I'm Going Bananas!:

A Teacher's Guide to Working with Students with Emotional/Behavioral Problems in Grades 4-6

Professional Project

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Introduction

Working with students with Emotional/Behavioral (EB) problems in the classroom can be a challenge few teachers are fully prepared for. Many times, these students are just as frustrated and overwhelmed as their teachers. As young adolescents, these students lack many of the appropriate interpersonal and intrapersonal skills to relate to others. Several of them tend to push people away even though they genuinely crave positive attention. These students require a teacher who will take the time to get to know them, show them support and encouragement and, of course, promote intrinsic motivation.

While these students may experience feelings of rejection and frustration, their teachers also suffer a similar state of mind. Teachers experience a multitude of feelings while working with students with EB problems. They may feel resentful, angry, frustrated, hurt, and/or overwhelmed regarding the specific student or situation.

Introduction (Continued)

Although teacher and student may represent very different roles in the classroom, often they find themselves thinking the same thing, "I'm going bananas!" It is important for teacher and student to work cooperatively toward a common goal: to create a healthy classroom environment and a caring teacher-student relationship.

Through positivity, consistency and a couple of helpful strategies, even the most challenging student can be successful.

Note to Teachers

This guide is intended for teachers of grades four through six who are interested in adopting positive strategies for working with students with EB problems. Its simple format is designed for General Education and Special Education teachers who lack an extensive background in the study of Behavior. Three commonly used and research-based strategies that promote positive and cooperative thinking among teacher and student are included. Also included are literature ideas for students, as well as various resources for you, the teacher. I hope you find this guide effective and easy to use.

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), 2004 describes Emotional Disturbance as:

(i) a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

> (a) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
> (b) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
> (c) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
> (d) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
> (e) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

(ii) Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance…(IDEA, 2004)

There are five main behavioral characteristics that a teacher might observe while working with students with Emotional Disturbances. These characteristics are:

Hyperactivity

Aggression

Withdrawal

Immaturity

Learning Difficulties

Hyperactivity

Hyperactive students can be impulsive, constantly moving, easily distracted, unable to concentrate and even aggressive.

Specific Behaviors:
- Fidgeting
- Wandering
- Excessive talking
- Difficulty participating in quiet activities (such as reading)

(www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus)

http://trialx.com/curebyte/2011/05/23/photos-related-to-attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder/

Aggression

http://www.specialpeoplecentre.com

Aggression comes in many forms, such as acting out or fighting. Students who exhibit aggressive behavior tend to be rejected by their classmates.
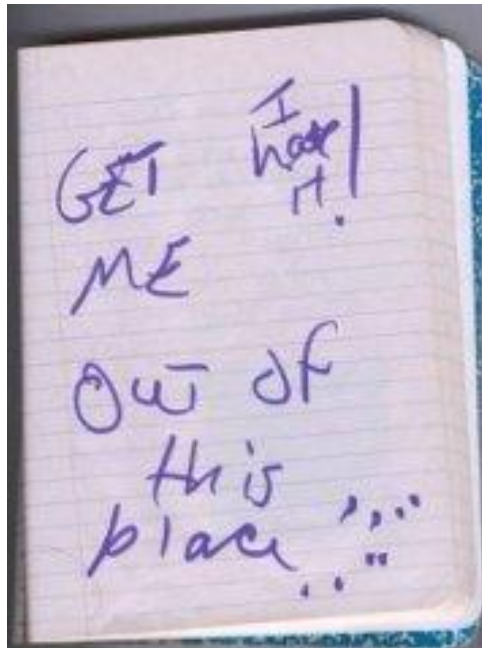
Specific Behaviors:
- Talking back to teachers or classmates
- Losing their temper frequently
- Fighting (physically or verbally)
- Angry/frustrated demeanor

Withdrawal

Withdrawal can be described as an excessive fear or anxiety with regard to social interaction.

Specific Behaviors:
- Lack of participation in classroom activities
- Will not initiate interaction with others
- Unhappy/Uncomfortable demeanor
- Consistently alone

www.healthwyze.org

Immaturity

www.parentdish.com

The definition of Immaturity is simply behaving in a way that a younger person would behave.

Specific Behaviors:
- Inappropriate crying
- Temper tantrums or pouting
- Poor coping skills

Learning Difficulties

Learning difficulties result in a student academically performing below grade level. The student can become confused and frustrated by one or more content areas.

Specific Behaviors:
- Lack of participation in the problem content area
- Defensive comments such as "math is stupid"
- Not turning in assignments
- Copying other students' work

www.momversation.com

Positive Behavior Strategies

www.teachersatrisk.com

Before implementing any of the following strategies with students, please complete this checklist. Always remember that it is rarely personal when it comes to the challenging behaviors of students. It is important for teachers to leave their egos at the classroom door.

❑ I am knowledgeable of the specific home lives of my students.

❑ I am aware of my students' interests.

❑ I have tried my best to build caring relationships with my students.

❑ I have my students' best interest in mind.

❑ I have positive and hopeful feelings about my students' success.

Positive Behavior Strategies

Three commonly used and research-based strategies that can be utilized in the classroom are included. The purpose of these strategies is to take a problem behavior and transform it into a more desirable one. They are:

Positive Reinforcement

Self-Monitoring

Behavior Contracts

Positive Reinforcement

The Theory:

Positive Reinforcement

Previously, many students fell into the following equation with regard to how their behavior was influenced by the attention they received for a particular behavior:

Student + Bad Behavior = Negative Attention
Sarah keeps blurting out in class. Her teacher provides her with a consequence for her misbehavior.

and

Same Student + Good Behavior = No Attention
Sarah sits quietly and the teacher neither says or does anything with regard to Sarah.

These students began to realize that bad attention from their parents and teachers was better than no attention at all. The attention they received for behaving poorly reinforced the problem behavior.

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The Theory: (Continued)

Positive Reinforcement

Positive Reinforcement utilizes this same idea but focuses on reinforcing good rather than bad behavior.

Student + Good Behavior = Positive Attention
Sarah sits quietly and the teacher gives her a thumbs up and a wink.

and

Same Student + Bad Behavior = No Attention
Sarah blurts out in class and is ignored by the teacher.

Positive Attention, for many students, serves as a much stronger reinforcer than negative attention.

Step 1:

Identify the Problem Behavior

Positive Reinforcement

Questions to Consider:
- What does the behavior look like?
- When does it tend to occur during the day?
- What sort of events usually precede and follow the behavior?

The more a teacher knows about the student and his or her behavior, the better.

Examples of Problem Behaviors:
- Refusing to follow directions
- Chronic tardiness
- Actively disrupting the classroom

Step 2: Identify the Desired Behavior

Positive Reinforcement

Now that the student's problem behavior has been recognized, it is time to identify and replace it with a more desirable behavior. This more positive behavior is generally the opposite of the problem behavior.

Example:

Problem Behavior = Not Turning in Work

Desired Behavior = Turning in Work

Step 3:

Positive Reinforcement

Identify Reinforcers

It is vital to select reinforcers that are important to the individual student. It is also important that these reinforcers make the student feel proud; ones that are intrinsically motivating. It is helpful to choose a variety of reinforcers to avoid satiation. They can range from the smallest gesture, such as a wink, to something larger like lunch with the teacher. These forms of reinforcement should make the student happy and excited to behave appropriately.

Examples of appropriate positive reinforcers:
- Listening to music
- Praise from the teacher
- Positive note home

Observe what the student does during free time for possible reinforcement ideas.

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Step 4: Provide Reinforcement for Desired Behaviors

Positive Reinforcement

When observing a student behaving desirably, provide them with his or her individual form of reinforcement. Remember that many fourth through sixth grade students do not feel comfortable being put in the spotlight, so sometimes a sneaky little "thumbs up" will be reinforcing enough. When possible, it is important to be specific with the student as to what behavior is being praised.

Step 5:

Positive Reinforcement

Reduce the Attention Given to Problem Behaviors

The less attention students receive for their problem behaviors and more they receive for their good behaviors, the better. Each situation is different, and it is up to the teacher how to best implement this step in his or her classroom.

Step 6:

Be Consistent!

Positive Reinforcement will not work without consistent implementation. It takes time to change a behavior, so be patient and, most importantly, be consistent.

Positive Reinforcement

Self-Monitoring

Self-Monitoring

Self-Monitoring, or Self-Management, as it is also referred to, are wonderful behavioral tools for teachers to utilize with specific students. The strategy of Self-Monitoring consists of teacher and student working cooperatively to generate a behavior plan that the student can implement him/herself. The more active a role a student takes in his or her own behavior change, the more enduring the change will be.

Step 1:

Identify the Problem Behavior

Questions to Consider:
- What does the behavior look like?
- When does it tend to occur during the day?
- What sort of events usually precede and follow the behavior?

Examples of Problem Behaviors:
- Consistently talks to neighbors during class
- Throws tantrums
- Chronic Tattling

Identify the Desired Behavior

As with Positive Reinforcement, the next step is to identify a more desirable behavior with regard to the student. Generally, this behavior is the opposite of the problem behavior.

Example:

Problem Behavior = Blurting out in Class

Desired Behavior = Not Blurting out

Self-Monitoring

Step 3:

Discuss the Desired Behavior with the Student

Have the student describe the desired behavior in his or her own words. Self-monitoring will only be effective if the student understands exactly what the desired behavior looks like.

Example:

A teachers description of a desired behavior might be, "Show respect for your peers."

A students description of the same desired behavior might be, "I will use nice words and keep my hands to myself."

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Choose a Measuring System

Choose a system that makes it simple for the student to keep track of when he or she performs the desired behavior. Recording the desired behavior, rather than the problem one, keeps the student feeling motivated and proud.

Examples:
- Tally Marks
- Check under Yes? No?

A timeframe for recording behaviors should be established starting with short periods of time and building as the student becomes more comfortable.

An example of a Self-Monitoring Chart can be found on the next page.

Self-Monitoring

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(Desired Behavior)	School (Morning)	School (Afternoon)	Home/Community
Daily Points Possible			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			
Total Weekly Points Possible			
Total Weekly Points Given			

Totals

Self-Monitoring

Teach the Student How to Use the Measuring System

Give the student a chance to practice using the recording system with teacher feedback. Make sure that the student fully understands what the behavior looks like as well as how and when to record it.

Examples:
- Have the student act out the desired behavior
- Perform a couple of practice run-throughs using the measuring system

Step 6:

Do Accuracy Checks and Give Feedback

Once the student has begun self-recording the desired behavior, perform random checks to ensure that the behaviors are being recorded properly. Do not allow the student to practice mistakes. Provide consistent feedback to ensure the student continues to progress behaviorally.

www.ramblingteacher.blogspot.com

Self-Monitoring

Self-Monitoring

Provide the Student With Continued Feedback and Support

None of these strategies are intended to be a quick fix. Continued feedback, guidance, and support are necessary for the self-monitoring student to succeed.

Ideas:
- Check in with the student daily or weekly to monitor progress
    - Discuss his or her personal accomplishments
    - Make sure the student understands the system.
    - Provide feedback
    - Answer any questions the student might have

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Behavior Contracts

Behavior Contracts

Behavior Contracts are a great way to include the student in the behavior change process without completely handing over the reins. Some students are not mature enough to manage their own behavior so this is a great tool to keep them involved.

Behavior Contracts can be utilized at school as well as at home. These contracts clearly illustrate what is expected of the student, as well as a reward he or she can earn if the particular expectations are met.

Step 1:

Identify the Problem Behavior

Behavior Contracts

Questions to Consider:
- What does the behavior look like?
- When does it tend to occur during the day?
- What sort of events usually precede and follow the behavior?

Examples of Problem Behaviors:
- Violence towards peers
- Verbal disrespect to the teacher
- Does not complete assignments

Step 2:

Identify the Desired Behavior

As with the other two strategies, the second step is to identify a more positive behavior in the student. This desired behavior is generally the opposite of the problem behavior.

Example:
Problem Behavior = Actively Not Participating in Class

Desired Behavior = Actively Participating in Class

Behavior Contracts

Behavior Contracts

Discuss the Desired Behavior with the Student

This strategy requires that a student fully understands what the desired behavior looks like. Have the student describe what it means in his or her own words.

Example:

A teachers description of a desired behavior might be, "Actively participate in class."

A students description of the same desired behavior might be, "I will pay attention and do my work."

Step 4:

Craft a Personalized Behavior Contract

Teachers can choose to create their own Behavior Contract from scratch or download one from the internet that allows them to fill in the blanks. Many templates are available in a variety of books on classroom management.

The majority of Behavior Contracts include some or all of the following sections:

- Student's Name
- Student's description of the desired behavior
- Consequence(s) for exhibiting problem behavior
- Reward(s) for exhibiting desired behavior
- Student, Teacher and Parent signatures

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Step 4: Continued

Behavior Contracts

Craft a Personalized Behavior Contract

When choosing appropriate rewards, it may be helpful to refer to the section on Positive Reinforcement.

The implementation of consequences tends to be a personal decision, better left to the individual teacher.

An example of a Behavior Contract can be found on the next page.

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Behavior Contract

I, _____, will try my best <u>not</u> to

_____

<div align="center">(Problem Behavior)</div>

Instead, I will

_____

_____

<div align="center">(Desired Behavior)</div>

My behavior goal will be considered accomplished when:

_____

_____

When I successfully accomplish my behavior goals, I will be rewarded with:

_____

_____

Student Signature _____

Teacher Signature _____

Parent Signature _____

Date _____

Step 5:

Follow Through!

The final and most important step in changing a student's problem behavior is to simply follow through. For many students, school may be the only place they receive any sort of consistency. It is the educators' responsibility to teach their students positive behaviors and help mold them into happy, motivated, confident young adults. It takes time, but with consistency and a caring student-teacher relationship, most students can succeed.

Behavior Contracts

Book List for Students

Children's literature can serve as a terrific tool for students with EB problems. These books provide students with a character they can relate to with regard to the feelings and challenges they face.

Just Call Me Stupid
By Tom Birdseye
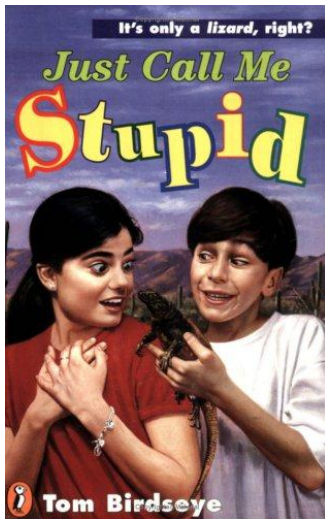
Loudmouth George and the Sixth Grade Bully
By Nancy Carlson
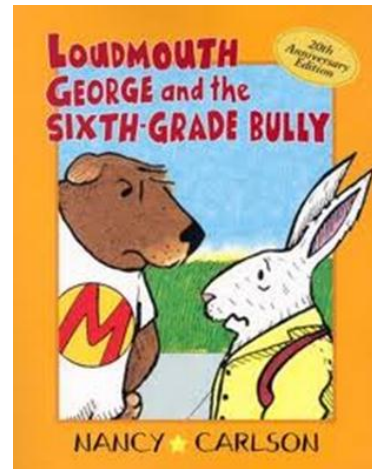
How to Lose All Your Friends
By Nancy Carlson
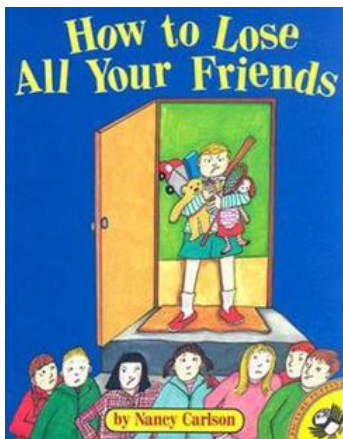
Some Friend!
By Carol Carrick
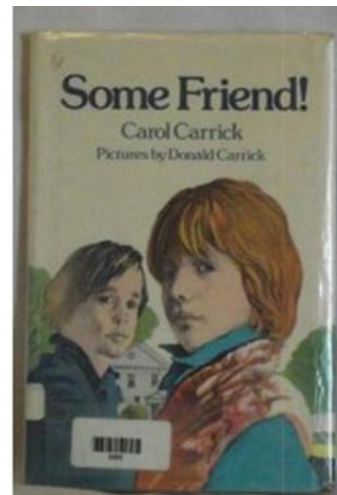
Book List for Students

Friends: Making Them & Keeping Them
By Patti Kelley Criswell
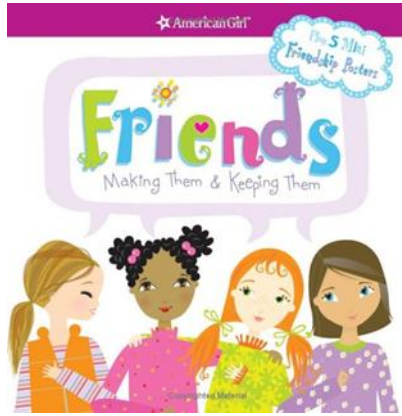
The Hundred Dresses
By Eleanor Estes
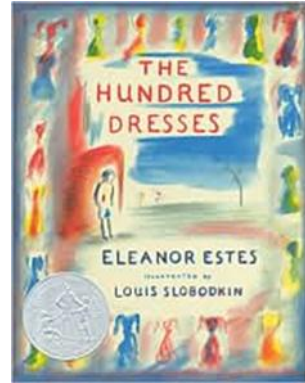
The Monster In Me
By Mette Ivie Harrison
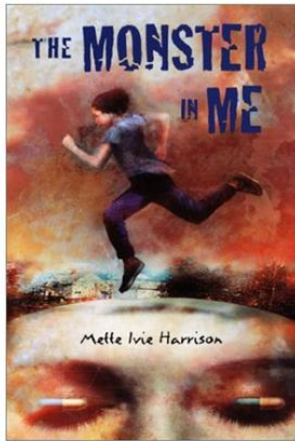
The 6th Grade Nickname Game
By Gordon Korman
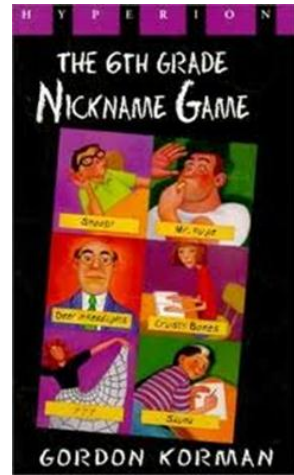
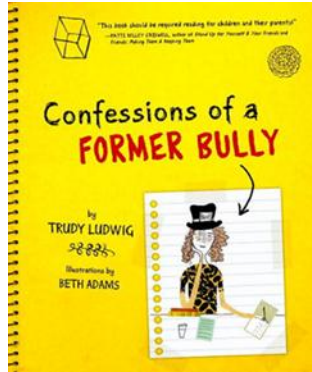All The Answers
By Anne C. Lemieux
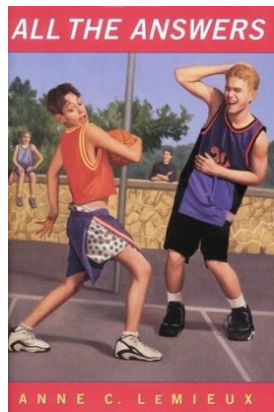
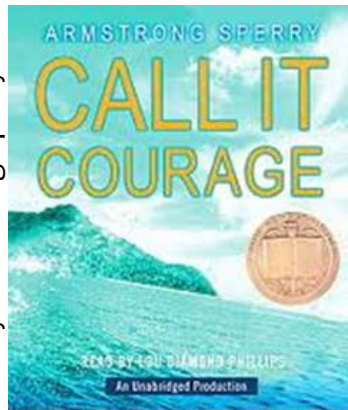Hidden Talents
By David Lubar
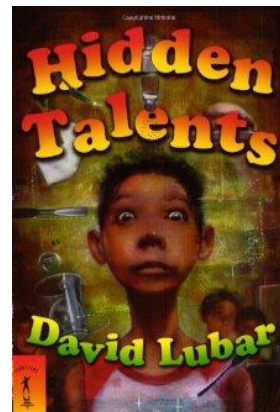
Book List for Students

Confessions of a Former Bully
By Trudy Ludwig

The Giving Tree
By Shel Silverstein
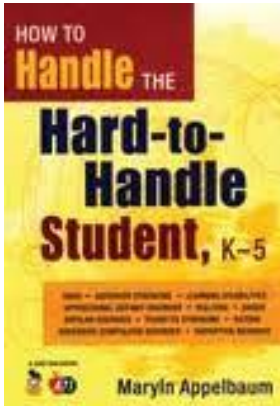
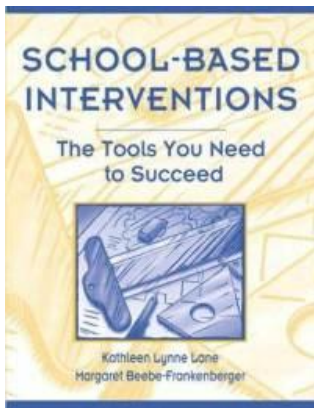Call It Courage
By Armstrong Sperry

Loser
By Jerry Spinelli

Many more books such as these can be found at:
http://atn-reading-lists.wikispaces.com/home
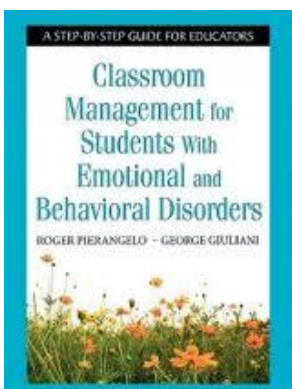
Resources for Teachers

Books:

Appelbaum, M. (2009). *How to handle the hard-to-handle student, k-5.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Lane, K.L. & Beebe-Frankenberger, M. (2004). *School-based interventions: The tools you need to succeed.* Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc.

Pierangelo, R. & Guiliani, G. (2008). *Classroom management for students with emotional and behavioral disorders.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Resources for Teachers

Websites:

- Nevada Positive Behavior Support (NPBS):
www.pbsnv.org

- This wonderful resource contains a large variety of Behavior Charts:
www.freeprintablebehaviorcharts.com

- This website is designed to mentor and inspire teachers with helpful articles and support:
www.inspiringteachers.com

- This vibrant teacher website bursts at the seams with strategies, tips, and creative lessons:
www.theteachersguide.com

- Pro Teacher is an interactive teaching community where you can share your great ideas with others:
www.proteacher.net

Professional Standards

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC):
Ethical Principles:
- Respect the diverse characteristics and needs of individuals with exceptionalities and their families.
  - Maintaining challenging expectations for individuals with exceptionalities to develop the highest possible learning outcomes and quality of life potential in ways that respect their dignity, culture, language, and background.
  - Using evidence, instructional data, research and professional knowledge to inform practice.

Professional Practice:
- Management of Behavior:
  - Apply only those disciplinary methods and behavioral procedures which they have been instructed to use, and which do not undermine the dignity of the individual or the basic human rights of persons with exceptionalities, such as corporal punishment.

Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC):
- Standard 5: Motivation and Management
  - The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning and self-motivation.

Content Standards

Without effective behavior management, students with EB problems would lack the appropriate skills needed to achieve their content standards. If the included strategies are implemented properly in the classroom, this guide can assist students in reaching all of their content standards.

www.uniapply.in

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Pierangelo, R. & Guiliani, G. (2008). *Classroom
    management for students with emotional and
    behavioral disorders.* Thousand Oaks, CA:
    Corwin Press.

Cover Pictures
Student: www.ifthiscouchcouldtalk.com/2010/12/06/when-she-was-good/
Teacher: mmmdigital.co.uk