

Handouts

- These are the handouts needed for this Classroom Module:
 - *Task Difficulty Teacher Tool*
 - *Task Difficulty Personal Reflections*
 - *Task Difficulty Example Vignettes*
 - *Addressing Task Difficulty in Your Classroom*

Task Difficulty



Task Difficulty Teacher Tool

Effective Classroom Practices

1. Classroom Expectations
2. Classroom Procedures & Routines
3. Encouraging Expected Behavior
4. Discouraging Inappropriate Behavior
5. Active Supervision
6. Opportunities to Respond
7. Activity Sequencing & Choice
8. **Task Difficulty**

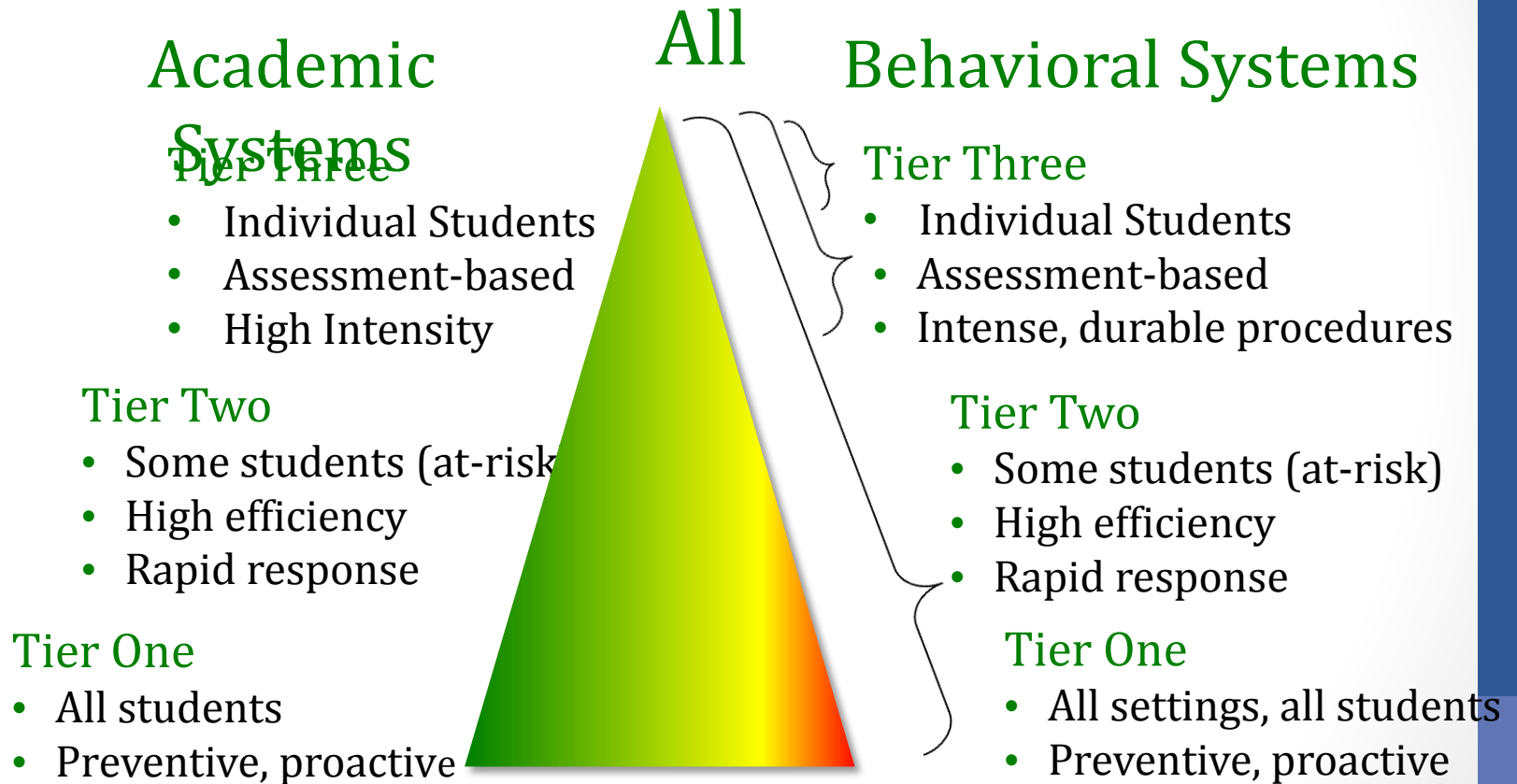
Outcomes

At the end of the session, you will be able to...

- Identify strategies to adjust the task difficulty in common classroom scenarios.
- Plan strategies to adjust the task difficulty in common activities you ask students to complete in your classroom.

Three Levels of Implementation

A Continuum of Support for



Why Consider Task Difficulty?

- For students, the school day is full of academic demands.
- When problem behavior occurs primarily in the face of academic demands, it is important to consider what aspect of the task might be contributing to the problem.
- Many behavior problems are a mismatch between the task and the student's skills.

Why Consider Task Difficulty?

- Work assignments that are too difficult for students or require them to use skill sets that are challenging for them, commonly result in problem behavior.

Scott, Anderson & Alter, 2012

Is It Fair to Adjust Tasks?

- Every student should get what he or she needs to be a successful student.
- For example, if one student were to fall and cut himself, he would be given a bandage. Every student in the class would not get a bandage because not everyone needs one. To be equal, the teacher should give bandages out to everyone, but to be fair, only the student who needs it would be given the bandage.

Assignment Length or Time

- Academics are accurately matched to student's ability, but the length of the assignment exceeds student motivation or endurance.
- Decreasing overall task length or offering periodic breaks to do something else can decrease problem behavior and aid task completion.

(Dunlap, Kern-Dunlap, Clarke & Robbins, 1991)

- Question to ask: *“Will the student be able to complete the assignment if time or assignment length adjustments are made?”*

Length or Time Strategies

- Shorten the assignment, allowing the student to demonstrate mastery with fewer items.
- Highlight, in color, those problems the student is to complete.
- Break the assignment up into shorter tasks; put fewer problems on a page.
- Have shorter work periods with other tasks in between.
- Have the student cover all items except the one he is working on at the time.
- Provide physical breaks between difficult tasks.
- Provide alternative times for the work to be completed.



Activity: Personal Reflection

- Think of a student who you could answer “yes” to this question:

“Will the student be able to complete the assignment if time or assignment length adjustments are made?”

- Choose a strategy to try that adjusts assignment length or time to complete.
- Discuss with a partner.



Task Difficulty Personal Reflections

Response Mode

- The mode that is required to complete a task can contribute to problem behavior.
- Reading or fine motor deficits, etc. often make reading or writing tasks appear overwhelming.
- Providing an alternative mode (e.g., computer or tape recorder, paired student reading, etc.) may reduce behavior problems.
- Question to ask: *“Could the student do the work if the mode of responding was altered? Does the student have difficulty responding in written format, orally, or when reading is involved?”*

Response Mode Strategies–

Writing

- Provide a choice between written and oral answers.
- Allow the student to dictate answers to the teacher, an assistant, or peer.
- Create guided notes to minimize writing.
- Allow the student to tape record answers to tests or assignments.
- Allow the student to use other creative modes for demonstrating understanding (e.g., building, drawing, drama, etc.).

Response Mode Strategies–*Reading*

- Include illustrations on worksheets that depict how to complete tasks.
- Highlight or underline important words in instructions and texts.
- Create guided notes that limit reading and draw attention to key points.
- Provide text on recording for the student to listen to as they read.
- Assign a partner to share the reading requirements and assist the student with unfamiliar words.



Activity: Personal Reflection

- Think of a student who you could answer “yes” to this question:
“Could the student do the work if the mode of responding was altered? Does the student have difficulty responding in written format, orally, or when reading is involved?”
- Choose a strategy to try that adjusts the mode of responding.
- Discuss with a partner.



Increased Instruction or Practice

- Using instructional strategies that are appropriate to the student's stage of learning is essential.
- Some students may not be at the same stage of learning as other students (e.g., acquisition level, fluency building, mastery, or generalization).
- For some students, they can learn and do the work if there is more teaching, guided practice, or fluency-building activities.
- Question to ask: *“Will the student be able to complete the tasks if (s)he has more instruction, guided or individual practice?”*



Instruction & Practice Strategies

- Arrange for additional brief instructional sessions using the modeling-guided practice-independent practice approach (*acquisition stage*).
- Arrange for a peer tutor to assist with guided practice opportunities (*fluency-building stage*).
- Use partner work to increase fluency with flash cards (*fluency-building stage*).
- Use meaningful real life examples for practice and application (*mastery or generalization stage*).



Activity: Personal Reflection

- Think of a student who you could answer “yes” to this question:
“Will the student be able to complete the tasks if (s)he has more instruction, guided or individual practice?”
- How could you provide more instruction, guided or individual practice?
- Discuss with a partner.





Activity: Increased Instruction & Practice Example Vignettes

Determine how the teacher might adjust the task difficulty to help the student meet success.

Dalton sits quietly, but does not complete his work during writing activities. His reading skills are at grade level. He is able to accurately retell what he has read and can orally answer all comprehension questions. When he is directed to answer comprehension questions on his worksheet, he begins slowly, then stops writing and puts his head down on his desk.



Task Difficulty Example Vignettes



Activity: Increased Instruction & Practice Example Vignettes

Find a new partner.

Read the remaining vignettes on the handout and determine how the teacher might adjust the task difficulty to help the student meet success.

Be prepared to share the strategies you decided.



Task Difficulty Example Vignettes



Activity: Addressing Task Difficulty in Your Classroom

- Using the handout, list common classroom activities you have students complete in the left column.
- In the right column, identify some ways you could address task difficulty. Ideas are listed on the back of that handout.
- If you desire, work with a partner.
- Be prepared to share.



Addressing Task Difficulty in Your Classroom

References

Dunlap, G., Kern-Dunlap, L., Clarke, S., & Robbins, G. R. (1991). Functional assessment, curricular revision, and severe behavior problems. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 24*, 387-397.

Scott, T. M. Anderson, C. M., & Alter, P. (2012). *Managing classroom behavior using positive behavior supports*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.