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Managing Challenging Behaviors in Schools: Research-Based Strategies That Work.
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CHAPTER 1

Preventing and Managing Learning and Behavior Problems

An Overview

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Many teachers in the field of education begin this journey with the intent of teaching and maybe even inspiring students with meaningful, well-planned instruction. We would venture to say that few teachers enter the fields of general or special education to work with students with social and behavioral challenges. In our many years as classroom teachers, behavior specialists, and researchers, we have often heard teachers express frustration that they did not "sign up to deal with behavior problems." Yet, it is all too often the case that these problems must be handled.

A teacher's lack of confidence in his or her classroom management skills can be a major detriment to his or her ability to be an effective educator. Brouwers and Tomic (2000) found that teachers' self-efficacy for classroom management has a longitudinal effect on teacher "burnout." Teachers who do not view themselves as capable of managing a range of behaviors in the classroom are more likely to leave the field than teachers who feel confident and capable. Martin, Linfoot, and Stephenson (1999) found that teachers who had low confidence in their behavior management skills were more likely to refer students to other school personnel and less likely to use positively focused strategies. In fact, statistics show that more than 58% of first-year teachers wish they had had more practical training before beginning their first year of teaching. This number increases to 61% immediately following their first year (Harris, 1991). Even teachers who elect to work with students with and at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) report difficulties in managing students' behavior efficiently (Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004).

These are teachers who have been trained to manage both externalizing (e.g., noncompliance, aggression) and internalizing (e.g., anxiety, depression) behaviors.

Consequently, it is important that teachers acquire the knowledge and confidence to use a range of strategies to (1) prevent problem behaviors from occurring in the first place and (2) respond effectively and efficiently to problems that do occur. In short, teachers must have an extensive repertoire of skills so they can deliver instruction in a manner that allows them to meet the academic, social, and behavioral needs of the increasingly diverse set of students they serve (Lane, 2007; Walker et al., 2004).

Ideally, teachers' knowledge of classroom management and individual student behavior supports should start with proactive strategies that are aligned with the school's primary prevention plan. It is much less effective to *begin* with reactive strategies, such as imposing consequences, without first addressing the fundamental components of proactive classroom management. These essentials include establishing a positive classroom climate; creating a physical room arrangement that facilitates instruction; providing clear, consistent reinforcement of behavioral expectations; determining the procedures and routines that smooth transitions and maximize instructional time; and managing paperwork efficiently (see Chapter 2, this volume). Poorly managed classrooms are characterized by teachers who wait for problems to occur and then attempt to respond to issues as they arise. This is unfortunate, as unstructured (or even unsafe) learning environments pose challenges to teachers and students alike in that they do not facilitate the overall goal of providing meaningful, rigorous learning experiences for all learners.

In this book, we provide preservice and inservice teachers, teacher educators, administrators, school psychologists, and behavior specialists with a continuum of strategies to prevent and respond to student behavior problems. The strategies are recommended for use in schools that subscribe to three-tiered models of prevention, although they can be implemented by classroom teachers working in schools that have not yet developed such models. The strategies begin with the least intensive supports (e.g., how to create well-managed classrooms) that take minimal resources (e.g., time, effort, or training) to implement and move to increasingly more intensive supports (e.g., functional assessment-based interventions; Umbreit, Ferro, Liaupsin, & Lane, 2007) for students who do not respond to less intensive interventions. In the beginning chapters, we provide information that is grounded in research (research based) as well as in our collective professional experiences (practice-based). In the later chapters, many of the strategies and procedures introduced (e.g., functional assessment-based interventions) are evidence-based practices that are supported by scientifically rigorous studies.

Because we recommend that these strategies be implemented in conjunction with three-tiered models of prevention, we begin by describing the full continuum of behavior support, which includes primary (Tier 1), secondary (Tier 2), and tertiary (Tier 3) levels of prevention. Then we focus on primary prevention, which is a comprehensive and systematic approach to supporting *all* students in a school. An

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additional benefit is that this approach is particularly beneficial for students with more challenging behaviors, including those at risk for EBD (Kauffman & Landrum, 2009; Lane, 2007). Next, we provide an introduction to the relation between teachers' and students' behavior, emphasizing how changes in teacher behavior can lead to changes in student behavior (Walker et al., 2004). Finally, we conclude by providing a preview of the content to be covered in each of the eight chapters in this book.

CONTINUUM OF BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

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Ideally, school site teams would have a three-tiered model of prevention in place to prevent and respond to learning and behavioral challenges to meet the full range of students' academic, behavioral, and social needs (Lane, 2007; Lane, Kalberg, & Menzies, 2009). Many schools and districts across the country have developed such models that focus on the school as the agent for change (Horner & Sugai, 2000). Response to intervention (RTI; Gresham, 2002a; Sugai, Horner, & Gresham, 2002) and positive behavior support (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai & Horner, 2002) are two such models that use a systematic, data-driven approach to providing increasingly more intensive levels of support according to how students respond to the various levels. Some schools have developed comprehensive, integrated models that include academic, behavioral, and social components rather than addressing these components separately (see Lane, Kalberg, & Menzies, 2009). Although we strongly believe that schoolwide models offer the best support for all members of the school community, we realize that not all teachers, administrators, and support personnel (e.g., school psychologists, behavior specialists, and paraprofessionals) have the advantage of being in a school that uses such an approach. In such cases, this book is doubly important as it provides information about the benefits of implementing such a system. It also gives an overview of each of the components and how they work, which may be useful for those working at the school-site level, as well as for those individuals involved in professional development, teacher preparation, and research activities. In this section, we briefly describe each level of prevention.

Primary Prevention

Primary prevention plans serve as the basis of this model. The intent of primary prevention efforts is to prevent harm from occurring. All students in a school receive primary prevention efforts—such as an effective or validated literacy curriculum, violence prevention programs, and/or character education programs—just by virtue of attending school. These prevention efforts and programs should be backed by research that demonstrates their effectiveness so as to avoid such wasting precious resources as personnel time and money.

There is no need to screen for possible participation or to determine eligibility; all students participate. The goal here is to provide universal supports to prevent undesirable outcomes in academic, social, or behavioral domains (e.g., school failure or impaired social relationships; Lane, Robertson, & Graham-Bailey, 2006).

For approximately 80–90% of the student body, these efforts are likely to suffice (Gresham, Sugai, Horner, Quinn, & McInerney, 1998; Sugai & Horner, 2006). Schoolwide data such as curriculum-based measures, office discipline referrals, and behavioral screening data (systematic tools designed to measure students' behavioral performance patterns) are analyzed to determine which students might benefit from targeted supports such as secondary and tertiary prevention efforts, which are described next.

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Secondary Prevention

Secondary prevention efforts are intended to address more serious behavior issues by reversing harm (e.g., identifying and supporting students who *might* be headed down an undesirable path; Walker & Severson, 2002). Namely, students who do not respond favorably to primary prevention efforts are offered secondary support programs to meet their specific acquisition (can't do), fluency (trouble doing), or performance (not motivated to do) deficits (Elliott & Gresham 2007). For example, students with limited reading fluency skills may receive small-group instruction in evidence-based interventions to address this skill (e.g., peer-assisted learning strategies; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Burish, 2000; Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, & Martinez, 2002; Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, & Simmons, 1997). Students who struggle with work completion or high levels of impulsivity may benefit from self-monitoring strategies (see Chapter 6, this volume; Mooney, Ryan, Uhing, Reid, & Epstein, 2005).

Approximately 10–15% of the overall student body may need such secondary prevention. Once these supports are in place, additional information (e.g., weekly oral reading fluency probes, percentage of assignments completed, or percentage of academic engagement) will need to be collected to determine how well the student is responding to this additional support. In cases in which students are not responding, or if students are exposed to more extensive risk factors (e.g., chaotic family environments, poverty, mental health issues; Reid & Patterson, 1991), then tertiary prevention efforts may be warranted.

Tertiary Prevention

Tertiary prevention is the most individualized, intensive level of support within a three-tiered model of prevention. The intent here is to intervene with students who exhibit the most challenging behaviors—again, in this case, to reduce harm. Functional assessment-based (Umbreit et al., 2007) and individualized reading (e.g., Clarke-Edmands, 2004; Lindamood & Lindamood, 1998; Lockavitch, 2000; Wilson, 2000) interventions are two such examples, both of which require an extensive

time investment, as well as monitoring of the student's progress throughout the intervention. Given that this level is highly resource intensive in terms of time, personnel, and expertise, these interventions are reserved for students with complex, long-term, and resistant behavioral or academic issues (Kern & Manz, 2004).

Approximately 5–7% of the student body may need tertiary-level supports. Although many of these students may already receive special education services, some will be general education students who exhibit bullying behavior or chronic absenteeism, who are isolated from their peers, or who experience extreme family problems such as domestic violence. However, if a student does not respond to this most intensive level, then it may be necessary to refer him or her to a multidisciplinary team to determine whether special education services are warranted.

Summary

If comprehensive three-tiered models of intervention that include academic, behavioral, and social components can be designed with an appropriate balance between scientific rigor and feasibility, schools have the potential to meet the needs of all students—including the most difficult population for schools, those with and at risk for EBD (Lane, 2007; Walker et al., 1996; Walker & Severson, 2002). For all levels of support, it is important that certain core features be evaluated systematically so that one can draw accurate conclusions about how well these various levels of prevention are working. Specifically, it is important to monitor the extent to which such interventions are implemented as planned so that the school staff can be confident that the improvements they see are a result of the intervention (*treatment integrity*; Gresham, 1989). This is also important information when the intended results do not occur. Lack of sufficient implementation (also referred to as *low treatment integrity*) can be the cause of less powerful or nonexistent outcomes. Also, the participants' perceptions of the goals, procedures, and outcomes should be ascertained to be sure that the program is one that they can comfortably support (*social validity*; Wolf, 1978). Finally, the degree to which the new behaviors continue over time (*maintenance*) and in new environments or circumstances should be examined to determine how effective the intervention is (*generalization*; Lane & Beebe-Frankenberger, 2004). This type of information increases participants' involvement in a schoolwide model because it allows them to make informed decisions about the time and energy they are devoting to the system of supports.

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THREE-TIERED MODELS OF PREVENTION: BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS WITH AND AT RISK FOR EBD

Primary prevention efforts are particularly beneficial for students with and at risk for EBD. This is especially encouraging given that prevalence estimates suggest that anywhere from 2 to 20% of the school age population has or is at risk for EBD

but that fewer than 1% of students are eligible for special education services under the category of emotional disturbance (ED;Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act [IDEA], 2004). This means that it is very important for general education teachers, administrators, and other school-site support staff members (e.g., behavior specialists) to be prepared to identify and support students with EBD, as they are highly likely to be served in the general education setting.

When defining EBD, the first thought that comes to mind is students with antisocial tendencies whose behaviors are aggressive, noncompliant, and defiant, posing significant challenges to adults and peers alike. Although these students with externalizing behaviors are the easiest to recognize, the EBD category also includes students with internalizing behavior disorders. Examples of internalizing behaviors include anxiety, depression, withdrawal, and eating disorders. Thus the term *EBD* includes students with externalizing, internalizing, and combined behavior patterns (Achenbach, 1991; Walker et al., 2004).

Although they are most often recognized for their behavioral excesses, students with EBD also have pronounced social and academic deficits. For example, they struggle to negotiate relationships with peers and teachers, exhibiting high levels of aggressive and coercive behaviors (Walker, Irvin, Noell, & Singer, 1992), as well as impaired social skills, that make it difficult for them to interpret social situations accurately. For example, students with EBD are likely to interpret a neutral experience, such as a pat on the back by a peer, as hostile. They may perceive it as "hitting" (Crick, Grotpeter, & Bigbee, 2002). Not surprisingly, students with EBD tend to respond sharply to such interactions, a response that can be shocking to their peers, resulting in strained peer relationships.

Furthermore, students with and at risk for EBD also struggle academically. Even if these students go on to receive special education support under the ED label (IDEA, 2004), they still experience less success than general education students and students in other disability categories (Landrum, Tankersley, & Kauffman, 2003). They often have broad academic deficits in reading, writing, and mathematics (Mattison, Hooper, & Glassberg, 2002; Nelson, Benner, Lane, & Smith, 2004; Reid, Gonzalez, Nordness, Trout, & Epstein, 2004) that tend *not* to improve over time. In fact, their academic skills may even decline (Nelson et al. 2004).

Not only do students with and at risk for EBD struggle in school, but also their outcomes do not improve when they leave school. They continue to struggle in their interpersonal relationships, experiencing high rates of divorce, unemployment, and use of mental health services (Kauffman & Brigham, 2009; Kauffman & Landrum, 2009; Wagner & Davis, 2006; Walker et al., 2004). In short, life is difficult for this population.

Primary prevention efforts hold promise for students with and at risk for EBD in that primary prevention programs can help level the playing field for students by subscribing to an instructional approach to behavior. In positive behavior support models, faculty and staff establish behavioral expectations to specify

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exactly what is expected in each key location in the school. Then the expectations are taught directly, just as academic skills are taught. Students are provided with opportunities to practice and receive reinforcement for meeting these expectations. Schoolwide data such as office discipline referrals, behavior screening tools (e.g., Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders [SSBD], Walker & Severson, 1992; Student Risk Screening Scale [SRSS], Drummond, 1994), attendance data, curriculum-based measures, and standardized test scores are used to monitor student performance and determine which students may need additional supports.

For students with and at risk for EBD, this three-tiered model offers a comprehensive, data-driven approach to provide graduated support according to individual students' needs to (1) prevent the development of behavioral problems that may lead to EBD and (2) support students *with* EBD by implementing targeted supports (e.g., secondary and tertiary). In short, this model includes proactive components aimed at prevention (primary prevention programs), as well as reactive components aimed at remediation (secondary and tertiary prevention programs; Kauffman & Landrum, 2009).

TEACHERS' STRUCTURING

Ideally, all schools would have a comprehensive three-tiered model in place that would meet the multiple needs of all learners. Such a model provides tremendous support, clarity, and structure for students, as well as for teachers, administrators, and school-site support personnel, thereby allowing everyone to attend to the business of teaching and learning. However, even if a schoolwide plan is not in place, it is important for teachers, administrators, and school-site support personnel to have an extensive range of skills and competences in order to prevent and respond to problem behaviors. They need a proactive set of strategies and tactics to prevent problem behaviors from occurring and thereby facilitate instruction. More specifically, when a teacher can spend less time responding to problem behaviors in a classroom, he or she can spend more time on instructional tasks and student learning opportunities.

Also, it is important for teachers and other school-site personnel to understand the relationship between instruction and behavior: How we teach influences how students behave, and how students behave influences how we teach (Lane & Wehby, 2002). For example, if a math teacher is attempting to teach place value with the use of manipulatives yet is concerned about students using them as projectiles, the teacher may rely on techniques that are not as effective or engaging, such as using worksheets. In more extreme cases, a vicious cycle of negative reinforcement occurs in which teachers essentially (yet unintentionally) engage in a curriculum of noninstruction (Shores et al., 1993). In brief, teachers implicitly agree to avoid instructional tasks if students eliminate the aggressive, disruptive behaviors that

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occur when teachers introduce task demands. Essentially, the messages become (1) I won't bother you if you won't try to teach (student perspective) and (2) I won't try to teach if you don't misbehave (teacher perspective).

This book provides a comprehensive continuum of supports that can be used to prevent and respond to problem behaviors, ideally within the framework of a three-tiered model of prevention. It offers even more critical support for those who do not have the advantage of working within a schoolwide primary prevention model.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS VOLUME

Dealing with challenging student behaviors is one of the most difficult aspects of teaching. Teachers frequently report this to be among *the* most challenging tasks they encounter in their jobs, and many teachers indicate that they feel ill prepared to meet the behavioral challenges they experience in the classroom (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995). A thorough knowledge of proactive systems of behavior management provides teachers with powerful resources that allow them to be effective and confident educators. Teaching environments characterized by consistent, positive discipline approaches contribute to students' academic and social success. This volume begins with an explanation of three-tiered models of prevention that can be used to prevent behavior challenges from occurring, as well as to respond to existing cases. We then offer a continuum of strategies beginning with general proactive approaches that increase in intensity to address the most challenging behaviors (see Figure 1.1). We offer a straightforward, practical approach to preventing behavior challenges, as well as effectively managing those that do occur. In this volume, we offer a unique approach to preventing and managing behavior problems in the classroom. Whereas most texts emphasize general theories of

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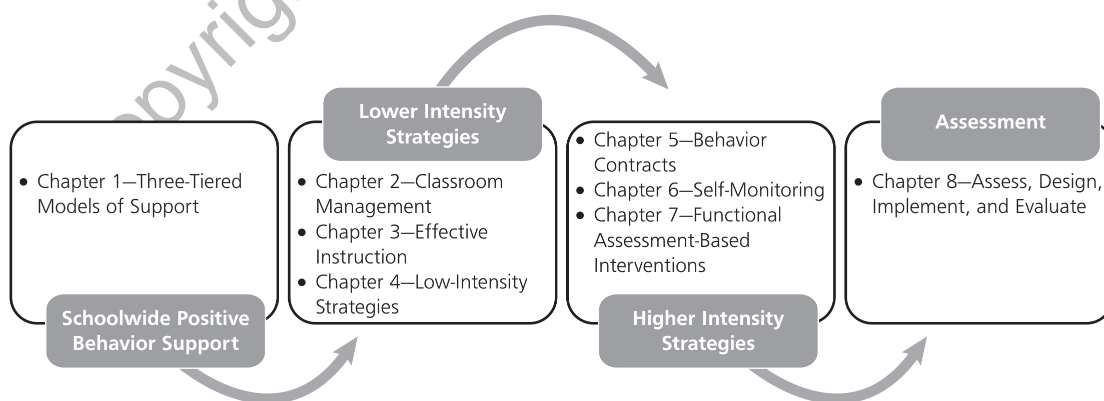

FIGURE 1.1. An overview of research-based practices for preventing and responding to behavior problems: Effective, practical strategies that work.

behavior management, we focus on specific techniques for proactive management. This information can be used by a range of individuals, including: (1) school-site personnel (e.g., teachers, administrators, school psychologists, behavior specialists, and paraprofessionals), whose main goal is to support instruction; (2) teacher trainers who are focused on preparing preservice teachers; (3) staff development trainers who are focused on supporting inservice teachers; (4) researchers who are interested in understanding and effecting change at the school-site level; and (5) parents who are interested in gleaning information that can help them to understand and support their child's learning and behavior within the school-site context.

We describe a continuum that begins with a broad-based approach to thinking about student behavior and ends with focused, intensive interventions to address more severe problems. We have organized this volume into three parts: Preventing Behavior Problems, Responding to Problem Behaviors, and Getting Started. In the paragraphs that follow, we provide a detailed overview of each chapter.

The first part addresses the systems that must be in place in order to provide effective instruction and avoid most behavior problems. The second part provides specific strategies for dealing with more challenging behavior. Each chapter includes an overview of the strategy, of the research supporting its use, and of the efficacy of the strategy with different populations (e.g., students with learning disabilities, students in general education, English language learners, and students at risk) and a detailed explanation of how to implement it. The final part looks at how to get started at the classroom level and includes an evaluation tool to help you decide where and how to focus your behavior changes.

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Part I. Preventing Behavior Problems

In Part I, we focus on classwide strategies for preventing problem behaviors. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the continuum of supports available and describes a comprehensive three-tiered model of prevention. We explain how teachers can structure their own classrooms to align with schoolwide prevention programs.

The next three chapters are dedicated to secondary-level classwide supports designed to prevent problem behaviors from occurring by facilitating strong instruction and incorporating sound classroom management strategies. Chapter 2 focuses on classroom management, Chapter 3 on instructional delivery, and Chapter 4 on teacher behaviors with an emphasis on low-intensity strategies (strategies that take limited time and effort to implement).

In Chapter 2, *Classroom Management*, we review the elements necessary for a comprehensive approach to classroom management. Before teachers can address the behavior of individual students, they must establish classroom routines that ensure a productive learning environment for *all* students. This chapter includes topics such as physical room arrangement, classroom climate, student transitions, supervision and monitoring, approaches to discipline, and managing paperwork.

We review the supporting research conducted in elementary, middle, and high school settings. Then we provide information and recommendations for addressing these issues in the classroom, providing step-by-step directions, illustrations, and related resources.

In Chapter 3, *Instructional Delivery*, we address issues related to the delivery of curriculum and instruction. An important component of managing behavior is to create learning experiences that provide students with opportunities to work in their zones of proximal development. Behavior problems are more likely to emerge when schoolwork is either too easy or too difficult (Glick & Armstrong, 1996; Umbreit, Lane, & Dejud, 2004). Therefore, we begin by providing an overview of instructional delivery, emphasizing the following: appropriate curricula, engaging instruction, appropriate pacing, and choice and preferred activities. Then we provide information and recommendations for addressing these issues in the classroom, providing step-by-step directions, illustrations, and related resources.

In Chapter 4, *Low-Intensity Strategies*, we discuss how teachers can examine their own teaching styles and student–teacher interactions to be sure they are using a proactive approach to supporting positive student behavior. We begin by discussing how to plan for and implement intrinsically rewarding activities. Then we introduce strategies that teachers can employ to redirect, minimize, or prevent undesirable behaviors. The techniques include: (1) supervision, (2) proximity, (3) with-it-ness, (4) appropriate use of praise, (5) providing opportunities to respond, (6) instructive feedback, (7) choice and preferred activities, (8) token economies, and (9) formal teaching of prosocial behaviors. Then we provide information and recommendations for addressing these strategies in the classroom, providing step-by-step directions, illustrations, and related resources.

Part II. Responding to Problem Behaviors

In Part II, we focus on more intensive strategies for responding to existing problem behaviors. These chapters assist teachers and other professionals with students who manifest challenging behaviors in spite of strong classroom management, effective teaching, and an active awareness of how teachers' actions can support positive behaviors. In Chapter 5, we introduce behavior contracting; in Chapter 6, self-monitoring; and in Chapter 7, functional assessment-based interventions.

In Chapter 5, *Behavior Contracts*, we examine behavior contracting with individual students to address academic and behavior issues. We include an overview of behavior contracting, reviewing research to support the use of behavior contracts with different populations of elementary, middle, and high school-age students. Then we provide information and recommendations for designing, implementing, and evaluating behavior contracts in the classroom, some of which may involve the parent, and for monitoring implementation and outcomes. We also provide illustrations and related resources.

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In Chapter 6, *Self-Monitoring*, we introduce self-monitoring procedures for use with individual students to address academic and behavior issues. We include an overview of self-monitoring strategies, supporting research for its use with elementary, middle, and high school-age students. Then we provide information and recommendations for designing, implementing, and evaluating self-monitoring interventions in the classroom. We offer step-by-step directions, illustrations, and related resources.

In Chapter 7, *Functional Assessment-Based Interventions*, we provide an approach to designing and implementing functional assessment-based interventions for use with individual students to address academic and behavior issues. Chapter 7 includes an overview of functional assessment-based interventions, focusing on one systematic approach developed by Umbreit, Ferro and colleagues (2007). We review the supporting literature for this approach as applied to use with students with and at risk for high-incidence disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, and other health impairments; IDEA, 2004). Then we provide information and recommendations for designing, implementing, and evaluating functional assessment-based interventions in the classroom. We offer step-by-step directions, illustrations, and related resources.

Part III. Getting Started

In this final section, we focus exclusively on helping teachers and other individuals to make informed decisions about how to apply the strategies for preventing and responding to problem behaviors presented in this book. This section contains only one chapter, Chapter 8.

In Chapter 8, *Getting Started in Your Classroom*, we provide guidelines on how to get started. We include a self-assessment, practical suggestions for determining which procedures to employ, and feasible guidelines for monitoring outcomes. We also emphasize the importance of addressing schoolwide components and offer teachers, administrators, and other school-site support personnel suggestions for how to help start schoolwide programs as well.

At this point, we invite you to grab a latte (decaf, grande, nonfat, extra hot!) or a cup of tea and read on!

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