

Substitute's Guide to Supporting Behaviors

Working with students with disabilities

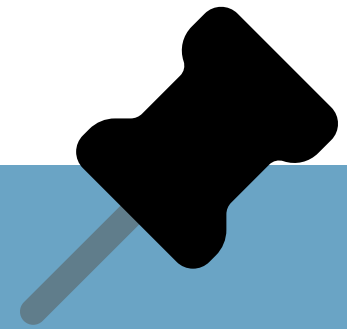


Welcome!!

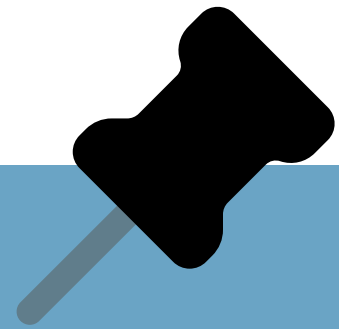
OBJECTIVE

You will be provided with 5 practical strategies for working with students that exhibit behavior challenges

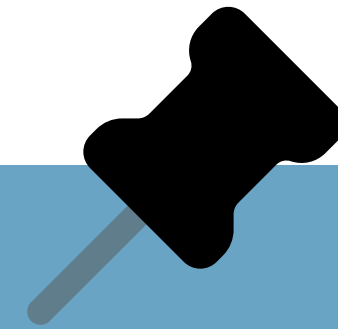
Key things to remember



**Every student
is unique.**



**Behavior is a
form of
communication.**



**Patience and
flexibility can
go a long way.**

Strategy #1

BUILD CONNECTION FIRST!



Why does this matter?

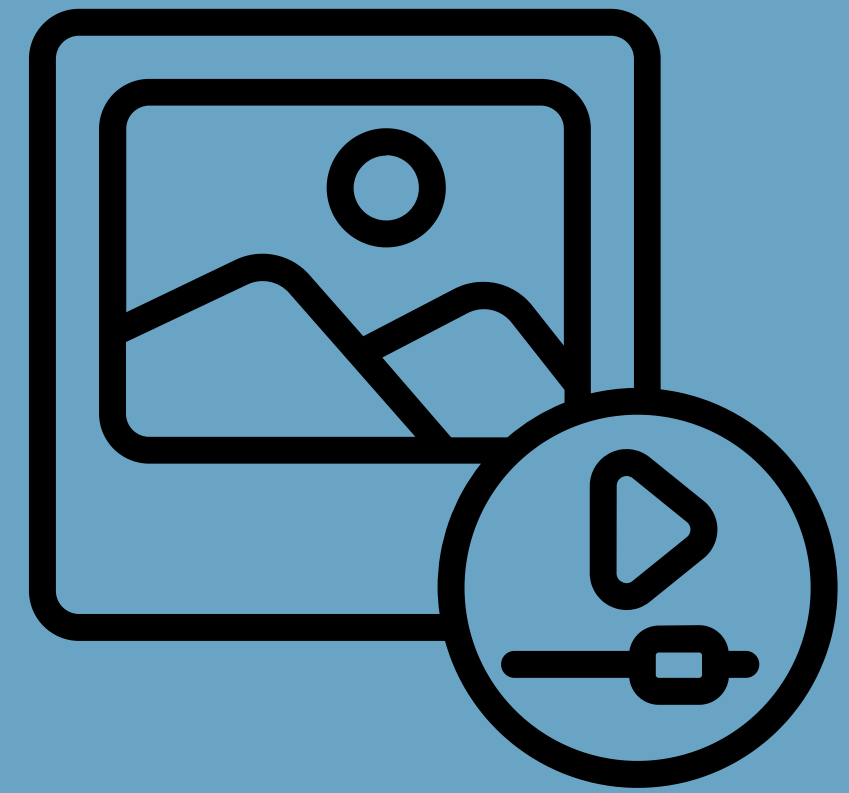
Students with disabilities often thrive on routine and familiarity

Quick Wins:

- Greet each student by name.
- Use calm, friendly tone.
- Offer choices when possible (“Do you want to sit here or here?”).

Strategy #2

USE VISUAL SUPPORTS



Why does this matter?

Many students with disabilities rely on visual cues to understand expectations.

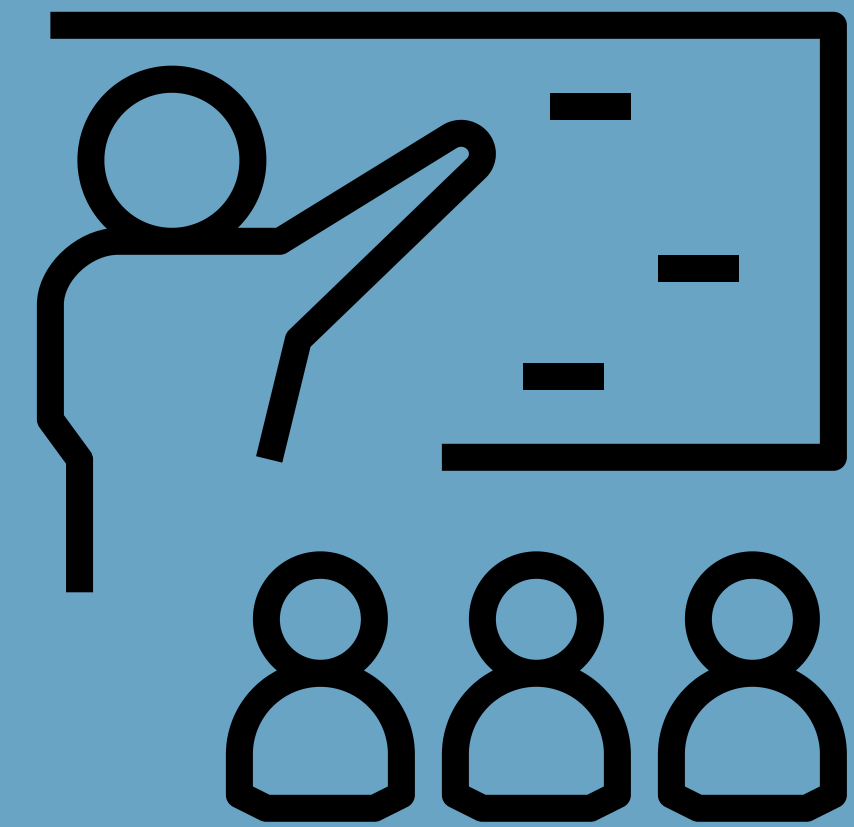
Examples of Visuals

- Picture schedules
- First/Then boards
- Gesture + object prompts

Tip: Ask staff if visuals are available and how they're used

Strategy #3

KEEP INSTRUCTIONS SIMPLE



Why does this matter?

Processing spoken language can be challenging for some students.

How to Support:

- Use short, clear directions (e.g., “Line up.” or “Sit down.”).
- Pause and give wait time.
- Model what you want them to do.

Strategy #4

BE FLEXIBLE AND CALM



Why does this matter?

Change or confusion can trigger anxiety or behavior.

**AVOID GETTING INTO A
POWER STRUGGLE!!**

What to Do:

- If a student is upset, stay calm and quiet.
- Allow space, reduce stimulation.
- Ask support staff for help—they're your best resource.

Strategy #5

REINFORCE THE POSITIVE



Why does this matter?

Encouragement builds trust and motivation.

Try This:

- Use praise often (“Great job staying in your seat!”).
- Give specific feedback (instead of “Good job,” try “You followed directions!”).
- Use high-fives, smiles, and small celebrations.

Final Reminders

THANK
YOU!

Ask for help:

Paraprofessionals and classroom staff are experts in the room.

Be patient and kind—to yourself, too!

You are new to this class and students. It will take time to adjust.

You are making a difference by just showing up.

Your willingness to show up means so much to the students and staff.

Need Help? Check the sub binder or ask the lead teacher or
paraprofessional.