



SOUTH DAKOTA
ParentConnection

Serving South Dakota Families Since 1985

- ❖ *What's Happening at SDPC?*
- ❖ *Looking Beyond the Behavior*

About Us

Betsy Drew

Betsy Drew is an Outreach Specialist at South Dakota Parent Connection. She is a retired Elementary Principal. She holds a master's degree both in Elementary Curriculum and Elementary Administration. Betsy has served as a 504 District Coordinator, a university instructor and a classroom teacher. As an administrator she implemented a Junior Kindergarten Program, Ready to Start summer program, and Response to Intervention Program for her elementary school. Betsy is a graduate of Partners in Policymaking. She has one daughter who has a complex and rare disorder.

Kris Sellers

Kris is a retired special education teacher and has worked with individuals of all ages with disabilities. Kris resides in Brandon with her husband. She has three children and six grandchildren. She enjoys her "second career" as an Outreach Specialist at South Dakota Parent Connection. It provides her with the opportunity to work closely with parents of children with a disability. She is a sounding board for parents when they are concerned for their child and helps them brainstorm and work through difficult situations by offering recommendations, resources, and guidance when it is most needed.



About South Dakota Parent Connection

Since 1985 SDPC has served continuously as the state's only Parent Training and Information Center.

We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization governed by a board of directors comprised of a minimum of 50% parents of individuals with disabilities.

100% of current staff are also parents or grandparents of an individual with a disability.

We have served as the state's Family to Family (F2F) program since (2007), We are the Health information Center (F2FHIC). We guide parents and caregivers to resources and services to meet their child's medical needs.

Under the umbrella of these two programs, we provide individual assistance and training to families who care for individuals birth to age 26 with disabilities and/or special health care needs.

www.sdparent.org

Navigator Program



20 Years of Partnership: Supporting Families and Schools



In 2025, South Dakota Parent Connection celebrated 20 years of partnership with the South Dakota Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. Together, we provide the Navigator Program, helping families and schools work together to support students with disabilities.



Navigators help families understand special education and the IEP process. They help parents prepare for meetings, ask questions, and share their ideas. Navigators also support schools by encouraging positive communication and teamwork. They are neutral helpers who keep everyone focused on what is best for the student.



Over the past 20 years, the Navigator Program has helped families and schools across South Dakota build stronger partnerships. In 2025 alone, the program supported 110 teams in more than 40 school districts. Every person who responded to the program survey said they would recommend the Navigator Program to others.

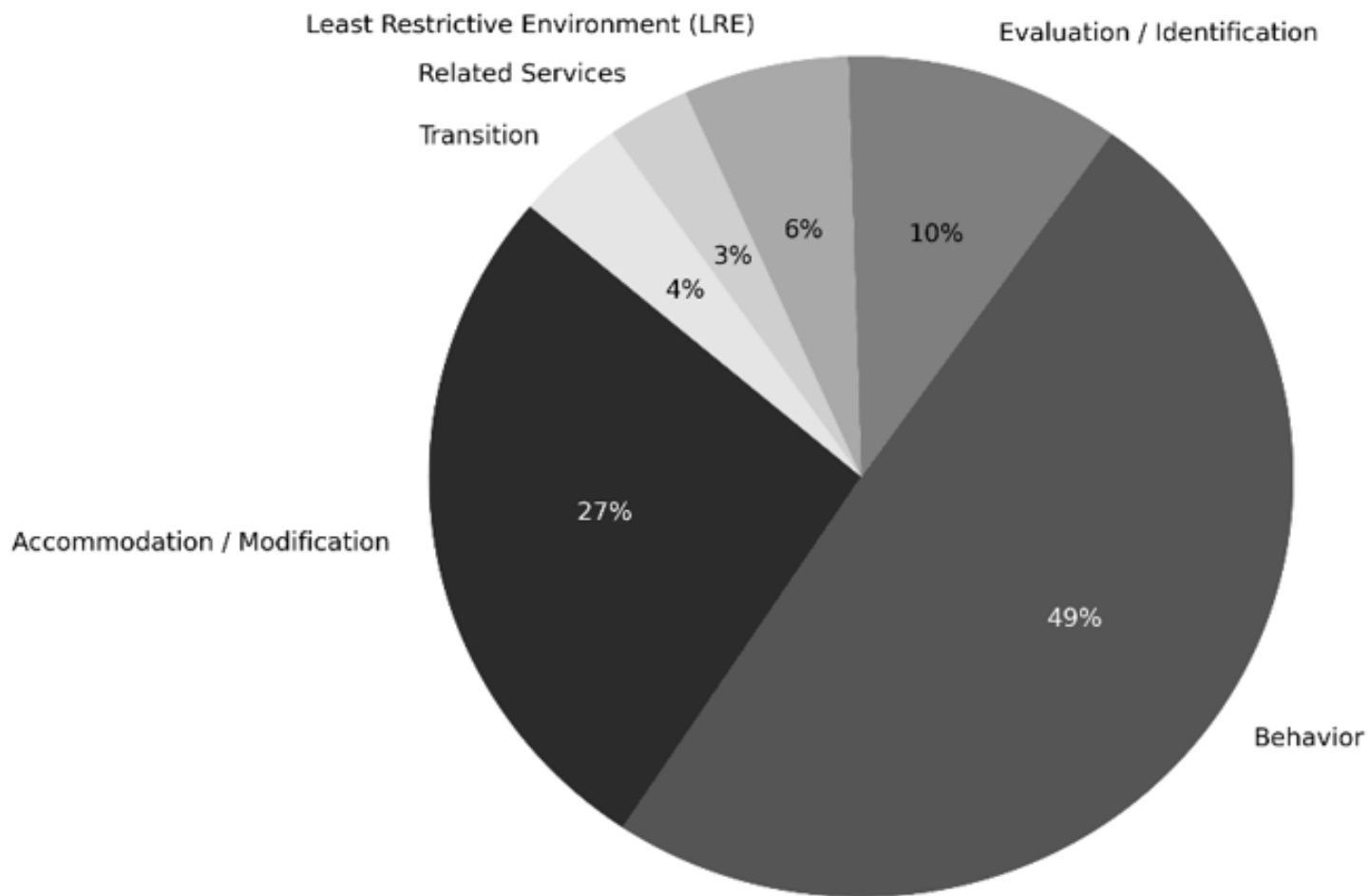
Navigator Program Case Issues

The following key issues were identified as factors leading to the referral of cases to the Navigator Program:

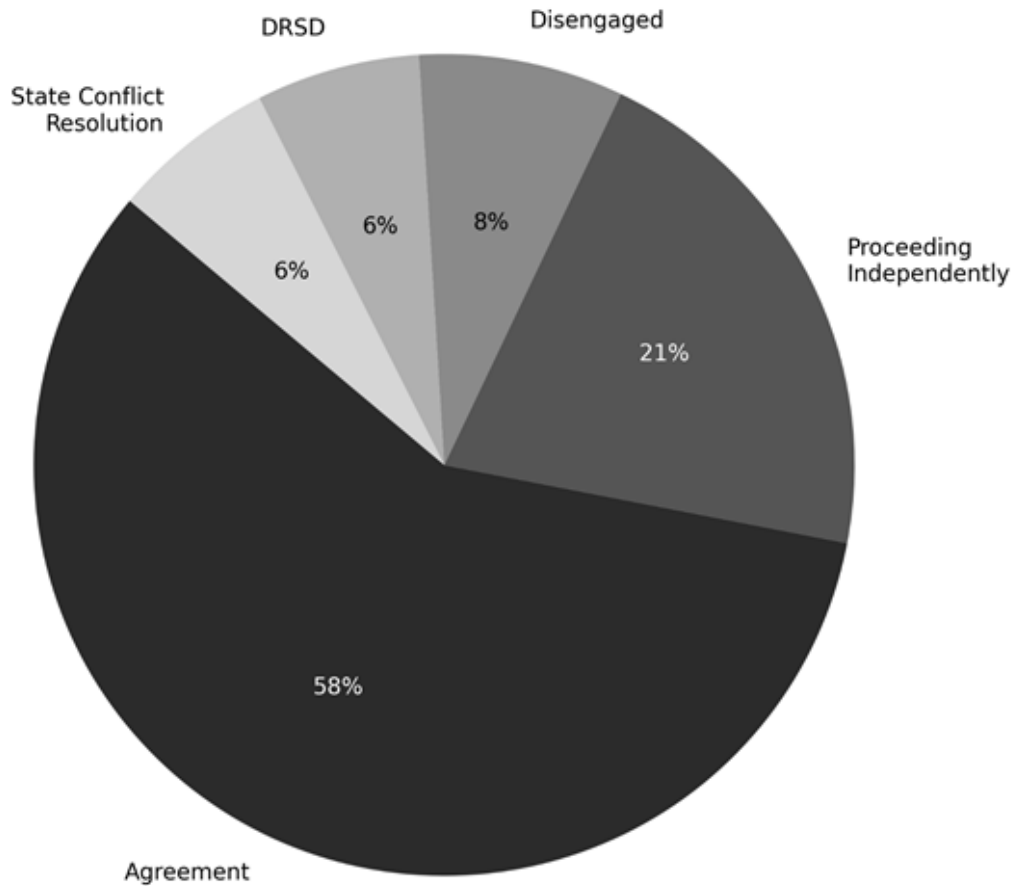
- **Accommodation/Modification**
Concerns related to the provision or adequacy of accommodations and modifications to support students' educational needs.
- **Behavior**
Disagreements regarding the development or implementation of behavioral plans and interventions.
- **Evaluation/Identification**
Disputes about the processes of identifying students' needs or evaluating their eligibility for specific services.
- **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**
Conflicts over decisions involving the most appropriate placement or educational setting for students to meet their needs while remaining in the least restrictive environment.
- **Related Services**
Concerns about adequacy, provision, or accessibility of related services, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, or counseling.
- **Transition**
Issues relating to transitions between educational stages, programs, or post-secondary planning.

Case Issues	Case Counts
Behavior	54
Accommodation/Modification	30
Evaluation/Identification	11
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	7
Related Services	3
Transition	5

Case Issues



Outcome	Number
Agreement	36
Proceeding Independently	13
Disengage	5
Disability Rights South Dakota	4
State Complaint Resolution	4



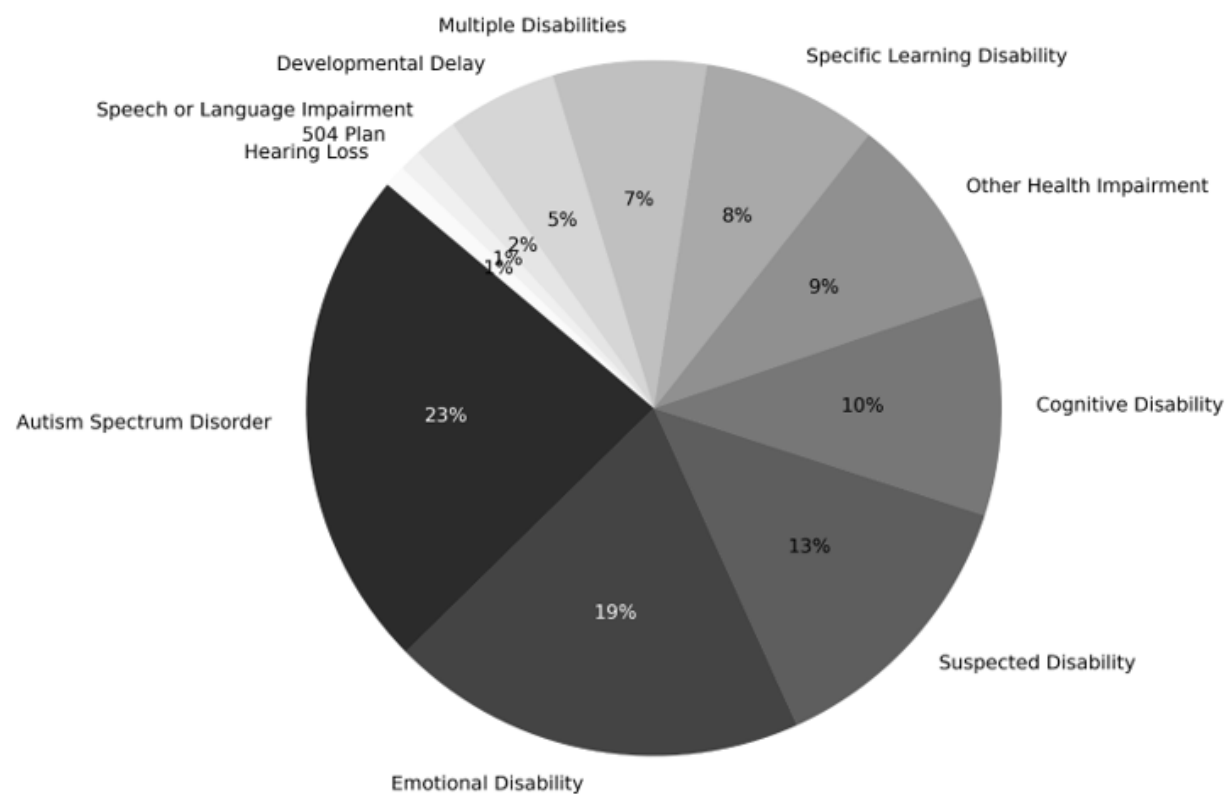
Outcomes

In some cases, families or school teams proceeded independently after receiving information, clarification, or technical assistance from the Navigator. When informal problem-solving was not sufficient, referrals to Disability Rights South Dakota or state-supported conflict resolution options were made, reflecting appropriate use of IDEA dispute resolution pathways.

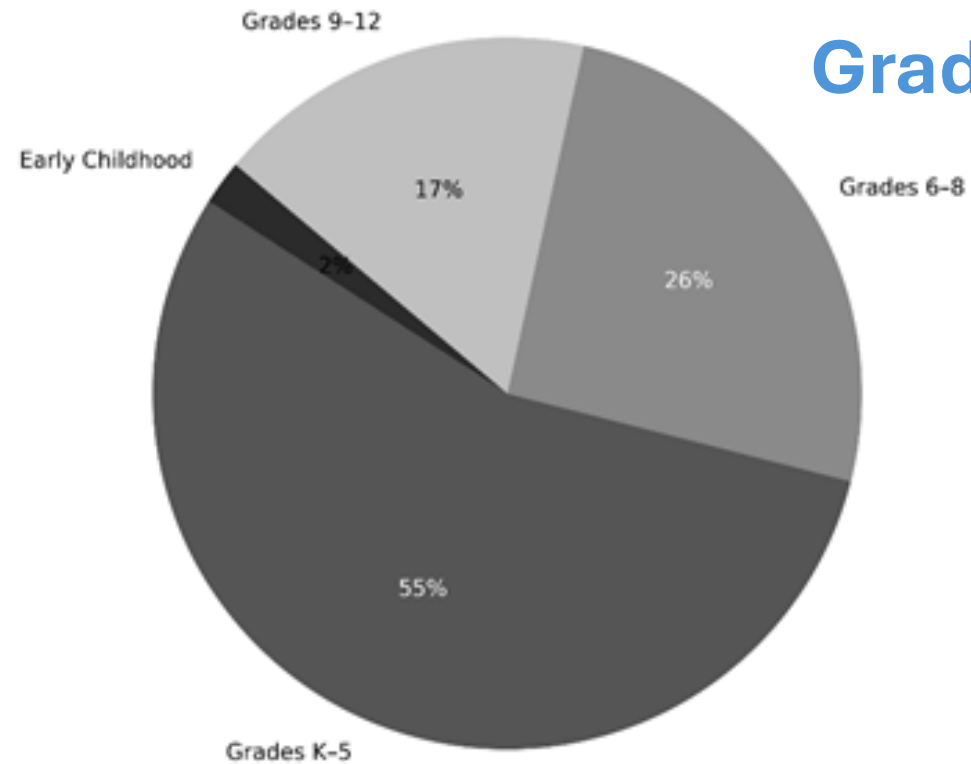
Overall, the outcome data indicate that the Navigator Program effectively supports timely resolution, informed decision-making, and reduced reliance on formal dispute mechanisms, reinforcing the program's value as an early intervention strategy and highlighting its continued strength and effectiveness in supporting families and schools across South Dakota.

Category

Category	Number
Autism Spectrum Disorder – 560	25
Emotional Disability – 505	21
Suspected Disability	15
Cognitive Disability – 510	11
Other Health Impairment – 555	10
Specific Learning Disability - 525	9
Multiple Disabilities – 530	8
Developmental Delay	6
Speech or Language Impairment - 550	2
Hearing Loss - 515	1



Grade Range	Number
Early Childhood	2
Grades K-5	54
Grades 6-8	25
Grades 9-12	17
18 – 21	0



Grade Range

Trainings on Demand



As the Parent Training and Information and the Family to Family Health Information Centers, South Dakota Parent Connection offers a wide variety of on-demand learning sessions for parents and professionals. Below are some of our most popular sessions.



The IEP Journey: A Guide for Parents

Learn the special education process step by step so you can confidently participate in IEP meetings and make informed decisions for your child.



Understanding Social-Emotional Development

Learn how social-emotional skills develop, how they affect behavior, and simple ways to support children at home, school, and in the community.



When Behavior is a Concern

Understand why challenging behavior happens and learn practical strategies to build regulation, connection, and positive behavior at home and school.



Understanding Executive Functions and Behavior

Learn how executive functioning skills affect behavior, emotion, organization, and learning, with practical strategies to support success at home and school.



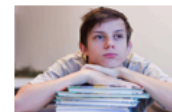
Beat the Summer Learning Slide

Discover fun, everyday activities that help children build reading, math, and learning skills while enjoying the summer break.



Supporting Their Future, Their Plan

Learn how transition planning prepares youth for education, employment, independent living, and life after high school. This series guides families through each step.



Helping Youth & Families Navigate Their Future

Help students prepare for adulthood by learning about transition planning, assessment, services, and supports that lead to successful adult outcomes.

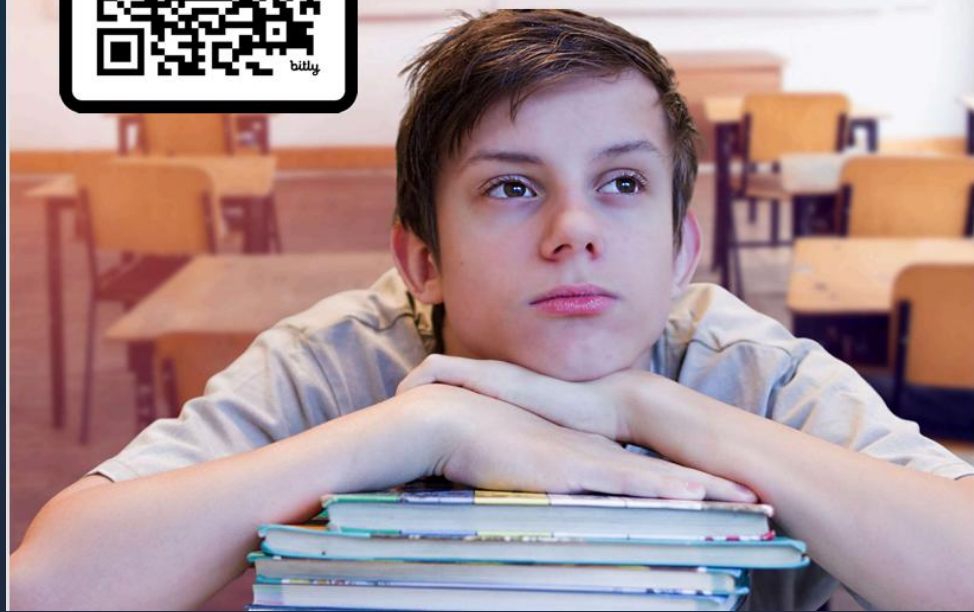


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Learning Series

Helping Families and Transition-Age Youth Navigate Their Future



August 15, 2026 – November 14, 2026

In This Series, You'll Learn:

- What transition planning is and why it is important
- What is included in an IEP transition plan
- How transition assessments help identify a student's strengths, interests, and goals
- What transition services and activities help prepare youth for adulthood
- How youth can build self-advocacy skills and take part in planning their future
- The information in this series helps professionals better understand the transition process so they can explain it clearly to families, answer questions, and support youth and families as they work toward education, employment, and independent living after high school.

Participants who successfully complete all training requirements will earn 1 Continuing Education contact hour.



You're
Late!!

**I can't
take**



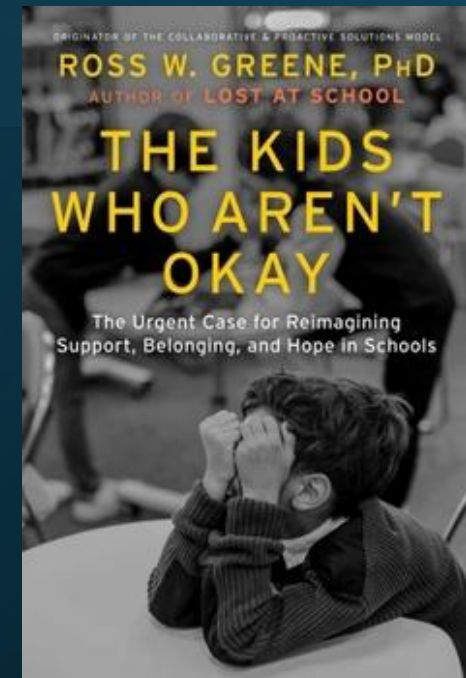
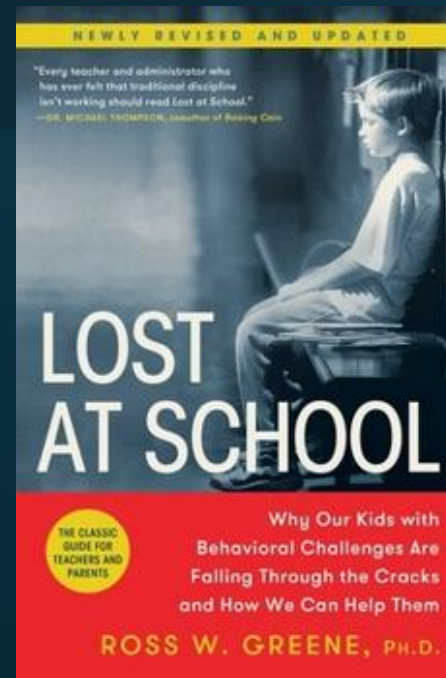
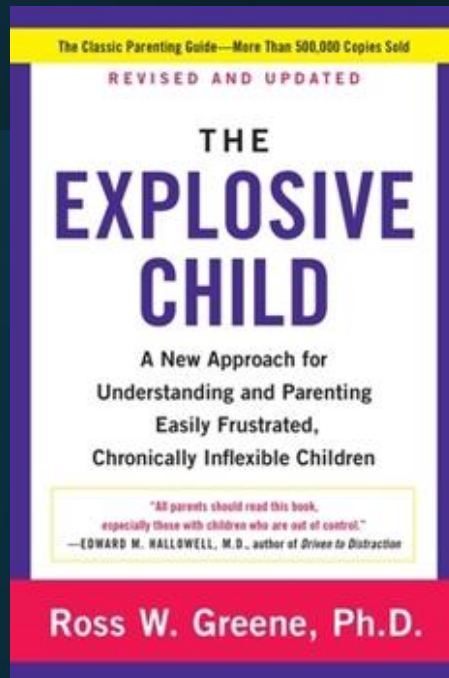
**another
behavior!!**

*Looking Beyond
the Behavior*



Ross Greene Books

<https://livesinthebalance.org/>



Ross Greene is a clinical psychologist and the originator of the innovative, evidence-based Collaborative and Proactive (CPS) model which has been used in countless school and treatment facilities with significant reductions in recidivism, discipline referrals, detentions, suspensions, and use of restraint and seclusion.

Look through a new Lense...

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR OCCURS
WHEN THE DEMANDS AND
EXPECTATIONS BEING PLACED UPON
A CHILD OUTSTRIP THE SKILLS HE HAS
TO RESPOND ADAPTIVELY.





Unmet expectation leading to an unsolved problem

- Lagging skills are the ***why*** of challenging behavior
- Unsolved problems tell us ***when*** the behavior is occurring

Behavior is Communication

- Becoming quieter than usual or withdrawing from others
- Talking more, getting louder, or using a different tone of voice
- Pacing, rocking, fidgeting, or moving around more
- Putting their head down or refusing to participate
- Clenching fists, tightening their jaw, or showing other signs of body tension
- Covering their ears or showing signs that noise, lights, or activity are becoming too much
- Asking to leave, go to the bathroom, visit the nurse, or take a break
- Repeating the same question or statement
- Arguing, complaining, or becoming more negative
- Tearing paper, breaking pencils, slamming items, or pushing materials away
- Having more trouble following directions or completing work
- Becoming silly, disruptive, or overly active
- Crying, looking worried, or showing signs of frustration
- Saying things like, “I can’t do this,” “Leave me alone,” “This is stupid,” or “I’m done”
- Reacting more strongly to small problems than they normally would

Kids Do Well If They Can

Concepts and terminology adapted from Dr. Ross Greene and his Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) model)

When demand exceeds capacity to respond...

- Handling transitions
- Performing in logical sequence
- Persisting on challenging tasks
- Poor sense of time
- Maintaining focus
- Understanding consequence of actions
- Managing emotional response to frustrations
- Expressing concerns, needs or thoughts in words
- Inaccurate interpretations (I'm stupid! It's not fair!)

= Misinterpretation of lagging skills

- Manipulative
- Wants attention
- Wants to get own way
- Not motivated
- Making bad choices
- Parents incompetent
- Bad attitude
- Mental illness
- Sibling was the same way

“If you identify the skills a student is lacking, you’ll understand why he is challenging.”

The Plans- A, B and C

❖ Student-teacher problem solving

- **Plan A-** Solving a problem unilaterally. Adults figure out what problem is making it hard for a student to meet an expectation, and they impose a solution.
- **Plan B-** Solving a problem collaboratively. Adults partner with student to uncover what's making it hard for the student to meet an expectation and collaborating with a student on a solution.
- **Plan C-** Used for *prioritizing* (can't solve all the problems at once).
and *stabilizing* (placing no expectations because student is too unstable, volatile and reactive- (basically an interim plan)).

Kids do well
if they want
to

Kids do well
if they can

Scenarios

Rodney

Juanita

Sheila

What is the lagging skill and the unsolved problem in each?

Looking Beyond the Behavior...Together

When we understand lagging skills, we begin to see behavior differently.

Instead of asking:

✗ *"What's wrong with this child?"*

We can ask:

✓ *"What skills does this child need to be successful?"*

This simple shift can change conversations, strengthen relationships, and create more positive outcomes for children at home and at school.

We invite you to complete our short survey.

- Your feedback is very important to us. It helps us:
- Improve our trainings and resources
- Better meet the needs of families and professionals
- Demonstrate the value of our programs to our funding partners
- Continue providing information, training, and support at no cost to South Dakota families

Thank you for your feedback and for supporting South Dakota Parent Connection!





Reach out to us with your questions and connect with one of our knowledgeable and compassionate staff members who have experience in education and advocacy to support you every step of the way.

We're Here to Help.



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