



# Stepping Up for Students Outline

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- a. Educators across the country are voicing the same concerns and asking the same questions:
  - i. Why are so many of my students struggling in my classes?
  - ii. Why do I sometimes feel like I teach in grade school?
  - iii. Where did they get that attitude?
  - iv. What do I do about all these disruptions to learning?
- b. The challenges to modern classroom management are overwhelming.
- c. Approximately 45% of students on college campuses have mental, emotional or behavioral conditions that influence their academic performance and ability to participate in classroom activities. -American Psychological Association Report
  - i. That means 11 of 24 students are struggling with significant challenges to their own learning process and may be disrupting the learning of others.
  - ii. Before we tackle a solution, we will first investigate the problem. We must understand what's happening for our students before we try to address their needs or coach different behaviors.

- 2. **PART 1 - THE PROBLEM:** Many students are acting in ways that create obstacles to teaching, their own learning, and the learning of others.

### a. CHALLENGING STUDENT BEHAVIORS

- i. Call Out: What are some student behaviors that have challenged you in the last 3 months?
- ii. Behaviors researchers identify as challenging for teachers:
  - 1. Incivility: Speech or action that is discourteous or rude and causes an atmosphere of disrespect, conflict, and stress.
    - a. "Incivility is a plague in higher education!" Journal of Effective Teaching
      - i. Arriving late or leaving early
      - ii. Inappropriate cell phone use
      - iii. Side conversations
      - iv. Sleeping in class
      - v. Persistent use of profanity
      - vi. Disapproving groans, sighs, or other expressions to show dislike
      - vii. Expressions of scorn, cynicism, or derision are expressed towards other students or the teacher.
      - viii. Constant challenges to policy, rules, or teacher credibility

- b. Immaturity: the student is rarely prepared, forgets massage supplies for exchange days, forgets deadlines and is constantly asking classmates, “What’s happening in class today?”
- c. Neediness: The student demonstrates a pervasive need for the instructor’s attention requiring significant teacher resources and time.
- d. Social Awkwardness: The student struggles with getting along, fitting in, contributing to group work, and reading social cues.
- e. Refusal to Work: The student uses a refusal to work as a way to maintain “cool” or power and often as a way to cover literacy challenges.
- f. Monopolizing: The student is always the first with an answer, always the first to speak up, and dominates discussions and Q&A sessions.
- g. Blame Shifting: The student projects negative outcomes from self onto others and has difficulty seeing the impact of personal choices on life outcomes.
- h. Chronic Negotiation: The student negotiates – EVERYTHING as a way to obtain special accommodations from the instructor and maintain power and a sense of control.
  - i. Use of sob stories: Stories of hardship and misfortune used to obtain special accommodations.
  - ii. Use of anxiety: Anxiety is used to buy time around an examination date or not participate in a class activity.
  - iii. Philosophical resistance: The student attempts to engage the instructor in a lengthy philosophical discussion about why a policy, task, or other is faulty. Often a way to demonstrate control or to take class off track.
- i. Concern for Classmate: The student becomes overly engaged in the problems of a classmate who is struggling. Instead of focusing on her own studies she/he spends time mobilizing classmates and the teacher to intervene with the struggling student.
- j. Difficulty with Feedback: The student incorrectly interprets critic or poor grades. Feedback viewed as negative and personal.
- k. Looking for Injustice: The student twists the instructor’s words claiming the instructor is racist, sexist, immoral, or prejudiced.
- l. Disorganized Thinking: The student demonstrates confused concept formation; difficulty concentrating, making decisions, or remembering things.
- m. Functional Limitations: Functional limitations related to prescription medications may make the student drowsy, confused, unmotivated, irritable, and low energy.
- n. Off-Track Questions: Questions asked because the student is bored, wants to be the one in focus, wants to challenge the instructor, or for other reasons not related to gaining clarity on presentation content.
- o. Difficulty Screening Environmental Distractions: The student is easily distracted by odor, noise in the hall, lighting, or the temperature.
- p. Poor Hygiene: The student’s poor hygiene distracts the class.
- q. Grandiose Thinking: The student regularly shares ideas or offers input that is strange, excessively ambitious, pretentious, or delusional.

- r. Difficulty with Multiple Tasks: The student has difficulty handling the pressure of multiple tasks or deadlines. He or she turns “victim”, pushes back aggressively, or freezes and is incapable of moving forward.
- s. Mood Swings: The student demonstrates rapid changes in mood and extreme highs and lows that catch everyone off-guard.
- t. Difficulty with Change: The student has a hard time coping with unexpected changes in course work, instructors, or learning experiences.
- u. Pervasive Anxiety: The student is regularly overwhelmed by fear and worry. Test days cause catastrophic alarm.
- v. Anger Management Issues: The student rapidly reacts in aggressive ways when he/she feels insulted, wronged, or injured. Angry over-reactions reduce feeling of classroom safety.
- w. Withdrawn: The student is withdrawn, painfully shy, or non-participatory and requires significant intervention from the instructor to get involved in class activities.

2. Extreme Negative Behaviors:

- a. Cheating
- b. Attending school while high, intoxicated, or smelling of alcohol, or selling drugs on campus.
- c. Verbal threats of violence towards students or teachers.
- d. Bullying in person, on social medial platforms, by text message, or by email.
- e. Sexual harassment or sexual assault.
- f. Physical assault
- g. Carrying weapons

**b. FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENT BEHAVIORS**

- i. Let’s take a look beneath behaviors alone and start to identify WHY students may be behaving the way they do.
- ii. Four key areas that influence student behaviors are:
  - 1. Social
  - 2. Mental or Cognitive
  - 3. Emotional
  - 4. Physical

**Social Factors Influencing Student Behaviors**

- iii. Social factors are beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, and ways of relating that students adopt in response to family norms and societal models.
  - 1. Permissive, indulging parents
  - 2. Lenient schools
  - 3. Progressive education reducing learner self-discipline, persistence, and inherent motivation
  - 4. Effort and achievement split
  - 5. Consumerist view of education
    - a. Attendance entitles one to good grades
    - b. Education is about a diploma
    - c. I paid for it, so you owe it to me
  - 6. Instant gratification culture

7. Technology facilitates negative behaviors
  - a. Reverse accumulation of knowledge
  - b. Why memorize when I can look it up
  - c. Cheating has never been easier
  - d. I can entertain myself during classes
8. Childhood Poverty
  - a. Cognitive capacity is strongly influenced by external factors like exposure to stress and violence.
  - b. People growing up in poverty are exposed to fewer words and less conversation.
  - c. People growing up in poverty demonstrate a poor sense of agency (a concept of themselves as free individuals capable of making choices that shape their lives).
  - d. People growing up in poverty demonstrate lower executive function (e.g., impulse control, emotional regulation, attention management, prioritization of tasks, and working memory).
  - e. 15 million children in the United States – 21% of all children – live in families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold.
9. Adult Poverty

### **Mental Factors Influencing Student Behaviors**

- iv. Two Types
  1. Mental Health Conditions: Conditions that affect a person's thinking, feeling, mood, and ability to relate to others.
  2. Cognitive Processing Ability: Conditions that affect a person's concept formation, oral or written comprehension, listening ability, memory, and recall.
- v. Mental Health Conditions
  1. Mental health conditions are common in college students because their onset occurs in young adulthood (onset by age 25).
  2. The Top 6 Conditions Influencing Students on College Campuses
    - a. Substance use disorders
    - b. Anxiety disorders
    - c. Eating disorders
    - d. Depression
    - e. Bipolar disorder
    - f. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
  3. Anxiety disorders are a group of mental health conditions characterized by significant feelings of anxiety and fear. General anxiety disorder, social phobias, panic disorder, and PTSD are the most common in college students.
    - a. 11.9% of college students have diagnosed anxiety disorders.
    - b. 41.6% of college students report significant concern with their level of anxiety.
    - c. A curriculum of touch likely a trigger for people with a history of physical or sexual assault.
  4. Depression is a mood disorder causing persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and loss. Often accompanied by physical fatigue, pain, and loss of interest in life.
    - a. 7-9% of college students have diagnosed clinical depression.
    - b. 36.4% report feelings/symptoms of depression.

5. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): A mental health condition characterized by difficulty with focus, attention, restlessness, and impulse control.
  - a. 2.8% of college students are diagnosed with ADHD.
  - b. ADHD is the number one reason schools are asked to make accommodations.
- vi. Cognitive Processing Ability: Conditions that affect a person's concept formation, oral or written comprehension, listening ability, memory and recall.
  1. Learning Disability: Neurologically-based processing problems that can interfere with basic and higher-level skills and affect an individual's life beyond academics.
    - a. 13 categories of specific learning disability defined by the Learning Disabilities Association of America.
      - i. Basic skills are reading, writing, and math computation.
      - ii. Higher level skills include organization, time management, abstract reasoning, memory, and attention allocation.
      - iii. 2.6% of students on 4-year university campuses have diagnosed learning disabilities.
      - iv. Approximately 10% of students in vocational education have learning disabilities.
      - v. *ldaamerica.org/educators*
    2. Illiteracy: The inability to read, write or perform computations proficiently or the lack of knowledge in a particular subject.
      - a. 21-23% (40-44 million) of the 191 million adults in the U.S. demonstrate the lowest proficiency (illiteracy) in reading, writing, and math.
      - b. 12<sup>th</sup> grade proficiency: The level of proficiency that would enable a student to successfully participate in post-secondary education without intervention from the school (e.g., remediation, tutoring, school accommodations, etc.).
      - c. The following statistics are based on first-year university students. Illiteracy is higher in vocational education.
        - i. 46% of Caucasian adult student demonstrate 12<sup>th</sup> grade proficiency (54% of white adult students will need intervention from the school to thrive).
        - ii. 25% of Latino adult students demonstrate 12<sup>th</sup> grade proficiency (75% of Latino adult students will need intervention from the school to thrive).
        - iii. 17% of African American adult students demonstrate 12<sup>th</sup> grade proficiency (83% of black adult students need school intervention to thrive).
        - iv. Causes of illiteracy
          1. Poverty
          2. English as a second language
        - v. Literacy is less about intelligence and more about opportunity and access.

### **Emotional Factors Influencing Students**

- vii. Emotional factors refer to the level of emotional intelligence demonstrated by individuals or groups, and the way emotional-social interactions influence class productivity and learning.
  1. Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and manage one's own emotions and the emotions of others.
    - a. Self-Awareness: The ability to be aware of emotions in self and identify those emotions accurately.

- b. Self-Management: The ability to regulate one's emotions and behaviors in social situations.
  - c. Social Awareness: The ability to be aware of emotions in others and in groups.
  - d. Relationship Awareness: The ability to initiate, create, and maintain working/social relationships with others and with groups.
2. Higher emotional intelligence helps students overcome other challenges.
  3. Lower emotional intelligence exacerbates other challenges.

### **Physical Factors Influencing Students**

- viii. Physical factors refer to the level of physical capacity and health present in students and the effects of health levels on teaching and learning.
  1. Influence of Obesity
    - a. 2017 report in the Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior
      - i. 41% of students on college campuses are obese (an increase of 78% since 2006).
      - ii. Type 2 diabetes, and hypertension cause learning challenges.
      - iii. Higher body mass index (BMI) linked to lower attendance, participation, and academic performance.
  2. Influence of Chronic Conditions
    - a. 17% of students on college campuses live with chronic diseases or chronic pain that effects attendance, class participation, and academic performance.
  3. Influence of Physical Disabilities
    - a. 11% of students on college campuses report physical disabilities (vision, hearing, mobility impairments) that impact attendance, class participation, and academic performance.

### **c. Conclusions**

- i. The situation is NOT getting better. It is expected to get worse as the poverty divide increases.
- ii. This is NOT an admissions issue. If we screened out students with all of these factors there would be no one left in class.
- iii. Schools must step up with student services that better address these issues and support teachers. Teachers cannot solve these underlying issues while also teaching content.

### **Statistics Sources**

- American Psychological Association ([www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org))
- Journal of Higher Education (<https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/uhej20>)
- Learning Disabilities Association of America (<https://ldaamerica.org>)
- National Center for Education Statistics (<https://nces.ed.gov/>)
- Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior ([www.jneb.org](http://www.jneb.org))
- The National Institute for Literacy ([www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov))
- American Journal of Public Health (<https://ajph.aphapublications.org/>)
- National Council for Adult Learning (<http://www.ncalamerica.org/>)
- Center for Immigration Studies ([www.cis.org](http://www.cis.org))
- National Coalition for Literacy (<https://national-coalition-literacy.org/research/adult-literacy/>)
- ProLiteracy Organization (<https://www.proliteracy.org/Resources/Adult-Literacy-Facts>)