

MO SW-PBS Classroom 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 aid in decreasing problem behavior. (Dunlap, Kern-Dunlap, Clarke & Robbins, 1991).

Aligns to MO Teacher Standards: 2:1, 2:6, 3:1, 5:1, 5:2, 5:3, 6:1, 6:2, 8:1

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 unexpected behavior is or is not associated with task difficulty.
- ▶ Selecting strategies that are matched to what is appropriate for the specific lesson(s).

Implementation:

Addressing Task Difficulty	Practice	What it looks like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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. ● them. 	Time adjustments	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	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	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	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	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 the student is in the acquisition stage. If a student 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%. Use meaningful real life examples for practice and application to assist with mastery or generalization,



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. & 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.



Adjusting Task Difficulty: Self-Assessment

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.

On numerical response questions, please rate your implementation using the following scale:

1 - Rarely 2 - Sometimes 3 - Almost Always 4 - Always

Address situations where the academic tasks are accurately matched to the student's ability, but the length of the assignment exceeds the student's motivation or endurance.

You have given your student an academic task that is appropriate for their ability. When preparing an assignment, how consistently do you...

- > reduce the length of the reading or the number of questions? 1 2 3 4
- > adjust the length of the task so that your student can successfully complete the task? 1 2 3 4
- > plan in advance, using student data, to have adjustments available that allow for successful completion while maintaining high expectations for meeting the learning objective successfully? 1 2 3 4
- > use progress monitoring data to determine when to make adjustments? 1 2 3 4

Address situations where the mode or method of response make the academic tasks aversive or overwhelming to the student.

When the mode or method of response is overwhelming to your student. How consistently do you...

- > anticipate this possibility and have alternate methods of response ready? 1 2 3 4
- > make necessary adjustments to the mode in order to increase the likelihood of successful work completion? 1 2 3 4
- > have a method of response available if necessary that has been successful in the past? 1 2 3 4
- > use progress monitoring to determine when to step in and make an adjustment? 1 2 3 4

Use instructional strategies appropriate to the student's needs including accessibility, background knowledge, and stage of learning.

How consistently do you...

- > match instructional strategies to the needs of each student? 1 2 3 4
- > consider a student's background knowledge when selecting instructional strategies? 1 2 3 4
- > consider a student's stage of learning when selecting instructional strategies? 1 2 3 4
- > consider accessibility when selecting instructional strategies? 1 2 3 4



Adjusting Task Difficulty: Practice Profile

Adjusting Task Difficulty				
Essential Functions	Exemplary/ Ideal Implementation	Proficient	Close to Proficient	Far from Proficient
Address situations where the academic tasks are accurately matched to the student's ability, but the length of the assignment exceeds the student's motivation or endurance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher uses student data to appropriately adjust the length of tasks to increase the likelihood of successful work completion, while maintaining the high expectations for meeting the learning objective. Teacher uses progress monitoring to determine when to make adjustments and evaluates the effectiveness of the support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher uses student data to appropriately adjust the length of tasks to increase the likelihood of successful work completion, while maintaining the high expectations for meeting the learning objective. 	<i>(Skill is emerging, but not yet to ideal proficiency. Coaching is recommended.)</i>	<i>(Follow-up professional development and coaching is critical.)</i>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher adjusts the length of tasks to increase the likelihood of successful work completion, considering the learning objective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence of planning for possible adjustments to length of assignment or task.
Address situations where the mode or method of response make the academic tasks aversive or overwhelming to the student.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher uses student data to appropriately adjust the mode and method of response to increase the likelihood of successful work completion, while maintaining the high expectations for meeting the learning objective. Teacher uses progress monitoring to determine when to make adjustments and evaluates the effectiveness of the support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher uses student data to appropriately adjust the mode and method of response to increase the likelihood of successful work completion, while maintaining the high expectations for meeting the learning objective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher adjusts the mode and method of response to increase the likelihood of successful work completion, considering the learning objective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence of planning for possible alternate methods of response.
Use instructional strategies appropriate to the student's needs including accessibility, background knowledge, and stage of learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher uses student data to select instructional strategies appropriate to the student's needs including accessibility, background knowledge, and stage of learning, while maintaining the high expectations for meeting the learning objective. Teacher uses progress monitoring to determine when to make adjustments and evaluates the effectiveness of the support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher uses student data to select instructional strategies appropriate to the student's needs including accessibility, background knowledge, and stage of learning, while maintaining the high expectations for meeting the learning objective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher uses student data to select instructional strategies appropriate to the student's needs including accessibility, background knowledge, and stage of learning, considering the learning objective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence of planning for adjustment of instructional strategies.

