Common Behavior Problems at School:
a Natural Opportunity for Social and Emotional Learning
(http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/behaviorsocialemot.pdf)

*S*tudents misbehave.
It's a daily fact of life in classrooms. What's a teacher to do? More to the point: What *should* a teacher do? That is a question for all of us.

To answer the question, we need to broaden the context from concerns about consequences, social control, removing "triggers," and social skills *training*.

The context must be the goals of schooling. And the goals must include not only academic learning, but the promotion of healthy social and emotional development.

In some form or another, every school has goals that emphasize a desire to enhance students' personal and social functioning. Such goals reflect an understanding that social and emotional growth plays an important role in

- C enhancing the daily smooth functioning of schools and the emergence of a safe, caring, and supportive school climate
- C facilitating students' holistic development
- C enabling student motivation and capability for academic learning
- C optimizing life beyond schooling.

With all this in mind, efforts to address misbehavior provide *natural,* albeit challenging, opportunities to promote social and emotional development and minimize transactions that interfere with positive growth in these areas.

Support staff need to grab hold of these opportunities as an avenue for working with teachers in a new way. Whenever a student misbehaves, personal and social growth should become a major priority in deciding how to react. The teacher's work with the student must expand beyond academics and standard curriculum.

The attached tool outlines steps teachers can learn to implement so that the response to misbehavior expands student goals and processes to ensure appropriate social and emotional learning. As can be seen, this means that consequences are formulated in ways that support rather than undermine such goals, that processes are minimized that instigate psychological reactance and negative attitudes toward classroom learning and teachers. In general, the processes enhance rather than threaten the student's feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to teachers, good student role models, and parents.

Working Toward Prevention of Further Occurrences

- C Promote a caring, supportive, and nurturing climate in the classroom and schoolwide
- C Personalize classroom instruction (e.g., to accommodate a wide range of motivational and developmental differences by ensuring a good match with students' intrinsic motivation and capabilities)
- C Provide status opportunities for nonpopular students (e.g., special roles as assistants and tutors)
- C Identify and remedy skill deficiencies early
- C For proactive misbehavior, offer appropriate and attractive alternative ways the student can pursue a sense of competence, control, and relatedness
- C Equip students with acceptable steps to take instead of misbehaving (e.g., options to withdraw from a situation or to try relaxation techniques)
- C Enhance student motivation and skills for overcoming behavior problems (including altering negative attitudes toward school)
- C Provide extra support and direction so that students who are prone to misbehave can cope with difficult situations (including steps that can be taken instead of misbehaving)
- C Develop consequences for misbehavior that are perceived by students as logical (i.e., that are perceived as reasonable fair, and nondenigrating reactions which do not threaten students' sense of competence, self-determination, and relatedness)

References and Resources

Behavior Problems: What's a School to Do?
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/behprob.htm

What Teachers Can Do to Promote Social and Emotional Learning http://www.edutopia.org/php/article.php?id=Art_685&key=020

Creating Caring Schools. http://ici.umn.edu/products/impact/182/over4.html

Steps in Using Common Behavior Problems
as a Natural Opportunity for Social and Emotional Learning

During Misbehavior

(1) Base response on understanding of underlying motivation (if uncertain, start with assumption the misbehavior is unintentional)

(2) Reestablish a calm and safe atmosphere

- Use understanding of student's underlying motivation for misbehaving to clarify what occurred (if feasible involve participants in discussion of events)
- Validate each participant's perspective and feelings

(3) Indicate how the matter will be resolved emphasizing use of previously agreed upon logical consequences that have been personalized in keeping with understanding of underlying motivation

(4) If the misbehavior continues, revert to a firm but nonauthoritarian statement

(5) As a last resort use crises back-up resources

- If appropriate, ask student's classroom friends to help
- Call for help from identified back-up personnel

(6) Throughout the process, keep others calm by dealing with the situation with a calm and protective demeanor

After Misbehavior

(1) Implement Logical Consequences (e.g., loss of privileges, removal from activity)

(2) Work with Student(s) to Clarify, Repair, Correct, and Prevent

- (re)clarify limits (emphasis on what is acceptable behavior rather than reiteration of rules)
- repair/replace damaged or stolen property
- implement special interventions to address relational problems
- shared development of plans for avoiding future problems

(3) Work with Parents to Clarify, Repair, Correct, and Prevent

- explain the actions and reasoning for the steps taken with the student(s)
- Clarify how the teacher plans to incorporate appropriate social and emotional learning into the goals for the student
- explain how they can support positive social and emotional learning at home
- mobilize them to work preventively with school