



## **Professional Development Institute**

### **Flex Course Syllabus**

# **Tackling Challenging Behaviors in Middle and High School (6-12)**

**PDI Course Number: 160T02**

**UCSD Course Number: EDUC42587**

If you would like information about receiving post-baccalaureate (graduate) credit for completing this course, [please click here](#).

### **Course Timeline**

Participants have one year to complete the course. Participants must spend a minimum of three weeks in this course.

### **Course Description**

Are you at your wits' end because you have run out of ideas on how to address the explosion of challenging behaviors that are becoming more common in today's classrooms? Today's students are experiencing stress, anxiety, and other mental health problems more than ever before, and with these stressors come a wide variety of challenging behaviors in the classroom. This online course is designed specifically for teachers in grades 6-12 who are searching for evidence-based strategies to address the problems experienced within today's educational landscape. The course begins by dissecting the stressors that are commonly encountered by students and teachers including such things as the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, declining mental health, and an increase in problematic behaviors. Teachers will discover how adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma can also affect student behavior. A variety of problems are addressed in the course content including attendance issues, bullying and school violence, substance use and abuse, and explosive emotions. Teachers will explore how to successfully address these important issues using powerful social-emotional strategies and activities so that emotions become deescalated and can be properly regulated by students going forward. Teachers also learn ways to approach students with empathy and build a strong classroom community, all while taking care of themselves in the process. By the end of this course, teachers will feel more

empowered in their quest to embed proven behavior management strategies into their own teaching practices to pave the way for a successful classroom learning experience.

## **Educational Outcomes**

1. Teachers will learn about the various stressors being faced by students, leading to a wide variety of challenges. Some topics discussed include the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, declining mental health, and an increase in problematic behaviors, as evidenced throughout middle and high school classrooms today.
2. Teachers will learn about the various stressors being faced by teachers today, including such things as increased workloads, decreased earning potential, and lack of respect.
3. Teachers will explore several large-scale school system stressors that contribute to dysregulated behavior throughout classrooms and schools. Some topics discussed include outdated model of schooling, lack of funding, teacher shortages, and burnout in teachers, administration, and families.
4. Teachers will learn how adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma can affect student behavior.
5. Teachers will learn how behavior is a method of communication and is often a result of an unmet need which is why it is so important to look below the surface to see what is truly occurring with a student.
6. Teachers will learn about the importance of empathy and community building in relation to managing challenging classroom behaviors.
7. Teachers will explore strategies to create meaningful relationships with their students in order to build empathy and community.
8. Teachers will learn strategies to support their own self-care as a way to further tackle challenging classroom behaviors.
9. Teachers will explore the benefits of attending school regularly and how increased attendance contributes to not only better academic achievement, but also helps students integrate socially and become solid community members.
10. Teachers will explore several strategies for increasing attendance based on rewards and consequences, but only as a path to moving from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation.
11. Teachers will explore several strategies for increasing attendance, all based on community, thereby helping to increase students' overall intrinsic motivation to come to school.
12. Teachers will understand the causes and correlations of bullying and school violence, including how those associated behaviors affect classroom behavior.
13. Teachers will explore specific strategies to cultivate empathy in the classroom, including the taking of different perspectives, incorporating a diverse curriculum, structuring discussions and debates, and celebrating diversity.
14. Teachers will explore specific social-emotional strategies to cultivate empathy, including the use of scenarios, journaling, and restorative justice.
15. Teachers will explore several strategies for building community in the classroom, including, but not limited to, 2x10 conversations, and making time for joy.
16. Teachers will understand that Substance Use Disorder is a biological, chronic illness, including how it relates to mental health issues.

17. Teachers will explore how various substances such as vaping, marijuana, alcohol, and opioids affect teenagers' brains, and they will learn how these changes affect students' behavior in the classroom.
18. Teachers will explore several specific strategies for combatting substance use in schools, including how to create a safe and supportive community, ways to prevent substance use through education and connection, providing emotional support, and being a positive adult role model.
19. Teachers will learn about emotional regulation and how emotional dysregulation can lead to mental health issues.
20. Teachers will explore Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a way to understand how emotional regulation can be taught over time.
21. Teachers will explore several evidence-based strategies to combat explosive emotions including, but not limited to, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), offering choices, creating a calm down corner, forming and nurturing trusting relationships, and modeling emotional regulation techniques.
22. Teachers will explore a variety of social-emotional learning (SEL) strategies to teach students how to better regulate their emotions. Some of these strategies include identifying emotions, perspective-taking, using scenarios, breathing techniques, and providing students with opportunities to take movement breaks.
23. Teachers will learn how establishing routines for common problems, providing frequent check-ins, and utilizing sentence starters are all forms of effective communication so that students can better communicate their needs, instead of reverting to challenging behaviors.

## **Instructional Media**

- Online Discussions
- Online Engagement
- Online Collaboration
- Instructor Feedback
- Instructor Interaction
- Online Resources and Websites
- Supplemental Instructional Materials
- Printable Classroom Resources

## **Evaluation**

- Test #1 (5% of final grade)
- Test #2 (5% of final grade)
- Test #3 (5% of final grade)
- Test #4 (5% of final grade)
- Test #5 (5% of final grade)
- Autobiography and Goals for the Course (10% of final grade)
- Article/Video Reflection (15% of final grade)

- Course Collaboration/Share Ideas with the Class (10% of final grade)
- Cumulative Assignment/Project: Respond to Classroom Scenarios (20% of final grade)
- Culminating Practicum (20% of final grade)

## Topical Outline

### Unit One

- Student Stressors and Behavior
- Teacher Stressors and Behavior
- System Stressors and Behavior
- **Assignment #1**  
*Write an autobiography including information about yourself, your grade level and what you specifically hope to learn about helping middle and high school teachers tackle challenging behaviors in their inclusive classrooms. Your autobiography should be a minimum of three paragraphs.*
- **Test #1**

### Unit Two

- Students Are People, Too
- Building Empathy and Community
- Self-Care for Staff: An Essential Piece of the Puzzle
- **Assignment #2**  
*As an educator, it is important to be aware of the research, studies, and professional work done in the field. In the course, you will find an article and video that are relevant to the specific course content. Read the article and then write an essay with your thoughts.*
- **Test #2**

### Unit Three

- The Importance of Attendance
- Attendance Strategies Based on Rewards and Consequences
- Attendance Strategies Based on Community
- **Assignment #3**  
*Online Discussion Board Participation/Engagement: Please post a tip, strategy, or idea that specifically relates to helping middle and high school teachers tackle challenging behaviors in their inclusive classrooms. The tip, strategy, or idea that you share needs to make a difference to other teachers in their own classrooms. Your assignment should be a minimum of three paragraphs and detailed enough for another teacher to follow easily. This is a great opportunity to share and collaborate with other teachers at your grade level around the country. Take time to review and respond to other postings that are*

*relevant to your classroom population in order to gain effective ideas to use immediately in your classroom.*

- **Test #3**

#### **Unit Four**

- Bullying and Violence in Schools
- Cultivating Empathy
- Creating Community
- **Test #4**

#### **Unit Five**

- Substance Use as a Chronic Illness
- The Effects of Substance Use on Behavior
- Dealing with Substance Use in Schools
- **Test #5**

#### **Unit Six**

- Deescalating Explosive Emotions
- Evidence-Based Strategies for Explosive Emotions
- Teaching Emotional Regulation through SEL
- **Assignment #4**

*Using what you have learned throughout this course, respond to each of the five scenarios, as laid out in Assignment #4. As the teacher, explain what you can do to help alleviate each of the troubling situations. Each response should be written in no less than six detailed sentences and should directly correspond to each situation, using evidence from the course. Format your assignment by pasting each scenario number and its corresponding title into the assignment, as well as your response to it.*

- **Assignment #5**

*The culminating practicum is a three-step process. (1) In the first assignment, you were asked what goals you had and what you hoped to learn from the course. Think back to your original goals for this course. Write a minimum two-paragraph reflection specifically describing how what you learned can be used to help you reach those goal(s). (2) Next, write a minimum three-paragraph plan that specifically describes the ways in which you intend to implement a particular strategy you learned in this course into your own teaching situation. (3) Last, write a minimum two-paragraph reflection describing a student you have or have had in the past. Then, discuss how the strategies you learned in this course will specifically benefit that student as you put your plan into action.*

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