An Educational Seminar...

You Don’t Tame the Angry Lion and Leave the Jungle Unchanged:

Culturally Relevant Behavior Management

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Mary Bacon’s journey from the projects in the South and tenements in the Northeast to the role of consultant was a varied and exciting one that makes her uniquely prepared both personally and professionally to address issues related to the closing the achievement gap between those who are racially, ethnically and culturally different as well as those who come from the culture of poverty. Educated in elementary and secondary parochial schools in New Orleans and Harlem, she earned a BA in Secondary Education from Fordham University, majoring in Spanish and French, becoming the first one in her family to graduate from elementary school. Graduate education was at Stanford University where she earned an MA in Guidance and Counseling and a Ph.D. in Social Psychology. Postgraduate work at San Jose State University in Educational Administration and in Special Education Administration at San Francisco State University rounded out her educational preparation for the themes that would shape her life’s work.

An experienced teacher, university instructor, counselor, psychologist and school administrator in a variety of educational institutions, Dr. Bacon has also served as a Probation Officer in juvenile halls and community-based programs, ending her career in juvenile justice as a Field Deputy in the California State Attorney’s office. For the past two decades, she has conducted keynote addresses and seminars for hundreds of thousands of educators throughout the country and internationally primarily related to serving the most challenged and challenging youth and families in our educational systems. Her firm, Images of a Culture, has served as a consultant to major school districts on the East and West Coasts in implementing multi-year contracts focused on deconstructing negative beliefs about, attitudes toward and expectations of those who are challenged in the educational system and providing strategies for fostering institutional change to ensure equity and equal access to educational opportunities for all.

Dr. Bacon’s wide range of personal and professional experiences provided a wealth of experiences that has contributed to her lifelong fascination with working with multicultural populations and experiencing the world from the perspectives of those who bring the rich cultural diversity that characterizes the American experience. She has worked with Puerto Rican and other Latino youth and families on the Lower East Side of New York, with the National Conference of Christians and Jews throughout New York City, with Mexican and other Hispanic youth in Southern California, and with African American children and families in urban and suburban communities throughout the country. In addition, Dr. Bacon has held leadership positions in one of the most advantaged communities in Northern California, lived with families in Spanish-speaking countries, traveled extensively throughout the world, variety of experiences that all have shaped her unique appreciation of difference that resonates with audiences to which she presents.

Just as important, Dr. Bacon is a parent who has managed to maintain a refreshing sense of humor while addressing the challenges of functioning in a culturally pluralistic society. In her personal and professional life, it is clear that each of the threads of her varied background has contributed to her message of strong advocacy for those whose perspectives and strengths often go unrecognized within the environments in which they must function.
Sample Presentation Abstracts

The presentation titles noted below are samples of topics routinely selected by various groups throughout the country. Content may be altered to fit the particular theme of the event and the nature of the audience to which the presentation will be provided. Topics may be combined and also adjusted for keynote address of 60-90 minutes in duration as well as interactive seminars of one hour to a full day.

Keynote Addresses

- Trends, Like Horses are Easier to Ride in the Direction They Are Going:
  Educational Leadership for a Pluralistic Society

- Deconstructing Negative Beliefs, Attitudes and Expectations:
  Achieving Equity in the Context of Excellence for All

- Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things:
  Culturally Relevant and Responsive Educational Service Delivery

- No Malice Required:
  Culturally Relevant and Responsive Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gap

Seminar Sessions

- **We Need To Be The Change We Want:**
  A Conversation with the Presenter

- **Them That Gots the Gold, Makes the Rules:**
  Building Fences Around The Mountaintop Instead of Ambulances in the Valley

- **You Don't Tame The Angry Lion and Leave the Jungle Unchanged:**
  Culturally Relevant Behavior Management Strategies

- **Every Shut-eye Ain't Sleep:**
  Families as Equal Status Partners in the Educational process

- **¡Sí Se Puede!**
  Bilingual-Bicultural Approaches to Achieving Educational Equity

- **Opportunities Denied: Promises Not Kept:**
  Reclaiming African American Youth

For further information or to inquire about booking Dr. Bacon for an engagement, please contact her at one of the numbers that follow:

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Presentation Abstract

You Don’t Tame the Angry Lion and Leave the Jungle Unchanged:
Strategies for Incorporating Culturally Relevant and Responsive
Positive Behavior Supports into Educational Service Delivery

What we who come from the culture of privilege and those who come from the culture of
disadvantage experience very different realities that can shape how they may approach
the environments in which they must survive/thrive. It is essential that we understand the
difference between those who are defiant and oppositional as opposed to those who have
been systematically victimized by the world they inherited. Many of these young people
often experience numerous assaults to their self-esteem as they interact with societal
institutions, often as a result of the efforts of well-meaning and caring individuals who
are merely willing participants in a flawed system that may treat all behaviors similarly
irrespective of the underlying causes that created them.

In the educational system and in society at large, success is much more determined by
one’s ability to play the game” as it is by one’s innate ability. This session focuses on the
skills we can provide to young people to help them face the challenges of a world that
sometimes give them more messages about their inadequacies than their ability to
conquer any obstacles they face. Participants will explore strategies for working with
challenging and challenged clients with a particular emphasis on those who present
school adjustment problems. Using a philosophy of inclusion rather than of exclusion,
educators learn to emphasize individual, classroom and systemic issues related to
culturally relevant behavior management as well as how to incorporate structures that
emphasize preventive rather than punitive strategies for decreasing powerlessness and
minimizing dysfunctional, disruptive and/or socially unacceptable behavior.

Mary Montle Bacon. Ph.D.
THE CULTURALLY DIFFERENT:
Behavior Management Issues in a Pluralistic Environment

Those individuals whose behavioral styles are different from those that are traditionally rewarded by the system exhibit a variety of characteristics that should be taken into consideration in the implementation of any approach to behavior management. Those who come from the culture of the oppressed, the culture of poverty, or who have a history of behavioral conflicts within the system require even greater sensitivity to ensure that our approaches are in fact culturally relevant and take into consideration their past history of experiences with “the system” that has shaped their response to the present environment and regard their behaviors as a natural outcome of those experiences.

Possible Characteristics to Observe
* Past history/experiences have shaped this group’s response to the present environment; their behaviors may be natural in the world to which they are accustomed.
* Those who have been oppressed expect the system to be unfair and are quick to label inconsistencies with any individuals as a lack of fairness.
* They are often more keenly aware of the subtleties in the behaviors of others and are very perceptive and sensitive to others’ attitudes and the way they are viewed.
* The culturally different who are perceived as subordinates who are powerless view the world from a different perspective than the powerful and interpret information in unique ways that are consistent with their desired as well as their actual status.
* Those who are accustomed to a more authoritarian approach to behavior management are particularly difficult to control in an atmosphere of perceived permissiveness, of being given freedom to choose their responses prematurely without training in how to handle this new style of behaving.
* They will often share and seek validation of their perceptions from members of their own group, a pattern that strengthens their evaluation of the unfairness of the system.
* As with most other individuals, the culturally different judge and categorize individuals and systems based upon their initial interactions and subsequent perceptions persist because they continue to be based on these initial impressions.
* Some may try to use adults’ fear of them to gain the upper hand, even to intimidate.
We must always remember that the lion has a purpose in the jungle and, if our focus is on taming all of the angry ones, we can upset the balance of nature. Our role is to identify the source of and the reasons for that anger and work to understand the journey that has brought those who challenge us to their present circumstances. Then, we can use that information as a basis for determining how to develop responses that focus on the underlying causes of the behavior rather than on the superficial manifestations of it and its impact on us and the environments we control.

“The reasonable man adapts himself to the world. The unreasonable man persists in adapting the world to himself. All progress depends on the unreasonable one, not the reasonable one…”

Often, the most challenging students can be transformed into partners in maintaining order rather than the architects of disruption. If we focus on their realities first in defining the most appropriate way to address their dysfunctional behavior in our world, it provides a vehicle for sharing “power” and legitimacy rather than battling for it.

“Until lions have their own historians, the hunters will always be glorified…”

African Proverb

Adopting Culturally Responsive Approaches to Behavior Management

- Use every contact to teach skills in negotiating the system
- Demonstrate empathy and interest in their life and perceptions of the world
- Identify your role as advocate rather than an impediment to achieving autonomy
- Strive to view the world through their eyes rather than yours
- Listen carefully for the messages beneath their words
- Emphasize the student’s strong suits rather than their weak ones
- Plan future contacts/follow-up/connections with role models
- Identify positive ways to engage the family in supporting positive adjustment
Goal: Promoting Self-discipline

Logical Consequences: Guidelines for implementation

All too often, the discussion of appropriate approaches to discipline focuses on authoritarian, authoritative, or permissive styles of behavior control. This is often because the salient dimensions highlighted relate to the degree of punitiveness one employs in shaping children’s behavior. If one instead focuses on discipline as a teaching/learning experience, our goal necessarily changes from one of behavior control to providing opportunities for young people to learn the logical consequences of the decisions they make. The natural consequences approach to behavior management stresses the positive aspects of discipline while ensuring that “behavior control” strategies will have more long-term effects on the student’s behavior patterns.

Logical Consequences: Important Elements/Strategies

- Identify consequences in advance whenever possible
- Parallel adult, real world consequences where possible
- Allow the student to preserve his/her identity and self-worth
- Remove the student from the emotion state to the thinking state
- Allow opportunities for meaningful options/choices that are equally acceptable
- Provide opportunities for discussion of options/possible outcomes
- Where possible, relate consequences to similar situations in their worlds
- Ensure that the consequences fit the infraction
- Preserve the adult/child relationship
- Foster internal control and self-discipline
- Provide opportunities to learn valuable life lessons from consequences imposed
- Demonstrate trust in the student’s ability to make quality decisions with training
- Involve peers in the process when appropriate as a teaching/learning experience
It is the role of the educational leader to set a tone for the school/classroom environment that fosters understanding in the context of order, mutual respect in an atmosphere dedicated to promoting self-discipline. It is the role of each individual in the system to mirror those principles in the environments that they control and to ensure clarity and consistency in the implementation of rules and the treatment of individuals for whom they are responsible. This means that disruptive, disrespectful and defiant or abusive behavior is not tolerated from adults or students and alternatives are used that preserve individual dignity.

Some major principles to consider in achieving this lofty goal are:
* **Accept** that most young people crave and orderly, predictable and safe environment.
* **Adopt** a philosophy based on broadly accepted principles that at times implies compromise on the part of participants involved.
  • **Identify** a collective vision for the staff with benchmarks that can guide each individual in their approach to discipline to discourage undermining the system.
* **Spend** as much time as needed early on establishing relationships, setting the tone, and demonstrating priorities for behavior.
* **Aim** for **consistency** in each individual’s and the system’s approach to discipline; provide explanations of differences in consequences for misbehavior where possible.
* **Allow** for individual variation in style and in the imposition of penalties in a manner that ensures fairness.
* **Practice** creative opportunities for peer reinforcement and support of principles.
* **Provide** creative modeling of the principles and behaviors we expect from students.
* **Analyze** the overall environment and individual settings to determine priorities for intervention; tackle priority areas through a consistent and coordinated approach.
* **Teach** young people to identify the salient dimensions in situations, to talk through the underlying principles as separate from the specific events.
• **Work** hard to distinguish between legitimate alternative behavioral styles and the unreasonable quest for power and control.

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Teaching Survival Skills
Enabling Behaviors

1. **Teach Them To Assess The Requirements For Success In Any New Situation**
   - Identify who has the power to reward and punish
   - Distinguish between socially acceptable/unacceptable behaviors
   - Emphasize their freedom of choice in acquiescing to demands

2. **Set Personal Goals To Guide Their Behavior**
   - Set up a game plan for success
   - Evaluate progress toward reaching goals
   - Change goals when original ones are no longer appropriate

3. **Teach Them Alternative Behaviors**
   - Value the strengths of the current behaviors or coping strategies
   - Teach alternative behaviors that are situationally appropriate
   - Value code-switching to preserve their dual cultures

4. **Create Personal and Academic Support Systems**
   - Increasingly decrease dependence on external control
   - Foster the notion that anyone more knowledgeable can be of assistance
   - Foster a sense of responsibility to/interdependence upon others
   - Inculcate the value of group problem-solving

5. **Model How To Corporate Alternative Behaviors Into Their Repertories**
   - Use interpersonal behaviors as a strategy to “Buy Time”
   - Foster decreased dependence upon manipulation as the level of competency increases
   - Use strengths to improve in areas of deficiency – not to mask them

   If you only have a hammer in your toolbox, every situation seems like a nail.

   ![Hammer](image)

   In my school/classroom, there will always be real or simulated respect.
Culturally Relevant and Responsive PBIS
An Introduction

PBIS is a set of principles and implementation strategies that is assumed to be culturally neutral and can fit into any given school setting and apply to any group of students. Whereas generally PBIS implementation has been successful in decreasing exclusionary discipline practices as designed, it often did not appreciably affect the disproportionate representation of certain subgroups of students in the disciplinary system. Moreover, it was observed that many students of color—specifically African American students—historically were/are punished more severely for less serious, more subjective reasons. The diverse populations of young people served in our schools bring complex sets of abilities and experiences that explicitly must be taken into consideration in the implementation of PBIS service delivery. Although the literature cites “the importance of procedures that are socially and culturally appropriate”, educators often do not how that is to be achieved.

The recognition that the manner in which some student subgroups have been socialized to behave may not fit traditional school expectations must necessarily guide us in identifying core expectations at the outset as well as the typical responses to what we might consider dysfunctional behaviors. As an example, the concept of respect (e.g., the widely accepted rule: “Be respectful.”) is grounded not only in the cultural understandings and experiences that students bring to school settings but also within the institutional cultures of schools and the expectations and values that educators bring as well. How respect, for example, is defined, performed, and monitored within and outside of school is culturally determined and those differences should be taken into consideration when teaching students and responding to differences in behaviors related to respect/disrespect that they may exhibit.

The lack of involvement of cultural mediators in the development of rules at the outset, the absence of available professional development opportunities for helping staff to develop culturally responsive teaching and classroom management practices leads to the predictable reliance on exclusionary discipline to manage behavior, a practice that disproportionately affects certain subgroups. PBIS must be implemented in a manner that involves not only changing the perceived dysfunctional behaviors of students but also by focusing on remediating the practices, norms, rituals, rules and other aspects of the culture of the school that may intentionally or unintentionally marginalize specific groups of students.

∞ Learning About The Socio-cultural Backgrounds of Students
Educators who become acquainted with the lived realities of their students are better able
to design learning activities that are engaging as well as to establish more meaningful
relationships with them and their families. Deliberate accumulating of information about
students’ personal, familial, cultural and neighborhood backgrounds that shaped who they
are should be chronicled throughout the year as well as information about what topics
interest them, how they learn best, what subjects they like, who is important to them, etc.

• **Adopting a Proactive Stance Toward Discipline: The Inclusive Classroom**
  Devoting a considerable amount of time to explaining and establishing a rationale for
  school and classroom rules and procedures to make expectations explicit in order to avoid
  misunderstandings and socializing students for classroom success is essential. Those
  who bring a different orientation to school and authority figures require consistency in
  the enforcement of those expectations and a recognition that students will have a learning
curve that requires their re-teaching and reinforcement.

• **Increasing Culturally Relevant Family Engagement**
  Identifying creative ways to bring the world of the school to families who are typically
  not involved in traditional ways and engaging those families as equal status partners is
  essential to providing the wrap-around services that many challenging students require.
  This can interrupt the cycle of fear, discomfort and sensitivity that often exists between
  educators and culturally diverse communities.

• **The Importance of Literacy as a Survival Skill**
  Weak skills in reading coupled with non-challenging or interesting course content that
  leads to boredom correlate with subsequent behavior problems for many students who do
  not get the proper foundation in elementary school or who easily disengage when they
  perceive that instruction is not relevant or stimulating. William Brazo states that “To
  presume that reading itself will transform conditions that plague young men such as
  poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, crime, and irresponsible fathering is recklessly naïve;
  however, to ignore the potential of active literacy for ensuring that fewer adolescent
  males become nowhere kids is equally naïve.”

• **Incorporating Physical Movement into Classroom Activities**
  Modification of traditional classroom and behavioral expectations to be more “boy-
  friendly” by including kinesthetic movement, increased use of manipulatives,
  multisensory materials and project-based learning as well as increased tolerance for
  elevated noise levels is important. Limiting teacher talk and focusing on performance-
  based activities that allow for creativity and drawing upon students’ dramatic talents,
  using learning centers, integrating music, art, and play as forums for learning can
  contribute to engaging the reluctant learner.

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**Creating Institutions That Rescue Children**
AVOID THE DEFICIT MODEL: DIFFERENCES NOT DEFICIENCIES

Often, we look at these young people based upon their deviation from the norm instead of evaluating them in the context of their own socio-cultural backgrounds and experiences. Deviance should be measured in the context of their variation from the norm in the communities or families from which they come rather than only using the standards of the community to which they are being required to adapt.

ACCEPT/ACCOMMODATE/AFFIRM STRENGTHS

The culturally different child brings a variety of strengths to the educational environment. Often they are not strengths that typically are valued by the traditional educational setting. Sometimes they are strengths and at other times they are counterproductive in the educational system. As educators, we must accept the differences, attempt to accommodate those that are consistent with improving their ability to function in the system but we must also and affirm the strengths that they bring as a bridge to incorporating alternative behaviors into their repertoires.

ADOPT A PRESCRIPTIVE DIAGNOSTIC APPROACH

It is essential to observe the student behavior systematically and understand the prerequisites for positive and negative adjustments as well as the outcomes of various interventions. When a child’s culture and values are different from ours, we must understand what motivates the behavior and what strategies are most effective in altering it by careful observation of the environment.

IDENTIFY AND USE SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

As with any individual or group that requires external motivation to facilitate the acquisition of specific skills, it’s important to identify those forces in the environment that can serve as resources with us in that process. Identifying the salient adults and/or peers who might be role models or motivators to young people is a critical step in ensuring reinforcement of the principles we value. Empowering indigenous leaders in the environment and securing visible or invisible supports from family and community members can maximize our ability to encourage young people to buy into the educational goals that we value.

ESTABLISH EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS

When these young people are not intrinsically interested in the information we impart, they can be motivated to master it merely because they feel a sense of responsibility to the individuals who provide that information. Often, they will work for teachers that they love even if they hate the subject but will do nothing in subjects where they have previously excelled if there is not an emotional connection with the instructor. Creating an emotional connection is not dependent upon one’s style or personality as much as on the student’s clarity that the adult cares for them.

“ To presume that reading itself will transform conditions that plague young people such as poverty, alcohol, drug abuse, crime and irresponsible fathering is recklessly naïve;
however, to ignore the potential of active literacy for ensuring that fewer adolescent males become nowhere kids is equally naïve.”

William Brozo

Literacy as the Key to Liberation

“While many of the students in my school were growing into the neighborhood, finding permanent lodging in the spiraling turmoil, I was able to chart a different course. Caring teachers with high expectations helped me read my way out. They helped me push against the currents of the environment in which I lived. They did not limit their aspirations for me because my pants were too short. They did not lower expectations for me because my lunch application told them I lived below the poverty line. Instead, they required me to read that basal textbook, as well as the local newspaper, historical documents, poetry, and literature. These teachers had Harvard dreams for students living in hellish instruction. Literacy was thrust upon me in rich and meaningful ways, not because I was a wonderful student, but because the teachers believed I deserved nothing less. I was a young adolescent being apprenticed toward success. Literacy, based on concepts of culture, community, and caring, was the vehicle to that success.”

In fifth grade, I began to read the junior detectives series Encyclopedia Brown. As I read the various entries in the series, insidious thoughts began to intrude. I did not have a tree house. I had never gone to a garage sale because there were no garages in my neighborhood. There were no lemonade stands run by children. I realized that Encyclopedia Brown lived in a different world from me. This character’s world was free of suffocative elements rooted in historical mistreatment.

Alfred Tatum, Ph.D.
Teaching Reading to African American Adolescent Males