Collaborating with Your Child's School to Develop Effective Behavioral Plans and Classroom Strategies

Yamalis Diaz, Ph.D.
Licensed Clinical Psychologist
Clinical Assistant Professor of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
The Child Study Center at NYU Langone Medical Center

CHADD of NYC
April 6, 2015

Objectives

- ❖ Understand important factors for working collaboratively with schools when developing behavioral intervention plans.

- ❖ Discuss steps for developing an effective behavioral intervention plan (BIP) in a school setting.

- ❖ Learn specific behavioral strategies that can be used in classroom settings to minimize attention and behavior problems.

Working with your child's school should not feel like a Duel!

It should feel like a collaborative partnership.

Creating a
Collaborative Relationship

❖ Parents of children with academic and behavioral difficulties may perceive many barriers to getting school-based services.

   ❖ Lack of consistent communication

   ❖ No plan or poor plan implementation

   ❖ Lack of knowledge about appropriate services

❖ Teachers and school staff may feel that they do not have the support they need to help the child.

   ❖ Poor understanding of child's difficulties and/or limited information about child

   ❖ Limited resources

   ❖ Lack of parental involvement

Problem-solving these concerns from both "sides" is *key* to developing an effective plan for child's success.

Methods for Getting Accommodations and Services

Informal/School-Based Services

Eligibility Law

- ❖ **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973** is a federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in any program or activity that receives federal financial assistance.
- ❖ For a student to be eligible for accommodations under Section 504, s/he must have a physical or mental need that "substantially limits one or more major life activities."

Entitlement Law

- ❖ **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** is a federal education law that requires schools to provide special education services to eligible students as outlined in their **Individualized Education Program (IEP).**
- ❖ Guarantees a **free appropriate public education (FAPE)** in the **least restrictive environment (LRE).**
- ❖ At minimum, state regulations must provide all protections contained in IDEA.

Common Misperceptions about IEPs and 504s

IEPs

- ❖ Automatically will not qualify if they aren't "below grade level"
- ❖ IEPs are only for "extreme cases" of ADHD
- ❖ There is no IEP classification for children with ADHD "only"

504 Plans

- ❖ 504 plans are just for testing accommodations
- ❖ We should just include "standard" accommodations
- ❖ There's no reason to meet to discuss 504 accommodations
- ❖ Parents are not allowed to attend 504 meetings

Prepare for IEP/504 Meetings

BEFORE:

- ❖ What is the GOAL of the meeting?
- ❖ Who is attending? Where? When?
- ❖ Prioritize your list of requests beginning with most important
  - ❖ Not sure what you can request → do some research

DURING:

- ❖ Listen carefully
  - ❖ Teacher perceptions/attributions/concerns
  - ❖ What is already being done?
- ❖ Take good notes and ask relevant questions
- ❖ Use "broken record technique" or just let them talk if already giving you everything your child needs

NYU Langone
MEDICAL CENTER

5 Steps for Developing a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP)

General Goals of a
Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP)

❖ Manage and modify attention and behavior problems that are interfering with school functioning.

❖ BIPs can focus on:

  ❖ Increasing child's academic productivity (both "input" and "output")

  ❖ Minimize inattention and off-task behavior

  ❖ Reduce hyperactivity/impulsivity and other disruptive behavior

  ❖ Decrease frustration and improve coping skills

  ❖ Increase compliance with classroom/school rules

  ❖ Increase child's independent functioning and self-esteem

Step #1: Identify specific concerns

❖ What specific difficulties or behaviors are impacting the child in the following areas?

   ❖ Learning (input)

   ❖ Academic productivity (output)

   ❖ Social-emotional functioning (engagement & participation)

❖ Does the child have a skill and/or a performance deficit?

❖ Are there characteristics of certain tasks or situations that "set the stage" for difficulties? (Antecedents)

❖ What is the "function" of certain behaviors?

   ❖ Gain attention, tangible reinforcement, escape/avoid, self-stimulate, communicate, etc. (Consequences)

Antecedents	Behavior	Consequences
What "sets the stage" for specific difficulties or behaviors?	What specific, observable behavior does the child display?	What happens *after* the behavior and does it reinforce the behavior?

➡ **FBA**

Functional Behavioral Assessment

Antecedents	Behavior	Consequences (currently)
Seated on carpet during reading lesson	Making silly sounds	Teacher reprimands, Sends back to desk
During math and writing seatwork	Not completing work	Sent to sit with guidance counselor to complete it
Hallway transitions and recess	Hitting/pushing others	Moved to front of line Sits out during recess

An FBA gives us information that allows us to understand the Antecedents that make it more likely a behavior will occur and current consequences that may inadvertently reinforce the behavior.

Developing BIP using FBA

Antecedent Strategies	Target Behavior	"Positive opposite" of target behavior	Positive/Negative Consequences
?	Making silly sounds	Sitting quietly	?
	Not completing work	Initiates first step of task when asked	
	Hitting/pushing others	Keep hands and feet to self	

Behavior Intervention Plan

Keep in mind that children with ADHD have more difficulties…

- ❖ Later in the day
- ❖ During tasks requiring organizational strategies
- ❖ When behavioral restraint (i.e., impulse control) is required
- ❖ Under low levels of stimulation, passive listening tasks
- ❖ Under variable (inconsistent) schedules of consequences
- ❖ Under longer delays to reinforcement
- ❖ In absence of adult supervision
- ❖ When required to "stop"/"start"
- ❖ In the context of negative/hostile relationships

Associated problems that should also be considered

❖ Other psychological disorders:
  - ❖ Anxiety Disorders
  - ❖ Depression and other mood disorders
  - ❖ Low frustration tolerance, poor coping skills, low self esteem
❖ Learning disorders/cognitive deficits
❖ Language/communication disorders
❖ Motor coordination deficits
❖ Medical or eating/sleeping problems
❖ Family stress/conflict

NYU Langone
MEDICAL CENTER

Step #2: Identify potential strategies related to each area of concern

- ❖ Select the behaviors/skills/deficits that will be addressed with specific strategies and accommodations.
  - ❖ Be sure to "plug up <u>each</u> leak"
- ❖ Use "antecedent control" strategies
- ❖ Include positive consequences to shape behaviors/skills
  - ❖ Avoid negative consequences or use sparingly
- ❖ Address skill and/or performance deficits
- ❖ Teach replacement behaviors that will serve the same "function"

Sample Strategies

- ❖ Academic accommodations
    - ❖ Modified classwork/homework load
    - ❖ Written instructions/teacher's notes
    - ❖ Review of homework log before leaving for the day
    - ❖ Extra set of materials for home
- ❖ Environmental changes: location of seat, materials, etc.
- ❖ Transitional warnings and prompts
- ❖ Break down tasks, give shorter direct instructions
- ❖ Review established routines regularly, use specific routines to "modulate" attention and hyperactivity
- ❖ Set clear rules/expectations *and* associated consequences
- ❖ "Fidgets", gum, doodle pad, sensory-related strategies*
- ❖ Scheduled, structured breaks*
- ❖ Daily Report Card (DRC)*

* 3 personal favorites

NYU Langone
MEDICAL CENTER

Structured
Attention & Movement Breaks

- ❖ Parents and teachers are often hesitant to give kids with ADHD breaks (for fear they won't come back!).
- ❖ Breaks provide essential cognitive and behavioral "reset" and *minimize* likelihood of disruptive behavior… kids take them anyway!
- ❖ With specific rules, kids often do well on breaks.
- ❖ Rules should specify when?, where?, what? & how long?
- ❖ For example,
    - ❖ Breaks can be taken before or after a lesson, but not during
    - ❖ You may take 3 before lunch and 3 after lunch (you don't have to take a break, but you can use them if you need them!)
    - ❖ You can take a break at your desk or in a quiet corner of the room
    - ❖ During your break, you can do a quiet activity (read, draw, solve math problems, write part of a cool story, etc.)
    - ❖ A break can last 3-5 minutes

Using Daily Report Cards (DRC)

❖ Includes 2-3 specific goals/target behaviors

❖ Can be reinforced at school *and* at home and/or tied in to existing reward systems

❖ Increases consistency of communication between parents and teachers

❖ Focuses parent/teacher attention on specific goals/behaviors and reduces subjective reporting

❖ Provides a method for tracking progress on specific goals

Arrival until Lunch	✔	After Lunch until Dismissal	✔
Stay in my seat (with less than 3 reminders) ☐ ☐ ☐		Stay in my seat (with less than 3 reminders) ☐ ☐ ☐	
Raise my hand before I talk (with less than 3 reminders) ☐ ☐ ☐		Raise my hand before I talk (with less than 3 reminders) ☐ ☐ ☐	

Teacher: Indicate reminder given by checking box

DRC Sample
(Multiple times/day)

Target Behaviors	Math	Writing assignment	Social Studies	Lunch	Recess	Cluster
Keep hands and feet to self	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Initiates task/activity when prompted	Yes No N/A	Yes No N/A	Yes No N/A			Yes No N/A
Follows activity rules (with <3 reminders)	Yes No N/A	Yes No N/A	Yes No N/A	Yes No N/A	Yes No N/A	Yes No N/A

# of Yeses = _____ %
# of Possible Yeses

Level 1 Reward = ≥ 80%
Level 2 Reward = 60-79%

Teacher Comments:

Sample Positive Consequences

Sample Home Rewards

- ❖ Extra screen time
- ❖ Special treat
- ❖ Special outing
- ❖ X minutes past bedtime
- ❖ Free pass on chore
- ❖ Points toward specific reward
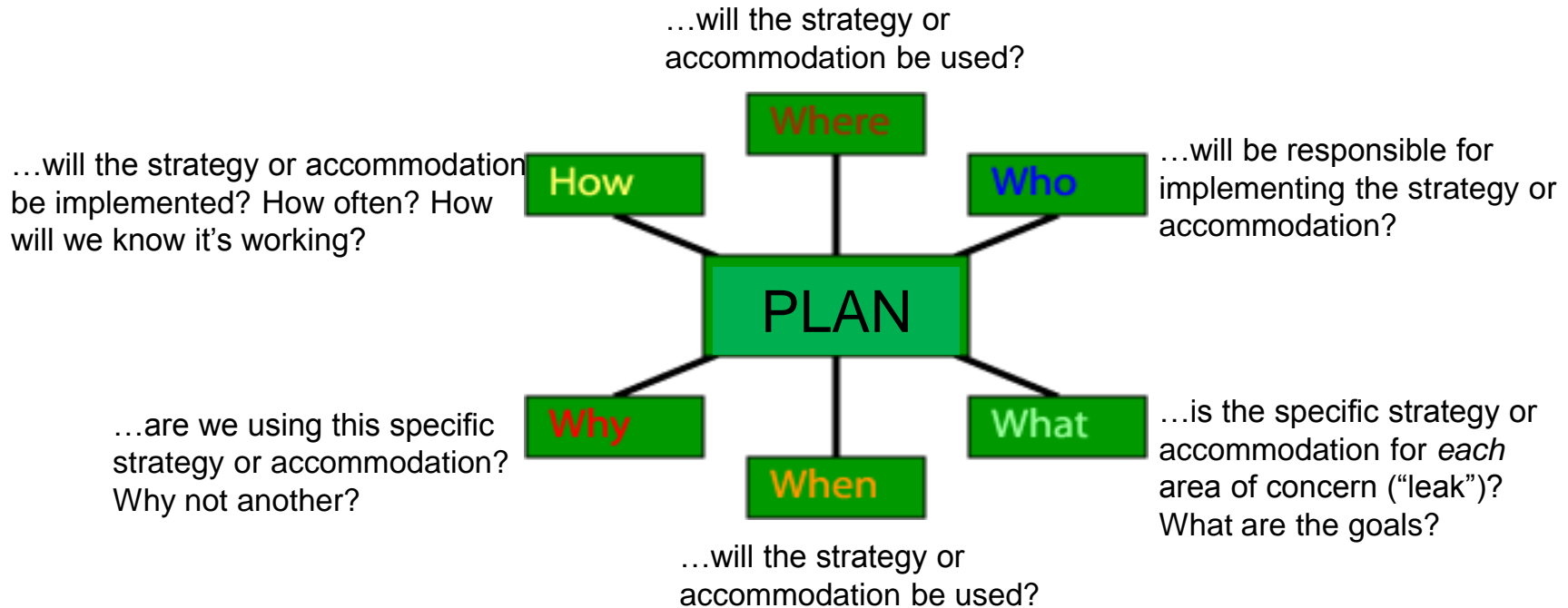- ❖ Many more! Be creative!

Sample School Rewards

- ❖ X minutes free time
- ❖ Extra computer time
- ❖ Visit to preferred staff member
- ❖ Teacher's helper or special job
- ❖ Special recognition
- ❖ Points toward specific reward
- ❖ Many more! Be creative!

PRAISE and POSITIVE FEEDBACK!!

Step #3: Develop a *Specific* Plan

❖ Keep in mind "the devil is in the details"

  ❖ Be sure to specify "5 W's and one H"

…will the strategy or accommodation be used?

…will the strategy or accommodation be implemented? How often? How will we know it's working?

…will be responsible for implementing the strategy or accommodation?

Where

How

Who

PLAN

…are we using this specific strategy or accommodation? Why not another?

Why

What

When

…is the specific strategy or accommodation for *each* area of concern ("leak")? What are the goals?

…will the strategy or accommodation be used?

Write out a Detailed BIP

Antecedent Strategies	Target Behavior	"Positive opposite" of target behavior	Positive/Negative Consequences
Review carpet time rules	Making silly sounds	Sitting quietly	Ignore silly sounds Praise sitting quietly
Transitional warning before challenging task Break down task Remind student of DRC goal	Not completing work	Initiates first step of task when asked	Praise when starts Circle YES or NO on DRC
Review transition rules Assign transition task Remind student of DRC goal	Hitting/pushing others	Keep hands and feet to self	Praise for "safe hands" Circle YES or NO on DRC X minute loss of recess

Behavioral Intervention Plan

Incorporating BIP into an IEP

❖ Review current annual goals and intervention strategies

    ❖ Specific? Measurable? Feasible?

❖ Specify how progress will be monitored *and* communicated to parents regularly

❖ Request that the IEP include the BIP

On many IEPs, these questions are checked "No", but both should be checked "Yes" in order to ensure that the IEP includes a behavioral plan if your child needs one.

STUDENT NEEDS RELATING TO SPECIAL FACTORS

Does the student need a behavioral intervention plan? ☐ No ☑ Yes:

Does the student need strategies, including positive behavioral interventions, supports and other strategies to address behaviors that

impede the student's learning or that of others? ☐ No ☑ Yes:

Typical Sample IEP Goal

Annual Goals What the student will be expected to achieve by the end of the year in which the IEP is in effect	Criteria Measure to determine if goal has been met	Method How progress will be measured	Schedule When progress will be measured
In one year, CHILD will demonstrate more appropriate classroom behavior by following teacher instructions and classroom rules.	80%	Teacher observation	Monthly

Modified Sample IEP Goal

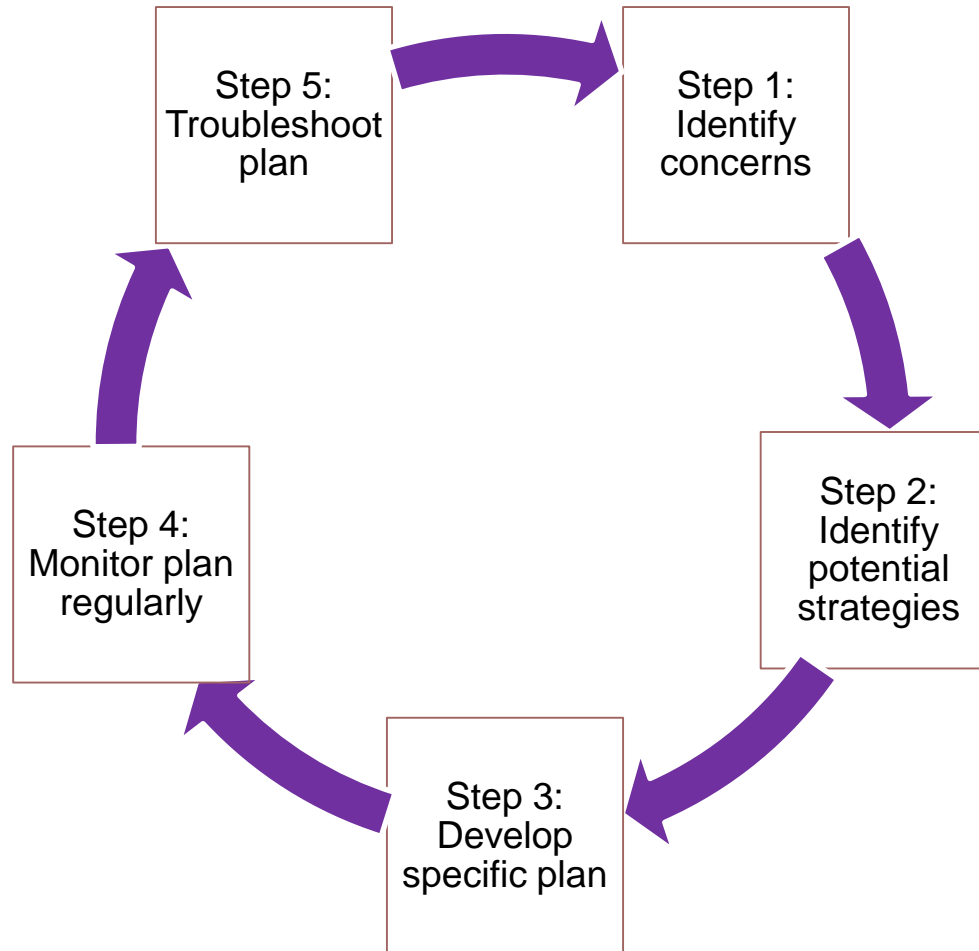| Annual Goals What the student will be expected to achieve by the end of the year in which the IEP is in effect	Criteria Measure to determine if goal has been met	Method How progress will be measured	Schedule When progress will be measured
In one year, CHILD will demonstrate more appropriate classroom behavior by following teacher instructions and classroom rules.	80%	Teacher observation of target behavior recorded on Daily Report Card	Recorded daily, reviewed monthly, modified as needed

Step #4: Monitor the plan regularly

❖ Create a concise <u>written</u> plan and ensure everyone has a copy.

  ❖ This can be a summary email following a meeting

❖ Specify method and frequency of communication between parents and teachers to regularly monitor plan and progress.

❖ Try to include a monitoring/tracking tool to assess whether strategies/accommodations are working (e.g., DRC)

  ❖ Is the child making progress? How will we know?

❖ Follow up and problem-solve any issues as soon as you know a part of the plan is not being implemented or is not working.

Step #5: Troubleshoot the plan
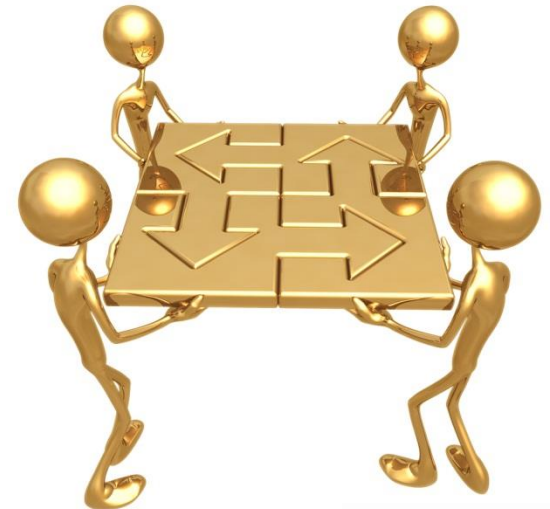
Common reasons plans fail:

- Goals are not clearly defined or plan addresses too many goals at the same time
- Plan addresses the wrong issue (misunderstanding of the nature of child's difficulties)
- Child has a skill deficit that is not being addressed
- Positive rewards being used are not reinforcing to child
- Positive rewards not being provided frequently enough
  - "Front-load" the intervention plan with a high rate of reinforcement at the beginning
- No home-based consequences included in plan
- Plan is not being implemented *as designed*
- Plan is not reviewed/modified or is stopped too soon

Effective plan development and implementation is a circular process

Ensure Continuity of Care

❖ Many individuals involved in implementing educational and treatment plan, but who is the coach?

❖ How do we ensure consistency and reinforcement of skills across settings and providers?

❖ How will we all communicate? When? How often?

❖ When should you seek additional support?

    ❖ Educational advocates/lawyers

    ❖ Mental health providers

    ❖ Parent support groups

Available Resources

- ❖ The NYC Department of Education:
  - ❖ Parent Bill of Rights summarizing key rights: http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/ParentBillofRights/default.htm
  - ❖ Family Guide to Special Education Services summarizing the process and available services: http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/SpecialEducation/tellmemore/importantDocuments.htm
- ❖ Advocates for Children of New York: http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/, Helpline: 1-866-427-6033
- ❖ Special Education Advocacy: www.wrightslaw.com
- ❖ The Statewide Parent Advocacy Network of New Jersey (SPAN): www.spanadvocacy.org
- ❖ Parent-friendly information about ADHD and related topics: www.chadd.org

Questions?