Shifting Perspective:

An alternative view on student engagement and behavior

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Topics of this Presentation

- What is perspective?
- How does it impact our interactions with others?
- How can seeing things from a different lens change our interactions with our students?
Who is here today?

Parents
Friends
Pet lovers
Athletes
Knitters
Cooks

District and Building Administrators
Teachers
School Psychologists
Consultants
Interventionists
Questions before we start:

1. What do you already know or think about this topic?

2. What are you wondering about?

3. What do you want to learn from today’s session?
What do you see?
Our biases and their impact

Harvard University has developed tests one can self administer to determine to what extent s/he may have a bias in several different areas.

Check out this link:

https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/
Our personal histories, cultures and upbringing impact not only how we see what we see but what we choose to focus on.
What you focus on can make a big difference as to what you see.
By shifting our perspective from focusing on the child as the problem to seeing the entire situation as something that can be adjusted and improved, we open a whole new host of options for changing unwanted behaviors.
And how you interpret what you see

Thinking of your child as *behaving badly* disposes you to think of punishment.

Thinking of your child as *struggling to handle something difficult* encourages you to help them through their distress.
Have you ever had a situation in which you jumped to a conclusion based on the information you had at the time only to realize it was totally different?
Can you help me, Mrs. Martin? This wasn't covered in any of my education courses.
Step 1: Redefine the “problem”

“When a flower doesn’t bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower.”

-Alexander Den Heijer
With proper nurturing plants and people grow and thrive
What are we trying to do with students

Engagement/Connection

Are lessons designed to develop curiosity in the students?

Are lessons connected or able to be connected to personal aspects/interests of the students?

Are lessons flexible to allow for a variety of strengths possessed by individual students?

Are behaviors seen as individual student problems that need to be fixed?

Enforcement/Compliance

Is the focus is to meet standards/criteria--teaching to a test?

Is the focus to teach specific topics, skills and subjects determined by someone outside of each classroom?

Is there a fairly strict curriculum which is required?

Is the focus of “behavioral supports” to maintain a specified order and control?
How do we change the environment?

We consider triangles:

https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/about.html
When attempting to understand the meaning of behaviors, it is important to consider possible factors that could be currently impacting the student and/or the teacher or that have impacted them in the past.
Consider basic needs of students/self:
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
Conceptualization based on The Arbinger Institute’s Influence Pyramid

- Outward Mindset
- Relationship building
- Listen and Learn
- Teach and Communicate
- Correct
Instead of seeing purposeful negative behaviors, look for an unmet need and/or a skill deficit.

Focus on developing relationships with each individual student and valuing him/her for his/her strengths and uniqueness.

General Concepts to keep in mind

- Early intervention can reduce or prevent problematic behaviors.
- Changing inappropriate individual behavior often requires changing staff behavior as well.
- Awareness that consequences, including staff responses, can inadvertently maintain unacceptable behavior.
- Individuals exhibit both desirable and undesirable behaviors for a reason.
- Misbehavior is a symptom of an underlying cause.
- Behavior is communication
- Behavior has a function
- Behavior occurs in patterns
- The only behavior you can control is your own.
- Behavior can be changed.
Steps for intervening

1. Examine environmental factors
   - This could include both home life as well as within the school setting
     • At home
       - Trauma history
       - Family Illness
       - Poverty
       - Substance abuse
1. Examine environmental factors:

• In school
  – How is your classroom set up physically?
  – Are there outside distractions that could be lessened?
  – Is there a clear, understandable classroom routine?
  – Are rules/expectations written and spoken in language the student is able to understand?
  – How is your classroom management style? Is it the same for all students or do you have some flexibility based on student needs?
2. Consider Personal Needs—both student and teacher

- Areas to explore for both the student as well as ourselves:
  - How is the day going?
  - Did you eat breakfast?
  - How much sleep did you get last night?
  - Mood
  - Stress level
  - Personal triggers
  - Are there skills that need to be taught/learned?
### Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>What it may be communicating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Biting self or others</em></td>
<td>I do not know what to do next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Repeatedly asking to go to the bathroom</em></td>
<td>I do not like who I am sitting by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Disrupting class</em></td>
<td>I do not know how to do the work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Screaming</em></td>
<td>I do not like the perfume the teacher is wearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Running away</em></td>
<td>I do not like the noises in the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Getting under my desk</em></td>
<td>I do not know what words to use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Wetting myself</em></td>
<td>If I am wet then I can leave class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Think about the function
Communication tips:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ss2hULhXf04

- Make yourself clear and simple
- Many if’s and uncertainties are confusing.
- Giving a lecture is often not useful
- Listen to others and validate their feelings
- See things from the other person’s perspective
- Examine how the student takes what you are saying
- Ask the student to repeat what they have heard
- Talk to them in an appropriate way for the individual’s age
- Keep in mind the self-fulfilling prophecy
Case Study 1-Elementary level

Danny Yell

- 5 years old
- No prior educational experience before kindergarten
- Difficulties in the classroom include: cursing, talking back, yelling, threatening to hit other students and staff and throwing things when angry.
- Academic testing has not been able to be completed due to his behavioral issues.
Case study 2-Elementary level

Cheyenne Lonely

• 9 years old
• Eager to please
• Hard worker
• Struggling in all subjects, despite LLI
Case Study 3-Middle School Level

Tim O’Myhans

- 12 years old
- Academically is doing okay
- Argumentative with staff and peers
- Struggles to work in small groups on projects
- Often asked to leave class due to disruptive comments and behaviors
Case study 4-High School Level

Wanda No

- 16 year old
- Quiet and tends to keep to herself
- History of diagnosis of ADHD, currently on medication
- Low stamina and perseverance on work she sees as being too difficult
- This school year, her grades have fallen in all areas
Closing thoughts:

1. What is one thing you can take from this session to apply to your work?

2. Any new insights or thoughts from the session?
Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.

-Maya Angelou
Questions? Comments?
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Resources and References:

- For more information about ACES study: https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/about.html
- The Arbinger Institute: https://arbinger.com/home.html
- Harvard Implicit Bias: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/
-Learning and the Brain: https://www.learningandthebrain.com/
-https://montessori4autism.org/v-action-plan/accommodations-for-asd-students/materials/

-Martin, Katie (2018) Learner Centered Innovation. Also see: https://katielmartin.com/


-Superflex: https://www.socialthinking.com


Zhao, Yong (2018) What works may hurt.