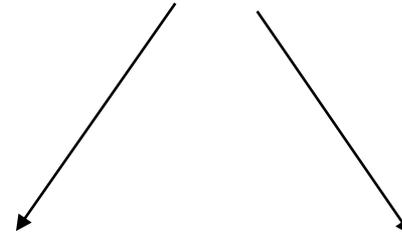
Obtain Desirable Events

Avoid/Escape Undesirable Events



Attention

Objects/
Activities



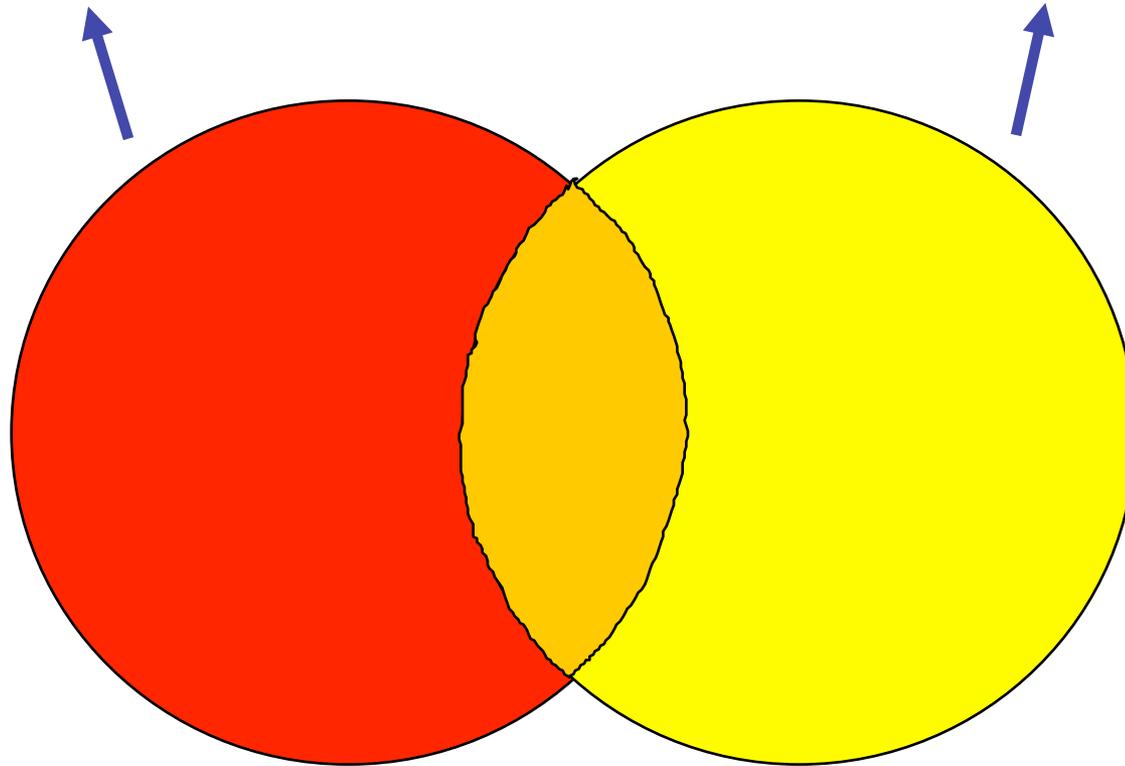
Attention

Tasks/
Events



**NONSOCIALLY
MOTIVATED**

**SOCIALLY
MOTIVATED**



Reinforcer

- A consequence provided after a response that increases the probability that the response will be emitted in the future

- **Positive reinforcer**

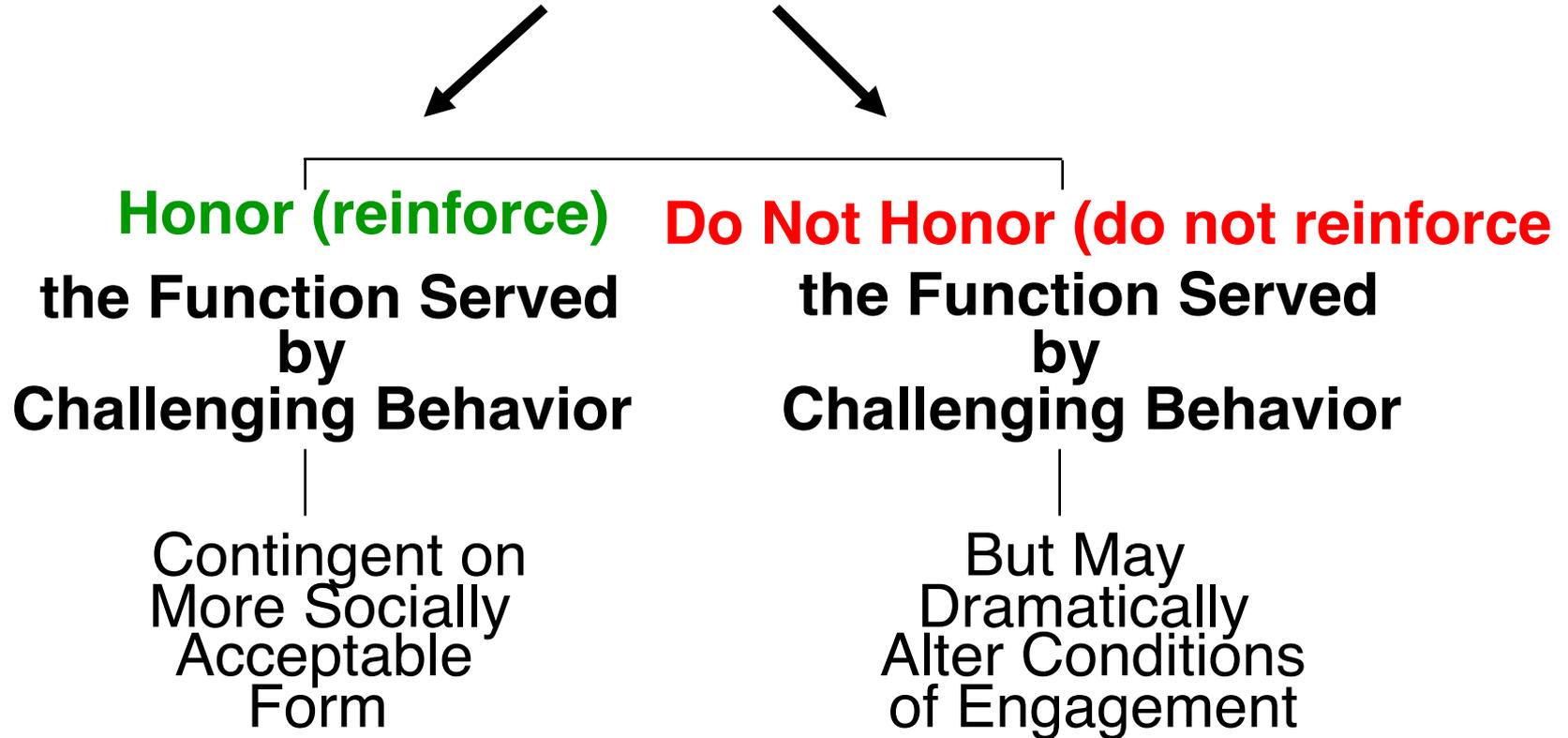
Consequence is the delivery of a desired stimulus

- **Negative reinforcer**

Consequence is the removal of an undesired stimulus



Intervention Strategies



Positive Behavior Supports (PBS)

- An approach to understanding reasons for problem behavior that includes the design of interventions based on the individual's behavior and the conditions in which the behavior occurs.
- The goal of PBS is to create long-lasting change.



Major Influences on PBS

- Behavioral psychology (Applied Behavior Analysis)
- Person-centered planning
- Self determination
- Inclusion

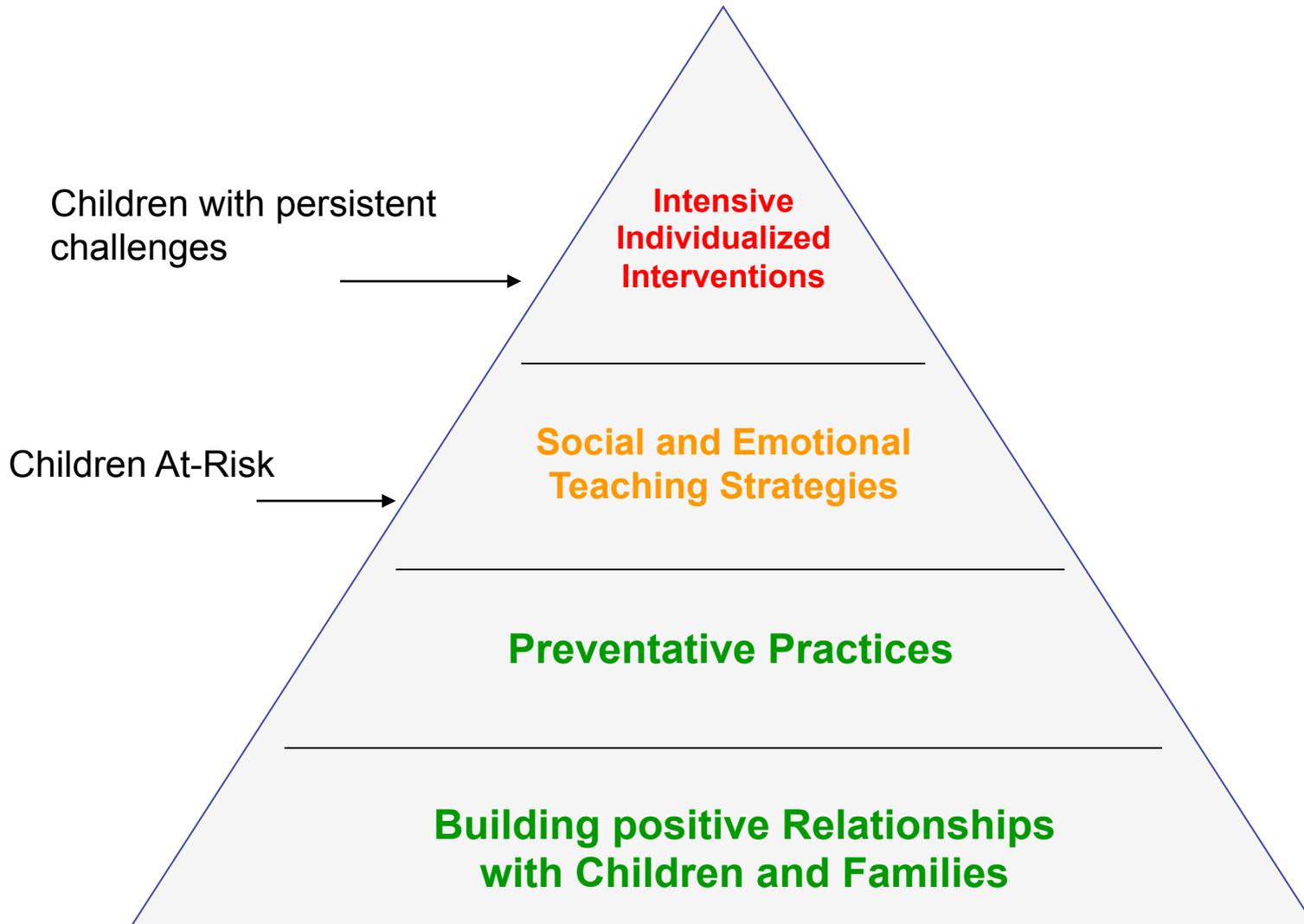


Key Features of PBS

- Ecologically Oriented
- Assessment Based
- Preventative
- Educational
- Inclusion Focused
- Comprehensive
- Team Based
- Long Term Based
- Respectful



Promoting Social and Emotional Competence within Early Education and Care Environments

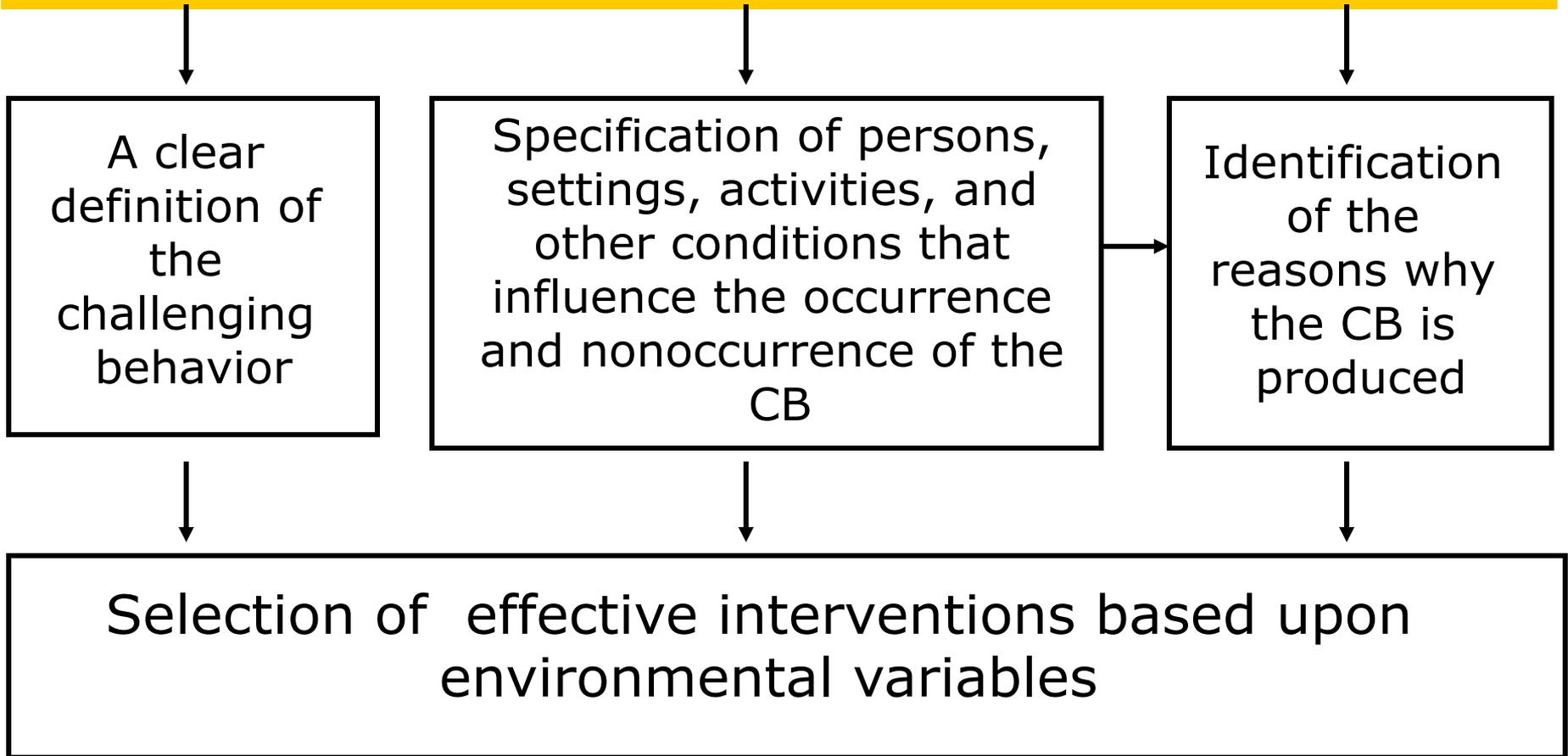


Functional Assessment

- A functional approach to assessment assumes that individuals behave in adaptive ways to ongoing changes in their environment.



Desired Outcomes of a Functional Assessment



Functional Assessment

- **Indirect assessments**
 - Information from individuals who have extensive knowledge/experience with the child
- **Direct observation**
 - Directly observe the behavior(s) of interest.
- **Environmental manipulations**
 - Controlled comparisons of variables hypothesized to be related to the function of challenging behavior



Indirect Assessment: Summary

- questionnaires/rating scales, interviews, and checklists
- Requires less interventionist time and effort
- Offer less precision than more direct assess.
- May be sufficient for less complex behavior concerns
- Information obtained via indirect assessment should be validated through direct observation.



Direct Observation Assessment

Involves observing the child in his/her natural environment.

- *Used to validate and supplement information obtained via indirect assessment including-*
 - Description of the behavior
 - Triggers (antecedents) that provoke the challenging behavior.
 - Consequences associated with the behavior.
 - Hypothesis regarding the purpose (social function) that the child's challenging behavior observes.

ABC Direct Observation

- Occurrence of challenging behavior triggers a diary entry
 - Behavior
 - What occurred immediately before the behavior? (antecedent)
 - What happened immediately following the behavior? (consequence)
- An analysis of the antecedents and consequences associated with the behavior of interest provide insight into the social function that the child's challenging behavior serves.



Day	Time	Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence	
11/28	8:00 – 8:30 Reading Center	Teacher reading to peers	Shoved peer	Teacher redirects	
		Teacher redirects Ralph	Yelled	Teacher 1-1 reading with Ralph	
	8:30 – 9:00 Small group sorting	Teacher leaves activity	Yelled	Peers laugh Teacher returns (works with group)	
		Teacher leaves activity	Yelled	Peers laugh Teacher returns (works with group)	
		Teacher leaves activity	Yelled	Peers laugh Teacher moves Ralph to her desk	

ABC Observation

- **Primary advantage**
 - Information can be used to identify patterns of behavior that may suggest a social function that is maintaining the CB.
- **Primary disadvantage**
 - Data is primarily qualitative
 - Sometimes difficult to summarize



Hypothesized Function

- After reviewing data summary

What function does the challenging behavior serve the child? (i.e. why is it occurring?)

- *Escape activity/object*
- *Escape attention*
- *Obtain activity/object*
- *Obtain attention*
- *Nonsocial function*



Conducting Systematic Environmental Manipulations

➤ What are they?

- Controlled comparisons of at least two different antecedents or two different consequences that are hypothesized to influence the emission of challenging behavior

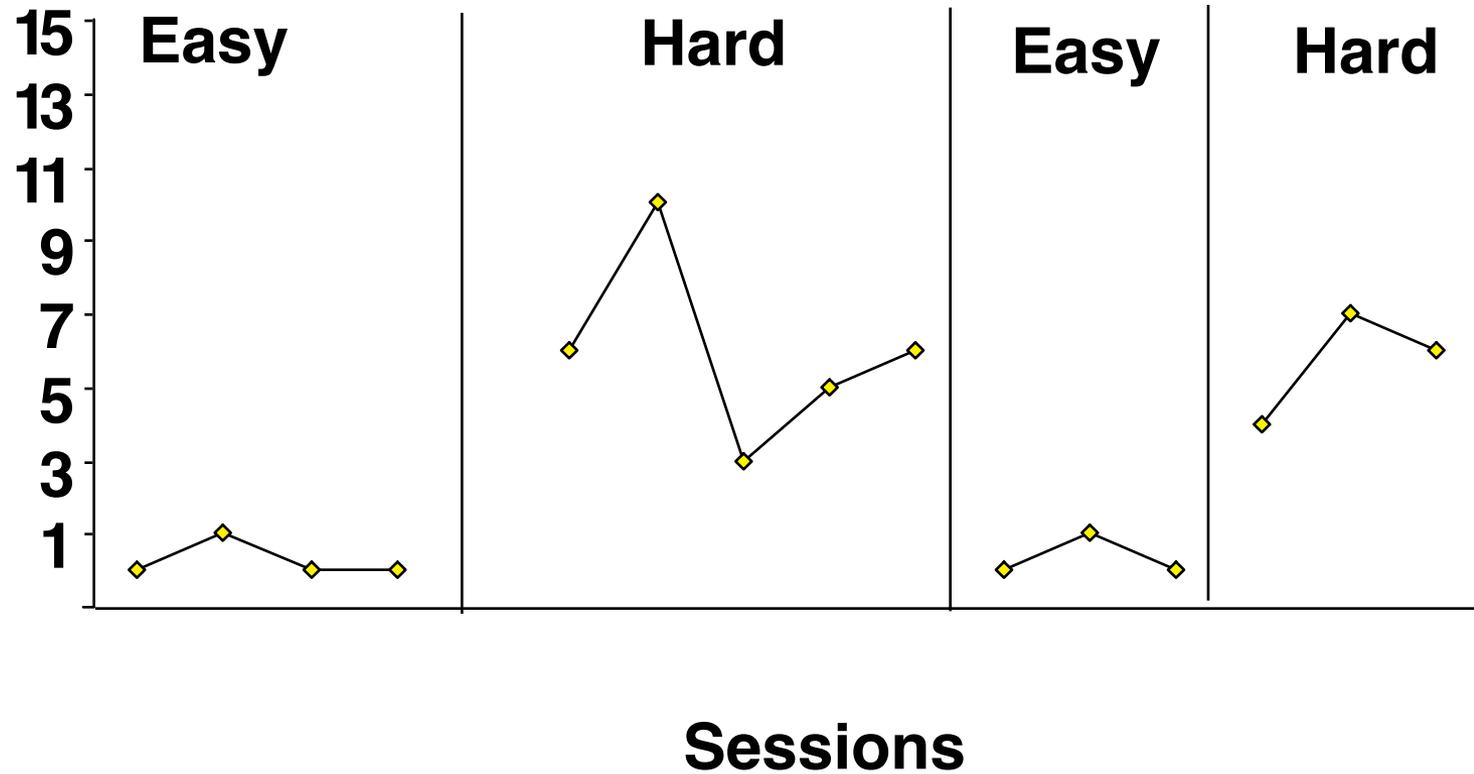
➤ Why should they be implemented?

- To clearly identify specific antecedents and/or consequences influencing challenging behavior that could not be isolated during direct observation

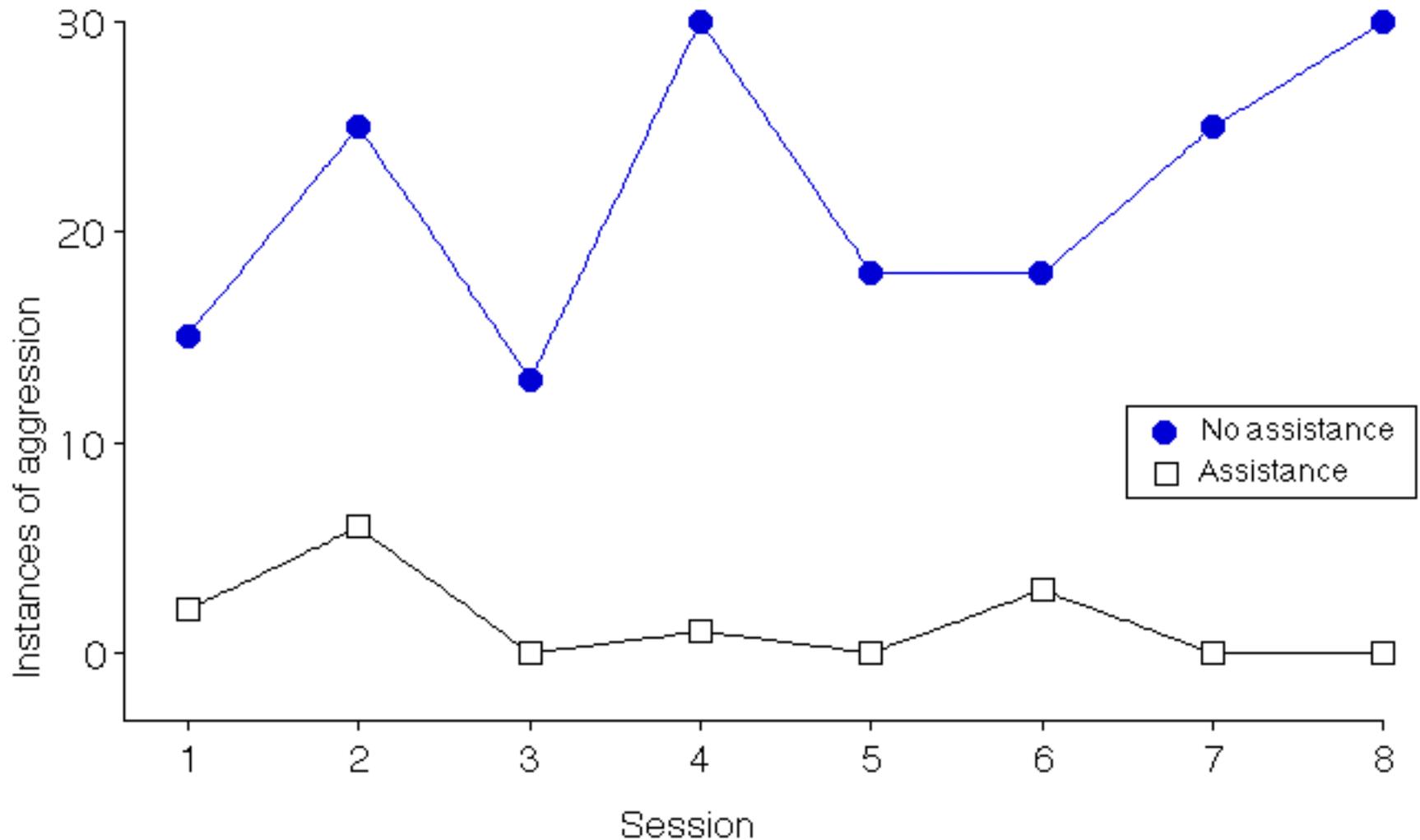


Manipulations of Easy and Hard

Frequency of Aggressive Behavior



Environmental Manipulation Data: Comparing Assistance Vs. No Assistance



Setting Events

Physiological, social or environmental conditions, past or present, that can influence the likelihood of challenging behavior.

– *Example:*

- *If Johnny is **not feeling well**, he is more likely to scream and kick when he cannot get his coat unzipped or hang up his backpack. He is also more likely to tantrum when asked to come to circle time.*



Examples of Setting Events

- *Poor night's sleep*
- *Illness*
- *Change in medications*
- *Missed meal*
- *Environment too hectic/crowded/demanding*
- *Environment too hot/cold*
- *Loud noises*
- *Change in routine*
- *Long wait time*
- *Change in staff or caregiver*
- *Surprise visits from people*
- *A fight with a peer or family member*



Setting Events

Setting Event	Antecedent	Behavior	Maintaining Consequence
Absent	The teacher tells the class to work on their math assignment.	Daniel raises his hand to obtain assistance from his teacher.	The teacher offers Daniel her assistance.
Present On the ride to school Daniel gets into an argument with his father about his homework (cognitive/emotional event).	The teacher tells the class to work on their math assignment.	Daniel throws his book to the floor. He places his head down on his desk.	The teacher offers Daniel her assistance.

Types of Setting Events

Type	Examples
Physiological	Pain or discomfort from illness or medication Fatigue
Cognitive/emotional	Argument with friends/family New social situation
Physical environment	Loud noises Lack of light or too much light
Social Activity	Presented with a difficult task Change in the routine

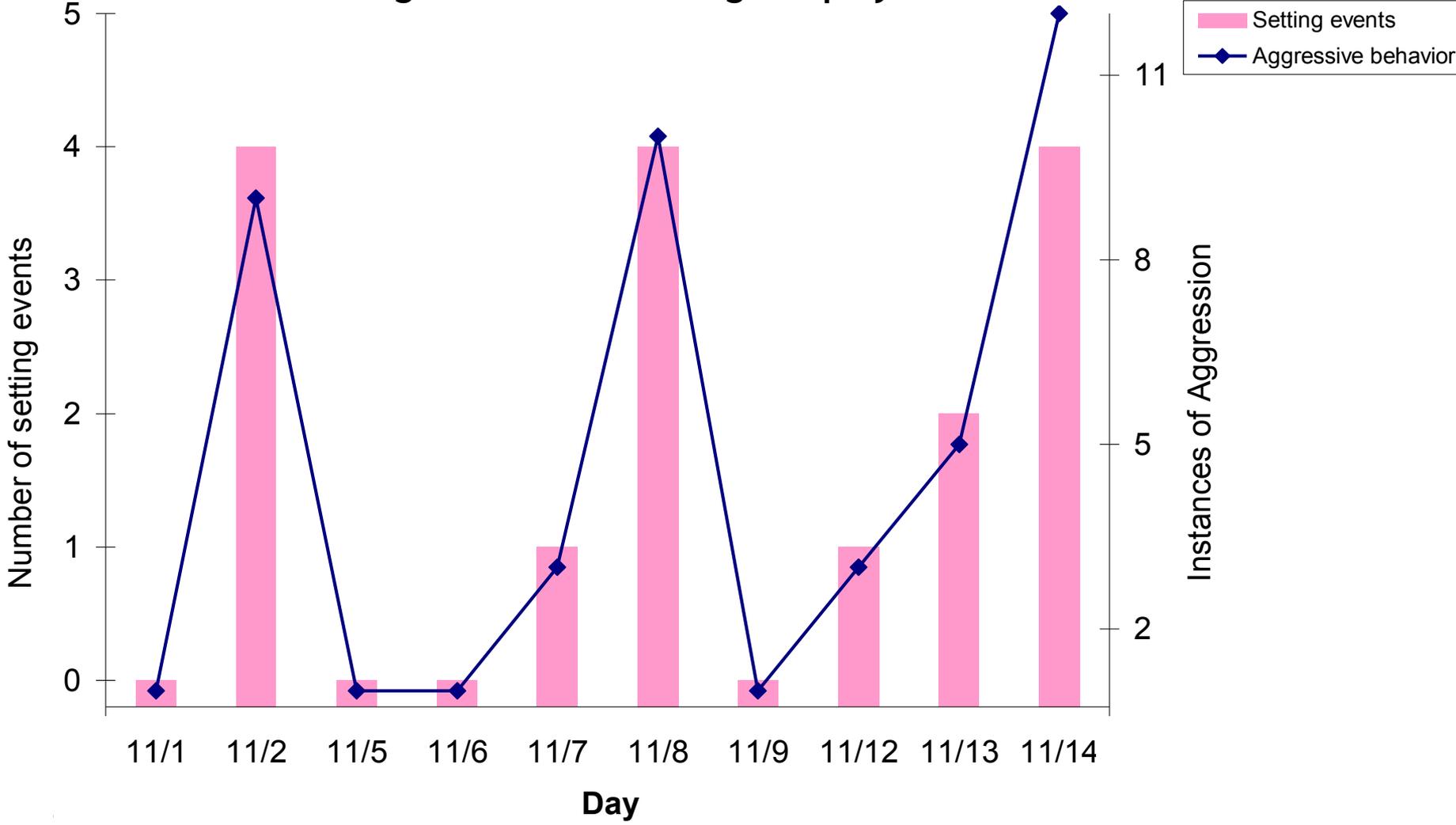


Summarizing Setting Event Data

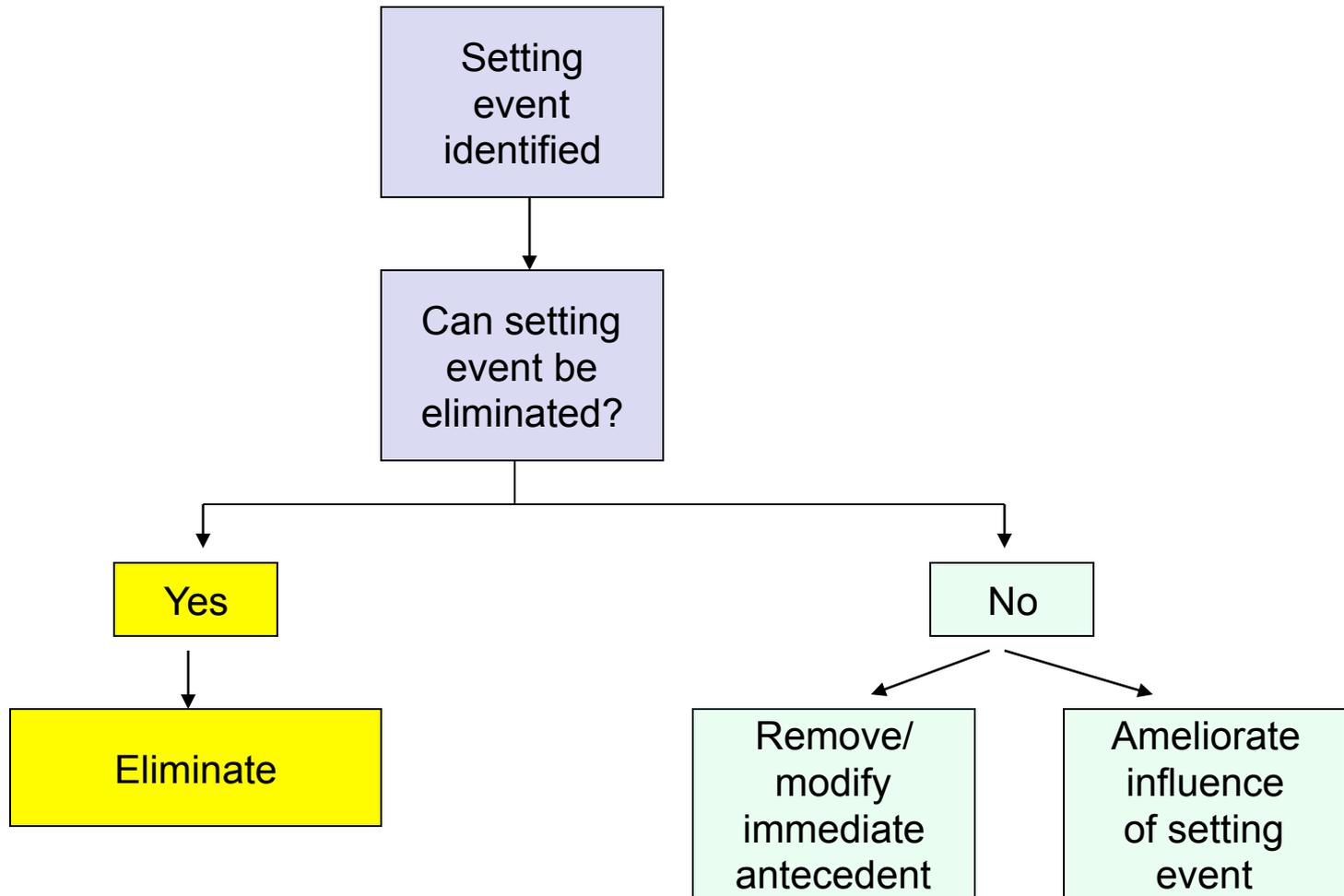
School Days

<i>Setting Events</i>	11/ 1	11/2	11/5	11/6	11/7	11/8	11/9	11/12	11/1 3	11/14
Slept at least 9 hours		X				X		X		X
Offered choices in morning routine		X				X			X	X
“Downtime” before school		X			X	X			X	X
Showed signs of illness		X								
Number of Setting Events	0	4	0	0	1	4	0	1	2	4

Relationship between setting events and Eric's aggression during 30-minute morning freeplay



Intervention approaches for setting events



Intervention



Communicative Alternatives



General Rules in Implementing Communicative Replacement

- Don't continue to reinforce the challenging behavior
- Try to minimize the probability that a challenging behavior is emitted prior to the emission of a socially acceptable communicative alternative
- If possible, select a communicative alternative that is already part of the learner's existing communicative repertoire
- Determine how discriminable the use of the new communicative alternative needs to be
- Consider the natural maintaining contingencies offered by the natural environment



Teaching Rejecting- A socially acceptable act produced to escape/avoid contact with an undesired person, object, or activity

- Identify the earliest possible point at which individual attends to the approach of the undesired event without engaging in challenging behavior
- Reinforce the absence of challenging behavior in the presence of the undesired event
- Prompt or model the desired communicative alternative in the presence of the undesired event
- Shape successively better approximations or gradually reduce the learner's reliance on response prompts
- Ensure that rejecting is used conditionally



Teaching Request a Break- A socially acceptable request to withdraw from an uncompleted task with the expectation of resuming engagement

- Determine the amount of engagement prior to an escape attempt.
- Just prior to arriving at this point, release the learner from the task.
- Once challenging behavior has diminished, prompt a request for a break at the critical point of engagement.
- After a correct response, the learner should be immediately released to a break activity. Near the end of the designated break activity, it may be necessary to have an inducement to get back to work.



Teaching Request a Break (Potential Problem)

THE LEARNER DOES NOT WANT TO RETURN FROM BREAK

- Identify one powerful reinforcer that will be delivered contingent on returning from break.
- Establish a more intermittent schedule of offering release from work without a request for a break.
- Remember to customize (by activity) the amount of work required prior to a break.
- Utilize behavioral momentum to establish reengagement



Request Assistance- A socially acceptable request for assistance with a difficult item or activity

- This strategy can be implemented when the interventionist is certain that providing unsolicited assistance reduces emission of challenging behavior
- Provide unsolicited assistance in presence of provoking activity in the absence of problem behavior
- Just prior to delivering unsolicited assistance, prompt a request.
- Gradually fade prompts
- Ensure that requests for assistance are used conditionally



Components of a behavior support plan

Antecedent/ setting event interventions

- Modify or eliminate problem antecedent and/ or setting events
- Introduce positive antecedents/ setting events

Alternative skill instruction

- Teach replacement skills that serve the same purpose as the problem behavior
- Teach coping and tolerance skills
- Teach general skills to expand overall competence

Responses to problem behavior

- Reduce outcomes for problem behavior
- Provide instructive feedback/ introduce logical consequences
- Develop a crisis management plan



Antecedent Focused Strategies

Seek to alter:

- Components of Activities
- Behavior of Social Partners
- Sequencing/Choice of Activities
- Presentation of Activities



Tolerance for Delay of Reinforcement

Teaches the child to (a) remain engaged in a task/activity, or (b) wait for a desired object for increasingly longer periods of time.

Examples

- ❖ At the lunch table, the child begins to get fidgety. Teacher says, “Two more bites.”
- ❖ During story time, Margaret starts to complain that she wants to leave. The teacher says, “One more page.”

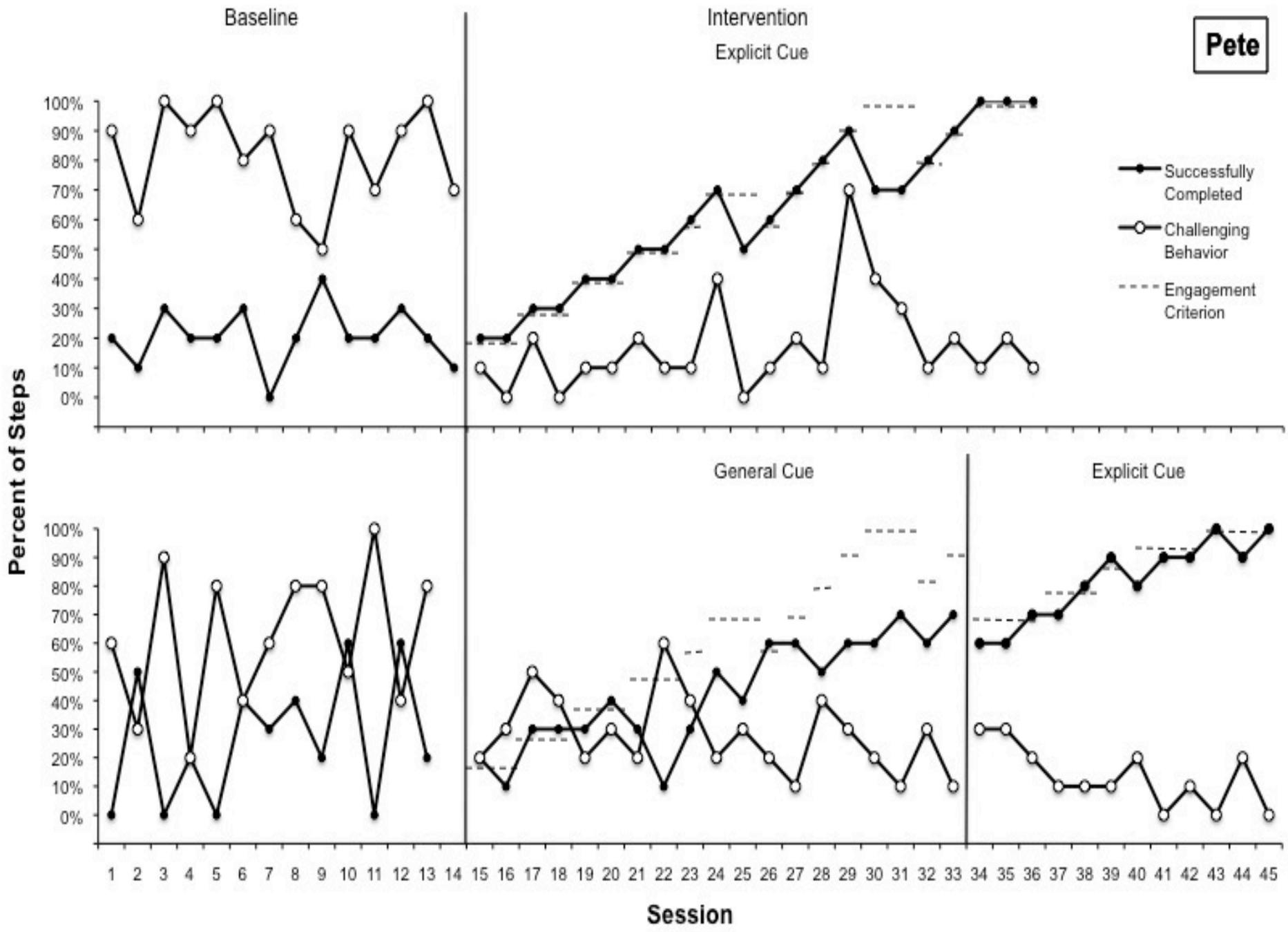


Tolerance for Delay of Reinforcement

Two different cues are used:

- **Delay cue**
 - Verbal, gestural, or graphic signal that communicates that the teacher will soon deliver reinforcement contingent on continued desirable behavior.
 - *“Hang on”*
 - *“One more”*
 - *“In a minute”*
- **Release Cue**
 - Verbal, gestural, or graphic signal that communicates the delivery or onset of reinforcement (i.e., release from task or delivery of preferred item or attention).
 - *“We’re all done.”*
 - *“Okay, here you go”*

Pete



High Probability Requests

A set of simple requests delivered just prior to a request for which the child typically does not comply.

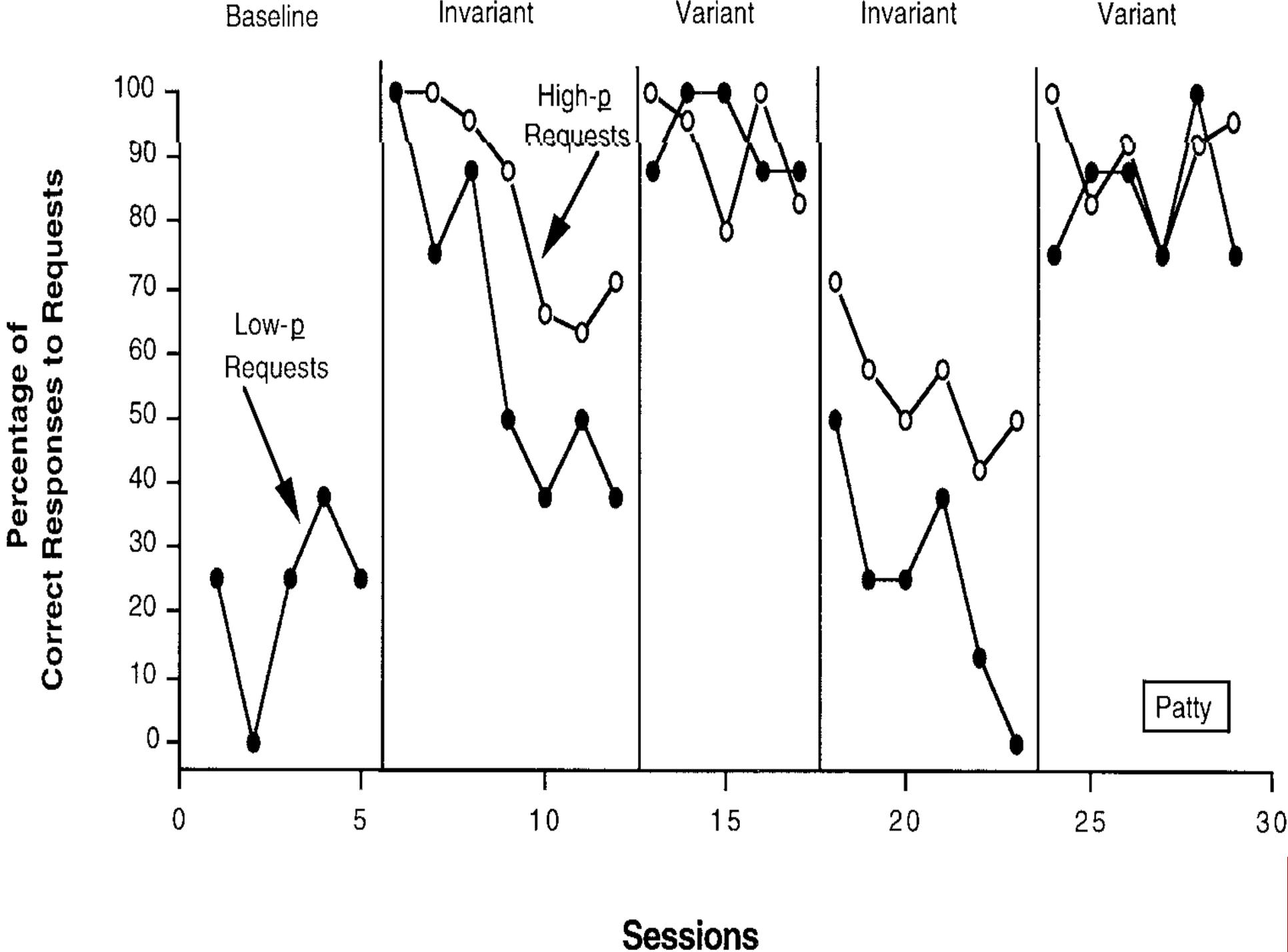
Example: Alan will not sit in his chair when requested.

Teacher	Child	Consequences
Alan, give me five.	Gives teacher five	All right!
Drops pencil. Pick That up for me.	Picks up pencil	Yeah!
What is on your shirt?	Alan says, "Batman."	Cool!
Lets sit in your chair.	Alan sits in his chair.	

Variations on implementation

- Embedding (Premack Principle)
- Interspersed requests





Schedule

Uses a group of symbols(objects, pictures, written words) to represent the chronology of events across a period of time.



Schedule

- Identify a natural cue to signal the child to check his schedule.
- Identify a controlling prompt.
- Place symbol representing the targeted task on the schedule.
- Select time to recruit the child's attention to check for task.
- Learner looks/takes symbol and travel to task--> S^{R+}
- Engages S^{R+}



Why do schedules work?

- **Enhances predictability**
- **Provides choices for learner**
- **Gives learner control**
- **Provides the learner with attention**



Why Are They Advantageous?

- Opportunities can be generated by the interventionist, rather than by challenging behavior.
- They may be less disruptive to the environment than reactive procedures.
- They are educative: New skills may be acquired in the absence of the frazzle that surrounds challenging behavior.
- Opportunities may be created that interrupt anticipatory chains of discriminative stimuli associated with challenging behavior.
- Do not have to deal with the behavior.

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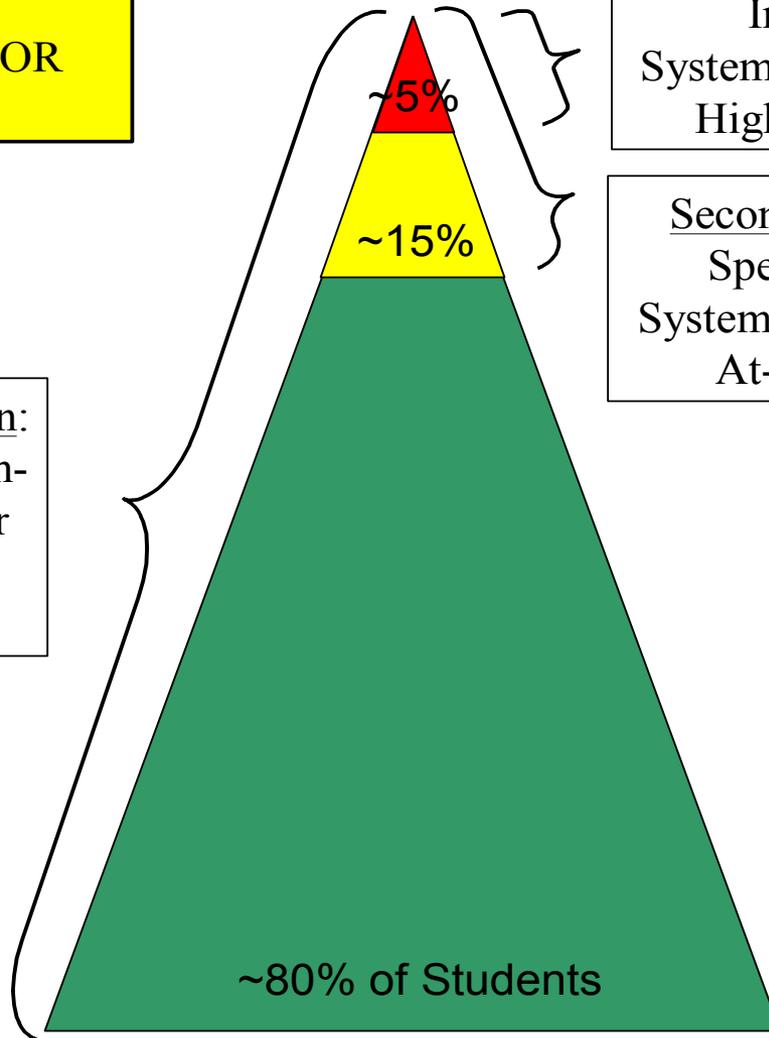
Schoolwide Support

- Nearly 25% of U.S. population is attending or teaching schools (Tyack, 2001)
- Schools:
 - deliver improved academic performance
 - build social competence
 - ensure safety
- Problem behavior is among top concerns in school (Horner, Diemer, & Brazeau, 1992; Gallup Poll, 2009)
- Antisocial behavior is increasing in schools (Skiba and Peterson, 2000)



**CONTINUUM OF
SCHOOL-WIDE
POSITIVE BEHAVIOR
SUPPORT**

Primary Prevention:
School-/Classroom-
Wide Systems for
All Students,
Staff, & Settings



Tertiary Prevention:
Specialized
Individualized
Systems for Students with
High-Risk Behavior

Secondary Prevention:
Specialized Group
Systems for Students with
At-Risk Behavior

Response to Intervention (RTI)

- **Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tiered approach to help struggling learners.**
- **Students' progress is closely monitored at each stage of intervention to determine the need for further research-based intervention in general education, in special education, or both**



Tier 1: High-Quality Classroom Instruction, Screening, and Group Interventions

- All students receive high-quality, scientifically based instruction to ensure that their difficulties are not due to inadequate instruction.
- All students are screened on a periodic basis to establish an academic and behavioral baseline and to identify struggling learners who need additional support.



Tier 2: Targeted Interventions

- Students not making adequate progress in the regular classroom in Tier 1 are provided with increasingly intensive instruction.
- Interventions are provided in small-group settings in addition to instruction in the general curriculum.
- Students who continue to show too little progress at this level of intervention are then considered for more intensive interventions as part of Tier 3



Tier 3: Intensive Interventions and Comprehensive Evaluation

- Students receive individualized, intensive interventions.
- Students who do not achieve the desired level of progress are then referred and considered for eligibility for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004).
- At any point in an RTI process, IDEA 2004 allows parents to request a formal evaluation to determine eligibility for special education. An RTI process cannot be used to deny or delay a formal evaluation for special education.

Bullying

- **Repeated actions directed at one person or group of people by one or more people**
- **Intentional negative action**
 - Verbal
 - Physical
 - Relational
- **Direct: words, push, shove**
- **Indirect: “Let’s walk by and not look at Sonovia.”**



Bullying is misuse of power

- Both boys and girls engage in it
- Single individuals can bully, and groups or cliques can bully
- Bystanders have power to help and hinder
- 1 in 7 has been either a bully or the target of a bully (Nat'l Assoc. School Psychologists)
- 85% girls & 76 % boys have experienced sexual harassment (AAUW Study)
- 62% of 6th grade boys w/ special health needs report physical assault on school property, vs. 49%/peers
MN Student Survey/MDH



Consequences of Bullying

- Children who bully are at risk for more serious violent behavior—fighting, carrying a gun
 - Nat'l Inst. of Child Health & Human Development
- Bully/victims display highest level of conduct, school and peer relationship problems
 - Juvonen, Graham and Schuster, *Pediatrics*, Dec 2003
- 60% of chronic bullies have arrest records in their 20's (Olweus, Sweden)
- 38% of special ed students were bullied (Toronto Board of Ed)
- 23% of students bullied and 71% of teachers reported that teachers intervene often or almost always
(Toronto Board of Ed study, from *The Bully the Bullied and the Bystander*)



Bystanders Study

- Peers are involved in 85%/bullying incidents
- Peers reinforced the bullying in 81% incidents
- Peers more respectful & friendly toward bullies than targets
- Peers active participants 48%/incidents
- Peers intervened in 13% of episodes
 - Pepler & Craig, 1995,
- 87% teens reject antigay bias; 5% intervene
 - National Mental Health Association, 2003



Features of School-wide PBS

- Procedures for family and community involvement
- Strategies for specific settings
- Strategies for targeted (at-risk) groups
e.g., academic supports, social skills groups
- Strategies for intensive, comprehensive individual supports

