



Guidebook for Educators and Providers

# A BETTER DAY CURRICULUM

Enhance Engagement and Remove Blocks to Success in  
Education and Mental Health Interventions



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# A Better Day Curriculum

## Guidebook for Educators and Providers

**Enhance Engagement and  
Remove Blocks to Success in Education and  
Mental Health Interventions**

*The 4-step, easy to learn process  
that is making every day a better day for teachers,  
students and providers across the globe.*



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# **Who Can Benefit From Applying A Better Day Curriculum?**

Increasing student engagement and supporting mental health in our youth has become a prevailing subject in our communities today. We know that increased engagement and creating the ability in our young people to manage their anxiety opens the door to all wellness and learning.

*A Better Day Curriculum* was designed specifically for educators and support providers. We know there is much value in addressing the whole child. *A Better Day Curriculum* shows us how.

Outcomes since 2004 show that students/children from early childhood through the high school years all benefit when teachers and interventionists apply *Better Day Curriculum* principles.

*A Better Day* has been applied in occupational therapy, pediatric medical care, and child and adolescent psychology.



# Introduction



## ***Understanding the Curriculum***

*A Better Day Curriculum*, when integrated into mainstream education and therapies, is producing exceptional results.

This practical guide outlines the 4-step process and the tools within these four steps that can be used as a hands-on daily reference for teachers in the classroom and interventionists in the therapeutic setting.

Users of ABDC find that it is not necessary to apply the steps in any particular order. Teachers and providers tend to integrate their own talents and styles, choosing which tool to try and when.

So, what students make ideal ABDC students? The tools presented here are useful to the general population of students in your classroom, Pre-K through 12. ABDC tools

are especially helpful for students who are struggling academically and/or socially.

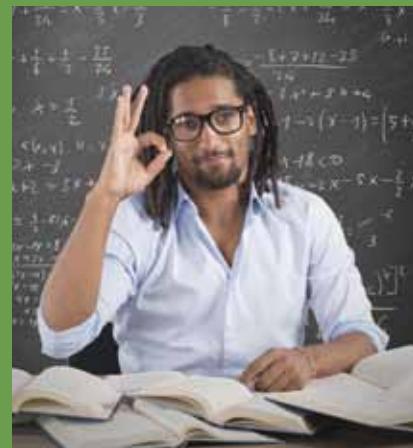
It is not necessary to perform every step or utilize every tool available within the ABDC curriculum in the same way that a carpenter does not use every tool in his toolbox for every woodworking project.

This is the bottom-line concept behind this curriculum. Choose just one or two of the *power tools* offered at a time. By implementing these tools into the educational standards you are required to follow, a more whole child approach is reached and more whole results are accomplished.

When we apply ABDC, we are not only creating A Better Day for our students, but for ourselves as educators, too.

# *Chapter One*

Energy to Teach: Energy to Learn:  
Reverse Burnout



## **Chapter One**

It doesn't matter how efficient or effective our teaching methods or how motivated the student may be if burnout is rampant. And for the most part, we find that it is. Burnout on the part of the student can be easily misinterpreted as a student's lack of interest, low motivation, and challenging behaviors. Most often, poor academic performance follows.

When there is no energy, there can be no engagement. Period. And as an educator, it can be extremely frustrating to show up each day lacking the stamina to deal with the classroom environment or remote content delivery and all it entails.

Consequently, we have found that the first step in ABDC is examining energy levels and as we like to refer to it, Balancing Your Energy Bank Account. This process is designed to be easy to use and a way that we can all walk through our day very consciously aware of how we are spending our energy, the same way we are aware of how we are spending our money.

We know that there are two ways to keep our financial bank account in balance. We can either put more money into the account or find ways to spend less. The process works the same way for children and adults in the education setting, and for life in general.

The following easy-to-use exercises will help you assess daily routine. You will identify activities and circumstances that deplete energy unnecessarily. It is best to look at both home and outside environments together, but even adjusting just one or the other can have a significant impact.

Once identified, you will devise a plan to eliminate energy expenses whenever possible. There are some outside influences

over which we have no control. The point here is to make changes wherever we can. The energy worksheets provided will then help you identify the activities and circumstances that tend to be energy giving and help you plan a way to integrate these energy recharge activities into your daily schedule and your student's more consistently.

## ***Using the Balance Your Energy Bank Account Forms***

For the purpose of this activity, we will assume that we begin each new day with 1000 kW of energy.

On the forms provided, and by using the sample forms as a guide, list activities from an average day that take your energy such as school, work, relationships, etc. With a few pointed questions or with close observation in younger children, you can do the same for a student who appears to be struggling. Give each of these activities a value. For instance, many find that school/childcare and work for adults takes 600 kW of energy each day. Others find that these activities give us energy, so they may add 500 kW, not subtract it. Most agree that it depends on the day and on the quality of the environment.

Once you examine the completed daily chart, you can adjust in one of two ways. You can eliminate activities and influences that take away energy or you can add activities and influences that replenish. Most times, we decide to apply a combination of both strategies. Even adding just one recharge and eliminating just one energy drain can bring big results for a teacher, a student or both.



*This is the key to finding **energy balance** for yourself and for helping our young people to do the same.*

The plan can be as simple as encouraging the addition of one energy recharge each day, for just a few minutes. Then, encouraging the student to omit just one energy depletion is the perfect compliment for this plan.

Old habits can be difficult to break, so be patient with students and with yourself. The good news is that during our observations in applying ABDC, long-term poor energy habits can be reversed fairly quickly using the Balancing Your Energy Bank Account method.

It's all about awareness and the Balancing Your Energy Bank Account method gives us a framework for this awareness and for active conversation on how to reverse burnout in the long term for both teacher and student.

# *Chapter 2*

The Learning Temperament Test™



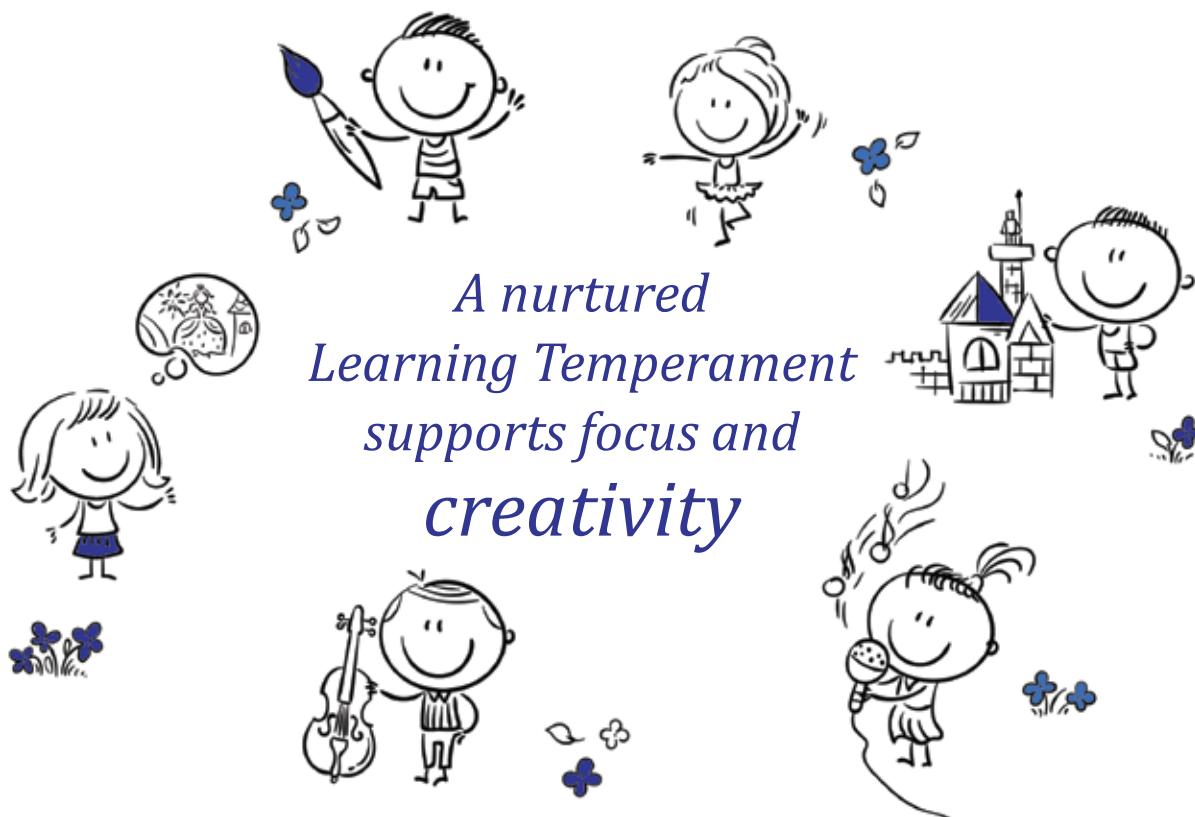
# **What Is A Learning Temperament™? How Can We Use the Learning Temperament Test to Support Engagement, Social Emotional Wellness and Ease Anxiety?**

We are all born with a Learning Temperament.™ A Learning Temperament is comprised of both physical and emotional needs that when met, allow us to engage, absorb information and feel more free of anxiety. The Learning Temperament, when nurtured, also supports focus and creativity. That is why it is so useful to identify the Learning Temperament of your students.

A Learning Temperament is a combination of the of body type principles and commonly accepted inborn personality traits. There are 9 distinctive Learning Temperaments.

Our personalities may change over the years as we are impacted by life experiences and conditioning. Yet, Learning Temperament always remains the same.

The Learning Temperament is a distinctive grouping of needs and ideal circumstances that can set the stage for our healthy human growth and development. Our overall wellness and resulting behaviors are impacted in a positive or negative way depending on how whether what we are surrounded by in our environment supports or upsets our Learning Temperament.



*A nurtured  
Learning Temperament  
supports focus and  
creativity*

# *Charting Learning Temperament*™

The first step in determining Learning Temperament is to establish Body Type. The second step is to establish Personality Type. Once you have used the test sheets below to do this, you will be directed to combine your results to determine Learning Temperament.

The test can be completed by the teacher after a week or so of close observation of the student, or with students middle school age and older, the student can complete the test on his or her own. Remember, the answers should reflect the way the student has operated throughout his or her life, and not based on temporary reaction to any fleeting life circumstances.

We find that assessing Learning Temperament for students who are particularly disengaged, who lack focus, or who are struggling with anxiety is a good way to compile tools and simple Online or classroom interventions. These simple interventions for each Learning Temperament are included at the end of the assessment pages.

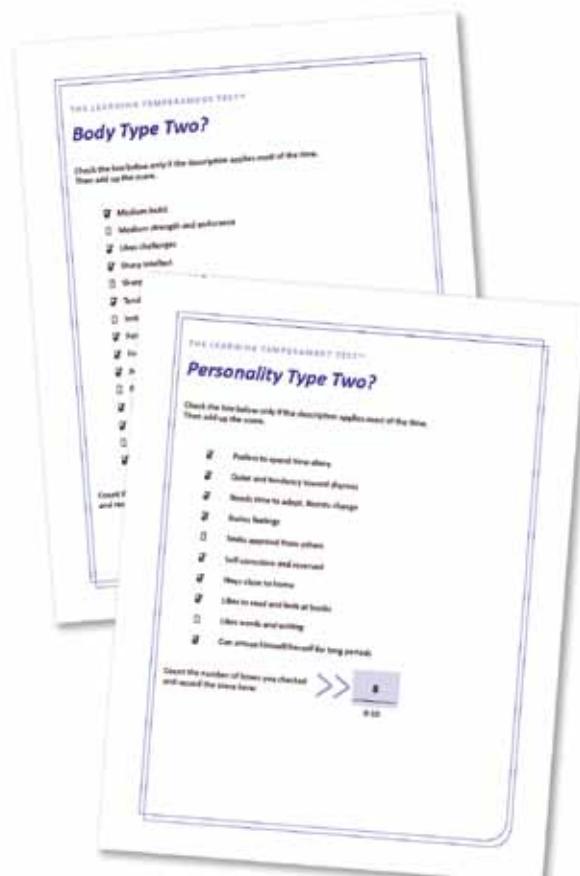
Once you have determined the student's Learning Temperament, choose one or two of the recommendations associated with that temperament to implement.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** If the Learning Temperament indicates a student needs time alone, work to formulate how they can access a quiet space to study and rest at home and during classroom work. Recommend dietary adjustments. One small change brings big results.

If the Learning Temperament indicates the need for physical activity, formulate a schedule for the student that provides physical breaks. This temperament will need much more movement than the typical physical breaks provided in the ordinary school day setting. Talk with parents about this.

When the temperament indicates a fear of taking risks, you may need to monitor to see if assignments are done but the student hesitates turning them in. Be creative. Have fun. Enjoy the results.

Are scents being introduced into the student's environment that are not on the recommended list? That can be an overwhelming distraction.



## *What Is Your Student's Learning Temperament™?*





## Vibrant Red

Vibrant Red needs regular opportunities for physical activity throughout the day. Holding Vibrant Red to a schedule of indoor activities for very long is likely to make them feel confined and out of sorts. Vibrant Red doesn't need to sit still for long periods without an activity break.

Give Vibrant Red plenty of warning when a change is coming. Even transitioning from one activity to another or making a small change in the schedule may bring immediate resistance. Provide Vibrant Red plenty of space and time for individual exploration.

Consistency is especially important for Vibrant Red. They can tend to take advantage of any opportunity to engage in behaviors that may be to her own detriment. Set schedules that encourage predictability and then stick to them.

They need hearty rather than light, low calorie salads, cooked rather than raw vegetables, and thrives on almonds, sesame and other oils, sweet spices such as cinnamon, allspice, cloves, and ginger.

Vibrant Reds need to avoid large quantities of spice or spicy foods, beans of all kinds, dried and unripe fruits, and commonly known gas producing vegetables such as cabbage, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts. Limit sugar.

Scents that provide balance: Rose, cloves, basil and orange. Avoid other scents.



## Copper

Copper needs regular opportunities for physical activity throughout the day. Copper can tend toward a short attention span for sit-down type activities. Copper is a bit flexible, however, when it comes time for change and transitions. Warnings of what is to come next and written posted schedules (in picture form for children) can be quite helpful. Resistance is rare in Copper, so they may need to be encouraged to ask for what they need.

Copper likes control but appreciates firm guidance and seems to know that they need it. Copper tends to thrive on activity but is measured in risk taking.

Everything in moderation works best for Copper. They may need to be encouraged to rest even when they want to keep going. Keep the lights low and the environment warm and clutter free. Otherwise, anxiety is sure to result.

Copper needs to be strongly encouraged to drink water regularly, to get ample rest on a set schedule, and to eat regular scheduled meals with access to healthy snacks in between. Regular habits, quiet, uncluttered environments (over stimulates easily), warmth, and a steady supply of nourishment will keep Copper in balance. Still, they can be quite flexible if some of these are absent for short periods.

Copper does best on a diet of warm foods with heavy textures rather than cold sandwiches or salads. They need warm rather than cold cereals, and hot lunches.

Scents that provide balance: Rose, cloves, basil and orange. Avoid other scents.

## Blue Mist

Blue Mist is the extreme of slow pace in relation to all the other Temperaments. They like to take time in all things whether it is taking a walk or trying new things. They can be fearful and hesitant. Yet the inborn need for adventure and change is in conflict with this fearful attitude, so they need only a little encouragement to step out of their shell. Blue Mist needs regular exercise but may tend to shy away from it. If not encouraged, however, they can tend toward overweight and overeating. They frequently crave sweets but should avoid sugar entirely.

Lighter foods, warm liquids, and spicy foods should be encouraged. They like the opportunity to try new foods but because of a conflicting resistance to new things will want someone else to try the new food, too.

As with sugar, butter, oil and fried foods should be completely avoided. Dry foods like crackers and popcorn are good for snacks, however, Blue Mist's digestion tends to be slow, and so too much snacking should be avoided. Blue Mist functions best on small light meals that include spicy food, seltzer, spiced cider, raw honey, raw fruits, vegetables and salads, dried fruits, all legumes, and ginger. Wheat, dairy, very cold foods such as ice cream and iced drinks, sugar and sweets, fatty foods, tomatoes, and very juicy fruits should be avoided.

Scents that provide balance: Eucalyptus, peppermint, lavender, juniper, and cloves. Avoid all other scents.



## Why Is This So Easy

Remember that just one or two small adjustments are all it takes. One dietary adjustment, one bit of attention to scents surrounding the student (sometimes even their own perfume or shampoo). Just one adjustment in the amount of space, activity or attention to boredom. In order to see significant results, we don't have to implement all these changes. Keep it simple for yourself, the students and their family.

You'll love how it feels. You'll love how it works even more. It's time for you to have A Better Day every day for you and your students.

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# Chapter 3

## Calm the Behaviors that Interrupt Learning



# ***Step Three***

## ***The Truth About Challenging Behaviors***



All challenging behaviors exhibited by adults and children are an expression of an unmet need. That is the simple truth. The unmet need comes either from within the child or from the inner child of the adults. In this chapter, we will work with this fact in order to identify which specific unmet need is the likely cause of a challenging behavior. In finding ways to satisfy the unmet need in our students, we can calm and ultimately eliminate the challenging behavior and remove obstacles to learning.

The key is to identify the need and then formulate a simple way to satisfy the need before a challenging behavior arises on any given day. Satisfying an unmet need for a student is not the same as indulging a challenging behavior in order to avoid being subjected to various forms of acting out. This chapter will show you how.

In the previous chapters, the tests and scales on energy and temperament provide tools that help us make close, careful observations about the less than obvious characteristics and needs of our students. Now we will continue building on these tools.

We categorize a behavior as challenging when the behavior is repetitive, and when it is consistently getting in the way of the academic, social, or developmental progress of the student or having a significant and ongoing negative impact on those around him.

True challenging behaviors are usually those that are so frequent and disruptive that they create an atmosphere of discomfort among other students and disrupt the learning environment or that prevent any meaningful teacher/student connection Online.

In the adult and older student: Inner child behaviors look a lot different than obvious, outward ones, but for our purposes, are handled the same way. Missed appointments, skipped classes, interrupting, mental absence and ceaseless chatter are a few ways challenging behaviors manifest in this group. We want to make the point, too, that the behavior intervention here in STEP THREE of the Better Day Curriculum is designed for students without serious mental health issues. Once these simple interventions are applied and do not prove effective, this is a red flag that a mental health referral is in order.

There are two steps in this behavior intervention. First, we identify the unmet need and then we meet that need before the undesired behavior happens. Second, and a step not to be skipped, is to remove any payoff when the behavior happens. It's amazing how often we can inadvertently be providing the student the very payoff they seek that perpetuates the behavior.

Example: Behavior: Acting out and interrupting teachers efforts to deliver curriculum either in the classroom or remotely. Behavior test results: The need to escape

**NOTE:** Without taking the test, we might assume that the student was vying for our attention. That is why this process is so effective. It keeps us on track on how to better support the student. We use trial and error every day with our students. This process helps us go beyond a guessing game and get the results we need promptly and then get on with the business of teaching and learning.

Satisfying the need: When we know the student is engaged in escape behavior, we can structure our interactions with him differently, before he feels the overwhelming need. We can (1) Offer him more space to work or play in (2) We can look at his Learning Temperament and see what might be in the school or home environment that is throwing him off such as temperature or scents

**Is This A Need to Escape?**

DIRECTIONS: FOR EACH QUESTION CHECKED "YES"

When engaged in the behavior...  
The individual has just been asked to do something or perform a task.  
It is at a similar time of day or in a similar situation.  
The person is surrounded by a lot of people in a crowd.  
You are exposing the individual to something new.  
You have had to interrupt or stop the person's activity or conversation.

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No _____
Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No _____
Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No _____
Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No _____
Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No _____
Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No _____

ENTER SCORE HERE: >> **5**

(3) Be sure that when the student acts out, we don't at that time allow him to escape. That will perpetuate the behavior. We need to satisfy the need before the behavior starts. Follow this pattern one student and one behavior at a time and enjoy the results.



# *Chapter 4*

The Science of Visualization,  
Empowerment and more



# *Step Four*

## *The Science of Visualization*

We've all watched in awe as an athlete pushes across the finish line or as the mountain climber makes it to the top of Mt. Everest. Against all odds and beyond all physical and mental limitations, the seemingly impossible happens.

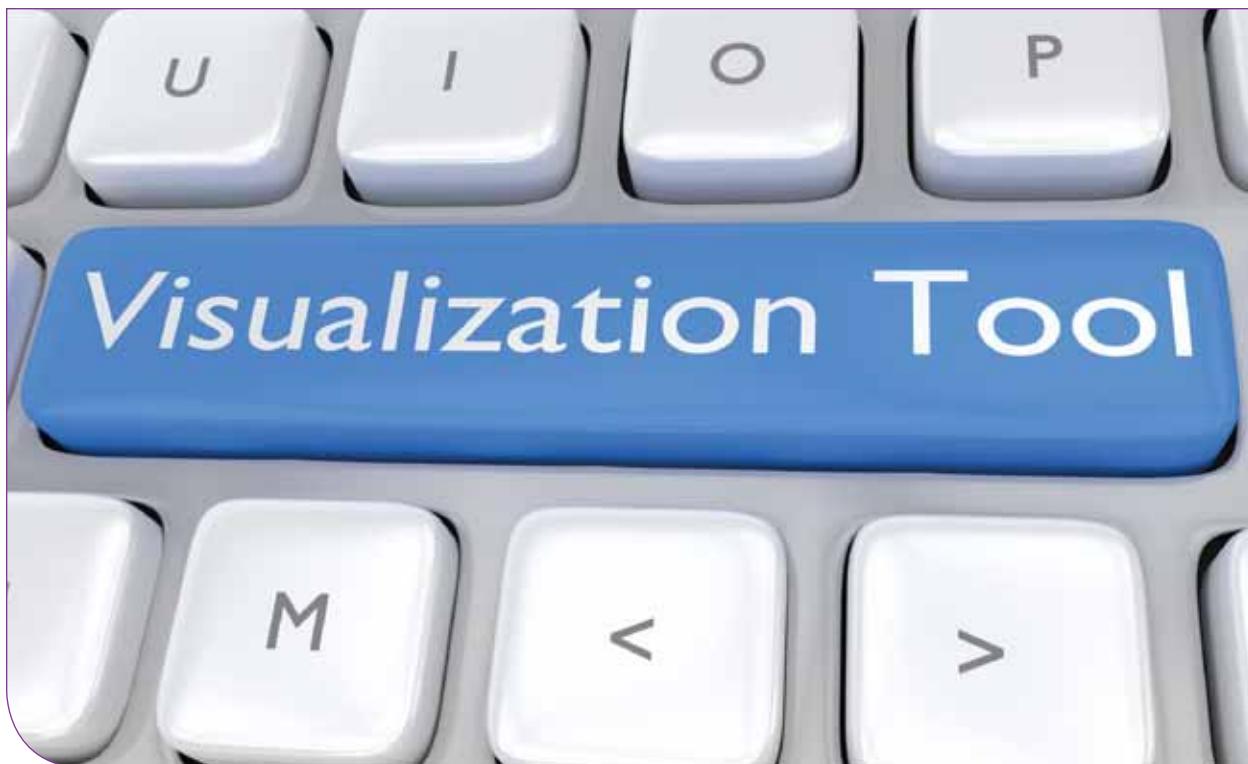
What each and every one of these accomplishments have in common is that the athlete was able, every step of the way, to visualize the positive outcome. Each visualized the finish line, minutes, days, weeks and sometimes years in advance of the ultimate success.

As educators, we have been applying this principle as a power tool in *A Better Day Curriculum*. On behalf of the student, we can practice the habit of visualizing the very best result for him.

Conversely, when we inadvertently expect more challenging behaviors from him, anticipate disengagement and lack of focus, we can end up getting exactly what we expect.

It is a scientific fact that our thoughts and visuals going through our minds affect our bodies chemically. Waking up from a nightmare demonstrates this concept. We see certain visuals in our dream and wake up afraid with adrenalin buzzing through our bodies.

We use this science to use intentional visuals to impact our students in the most positive of ways while at the same time, feeling better ourselves in the doing it.



When we look at this 3-pronged empowerment process of accompaniment, information gathering and responsiveness, and hold the process up to what may be more natural to us in the education model—identifying the problem and figuring out a solution—we will see a more natural and whole child path to teaching and learning. A student will gain confidence and feel more understood.

The same 3-pronged process works well in supporting colleagues who have become discouraged and parents who may be difficult to engage. Parents, after all, have become accustomed to hearing from schools and teachers most often when there is a problem. To begin the year with a phone call to a parent to discuss the strengths we have identified in their child goes a very long way in helping the parent open up to us and to drop defenses.

One of our challenges in the educational setting is the feeling that time is of the essence. While this is true, unless we are facing an immediate mental health crisis, taking the time to move through the empowerment process is well worth the investment, saving us stagnant periods of disengagement with the student later on. Empowerment provides us with a much higher rate of success with student connection later on. Moving into problem solving mode too soon can and often does slam a door shut to connecting with a student that may never be pried open again.



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# **Conclusion**

## **The Best Way to Use this Curriculum**

A Better Day Curriculum has been used successfully in educational settings since 2004 under a variety of program titles from Pre-K through the high school years. As outcomes were gathered and narratives became more and more positive, the 4-step process was renamed to represent what it really is. A process that allows educators and providers to make every day in schools and classrooms better and better, for themselves, for the people they work with and for the students they serve.

Most providers have found that studying the 4-steps in their entirety is the best approach. Then, once the basic concepts are understood, this guide provides a day-to-day hands on reference, a toolkit as we like to call it and allows teacher and providers to pick, choose and combine the tools that work best for their students.



So, where do I start? We have found that teachers immediately know where to go to pull just the right tool once all the tools are understood. Others prefer some more specific direction to start.

That direction is provided below. Just remember that ABDC was designed to allow flexibility and creativity for each teacher and student.

And while as teachers we typically have up to 20 or more students in any given classroom, Online, or a combination of both, it helps as we begin to implement ABDC to identify one student at a time, get into a groove with a grouping of effective ABDC tools for that student, and then move ahead with another student. The process can be a true time and stress saver for you as an educator. ABDC is a very effective way to get disengaged students to connect one-by-one. In just a matter of weeks, ABDC curriculum can become part of how we teach and how we connect with students. In a relatively short period of time, what we initially saw as learning crisis mode smooths out into a pattern of every day feeling better than the last. And it is YOU, the teacher, who has gained the power to make every day a better day.

*This guide provides a day-to-day toolkit and allows teachers and providers to pick, choose and combine tools that work best for their students.*

## SAMPLE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT INTERVENTION

Ask yourself these questions and follow the guide to get started with each student. Use the guide to support yourself and your student in whatever area stands out as an overwhelming need. And remember, you can't get it wrong. You can, however, observe which tools make an immediate, significant difference in your students and in how you feel each day.

# **Key Question Starter Guide**

- ***Am I applying the empowerment principles with my student?***  
(Page 37 in this guide)
- ***Do I have the energy I need to do this work? Does my student?***  
(Page 6 in this guide)
- ***Is my student being thrown off balance and unable to focus because certain factors in the school environment do not support his Learning Temperament?***  
(Page 12 in this guide)
- ***What behavior is getting in this student's way of his more complete focus and engagement? What is the unmet need that may be causing the behavior and how can I help him meet that need before he acts out?***  
(Page 28 in this guide)
- ***As I move closer to a solution for this student, how can I use simple, non-time-consuming visuals to bring about some immediate relief for me and my student today?***  
(Page 34 in this guide)

When we take just one small step, with our most disengaged, anxious students first, ask ourselves just one of these guiding questions and take a few minutes to apply one ABDC power tool during the course of our busy day, we will notice without delay that our students are experiencing better days, and as educators and providers, so are we. And who doesn't want *A Better Day* and break-throughs in our work?

In the classroom and therapeutic setting, and now, dealing with recovery from remote learning and isolation for long periods, we continue to struggle with how to better engage students in academics and how to support their mental health and deal with the prevailing overwhelming anxiety in our students and in ourselves. *A Better Day Curriculum* is a way to ease and perhaps even end that struggle.



For more information  
or to schedule a personalized  
consult with one of our  
lead providers:

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