



Review of the book  
“Working with Troubled Children”

*reviewed by:*  
Richard Mehrenberg

---

*A Book Review Published in*

*TEACHING Exceptional Children Plus*

*Volume 6, Issue 2, 2009*

---

*Copyright © 2009 by the author. This work is licensed to the public under the Creative Commons Attribution License*

# Review of the Book “Working with Troubled Children”

*reviewed by*  
Richard Mehrenberg

---

**This article reviews:**

**Kauffman, J.M. & Brigham, F.J. (2009) *Working with Troubled Children*. Verona, WI: Full Court Press**

---

## **Keywords**

E/BD, book review, special education

## **SUGGESTED CITATION:**

Mehrenberg, R. (2009). Review of the book “Working with Troubled Children” *TEACHING Exceptional Children Plus*, 6(2) Article 7. Retrieved [date] from <http://escholarship.bc.edu/education/tecplus/vol6/iss2/art7>

In their new book, *Working with Troubled Children* (2009), authors and childhood behavior disorder experts, James M. Kauffman and Frederick J. Brigham have created a comprehensive, yet friendly resource for educators. This book fills a gap in the literature base that provides the fundamentals of the field without alienating readers with minimal special education background, or others put off by the dry prose of the typical college textbook.

The book consists of eight chapters roughly broken down into two sections. The first four chapters address the question, “What are behavior problems?” They deal with topics such as prevention, identification, early intervention, and potential causes of behavior disorders. Chapters five through eight focuses on the question, “What can be done about behavior problems?” The latter half address the fundamentals of behavior management, organization, incentives, deterrents, and where to go for additional help. Together, the two sections provide the essential knowledge and skills teachers need to help students with troubling behaviors.

One of the biggest strengths of the text is its ability to make connections between the theoretical and the practical. Recommendations are grounded in research and evidence-based practices. The authors provide a substantial reference list for further reading and are not afraid to take sides on a controversial issue when the data supports their cause, such as the use of rewards or violence in the media.

Complimenting the theoretical aspects of research are numerous case studies. Each case study provides clear and relevant examples of particular topics throughout the chapters. They allow the reader to better understand how concepts might play out in the real

world. The attention paid to both the hypothetical and the practical demonstrate that Kauffman and Brigham are concerned with sharing not only *what* works for the child with a behavior disorder, but also *why*.

Throughout the book, the authors address several important points that are not regularly found in similar texts. For example, the terminology and necessity of using a label for students is explored. It is stated that although many people feel that labels are socially damaging to a child with a disability, they are needed in order to objectively recognize and treat a particular problem.

Many teachers may feel confused or overwhelmed by the multitude of labels for students with challenging behaviors. Terms such as emotional disturbance”, “behavioral disorder or “socially maladjusted” have all been used to describe such children. The authors feel that it is much more important to come to consensus on a common definition, rather than a common label.

Regardless of the label used, Kauffman and Brigham suggest asking three questions in order to help determine if a behavior problem warrants intervention. The three questions are:

1. Is it extreme?
2. Is it a chronic problem?
3. Is it socially unacceptable?

Educators are urged to use these questions as a starting point to help gauge whether a child’s inappropriate behavior may require additional investigation and intervention. Specific guidelines and examples of how to do so are provided.

One of the most important points in the book is also one most overlooked by similar texts. It is suggested that effective behavior management begins with effective instruction. Teachers are advised to construct les-

sons that are challenging, focused, and relevant. Students who find academic success will be less motivated and have less time to engage in unacceptable behaviors. The authors describe evidence based practices such as direct instruction that have been shown to increase academic achievement. Additional resources are provided for teachers who would like more information and support.

*Working with Troubled Children* is an excellent addition to the library of new and experienced special education teachers, general education teachers, pre-service teacher candidates and anyone else who would appreciate a better understanding of how to work with children with challenging behaviors. The contents are data-driven, yet reader-friendly. One small suggestion would be the inclusion of an index to help readers locate a particular topic as needed. This consideration is especially important since many teachers will want to use the book as a valuable consultation guide throughout their careers.

***About the reviewer:***

**Dr. Richard Mehrenberg is an Assistant Professor of Special Education at Millersville University.**