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Giselle Valdez Tejada  
*California State University, Monterey Bay*

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Teaching Students with Maladaptive Behaviors in Special Education

Giselle Valdez

California State University, Monterey Bay

Senior Capstone

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**Abstract**

Thousands of students engage in maladaptive behaviors in Special Education classrooms throughout the world every single day. It is very important for parents and others related to the field to know and get an understanding of how teachers teach students effectively according to their functional skills and understanding. This senior capstone examines how teachers teach students with maladaptive behaviors in Special Education. Through the use of literature review and interviews with three specialists in Special Education, the findings reveal that by finding ways to keep their maladaptive behaviors to interfere with their learning is by providing one-to-one support in classroom settings and tapping to available extra resources in schools will increase their academic performance.

### **Introduction and Background**

Ever since I was a little girl I questioned so many things around me, especially after August of 2005. I became curious as to why I would see a sibling of mine bite herself, hit herself, and hit people around her. I wondered if those behaviors would ever go away or if they would interfere with her learning as she grew older. As I grew older I simply accepted what I would see at home but knew I wanted to learn about behavior and become someone who can help children with maladaptive behaviors in the future. As my sister grew older, she started attending school and had a 1:1 paraprofessional with her at all times. I wondered about the effectiveness of having someone with her at all times. According to Giangreco and Doyle (2002) , “Sometimes that proximity is warranted and necessary to provide personal care, ensure safety, or provide instructional supports (e.g., verbal or physical prompting/guidance, tutoring)” (p.5). I also remember taking her to school various times with my mother and I would see different reinforcement options, token economy systems on their desks, PECS pictures, etc. and that was the moment I fell in love with the environment of a classroom setting and science of behavior.

There are many children who have emotional and behavioral disorders worldwide. The most important factor with children who have emotional and behavioral disorders is finding a way in which their maladaptive behaviors don't interfere with their learning and education. Keep in mind that not anybody can have the courage and patience to work with children with maladaptive behaviors as it can become stressful and requires a lot of patience. It does require some experience and some sort of training. “Maladaptive behaviors include aggressive behavior towards authority figures and peers, temper tantrums, oppositional defiant behavior, inappropriate verbal behavior towards peers, teachers, and other authority figures” (Johnson, 2019, p.15). Some other examples include self-injurious behavior (SIB), mouthing, property

destruction, pinching, and biting. This topic is very important not only to me but many others who have siblings in SPED, work in the SPED field, or may be interested in this field. I am curious to know how Special Education teachers teach curriculum to students with maladaptive behaviors. As we all know every child has different needs, therefore, do teachers have different plans for every student depending on their IEP (Individualized Educational Plan)?

This senior capstone research project examines how teachers teach students with maladaptive behaviors in Special Education classroom settings. This project will include an Introduction and background, Literature Review, Methods and Procedures, Results and Findings, and a Conclusion section along with References and Appendix. The primary question I will be seeking to answer is: How do educators teach students with maladaptive behaviors in Special Education? Secondary and related research questions that will also be addressed and answered are: What are maladaptive behaviors? And what do they look like? How do schools diagnose that children have maladaptive behaviors? What percent of children have maladaptive behaviors within the U.S Education system? How do maladaptive behaviors interfere with learning skills? What does research say about teaching young children with maladaptive behaviors in Special Education? Are there programs available to teach or work with students with maladaptive behaviors in Special Education? If so, what are they and how do they look? Why is it important to have a 1:1 paraprofessional next to a child with maladaptive behaviors in school settings? Are there resources for teachers and schools to work with students with maladaptive behaviors in schools? If there are, what are they?

### **Literature Review**

As I go into answering the previous questions, I will get into detail on many different aspects and related topics needed in order to maintain a SPED classroom steady and for every

child to engage in their learning within decreasing or maintaining their behaviors in appropriate ways. According to Crutchfield (1997), “Over five million of these children have been identified as having a specific disability such as autism, mental retardation, cerebral palsy, or a learning disability that necessitates some type of special instruction” (p.2). Hibel et al., (2010) states, “Placing a student into special education requires that he or she be “labeled” as requiring special assistance to meet the cognitive, behavioral, and/or physical demands of the school general curriculum... At some point during the students K-12 career, the eligibility process for soft disabilities is initiated when a teacher begins to consider the student as performing significantly below grade level learning or behavioral standards and so refers the student for evaluation as possibly having a disability”(p.312). The way in which schools diagnose students with maladaptive behaviors is by evaluating them using different behavior scales. “The first part of the evaluation involves interviews—both individually and together with parents—to assess your child’s background, medical history, and symptoms. When a clinician conducts the diagnostic interview with a child, he or she speaks with the child and observes the child's nonverbal communication, such as facial expressions and posture” (NYU Langone Health).

Assessment scales taken into effect are the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, Conners Parent and Teacher Rating Scales, Vanderbilt Assessment Scales, Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC), Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist, and the Barkley Home and School Situation Questionnaires. The Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales is a scale that requires a team procedure. Both parents and teachers involved have to answer a couple of questions regarding the child. There are no right or wrong answers but for it to see how the student interacts with the world. These questions are typically focusing on the basic skills (communication, daily living, socialization, and motor skills). The results usually help to see the delays a child apprehends.

Another scale used in school settings is the Conners Parent and Teacher Rating Scales. This scale measures the presence and severity of behaviors related to ADHD

(Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder). This scale regards both parent and teacher as well.

They both answer a couple of questions on how a child behaves in a particular setting. Questions

are related to inattention, hyperactivity, learning difficulties, and social skills. The Achenbach

Child Behavior Checklist is another very common Scale. This scale measures emotional,

behavioral, and social development and abilities. Teachers and students have to answer about

100 statements describing a child's behavior by rating them “true” or “untrue”.

Maladaptive behaviors interfere with a child's learning skills as they can be repetitive.

When a child has repetitive behaviors such as elopement, hitting, or tantrums there is no time for

them to learn as much as a student with no maladaptive behaviors would. Hodgdon (1999) points

out that learning differences in people with autistic spectrum disorder may affect their learning of

skills to replace maladaptive behavior. Some examples include: lack of generalization of learned

skills, inability to discern what behavior to imitate and when behavior is appropriate, and learned

chains of behavior that may be hard to change or interrupt mid-chain. Commonly, the students

who don't understand what communication is, have difficulty expressing themselves, and don't

know what else to do but engage in maladaptive behaviors. Maladaptive behaviors can also be an

attempt to draw attention to themselves or something in the environment. People with autistic

spectrum disorder have difficulty using language for socialization purposes, such as social

interactions, establishing joint attention, and establishing social connections. Requesting an item,

greeting a person, asking or answering questions, commenting, conversation, and expression of

feelings all become difficult (Hodgdon, 1999).

Smith et al (2009) indicated that “Special educators are required to teach based on standards while implementing individualized education plans (IEP) and meeting the needs of a diverse group of students. The teachers are given grade-level standards or extensions of standards and are often challenged by the task of translating standards into measurable, meaningful objectives for individual students” (p.11). Therefore, it is the special educator and their team (paraprofessionals) to come up with alternatives on how a specific child will receive the information in a way they can understand. Each learner has different disabilities as well as different strengths and weaknesses which is why planning should be integrated in their unique learning method. Students with autism or severe disabilities usually have their own individual schedules. Individual schedules allow students to focus on their learning activities for the time being before transitioning into something different. Individual schedules should be at the reading level of the student which can include written schedules for readers, symbol or picture schedules for symbol readers, and objects for nonreaders. Teachers also teach students by allowing them to have access to technology applications. Technology use provides access for participation in activities, assists in expressive language, increases endurance or ability to persevere and complete tasks, allows greater access to information, supports social interactions, and helps the individual achieve greater independence in performing living tasks. Technology methods vary from having touch screens, alternative and adapted keypads, keyguards, head pointers, and switches. Many students also learn from having visual notebooks that include what they have learned or are learning. Their system is called a theme-specific vocabulary.

Special Education Teachers teach vocabulary by making the lessons multilevel. Some students are learning that pictures can be used for language and others are learning to read words. They learn the meanings of small concrete words and others the meaning of more complex



words. Special education teachers use the opportunity to ask questions to the students when they are watching a video or reading a book. They pause, test their knowledge by asking specific questions, and the student shows the word or symbol (or their preferred communication method). Teachers and their team get in small groups and guide readings. The purpose of this instruction is to teach word-identification skills, increase oral-reading fluency, and develop comprehension skills. A couple of materials used for guided readings are daily chapter retellings written in large boards, poetry printed on large charts, and words from songs in features related movies.

“[Picture Exchange Communication System] PECS, developed by Bondy and Frost (1993), is currently being used to teach functional communication skills, initiate requesting, and provide choice-making opportunities to persons with autism and other severe developmental disabilities” (Conklin & Mayer, 2011, p. 156). This is also used once the class work is all done by the student. Students get to choose a reinforcer by requesting a preferred item, activity, or relief of an aversive stimulus in an appropriate manner. Once they immediately receive what they requested, their positive behavior is reinforced. There are different types of phases in PECS: how to communicate, distance and persistence, picture discrimination, sentence structure, responding to “what do you want”, commenting, and spontaneous commenting. All of these phases teach the student something different. It goes from teaching the student to pick up a preferred item when asked to do so, take a picture to their communication board and place it, select a preferred and non preferred picture, select the correct picture array, making a structured sentence by putting the image in a sentence strip, picking up a picture of what they want, and then commenting on what they see or what the picture may be. Teachers use the Picture Exchange Communication System to teach students communication skills, which can also help decrease maladaptive behaviors as it is a way of expressing themselves.

Smith et al (2009) says that planning curriculum should be based on an integrated or thematic approach. The thematic approach is a method of instruction that serves students with moderate to severe disabilities. “In thematic instruction, a basic theme is chosen, and all other subjects are related to the theme. This makes it possible for students to understand materials and make connections rather than having isolated bits of information floating about without meaning or connection” (p.18). There are many ways to choose upon theme topics. Regular teachers usually center teaching on different subjects such as social studies and science but special education teachers choose center instruction on a selection of age appropriate literature chosen upon a theme.

An individualized education plan (IEP) has a goal for each individual student. For example, there can be a case in which a goal can be to give 20 vocabulary words for the student to identify. In other cases, an IEP can have a goal to graph, collect, and organize data. Depending on the goal, it is what is being worked on for that individual student. Some of the program principles are that when necessary, support and modifications should be provided. The program should also be based on general education standards but emphasized in functional skills. Another program principal is that there should be concrete materials and real-world experiences throughout their learning. As mentioned, low- and high-tech assistive technology should be used to utilize learning and assure participation and success. Through the use of technology, students are being both receptive and expressive and are demonstrating their comprehension and knowledge. Meanwhile teaching students curriculum, the token economy system is another method implemented. “Token economy systems are often used by special education teachers to improve social skills and academic performance. Tokens or points are issued by the teacher to students who comply with rules and perform desirable behaviors. The tokens or points may be

spent, at the student's discretion, on reinforcement options offered within the classroom” (Lazarus, 1990). This economy system can be used in both home and school settings. This system is applied by the following: selecting tokens, defining behavior or skill to be reinforced, specify the instructions, select backup reinforcers, establish a ratio of possible tokens used for the week, consider how the task can be exchanged if the student fails, and train the students to use the system.

Depending on the severity of the classroom setting or student it may be possible to have paraprofessionals or 1:1 (direct paraprofessionals) for extra support. These paraprofessionals and the special education teacher all become a team. Whether the child may need help academically or due to emotional and behavioral issues a paraprofessional is there to help. Smith et al. (2009) mentions, “Students who need help with communicating devices or need extra assistance should be paired with a teacher assistant or a nondisabled peer tutor. Those who may need to leave frequently (students who walk to manage agitation, those with bathroom issues, etc.) need to be seated nearest a door. Students who are sleepy because of medication or sleep apnea need to be near the front so teachers can encourage them to stay awake. Students who agitate each other should be placed apart”. Typical tasks a paraeducator/paraprofessional assists in are performing instructional activities planned by the teacher, give the teacher feedback on a student's progress, and assist in clerical duties. They may also take attendance, tutor a child in skills, assist the teacher in administering tests, and when the children have gone home, they work with the teacher for upcoming lesson plans. Paraprofessionals have two responsibilities, classroom management and instructional planning. 1:1 paraprofessionals have the duty to be next to the student assigned to them. 1:1 direct paraprofessionals assist the student academically and personally and are with them at all times. The student they may be next to may have various

maladaptive behaviors causing them to hit themselves or others, or elope, causing their learning to become affected.

There are various resources for Special Education teachers and schools to work with students with maladaptive behaviors. There is training for teachers, support from their paraprofessionals, and extra support from companies who focus on Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) in school settings. “Students may need the support of a physical therapist, an occupational therapist, speech pathologist, a counselor, a vision specialist, and family in addition to the expertise of a special education classroom staff” (Smith, 2009, p.14). Each and one of these specialists usually pulls out the student from the classroom once or twice a week and work together in a 1:1 setting. Many therapists now support the student in classroom environments, including a Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) and Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). These two specific specialists focus on the behavior of the child. “ABA-based interventions have been shown to be effective in reducing these problem behaviors to a level where children with ASD can be educated with their nondisabled peers, in either the general education classroom or a combination of both self-contained and general classrooms” (Lincoln, 2014). As many students already do in-home intervention, many times BCBA's try to engage the RBT to be with them during school time as well depending on the severity of a child's behavior. “The behavior analyst was also identified as the individual who would design and oversee the data collection program as well as organize and conduct weekly meetings with the school staff, the home team, and parents, to review progress, analyze data, and develop programs” (Simpson). BCBA's focus on functional assessment, discrete trial training, and functional communication training.

Gibbie et al (2011) asserted that, “Professional development for teachers has been one of the primary ways of enhancing practice, taking graduate level classes is traditionally seen as the other method. The organization, Learning Forward, formerly known as the National Staff Development Council, has indicated in their purpose statement that, “every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves” (p.36). Graduate level courses are a way for teachers to gather more training in special education classrooms. It is also important to build positive relationships and create supportive classroom environments central to training. Additional training topics included: the importance of teaching social competence, the impact of teacher–child relationships on school success, the importance of nurturing for early brain development and the lifelong impact of persistent challenging behaviors. (Gebbie et al., 2011)

### **Methods and Procedures**

In order to gather the information and data necessary I looked into different articles and databases in the CSUMB Library such as EBSCO, ProQuest, and other related websites. Looking through these databases made me gain a better understanding on how teachers teach students with maladaptive behaviors in Special Education. I also got to learn about other related questions regarding this topic (secondary related questions). Throughout the research process, I interviewed three people: a Special Education teacher, BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst), and a paraprofessional (see appendix A, B, and C). These three individuals all play important roles with students who engage in maladaptive behaviors in special education classrooms. I specifically designed questions for the three of them regarding maladaptive behaviors, how curriculum is taught, how behaviors interfere with their learning, and who is there for extra help. Each of these people had to answer 5 questions. Their answers helped me

compare and contrast between what research had to say and how they, themselves, do their job and what it consists of. I sent one of these interview questions out to my supervisor, the BCBA who answered what her duties are and how they diagnose children with maladaptive behaviors (See Appendix A, Interview Questions to BCaBA). She also personally gave me an overview of what being a BCBA in a school setting looks like and the differences between in-home services and school setting. I also sent one out to a SPED teacher who answered how she teaches the curriculum and if all curriculum is taught the same with each individual (See Appendix C for Interview Questions to Special Education Teacher). The last set of interview questions was towards a paraprofessional who answered what their duties are and the importance of being next to a child who encounters emotional and social behaviors throughout a school day (See Appendix B for Interview Questions to Paraprofessional).

In order to get to the Interview process, there were many other things I had to develop first in order for my Capstone research paper to come together. I first had to construct a title of my interest and come up with a primary and secondary questions. These questions needed to be approved and looked over with our Capstone advisor. I then completed a prospectus paper. The prospectus paper consisted of finding articles and sources that would help me find information to put towards my literature review. I wrote how and why that specific source would help me develop my Senior Capstone research paper. It also consisted of discussing rationale and background as well as what three MLO's I would incorporate throughout my research project. Towards the end I wrote what that final product delivery would look like and whom it'd be towards too (the audience).

As I spent most of the time seeking new information that I myself did not know. I split down the questions with its concept and put them all together in the end to gain a better

understanding. My secondary questions consisted of background information and related questions. During this process I split them up and evaluated which would provide the most information for someone who isn't as knowledgeable in this topic and put that information at the beginning of this paper to give them a better understanding (Introduction and Background).

### **Results, Findings, and Discussion**

It has been a long process to have broken everything down, but I can now be confident to say that I have gained more knowledge about how teachers teach students with maladaptive behaviors in special education classrooms. Many of the concepts I asked my interviewers made sense with my questions on how they do specific tasks. Regarding what maladaptive behaviors are and what they look like, I designed a question for my interviewers, the SPED teacher, paraprofessional, and BCBA onto what the most common behaviors were in Special Education classrooms. The responses to these questions were SIB (self-injurious behavior), such as head banging, biting, and throwing themselves to the ground. Other behaviors mentioned were mouthing (non edible items), pinching, and scratching. Another one of my secondary questions was how do schools diagnose that children have maladaptive behaviors? I asked the BCBA in the interview section this exact question. Her response was, "Each school performs their own evaluations and observations to determine the needs of each child. Parent report and other clinical reports are taken into consideration" (BCBA, personal communication, 11 November 2022). According to research, schools diagnose students with maladaptive behaviors by evaluating them using different behavior scales. Each assessments is used for different concepts depending on the child and their medical condition/behaviors. I also I asked the BCBA and SPED teacher how maladaptive behaviors interfere with a child's learning. The BCBA responded that it impedes the child from engaging in observational learning and from having a variety of

social interactions with those around them. The SPED teacher responded that it does not permit them to learn from their immediate environment and can result when a student does not see a path to their desired future/task.

For my primary question, how do teachers teach children with maladaptive behaviors, I designed this exact question for the SPED teacher. She responded, “As for me, I use accommodations and differential instructions. We have certain curriculums prepared for them too” (Special Education Teacher, personal communication, 11 November 2022). I also asked the paraprofessional and teacher: Do you follow a specific learning plan implemented by the teacher for just one student or are all lessons the same for the whole class? He responded, “Same lesson for the whole class depending on the student's amount of work and behavior changes” (Paraprofessional, personal communication, 11 November 2022). The teacher responded, “We try to do one lesson with all but the means of delivering the lesson varies and the level of cognitive of the child too” (Special Education Teacher, personal communication, 11 November 2022). This would make sense as research says, “Special educators are required to teach based on standards while implementing individualized education plans (IEP) and meeting the needs of a diverse group of students. The teachers are given grade-level standards or extensions of standards and are often challenged by the task of translating standards into measurable, meaningful objectives for individual students” (Smith et al., 2009). Teachers and paraprofessionals also use reinforcing methods to decrease behaviors while engaging in a lesson or activity. They use token-economy systems and other reinforcement methods depending on what the child desires. I designed a question specifically for the paraprofessional being: What reinforcement methods do you use in a classroom setting to motivate students? He responded that he rewards students with positive reinforcement (candy, chips, or iPad). This helps the



student stay focused and on task. Teachers may also have individual schedules for a child, depending on the severance of their behavior. The individual schedule is used throughout the day with the help of a paraprofessional, many have timings as well. Another way in which teachers teach students is by using technology. Depending on the child's functional needs, the teacher puts in applications that can help them with functional communication.

The thematic approach is a method of instruction that serves students with moderate to severe disabilities. Meanwhile on the other hand, the integrated approach is a setting where students with disabilities learn alongside peers without disabilities. As of a moderate-severe classroom, they are no longer with other students who do not have disabilities. As stated, “As the cornerstone of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004, no document is more significant for ensuring effective and compliant program design, implementation, monitoring, and enforcement of the law. The IEP serves as a roadmap for special education (SE) services (Conroy, Yell, & Katsiyannis, 2008; Diliberto & Brewer, 2012; Gartin & Murdick, 2005). IEP are designed to be completed by both the parent and teacher. It mentions the strengths and weaknesses of a child and what their skills/behaviors are.

During the paraprofessional interview, I asked: What are your duties and what is the importance of you being a 1:1. The paraprofessional answered, “To assist the teacher with classroom routine/schedule. It is important to have a 1:1 as it gives the student the extra support”. Research says that some of the typical tasks a paraeducator assists in are performing instructional activities planned by the teacher, giving the teacher feedback on students progress, and assisting in clerical duties. 1:1 paraprofessionals are very important to have as they make sure that a student with maladaptive behaviors does not injure themselves or students nearby. 1:1 are intended to be only with one specific child. 1:1 are for children who need someone to be with

them at all times during school hours. They help them both academically and with their behaviors as a teacher is already teaching curriculum.

My last question in the research process was: Are there resources for teachers and schools to work with students with maladaptive behaviors in schools? If there are, what are they? I asked this exact question to the BCBA and SPED teacher. The BCBA responded, “Students in Special Education can qualify for a 1:1 RBT (Registered Behavior Technician) that can assist with their behaviors throughout the school day. These children may also receive in-home ABA services that can help reduce their challenging behaviors across settings if skills are generalized” (BCBA, personal communication, 11 November 2022). The teacher responded, “Yes. It depends on the district setting, some have it in a special day class, some in an inclusion. It still varies again to the severity of the behavior” (Special Education Teacher, personal information, 11 November 2022). The BCBA can be part of school settings in which there are RBT. I asked the BCBA what her duties were in a classroom setting. She responded, “My main goal as a BCBA is to be able to provide children with ASD quality services while implementing best practices of ABA. My goal is to better support parents in understanding the core deficits of ASD and applying strategies that will help their children improve their behavior while maintaining the family’s well-being. Parents of children with ASD can encounter barriers such as depression or anxiety due to their child’s diagnosis. It is my goal to equip parents with sufficient strategies to help their children and increase their parenting competence” (BCBA, personal communication, 11 November 2022). Other resources include teacher training, support from ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) companies, physical therapist, an occupational therapist, speech pathologist, a counselor, a vision specialist, and family in addition to the expertise of a special education classroom staff, and having paraprofessionals with SPED teachers.

### **Problems and Limitations**

Throughout conducting my research paper, there were a couple of problems and limitations I came across. The first being, taking interview candidates into consideration. I had to think about who I was going to interview and how I was going to get there as everybody is working on the daily and had different timings. As my supervisor is a BCaBA, I took her into consideration without any doubt, I just needed to ask if she would be willing to help out, and get her consent. I also asked my siblings' SPED teacher if she would be willing to answer a couple of questions for me, she was glad too. The one I struggled with the most was looking for a paraprofessional. I was finally able to interview one but once I was already done conducting interviews with the BCaBA and SPED teacher, around late October. The second thing I had a problem with was setting up meeting times. I had to rearrange schedule times three times for the paraprofessional and one time for the SPED teacher as our times did not align. The third problem was that interviews were delayed and I didn't get them as fast as I thought I would, delaying the information I was going to put into my draft Capstone research paper. Along with that, the paraprofessional was the one who took the longest. Overall, the most common problem was timing and delayed information.

### **Recommendations**

My recommendations towards the school districts in which there are SPED classes and SPED teachers is that there should definitely continue to have professional development trainings that does not require them getting a higher education, such as a Masters Degree. As not everybody can afford getting into a higher institution nor may not want to, there should be other training programs in which they go over behavior interventions, procedures, and reinforcement methods to help in classrooms who have children with maladaptive behaviors. My other

recommendation is to always go a step above when helping a child with maladaptive behaviors as we want the best education possible for them. There are many various ways in which we can encourage and motivate students to do work inside a classroom and help maintain their behaviors at a steady rate while reinforcing them with what we can.

### **Conclusion**

Having the extra support such as paraprofessionals, RBTs, and BCBA's can make a child's maladaptive behaviors decrease and their academic performance to increase. There are many methods in which you can improvise to motivate a child into doing their work in a way only they understand, which is by using positive reinforcement methods and rewards. As the teacher teaches the curriculum as a whole but individually, depending on a child's IEP (Individualized Educational Plan), it is important for the team to follow through so the child receives the same information as everybody else but in their unique knowledge. Overall, teachers use different teaching methods and have to improvise on the daily when new lessons come upon so each individual receives the same curriculum.

After having so many questions as a young child about behaviors and education, SPED classroom system, how teachers teach curriculum, the extra support schools offer, how behaviors are diagnosed, the type of assessments schools complete to diagnose, and what methods students use to communicate and learn with; I am glad to have found so much information on this topic. It is important for every child to get the best education possible regardless of the disabilities they encounter. Teachers are the number one source as their profession is to help one succeed and reach their full potential. Paraprofessionals are there as an extra source to help the learner gain all the lesson information the best they can, meanwhile making sure their behaviors are not

affecting their education. With all the best learning methods and procedures available we can help any child with maladaptive behaviors to learn functionally and socially step by step.

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## Appendix A

### BCaBA/BCBA Interview

**1. What are the most common maladaptive behaviors in Special Education classrooms?**

The most common maladaptive behaviors I have worked with include head self-injurious behaviors, such as head banging and mouthing/biting non-edible items.

**2. What is your main goal as a BCBA in school settings?**

My main goal as a BCBA is to be able to provide children with ASD quality services while implementing best practices of ABA. My goal is to better support parents in understanding the core deficits of ASD and applying strategies that will help their children improve their behavior while maintaining the family's well-being. Parents of children with ASD can encounter barriers such as depression or anxiety due to their child's diagnosis. It is my goal to equip parents with sufficient strategies to help their children and increase their parenting competence.

**3. How do maladaptive behaviors interfere with a child's learning?**

Maladaptive behaviors impede children from engaging in observational learning and from having a variety of social interactions with those around them. This does not permit them to learn from their immediate environment.

**4. How do schools diagnose that children have maladaptive behaviors?**

Schools perform their own evaluations and observations to determine the needs of each child. Parent report and other clinical reports are taken into consideration.

**5. Are there programs available to teach or work with students with maladaptive behaviors in Special Education? If so, what are they and how do they look like?**

Students in Special Education can qualify for a 1:1 registered behavior technician that can assist with their behaviors throughout the school day. These children may also receive in-home ABA services that can help reduce their challenging behaviors across settings as skills are generalized.



## Appendix B

### Paraprofessional Interview

**1. What are your duties as a paraprofessional in school settings?**

Assist teacher with classroom routine/schedule.

**2. What are the most common maladaptive behaviors in Special Education classrooms?**

SIB, throwing themselves on the ground, pinching, scratching.

**3. Why is it important to have a 1:1 paraprofessional next to a child with maladaptive behaviors in school settings?**

Gives the student extra support.

**4. Do you follow a specific learning plan implemented by the teacher for just one student or are all lessons the same for the whole class?**

Same lesson for the whole class depending on the student's amount of work and behavior changes.

**5. What reinforcement methods do you use in a classroom setting to motivate students?**

Reward students with positive reinforcement (candy, chips, iPad).

## Appendix C

### Special Education Teacher

#### **1. How do educators teach students with maladaptive behaviors in Special Education?**

As for me, I use accommodations and differential instructions. We have certain curriculums prepared for them too.

#### **2. How do maladaptive behaviors interfere with learning skills?**

It can result when a student does not see a path to their desired future/task. It distracts them.

#### **3. Does each student have their own lesson plan for the day or do you teach the whole class one specific lesson?**

We try to do one lesson with all but the means of delivering the lesson varies and the level of cognitive of the child too.

#### **4. Are there programs available to teach or work with students with maladaptive behaviors in Special Education? If so, what are they and how do they look like?**

Yes. It depends on the district setting, some have it in a special day class, some in an inclusion. It still varies again to the severity of the behavior.

#### **5. What are the most common maladaptive behaviors in Special Education classrooms?**

For behavior, avoidance. Anger, withdrawal. Passive aggressiveness. But students who have autism spectrum, social emotional, and many more.