

Preface

The main title of this book, *Teaching Behavior*, is meant to be a double entendre. When the word *teaching* is considered as an adjective modifying the noun *behavior*, the title describes a set of actions or behaviors in which teachers engage when teaching (i.e., the behavior of teaching)—and this book is focused precisely on these teaching behaviors. At the same time, the behaviors in which teachers engage are important only as a means to an end—a means to successful student behavior. Thus, when the word *teaching* is considered as a verb, the title describes the purpose of teaching (i.e., teaching students to behave). While it is common to talk about teaching and behavior in the same context, this book is meant to approach student behavior more directly as the product of specific behaviors undertaken by the teacher. That is, for any given student behavior, good or bad, there are teacher behaviors (or lack thereof) that are at least in part responsible for both the current and future exhibition of that behavior.

As this book will make clear, teaching provides an impact on probability, and the selection of high-probability teaching behaviors must be seen as a sacred responsibility. However, one should not confuse *responsibility* in this sense with *fault*. Student misbehaviors are not the fault of the teacher. However, misbehaviors do create a responsibility for teachers to adjust teaching. If the teacher allows the student to fail, at some point one could say the teacher has shirked his or her responsibility. The teacher who does not adjust teaching in relation to student behavior suffers very poor probabilities for future success. For example, in response to the query “What’s $2 + 2$?” the student response is “5.” The teacher has previously taught this fact in accordance with what would be considered to provide a high probability for success, and has even provided reminders immediately prior to asking the question. But the fact remains, if the teacher’s behavior does not change in the future, the probability of the student suddenly getting the correct answer is not favorable. So again, the student’s error is not the fault of the teacher, but that behavior certainly has created a responsibility for the teacher’s behavior to change in some meaningful manner to create higher probabilities for this student’s success in the future.

The book is written in the first person—as if I were telling a story. My own teaching experiences were largely in self-contained classrooms and segregated alternative settings with students identified with emotional and behavioral disorders. As a generality, minorities and persons from poverty were overrepresented in my classrooms. However, I’ve discovered over the years that these demographics are largely irrelevant in terms of selecting intervention. Effective instructional practices (albeit at varying degrees of intensity) work similarly well across all students. Most who have taught or worked with children and youth have at least a basic understanding of what challenging behaviors are and how frustrating they can be for a teacher.

It seems that despite our experiences, we tend to have an expectation that all students will have at least some respect for adult authority and comply with simple directions when pressed. Perhaps this is an instinctual expectation as, for me, it seems to fly in the face of an entire career of experiences. After more than 30 years of working with students with challenging behavior, during frequent school observations, I still find myself shocked when students casually and with impunity defy teacher directions. I have to admit there is an immediate emotion associated with these observances—an emotion that I would have to call anger. How dare that student so insolently say no to a teacher? What they need is a strong hand to let them know this won't be tolerated! But just as quickly, I go through the list of students I've dealt with who exhibited similar behaviors—none of whom ever responded favorably to louder directions, threatening postures, or a more strong-armed approach.

In isolation, away from the immediate context and frustration within which these confrontations occur, it is far too easy to provide expert advice. I used to get lost in long and complicated conversations with my administrators and professors, whom I think felt that they had to offer a solution when I asked for direction with a student. Having never actually observed the student, they confidently told me that I needed to try some specific intervention or strategy. I'd feel temporarily satisfied that there was hope, until the next day when I walked into my room and was hit with the immediate realization that the intervention we'd been discussing was far too flawed or simplistic. There is a hypnotic attraction to potential fixes—which is actually much preferable to what eventually grows into the more calloused resignation of learned helplessness. I can recall points in my career where I simply lost faith that anything could change behavior for the positive among the most challenging students.

When I reported my failures and those of my students back to administrators and those in charge, their response always left me feeling like I was bothering them. The subtle eye roll or exhausted sigh made me feel like they felt this was my problem, and asking for advice was sign of weakness. One thing I have come to be certain of over the years is that there are rarely any quick and simple fixes. It's frustrating and it always will be. The answers are comprehensive in nature and must take into account the environment, relationships, instruction, consequences, and patience. If it were easy to fix, there would not be so many of these problems confronting us. While the potential for completely avoiding student misbehavior is completely improbable, developing a comprehensive approach to managing classrooms through effective instruction provides the highest probability for success.

USING THE BOOK

The book is written as a hybrid of textbook and teacher companion. Each chapter begins with discussion questions that can serve either as an advance organizer of the content to come or as guiding questions for a book discussion group. The idea is that it might serve as a guide for a course of study or as a more comfortable read to help the average teacher consider effective teaching—especially in consideration of students with challenging behavior. As a general rule, I have avoided heavy referencing, preferring instead to provide a list of important readings and resources focused on particularly important topics as they appear throughout each chapter. The idea is to provide readers with access to more in-depth information should there be an interest in a particular topic, rather than to spread citations throughout. Still,

I believe all the information I present herein to be pulled from among the readings I suggest. Finally, fidelity checklists are presented at the end of Chapters 6 through 9, and a comprehensive Checklist for Effective Teaching is included on the companion website at <http://www.corwin.com/ScottTeachingBehavior>.

The audience for the book is the average classroom teacher, administrator, instructional assistant, or anyone else with daily student contact. While some classrooms present more challenges than others, the array of proven strategies based on effective teaching does not vary. As students present greater challenges, the strategies presented herein will necessarily become more intensive and will require more effort, more adults, and more patience. However, the strategies that we know provide the highest probability for student success are essentially the same at early childhood and high school, for gifted students and students with intellectual disabilities, in Math and Art class, and with typically developing students and those with identified behavioral challenges. Throughout the book, I use examples and stories that I've collected over the course of my career. I've been careful to select those examples that I believe capture the essence of misbehaviors and the challenges of being a teacher without regard to age level, certification area, or instructional content. In addition, there is a recurring character, Bruce, who argues with me throughout the book. I've found that no matter how logical and well-founded a practice is, there will always be someone who disagrees. The purpose of Bruce is not to provide the reader with ammunition to persuade others. Rather, it is to provide the reader with consideration of opposing points of view and how I believe the logic supports a particular model or direction.

Also, throughout the book, gambling is used as an analogy in considering the best course of action in developing and managing effective teaching—including The Teaching Wager that is referred to repeatedly. The purpose of the focus on gambling is to get the reader to continually see teaching as purposeful and under the control of the teacher. When considering student success, the teacher would do well to ask, "If it was worth \$1,000 if the students were to be more successful tomorrow, what would I do?" By that same token, the teacher should constantly question whether the methods being used really provide the highest likelihood of success. Clearly, when it comes to games of chance, no gambler can really be better than any other. Blowing on the dice or wearing a lucky shirt does not change the probability of an outcome—and this is part of the point here. Teaching is not pure chance, the behaviors in which the teacher engages do affect the probability of the outcomes. This is precisely why it is so important that teachers carefully consider their teaching strategies and techniques in light of the students being taught, their history, their background, the context, and the environment in order to select those that both empirically and experientially provide the best chances for success.

The basic premise of the book is that a comprehensive view of effective teaching behavior provides the foundation for all classroom management. Effective teaching is defined in Chapters 1 and 2, but I want to be clear that I see this term as extremely comprehensive in nature. That is, teaching is more than just the delivery of instructional content, or delivery of consequences. It's broader than having classroom rules or engaging instruction, and it's bigger than how we respond to the students with the most challenging behaviors or the development of relationships with students. Effective teaching is all of those things, but it's bigger still because it involves the thoughtful use and integration of all. For our purposes, I hope this book provides clear evidence that the whole of effective teaching is greater than the sum of its parts.

ADVANCE ORGANIZER

The book is organized in a manner that seemed most logical when considering the whole. As with any complex matter, each component is somewhat related to and dependent upon another. For instance, consequences are discussed in Chapter 10. However, the concept of teacher feedback to students is an integral part of Chapters 4, 5, and 9 preceding it. In many cases, smaller components of chapter elements are presented in earlier chapters as necessary to make a point. Still, the overall ordering of content is meant to provide a logical way of preparing a classroom for effective teaching, and it is presented as if the reader is understanding the content and developing a classroom one step at a time. To provide a link back to practice in actual classrooms, checklists, instruments, examples, and other materials are available at <http://www.corwin.com/ScottTeachingBehavior>.

The book is organized in three sections. The first section, "Behavior and Instruction," provides a logic and evidence for the strategies presented in the remainder of the book. This section begins with chapters defining effective teaching, describing the nature of evidence and probability in considering strategies, and considering behavior when planning for change. This section ends with a chapter describing the logic of function-based assessment (FBA) and laying out methods for conducting simplified FBA as both a classroomwide and individual student process.

Section II, "The Daily Grind," is heavily focused on the day-to-day tasks and activities involved in being a teacher and working with students. The first chapter in this section presents comprehensive guidelines for developing a physical space, developing classroom rules, considering daily routines, and other decisions that are made before students enter the classroom. The next two chapters provide comprehensive details for instructional planning in the context of both academic and social behavior. This is followed by a chapter on the presentation of effective content instruction and the interaction between teacher and student to facilitate success. The final chapter in this section is dedicated to consequences for behavior, both positive and negative, and as applied in the context of instruction. These five chapters comprise the most prescriptive portions of the book—providing clear details and examples for implementation. These chapters are among the largest in the book and could reasonably have been broken into smaller pieces. However, the intent was to maintain focus on each of the key components as an individual piece, but in the context of the other key components.

Section III, "Individualized Strategies," is comprised of three chapters that cover additional material that cuts across content in the rest of the book. The first chapter in this section presents a basic guide for the development and implementation of effective measurement strategies for behavior. Examples cover both basic classroom data and more formal monitoring of student behavior plans. The next chapter focuses on effective prevention of and responding to escalation and crisis behaviors in the classroom—what to do when students refuse to respond to effective instruction. The final chapter provides a list of systems, tricks, and strategies in the classroom with a focus on very specific and individualized application of the general content presented in the heart of the book.