

MO SW-PBS TEACHER TOOL

TASK DIFFICULTY

PRACTICE: Task difficulty relates to work assignments that exceed the student’s skill level. It is important to determine which aspects of the task/assignment do not match the student’s skills, and then how they can be appropriately adjusted to decrease associated problem behaviors and increase opportunities for academic success.

RESEARCH STATES:

- ▶ 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).
- ▶ Providing tasks at the correct level of difficulty increases & promotes on-task behavior, task completion, task comprehension and appropriate class-wide behavior (Kern & Clemens, 2007).
- ▶ Decreasing the overall task length and offering periodic breaks to do something else can aide in decreasing problem behavior. (Dunlap, Kern-Dunlap, Clarke & Robbins, 1991).

What is it?

- ▶ Identifying specific parts of a task or assignment where the breakdown in learning occurs.
- ▶ Asking specific questions to select supportive teaching strategies.
- ▶ Determining if inappropriate behavior is or is not associated with task difficulty.
- ▶ Selecting strategies that are matched to what is appropriate for the specific lesson(s).

Practice: Addressing task difficulty

- Identify core subjects/skills for which strategies are needed.
- Create a menu of strategies that are practical and doable for each.
- Identify students who could benefit from implementation of strategies.
- Select specific strategies and implement.
- Choose the amount of time the strategies will be used.
- Take data to see if the strategies are effective.
- Gradually decrease use of the strategies as students are able to make sufficient progress without them.

Strategy	Examples
Time adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have shorter work periods with other assignments in between • Provide physical breaks between difficult tasks • Provide alternative times for students to complete their work
Length adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight, in a color, the problems for the student to complete • Have the student cover all tasks except the one she is working on at the time • Break up the assignments into chunks
Adjust Input Mode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include illustrations on worksheets describing how to complete tasks • Highlight and/or underline important words in instructions and texts • Create Guided Notes that highlight key points
Response Mode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide choice of written or oral answers • Permit students to use outlining software to facilitate planning • Allow students to video or take pictures to produce journals or compose essays
Increased Instruction or Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different instructional strategies than were presented during initial instruction – incorporate multiple representations • Arrange for additional brief instruction using modeling, then guided practice, then independent practice if student is in the acquisition stage. • If students understands the content but needs more practice, arrange a peer tutor. Ensure 90% accuracy before moving to independent practice. • Use flash cards to increase fluency to 90%. • To assist with mastery or generalization, use meaningful real life examples for practice and application.

Is the student’s inappropriate behavior associated with a task or skill? If so, under what specific circumstances?

Teacher Self-Assessment Tool

Self-Assessment Features	Yes	No	In Progress
1. I plan lessons to include strategies to address task difficulty and align with student(s) ability and needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time expectations or assignment length • Mode of responding • Increased instruction, guided practice, independent practice 			
2. I implement task difficulty strategies as appropriate for lesson(s) content and student(s) ability and needs.			



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.
- Kern, L. and Clemens, N.H. (2007). Antecedent strategies to promote appropriate classroom behavior. *Psychology in the Schools*, 44(1), 65-75.
- Scott, T. M. Anderson, C. M., & Alter, P. (2012). *Managing classroom behavior using positive behavior supports*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

For More Information

To access the MO SW-PBS Tier 1 Workbook, videotapes and other resources go to the Missouri Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support website: <http://pbissmissouri.org/>

