

# **Introduction to Positive Ways of Intervening with Challenging Behavior**

**A compilation of tip sheets introducing  
researched behavior modification methods,  
information, and suggestions on specific behavior  
problems, along with an accompanying  
glossary and bibliography**

**1995**

**Published by The Institute on Community Integration,  
College of Education, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis**

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The materials below appear in this packet in the same order that they are listed. They have been developed to assist teachers and parents in providing the best possible educational opportunities to students with emotional and behavioral disorders. These materials were published by the Institute on Community Integration, College of Education, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis and were authored by Kareen Smith of the Institute.

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# Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder...

## *a guide for teachers and parents*

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*This Intervention Tip Sheet has been developed to assist teachers and parents in providing the best possible educational opportunities to students with emotional and behavioral disorders. This Tip Sheet was published by the Institute on Community Integration, College of Education, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis and was authored by Kareen Smith of the Institute.*

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### ***Introduction***

Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD - also referred to as ADDH and Attention Deficit Disorder, ADD) "describes a disorder in which a child displays significant difficulties with poor attention, impulsivity and overactive behavior" (Braswell, Bloomquist & Pederson, 1991, p.5).

While most children display these behaviors at some time in their lives, children diagnosable as having ADHD display them in a way (frequency, duration, severity, etc.) which is significantly inappropriate for their mental age and at a significantly different rate than peers. Additionally, ADHD is a developmental disorder which persists through life (Kauffman, p. 291). Correlate behaviors of ADHD children can be observed as early as infancy. ADHD infants can be described temperamentally as being irritable, difficult to soothe and as having irregular sleeping and eating patterns.

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### ***Prevalence***

ADHD is thought to affect 35% of elementary school age children. Because of how schools are run, with children being expected to be still and comply, ADHD students commonly have problems in school. Teachers commonly describe children with ADHD as often being off-task, fidgeting, playing with objects (i.e., tapping pencils, playing with coins), impulsively vocalizing their feelings or reactions and often being out of their seat.

### ***Implications***

Problems associated with ADHD can lead to poor motivation and difficulty in developing problem-solving abilities. In order to help ADHD children succeed scholastically and socially, it is very important that there is intervention which is tailored to the child's specific needs (Braswell, et al.) Educational interventions are important to ensure that a child's educational needs are met; this can mean special services for children who have learning disabilities in addition to ADHD, time spent in a resource room or, possibly, self-contained settings. The trend today is to provide more supports to the mainstream classroom rather than separating students. It is important that parents, teachers, and school faculty involved in designing a individual education plan do not assume that ADHD students are less intellectually competent than their classmates. In fact, research has shown little cognitive differences between ADHD and other children, nor do children with ADHD tend to have IQs outside of the normal range (Forness, Youpa, Hanna, Cantwell, & Swanson, 1992).

### ***Interventions***

Research and experience of individuals shows more and more that positive, proactive interventions used with students with ADHD (and other emotional or behavioral disorder) are just as, if not more, effective than aversive, reactive interventions. It is also true that few teacher training programs provide training in proactive interventions and teachers (as well as parents) may find themselves with little information and few resources when attempting to implement proactive intervention.

For these reasons, The Institute on Community Integration (ICI) has put together several worksheets which concisely illustrate different proactive interventions which have been found to be effective and are relatively easy to implement. These are strategies which have been shown to be especially useful in working with children (of all ages) who have emotional or behavioral disorder, such as ADHD. It is important to note that a child does not have

to have been referred for special education for these interventions to be effective - they are very valuable pre-referral tools.

While not every intervention will be effective for every child, with modification and consistent delivery, these interventions are very effective. ICI hopes that you will use these and other proactive interventions in helping each child reach (and go beyond) his or her potential.

### **Diagnostic Criteria for Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder**

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders, fourth edition (DSM-IV), American Psychiatric Association, 1993.

1. Either (1) or (2)
  - a. six (or more) of the following symptoms of **inattention** have persisted for at least 6 months to a degree that is maladaptive and inconsistent with developmental level:  
*Inattention*
    - i. often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, work, or other activities
    - ii. often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities
    - iii. often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly
    - iv. often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace (not due to oppositional behavior or failure to understand instructions)
    - v. often has difficulty organizing tasks and activities
    - vi. often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort (such as schoolwork or homework)
    - vii. often loses things necessary for tasks or activities (e.g., toys, school assignments, pencils, books, or tools)
    - viii. is often easily distracted by extraneous stimuli
    - ix. is often forgetful in daily activities
  - b. six (or more) of the following symptoms of **hyperactivity-impulsivity** have persisted for at least 6 months to a degree that is maladaptive and inconsistent with developmental level:  
*Hyperactivity*
    - i. often fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat
    - ii. often leaves seat in classroom or in other situations in which remaining seated is expected
    - iii. often runs about or climbs excessively in situations in which it is inappropriate (in adolescents or adults, may be limited to subjective feelings of restlessness)
    - iv. often has difficulty playing or engaging in leisure activities quietly
    - v. is often "on the go" or often acts as if "driven by a motor"
    - vi. often talks excessively  
*Impulsivity*
    - vii. often blurts out answers before questions have been completed
    - viii. often has difficulty awaiting turn
    - ix. often interrupts or intrudes on other (e.g., butts into conversations or games)
2. Some hyperactive-impulsive or inattentive symptoms that caused impairment were present before age 7 years.
3. Some impairment from the symptoms is present in two or more settings (e.g., at school [or work] and at home).
4. There must be clear evidence of clinically significant impairment in social, academic, or occupational functioning.
5. The symptoms do not occur exclusively during the course of a Pervasive Developmental Disorder, Schizophrenia, or other Psychotic Disorder and are not better accounted for by another mental disorder (e.g., Mood Disorder, Anxiety Disorder, Dissociative Disorder, or a Personality Disorder).

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# **Behavior Modification...**

## ***a proactive intervention for the classroom***

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### ***Introduction***

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Teachers spend a good deal of time dealing with inappropriate, disruptive behavior. Oftentimes attempts to modify student behavior are unsuccessful due to time constraints, inconsistent implementation, and a lack of understanding of the principles of behavior modification. Here you will find the basic premises of methods of behavior modification which should help you approach student behavior and the development and administration of behavior modification plans in a consistent and more effective manner.

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### ***What is behavior modification?***

There are many different methods and philosophies of dealing with “inappropriate,” “abnormal,” or “undesirable” behavior. Behavior modification is one of these. It is different from other methods and philosophies in that it focuses only on observable, describable, and measurable behaviors, as opposed, for example, to psychoanalytic theory which focuses on finding the underlying cause (i.e., childhood trauma) of behavior. Behavior modification, based on behaviorist principles, operates on the following tenets:

- 1) Behavior is controlled by antecedents, events which occur before a behavior is exhibited, and
- 2) By consequences, that is, events which occur after a behavior is exhibited.
- 3) These antecedents and consequences can be changed in order to increase or decrease the chance that a given behavior will continue to be exhibited.
- 4) Behavior, appropriate as well as inappropriate, is learned.

### ***What are the aims of behavior modification?***

Behavior modification techniques aim to manipulate the antecedents and consequences of behavior so that the likelihood of appropriate behavior is increased and inappropriate behavior is decreased.

Proactive behavior modification, interventions which avoid the utilization of aversive consequences, also involves teaching new and more appropriate skills (positive programming). The reason for this is the belief that all behavior is learned. If you are trying to reduce an inappropriate behavior, an appropriate behavior must be taught as an alternative.

### ***When should behavior modification techniques be implemented?***

Before introducing an intervention, several things must take place. First, it must be established that there is, indeed, a behavior problem. Factors which may influence or cause a student’s behavior, such as a medical condition, language difficulties, or cultural differences, must be investigated. Additionally, input from other staff and from parents is necessary in establishing which behavior is problematic. Second, a functional analysis needs

to be completed in order to establish which antecedents and consequences are supporting the behavior (or which antecedents and consequences are needed in the case of promoting behavior). Third, it must be determined whether the target behavior is of priority to justify intervention. For example, while pencil tapping may be an annoying behavior, it probably does not warrant implementation of a token economy. In deciding whether a behavior necessitates intervention, you will need to look at its frequency (how often it occurs as compared to peers), the intensity at which the behavior is exhibited, and the rate at which the student is able to learn new behaviors.

After these steps have been taken and it is agreed that a problem which warrants intervention does exist, behavior modification can be implemented.

### ***What are examples of behavior modification interventions?***

Examples of behavior modification which can be used to increase behavior are: praise and approval, modeling, positive programming, shaping, token economy, self-monitoring, and shaping. Methods which can be used to decrease behavior are: extinction, reinforcing incompatible behavior, relaxation, self-monitoring, and shaping.

### ***What are other considerations to take into account when implementing a behavior modification intervention?***

When deciding on an intervention, the least intrusive and restrictive intervention deemed likely to be effective should be chosen. For example, if a student is likely to respond to verbal praise in increasing assignment completion behavior, it would be unnecessary, and perhaps even detrimental, to implement a token economy in changing this behavior.

It is also important to include positive programming as part of any type of behavioral intervention. For many students, inappropriate behavior may be the only behavior in a student's repertoire which has been effective in meeting his or her needs. Positive programming serves to increase the options in a student's repertoire and provide more choices for the student.

Finally, it is important to remember that it is the behavior which is troublesome, not the student. It is important to make this distinction even though in some cases a student may seem to continually try your patience. Separating the student from his or her behavior will help prevent and dissipate negative feeling that you may have about a student and help make you and your intervention more effective.

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# Contingency Contracting...

## *a proactive intervention for the classroom*

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### ***Introduction***

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A contingency contract is an agreement between a student and teacher which states behavioral or academic goals for the student and reinforcers or rewards that the student will receive contingent upon achievement of these goals.

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#### ***What kind of goals can be included in a contract?***

Behavioral or academic improvement goals can be part of a contract. A contract should have only one stated goal. They are not appropriate for behaviors that are dangerous to the student or others, such as physical aggression or self-injurious behavior.

#### ***How do I define the contract goal?***

You must first assess the present level of performance. If your goal is that the student learn and practice raising his hand instead of interrupting, you must first establish to what degree this behavior is exhibited. Does the student raise his hand 10 times an hour or 10 times a day? If the goal is for the student to complete more math work, you must establish his or her present level of productivity. Does he or she complete two worksheets a day or a week? This is the baseline level of performance and should be assessed over a one-week period.

#### ***How do I proceed after establishing the baseline performance?***

At this point, you turn the goal into a specific objective by defining and clarifying it. The student now becomes involved in drawing up the contract. Negotiate with the student in defining the objective in measurable and observable language. The objectives for the examples above might be “raises hand and waits to be called on five times each hour” (if the student is, for example, raising his hand three times and interrupting five times) or “completes 60% of math worksheets.”

#### ***Besides the goal, what should be included in the contract?***

While the target behavior is the bulk of the contract, there are several other components which are vital:

**Contract Conditions:** With the student, decide under what conditions the contract will be in effect (the times, classes, and activities), for example, in math class or on the playground.

**Contract Completion Criteria:** The criteria describe the level of performance for completion. Does the behavior need only be achieved once or will it need to be maintained for a period of time (i.e., “Student will complete 60% of math homework for eight days in a 10 consecutive day period”)?

**Reinforcers:** The contract should include a reinforcer or reward that the student will earn upon contract completion. This should be something the student chooses, within reason. Edibles, small toys, free time, and “no

homework” passes are examples of reinforcers which could be effective. Positive consequences (i.e., rewards) should be delivered immediately upon contract completion.

**Review and Renegotiation:** Include dates on which progress will be reviewed with the student. You may choose to review the contract weekly with the student to help keep him or her on track and to evaluate progress. If you see no progress after a couple of reviews, it may be necessary to renegotiate the contract. Goals may be unreasonable and reinforcers may be inappropriate. It is also appropriate to state a goal date for contract completion.

**Language and Signatures:** The contract should be written in simple, clear language that the student can understand. For example, “reward” should be used instead of “reinforcer.” This will make the contract more relevant to the student.

Both you and the student should sign and date the contract and, if working in collaboration with parents, they should also sign it.

When it will not infringe upon the privacy of the student, it can also be appropriate to have an outside party or witness sign the contract, such as a friend of the student or another adult that the student trusts.

### ***When should I implement the contract?***

In order to support the student’s success, it is advisable to begin implementation with a mini-contract. This is a modified easy-to-complete version of the official contract. The mini-contract gives the student an opportunity to practice and learn how the contract operates. Choose an objective for the mini-contract which the student will easily achieve in two to five days. After completion of the mini-contract, sit down and discuss the experience, review the official contract, clarify it, and make sure there is no need for refinement before implementation.

### ***What are other considerations for contingency contracts?***

- Deliver positive consequences (i.e., rewards) immediately upon contract completion.
- Contract goals are best stated in positive ways, for example, “[Student] will raise hand and wait for assistance when frustrated with classwork” rather than “[Student] will not crumple up work and throw it on the floor.”
- If progress toward completion is not being made, the contract needs to be modified or rewritten without placing blame on the student. Include parents in contingency contracts whenever possible.
- Students may wish to have reinforcers which are available at home, such as television viewing or staying up later on weekends. These can be great reinforcers if parents agree and are willing to work with you in delivering them.
- Contracts can have either short- or long-term objectives. These can be stated to be achieved in two or three days, after which a new contract will be written. Also, short-term contracts can be devised as steps leading to achievement of the long-term contract goals.

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# Cooperative Learning...

## *a proactive intervention for the classroom*

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### ***Introduction***

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Cooperative learning involves having students work as teams. It is beneficial to students in several ways: it creates peer pressure and support for mastering skills, it develops interpersonal and small group skills, it encourages individual accountability, and it creates an environment in which to learn and practice social skills. The ability to work cooperatively is a vital skill that is often neglected in the education process. This sheet outlines the core components of cooperative learning and ideas for how to introduce cooperative learning activities into your classroom.

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### ***Why is cooperative learning important?***

Most of the learning that children do in school is very passive; they are expected to sit back, listen, absorb, and recall. Cooperative learning actively engages the student in his or her learning process by creating an opportunity for teaching and learning to occur between peers. It results in positive peer pressure on all individuals to achieve group goals. It also supports each individual to ensure that those of varying ability can achieve these goals.

In an education system that typically promotes individualism and independence, the experience of cooperative learning introduces the understanding that one needs to rely on and have connections with others to succeed. This sense of interdependence is vital to successful and satisfying functioning in the adult world.

Finally, one of the most valuable uses of cooperative learning is to teach social and interpersonal skills. Particularly in working with students with behavior problems, cooperative learning teams provide a safe, intimate atmosphere where social skills are modeled by other group members. It is a place where students can practice new skills.

### ***What skills are necessary for cooperative learning to be a success?***

In order for cooperative learning to be a success, a sense of positive interdependence must be developed. This refers to a sense that each team member's contribution is valuable and necessary in order to achieve goals. Johnson and Johnson (1991) outline the following skills that must be taught and practiced in cooperative learning teams.

**Goal setting:** The first step to creating an atmosphere of positive interdependence is setting a mutual goal which is reachable only if all members of the team participate. The goal should be structured so that every team member is responsible for learning the material and ensuring that every other group member learns the material.

**Leadership skills:** There are three general leadership skills that are necessary for cooperative learning. **Giving directions** encompasses being able to review the instructions, call attention to time limits, and offer ideas on how to most effectively proceed with the task. **Summarizing** involves the ability to review aloud what has just been read or discussed, referring to notes or the original material as little as possible. **Generating answers** refers to coming up with as many possible answers from which the team can choose the best answer.

**Cooperative and interpersonal skills:** Some students may already be, to differing degrees, proficient in some of these skills. It is through monitoring and observing that you will see which skills students lack and need to develop. There are four levels of these skills. **Forming skills** involves being able to quietly come together as a group, to stay with the group, to quickly attend to the task, use quiet voices, and take turns. **Functioning skills** are what help the group develop and maintain an effective working relationship. These include sharing ideas and opinions, asking each other and the teacher for facts and reasoning, giving direction to stay on task, encouraging participation of other group members, expressing support and acceptance of other group members' ideas and contributions, offering to explain one's ideas, and paraphrasing one's own and others' ideas. **Formulating skills** are cognitive skills which stimulate and develop the use of higher quality reasoning skills. These are: the ability to summarize ideas and material aloud, seeking accuracy of these summaries, seeking elaboration by relating material to what is already known, developing ways of remembering information (mnemonic devices, for example), checking other group members' understanding by asking for verbalization of their reasoning processes, and asking others to plan out loud. **Synthesizing** involves skills necessary to dispute and reconceptualize material and conclusions. These skills are necessary in thinking more divergently about an issue and arguing constructively about differences. Students need to learn to: criticize ideas while expressing respect for the person with the idea, differentiate between group members' ideas and reasoning, ask for rationalization of ideas, extend other members' ideas by adding one's own information, integrate differing ideas into a single position, generate more than one possible answer, and check the group's work against the original instructions and timelines.

### ***How do students learn cooperative skills?***

Cooperative skills are not generally learned in school. From the time students enter kindergarten, independence and competition, rather than interdependence and cooperation, are stressed. Therefore, it cannot be expected that students are immediately successful in their cooperative learning teams. They must first be taught the necessary skills.

These are taught first through procedural explanation. Each skill, its purpose and importance are explained. Then, the skill is modeled. It is beneficial to demonstrate the skill both effectively and ineffectively and to discuss with students what was different about each example and why one was preferable. Next, provide the opportunity to practice and role-play. Given different hypothetical situations, students' role-playing sessions should be reviewed by both teacher and other students, and feedback should be given. Finally, students should be given the chance to reflect on the feedback, ask questions, and, if necessary, practice more.

### ***How can I incorporate cooperative learning into my lessons?***

These are activities recommended by Johnson and Johnson (1991) which are quick and easy ways to begin implementing cooperative learning:

**Turn to neighbor:** For three to five minutes, have students turn to their neighbor and explain an idea of the lesson to each other, state three important points of the lesson, come up with a question about the topic, or whatever else might fit into the lesson.

**Jigsaw:** Each team member reads or studies a part of the lesson and is then responsible for teaching what he or she has learned to the other members.

**Pre- and post-group activities:** Before new lessons, have students work in their teams to brainstorm and write down what they already know of the topic and predict what they will learn. After the lesson, have them get together again to paraphrase and summarize what they have learned and what more they would like to learn.

**Homework checkers:** Have students work in their teams to compare homework and discuss differing answers, correct answers, and include why they have changed their answers. The team can then turn in all the papers, with one being the final product.

**Book report pairs:** Have students work in pairs and interview each other on the book or story he or she has read. Each person then reports on what the other has read in oral or written form.

**Writing response teams:** Students read and review each others' papers, making written comments on what they like, suggestions they have, making grammar and punctuation corrections, and discussing it with the author.

### ***How should cooperative teams be formed?***

Start with small groups of two or three students. Large groups require more interactions and, if students do not already possess cooperative learning skills, successful team outcomes will be unlikely.

Form the groups yourself. Make sure that teams are diverse in ability, gender, and ethnicity. You do not want to have one group of the two highest achievers in the class and another of the two lowest. There is disagreement in the literature about whether friends should be paired together. Many authors believe that letting two close friends comprise a team will lead to lots of off-task behavior. However, there is research which shows that friends are often more productive and creative and engage in higher levels of cognitive functioning because they do not have to spend time getting to know each other and are more willing to challenge each other's ideas. It may, therefore, be more beneficial to have friends work together on short-term products and to group students together who do not know each other as well for longer-term projects.

Make your expectations of group behavior very clear. Observe teams as they work, ask questions about what they are doing, and prompt them when they are having trouble getting started. Sit down with them while they work and give feedback about their process.

Finally, integrate cooperative learning into your curriculum. Have students review for tests together, work on assignments together, and check each other's work for accuracy and completeness. The more discussion and interaction there is between students, the more active participation there will be and the more they will learn.

### ***How can I approach problem behavior within cooperative teams?***

Dishon and O'Leary (1984) describe and discuss how to handle the four most common behavioral problems which occur during cooperative learning (especially when students are first learning how to work as a team). These are as follows:

1. **Passive uninvolvement:** Passive uninvolvement is expressed by students turning away from their group, not paying attention to the group, saying little or nothing, not bringing materials and work to the group, etc. When these behaviors occur, you may try to:
  - Jigsaw tasks so that each team member has needed information. Then, if the uninvolved team member does not voluntarily contribute information, the other members will actively involve the student.
  - Assign the uninvolved member a role which is crucial to the group's success and is implicitly involved, such as reader or secretary.
  - Reward teams for their average performance. This will motivate teams to actively involve an uninvolved member.
2. **Active noninvolvement:** Active noninvolvement is occurring when a student is doing and talking about everything but the group task. He or she may be leaving the group and walking around, purposely giving wrong answers, and refusing to do group work or to work with specific team members. In such cases, you may offer some sort of positive reinforcement that is especially preferred by the uninvolved student or the group which is contingent upon group success.
3. **Independence:** When you see a student working alone and independently of the team, you can:
  - Limit the resources of the group, for example, provide only one pencil and piece of paper or one newspaper. In this way, the student will be forced to work with the group.

- Jigsaw tasks so that each team member has needed information. The student must then work with group members in order to complete the task.
4. **Taking charge:** When a student “takes charge,” you will observe him or her refusing to let other group members do work, ordering other team members around, doing all the work, bullying other members, or making team decisions without the input of other members. In such cases, you can:
- Jigsaw materials and resources so that the student cannot complete the task without input from other members.
  - Assign group roles so that other group members have more powerful roles such as reader, secretary, summarizer, etc.
  - Reward the group on the basis of the lowest group score(s). This will pressure the student to help and cooperate with others so that they learn the material.

### *How should I assign grades for teamwork?*

Johnson and Johnson (1991) give the following suggestions for assigning grades to cooperative learning tasks:

1. **Individual score plus bonus points based on all members reaching criterion:** After studying or working together, each student completes his or her own work. He or she then receives a grade plus bonus points if all group members have achieved a preset criterion of success.
2. **Individual score plus bonus points based on lowest score:** After studying or working together, each student completes his or her own work. Members then receive a grade plus bonus points on the basis of the lowest individual score in their team.
3. **Individual score plus group average:** After studying or working together, each student completes his or her own work. He or she is awarded a grade consisting of his or her individual score plus the score which is the average score of the group.
4. **Individual score plus bonus based on improvement scores:** After studying or working together, each student completes his or her own work. Each student is then awarded a grade which consists of his or her individual score plus bonus points if the group score average has improved from the last task. Every two or three tasks, the base score (on which bonus points are based) is updated.
5. **Totaling members’ individual scores:** The individual scores of members are added up and all members receive the total of all the scores.
6. **Averaging of members’ individual scores:** The individual scores of members are added up and an average is taken. All team members receive this average.
7. **Group score on a single product:** Team members work together to produce one product and all students receive the grade given the product.
8. **Randomly selecting one member’s paper to score:** After working or studying together, each group member completes the task individually. One product is then randomly chosen and all team members receive the grade awarded this product.
9. **All members receive the lowest score:** After working or studying together, each group member completes his or her own work. All members then receive the lowest score of the team. This method dramatically improves the performance of low achievers since everyone in the group is motivated to help him or her achieve.

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# Cuing...

## *a proactive intervention for the classroom*

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*This Intervention Tip Sheet has been developed to assist teachers and parents in providing the best possible educational opportunities to students with emotional and behavioral disorders. This Tip Sheet was published by the Institute on Community Integration, College of Education, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis*

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### ***Introduction***

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“A cue is a signal that stimulates a person (e.g., a student) to exhibit a previously learned voluntary behavior pattern” (Cangelosi, 1988, p. 225). Cuing, also referred to as prompting, is an intervention which stops disruptive behavior before it starts by drawing attention away from inappropriate behavior and redirecting attention to appropriate behavior.

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### ***With what kinds of behavior is cuing useful?***

Cuing is beneficial in modifying behaviors which are being displayed by a whole classroom, such as noise level and behaviors exhibited by one or few individuals (for example, on-task behavior and hand-raising). Once you are able to recognize the warning signs of inappropriate behavior, you can begin to use cuing to help the student prevent his or her behavior from escalating. *However*, if a behavior has escalated to the level where there is conflict and the student is defensive, cuing is no longer an effective intervention.

### ***What kinds of cues are there?***

Four general categories of cuing are: visual, verbal, gestural, and physical.

**Visual cues** are unobtrusive, can be used with little effort, and are useful with groups of students. Posting classroom rules and daily schedules are two examples. When a rule is not being followed, the cue can be strengthened by pointing to the rule or asking the students which rule is not being followed. Another useful cue for the classroom is a noise level indicator. This could be in the form of a stoplight and would be changed according to the acceptable noise level. Red could represent no talking during testing or quiet time, yellow could represent quiet whispering during seat work, and green could represent reasonable talking during group activities or free time. A useful visual cue when working with an individual is using notes to remind him or her of task instructions.

Students can implement cuing systems for teachers, too. A student with mood swings could use a “mood indicator” to let the teacher know how things are going. This can be done by putting a smile or frown face on his or her desk. Students who demand lots of attention during work time by asking many questions could implement cuing by placing a sign reading, “I have a question” on their desk.

**Verbal cues** are commonly used by teachers. These remind students of the task at hand (“We are on page 21 in our math books”), giving instructions (“Michael, would you please sit down in your chair now”), and encouraging appropriate behavior (“Keep up the good work,” “This is what a hard-working student looks like”), etc. Verbal cues are very powerful because even if directed only at one student, they can affect an entire classroom’s behavior.

**Gestural cues** involve a gesture or movement which is understood by students as indicating a desired behavior. Putting a finger to one's lips for silence, raising one's hand before asking students a question to remind them to raise their hands before answering, and pointing to a class rule on a rule sheet are common gestural cues.

**Physical cues** physically direct the student's behavior. Putting a hand on a student's shoulder if they are talking during quiet time is a common example of a physical cue. Simply positioning oneself in a specific area of the classroom can serve as a physical cue. For example, if a student is antagonizing another, walking over to them and standing next to them is a physical cue to stop this behavior.

*Physical cues must be used with caution.* Many students react negatively to being touched--this must be respected. As students move into adolescence, issues of privacy and personal space make physical cues involving contact less viable.

### ***What are the qualities of effective cues?***

In order to be effective, cues should be nonintrusive, discrete, nonhostile, and understood by the student. Nonintrusiveness is important for several reasons. If the student feels he or she is being put on the spot or is receiving negative attention, he or she will become defensive. Also, if the cuing is always intrusive, the student may inadvertently learn that they need to be prompted in order to behave correctly. Discretion is advisable so that cuing does not interrupt the flow of the class.

Making sure that the student understands the cue is easy to overlook if you assume that the student is aware of his or her behavior. You must communicate with the student what is going on.

Finally, it is important that you do not let any frustration or anger come through when cuing. If you are hostile (or even if the student perceives there to be hostility), the intervention will not be effective.

### ***How do I prepare to use cuing?***

First, consider student capabilities. Make sure the student knows or can decode your cue. Some students may react very negatively to physical contact; with such students, a physical prompt would be inappropriate.

Second, prioritize behaviors to be changed. Is it more important to reduce the class noise level or to increase a student's in-seat behavior? These decisions must be made before a cuing intervention can be implemented.

Third, involve students in preparing for implementation. This can begin with a discussion of what a cue is and examples of everyday cues: fire alarms, alarm clocks, ambulance sirens, etc. Discussion of what these cues indicate and how people respond should help students put classroom cuing into context. "Social perspective taking" (Slade & Callaghan, 1988) is another useful tool to get students involved in cuing. Give the students a hypothetical situation, such as a lifeguard or police officer, and have them construct a set of rules they would use and cues used to alert others to the rules.

Finally, clearly convey your expectations and the methods you will use to cue students. Role-playing and modeling are useful to clearly demonstrate to students what your cues are.

### ***How do I fade a cue?***

When you have reached a desired, consistent level of response, you are ready to begin fading it. Gradually design the cue to be less intrusive, maintaining the level of response until the cue is no longer necessary.

### ***Special Considerations...***

Keep in mind that cuing is extremely effective in promoting positive behavior. Telling a student or group of students, "What a great job you are doing concentrating on your homework" cues the student to continue working and helps instill positive feelings about the self and about school. Cuing for positive behavior should be a significant and integral part of any cuing intervention.

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# Defiance and Verbal Aggression...

## *preventing and dealing with challenging behavior*

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### ***Introduction***

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Students who are verbally aggressive use words to get what they want, for example, to gain attention or avoid a task. In modifying the behavior of a student who is defiant or verbally aggressive, it is necessary (as in dealing with any other behavior) to perform a functional assessment before designing and implementing a proactive behavior modification intervention.

It is also helpful for one to have methods and techniques to deal with specific situations when a student becomes defiant or verbally aggressive. This tip sheet intends to give you a better description and understanding of defiance and verbal aggression, as well as several ways to deal with a student who is displaying these behaviors.

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### ***What are the characteristics of students who are defiant or verbally aggressive?***

Students exhibiting these behaviors operate on the premise, "I'm okay; you're not okay." "[T]he misguided social goal is [to] control, to manipulate others through language" (Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986, p. 267). Wolfgang and Glickman list the following behaviors as some of those in the defiant/verbally aggressive student's repertoire:

- makes fun, teases, and ridicules other students.
- swears at other students.
- jokes and laughs when asked to be serious.
- "sassess" or is sarcastic toward the teacher.
- yells out with inappropriate comments during class instruction.
- gets into frequent shouting matches.
- laughs and is openly amused when other students are being reprimanded.

Fortunately, these students are rarely physically aggressive. A positive characteristic of these students is that they are attempting to communicate their feelings and desires, even if doing so poorly.

### ***How do I avoid being drawn into conflict cycles with defiant or verbally aggressive students?***

The defiant student's "you can't make me" attitude, along with both the student's and teacher's urge to avoid "losing face," can easily lead the teacher to be pulled into a conflict cycle. In order to avoid being pulled into such a cycle, take into consideration the following (Chernow & Chernow, 1989, p. 151):

- **Decide if the defiance is momentary.** Many students will comply after an initial outburst if given a moment's time. These students need to learn to control their temper and express themselves more appropriately.
- **Watch to see if the hostile behavior persists.** If it does, remove the student and/or yourself from the confrontation. Allow for a cool down period before dealing with the situation to prevent the situation from mushrooming.

### ***How do I bring about a long-term change in reducing defiance and verbal aggression?***

First, a functional assessment must be carried out in order to determine what purpose the aggression is serving and what circumstances seem to incite it. Then a behavior modification plan including proactive strategies should be designed, carried out, and evaluated.

While the strategies listed in this tip sheet will be helpful in getting you out of sticky situations, a long-term plan must be developed and implemented if you are going to help the student change. Not everyone will know or carry out the techniques listed above, and the student must become responsible for and in control of his or her own behavior. Please refer to tip sheets produced under this grant entitled *Token Economies, Differential Reinforcement, Positive Programming, Contingency Contracts, and Self-Monitoring* for ideas on strategies which can be useful in helping reduce defiance and verbal aggression.

### ***If I find myself in a situation where the student's behavior is out of control, how can I proceed?***

Chernow and Chernow (1989) recommend the following steps in dealing with a verbally aggressive student before he or she has calmed down to a degree that discussion is possible:

- **Tell the student that you will not argue with him or her, provide the student with a choice and leave the student alone, allowing time to decide.** Telling the student, "I will not talk to you if you are going to call me names. When you feel ready to address me with my name, I will be willing to help you/discuss this with you," and walking away leaves you and the student with some sense of calm and control.
- **Instruct a hostile student to wait for you away from other students, i.e., in the hall or office.** This will allow the student time to calm down so that you can engage him or her in discussion.

### ***What techniques can I use to engage the student in discussion when I suspect he or she is ready?***

**Reflection.** Reflection is restating in similar words what the student has stated. This helps draw the student into discussion by showing that you are listening and letting you check that you understand what the student is saying. Be sure to restate in a calm, nonthreatening, nonjudgmental voice.

#### **Example:**

Student: I'm going to hit Bob if he doesn't learn to mind his own business.

Teacher: You are very angry at Bob because he intrudes in your conversations.

**Agree with part of the criticism.** This technique helps neutralize an attack and deter arguing. In a calm, nonthreatening voice, try restating the criticism and asking for specifics. You must allow for the fact that while the student may not have expressed him- or herself appropriately, there may be some worth to the criticism. If the student is calm enough, ask what specifically he or she would like to be changed. If it seems reasonable, ask if the student will try to change his or her behavior if you try to change yours. If the student's suggestion does not seem reasonable, reinforce him or her for sharing it appropriately and let them know that while you may not be able to honor it, you appreciate being privy to it.

#### **Example:**

Student: You always yell at me for talking and never at anybody else!

Teacher: I do often have to ask you to stop talking because when I look up at the class, you often continue to talk.

**Question for specifics.** This technique helps the student break down generalizations and state him- or herself in more specific, concrete terms. It also helps the student focus on the actual problem rather than the people involved. Furthermore, it helps you identify strengths and weaknesses in the student's problem-solving abilities, allowing you to develop instruction in improving these skills.

#### **Example:**

Student: I hate math. These problems are stupid.

Teacher: Which part are you getting stuck on?

**Collaboration.** This technique gives both you and the student something you want from what could potentially be a conflict. It helps prevent a conflict cycle from ensuing and teaches negotiation skills and delayed gratification.

**Example:**

Student: I'm not going to clean up the art project. I want to go to recess.

Teacher: I'll pick up the paper if you'll put away the paints and brushes. Then you can go to recess.

**Direct/firm commands.** Direct/firm commands should be used in a crisis situation if they have worked well in the past or if you believe the student will respond to them. This strategy should not be used frequently as it does not encourage the student to take responsibility in making decisions. These commands are used in order to gain immediate control.

**Example:**

Student: I'm going to beat the crap out of you!

Teacher: Robert, sit down now!

**Distraction, redirection, or humor.** These strategies can be used in a crisis situation in order to divert the student's attention from the issue at hand. It permits a temporary reduction in anxiety, stress, and attacking or aggressive responses.

**Example:**

Student: If Toua touches my bike again, I'm going to wrap it around his neck!

Teacher: What kind of a bike do you have?

**Stop gap.** This strategy is useful when you find yourself becoming emotionally caught up in conflict with a student or when you sense that the student is unable to stop engaging in defiant or aggressive behavior because he or she is being controlled by emotion. This technique involves the teacher telling the student that they both need a break from each other until they are able to calm down. This allows both parties to bring emotions under control and prevents the conflict cycle from further developing.

**Example:**

Teacher: I feel like we're both getting angrier and having a hard time listening to each other. Let's put this aside for 10 minutes and talk about it after we've had time to calm down.

### ***Final comments on defiance and verbal aggression...***

These strategies require practice. They are not the typical responses we are conditioned to give to students who are being unreasonable or antagonistic. However, they can be very effective in giving a student the time he or she needs to calm down and in developing the student's trust in you by showing that you listen, care, and are willing to get involved.

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# Differential Reinforcement...

## *a proactive intervention for the classroom*

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### ***Introduction***

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The importance of consequences in shaping behavior was voiced by B.F. Skinner in the early years of this century. Research since then continues to show that reinforcement is a key component of helping facilitate changes in student behavior. The method of reinforcement delivery also plays an important role in the effectiveness of the reinforcement. This tip sheet describes differential reinforcement and the different types of delivery methods of reinforcement.

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### ***What is differential reinforcement?***

There are two kinds of differential reinforcement. The first is used to decrease inappropriate behavior by ignoring it and providing reinforcement for appropriate behavior. The second is used to bring behavior under the control of a specific stimulus.

The word "differential" means that students are taught to differentiate between positive and negative behaviors by learning that specific behaviors will or will not be reinforced and that behaviors are appropriate only when exhibited in certain situations, i.e., after certain discriminative stimuli.

### ***How is differential reinforcement delivered?***

Differential reinforcement is delivered in the same way as positive reinforcement and can consist of the same types of reinforcers. What is different is when it is delivered.

### ***When is differential reinforcement delivered?***

It is at this point that the different types of differential reinforcement distinguish themselves. Each type of differential reinforcement will be defined, an example will be given, its purpose will be explained, and schedules and cautions will be outlined.

**Differential Reinforcement of Other Behaviors (DRO)**. DRO is reinforcement delivered when the targeted inappropriate behavior is not exhibited. For example, if the targeted behavior is interrupting, the teacher will reinforce a student for not interrupting, even if other inappropriate behaviors are occurring, because these behaviors are not being targeted. DRO can be used to reinforce a student after a specific interval of time during which a targeted inappropriate behavior was not exhibited. A DRO-reset schedule is one which starts the interval over immediately after the student exhibits the targeted behavior. One may also use fixed interval schedules in which the timer is not reset until the time runs out.

Three cautions when considering using DRO: "first, because reinforcement is provided as a result of the *nonoccurrence* of a targeted inappropriate behavior, a specific appropriate behavior is not reinforced....Second, provision of reinforcement contingent on nonoccurrence of a targeted inappropriate behavior may lead to

inadvertent reinforcement of other inappropriate behaviors as well as appropriate behaviors. Last, under a DRO-reset schedule, the child may learn to exhibit the inappropriate behavior immediately after the timer is set and, after the timer is reset, still receive reinforcement at the end of each interval, even if the inappropriate behavior occurred" (Zirpoli & Melloy, 1993, p. 171).

**Differential Reinforcement of Alternative Behavior (DRA)**. DRA is the reinforcement of any behavior which makes it impossible for the targeted inappropriate behavior to occur. For example, a student who draws on her desk when bored may be reinforced for drawing on paper, playing a game, and helping classmates on seat work, since these behaviors can not be going on if the student is doodling on her desk - they are incompatible with doodling.

**Differential Reinforcement of Lower Rates of Behavior (DRL)**. DRL is the reinforcement of a behavior when exhibited at a lower frequency. Unlike DRO, DRA, and DRI, behavior reinforced via DRL is not in itself inappropriate; rather, the frequency at which it is occurring is inappropriate. For example, it would be inappropriate for a student to ask to use the restroom every fifteen minutes; however, this is not a behavior you would wish to cease. Instead, DRL is used to reinforce the behavior when it occurs, for example, once every hour.

**Differential Reinforcement of Higher Rates of Behavior (DRH)**. DRH is the reinforcement of a desired behavior as its occurrence increases. For example, prosocial comments such as "please" and "thank you" might be something the student knows but uses infrequently. With DRH, you reinforce the student for using these comments at a higher rate.

### ***How do I decide which schedule of reinforcement to implement?***

You must look at each student's individual abilities and desire to change, as well as the severity of the target behavior. If a student lashes out and hits people when angry, DRL would be an inappropriate schedule. The hitting must stop, and it is better to reinforce any other behavior which does not result in other individuals being injured. However, with a behavior like constant questioning, you do not want a student to stop asking questions but you would like the student to not ask so many questions. In this case, DRL would be very appropriate, while DRA would be less appropriate since this schedule is designed to bring about the cessation of a behavior.

Most importantly, with any change, it is critical that positive programming is coupled with behavior modification. This is necessary in order to teach the student new, appropriate behaviors. Please see the tip sheet entitled "Positive Programming."

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# Hostile-Aggressive Behavior...

## *preventing and dealing with challenging behavior*

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### ***Introduction***

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Students who are hostile-aggressive are encountered (and certainly dreaded) by just about every teacher. These are the students classically regarded as "problem students." They often have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, emotional or behavioral disorders, or are below grade level in achievement. They are capable of dominating and controlling others through intimidation and irrational, often explosive behavior. This tip sheet looks at the characteristics of the classic hostile-aggressive student, examines reasons for such behavior, and gives suggestions for dealing with such students.

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### ***How does the hostile-aggressive student act out?***

One can categorize the acting-out behavior of hostile-aggressive students into three general categories: verbal aggression, physical aggression, and vandalism. What distinguishes these behaviors as exhibited by the hostile-aggressive student is that they are done with intent to do harm, whether that be physical, emotional, or for revenge and retaliation.

Verbal aggression includes defiance, continuous arguing, cut-downs, threats, swearing, bossing, sarcasm, and teasing. Physical aggression can be exhibited as kicking, hitting, fighting, spitting, throwing materials with intent to do harm (either to a person or to objects, i.e., a window) and biting, among others. (Be sure to learn as much as you can about the student from his or her file as well as through observation; some of these behaviors could be a result of Tourette's Disorder.) Vandalism includes not only destruction or damage to property but theft as well.

### ***What causes students to behave this way?***

There are many theories as to what causes hostile-aggressive behavior in children. Several which are especially important to teachers are as follows:

**Modeling:** Children observe hostile-aggressive behavior modeled by parents, teachers, peers, and in the media. Threats from parents, yelled reprimands from teachers, and violence among peers and in the media are then mimicked by the child.

**Peer Reinforcement:** Behavior such as fighting is reinforced by peers when they take sides in or cheer for individuals who are fighting. This leads to an increase in hostile-aggressive behavior.

**Social Skills Deficit:** Children lack the social skills necessary to deal with stressful situations in an assertive rather than aggressive manner. Their repertoire of problem-solving skills is limited to aggression, so they use this to fulfill their needs.

**Low Self-Esteem:** The hostile-aggressive child acts out of anger. This reflects poor self-image and an identity of failure "resulting from an inability to satisfy two basic needs: giving and receiving love, and having a sense of worth" (Medick, p. 73, 1979). They believe that it is not all right to feel anger and frustration and think they are bad people when they do have these feelings. Their behavior has led to rejection by both adults and peers, which causes their self-esteem to further plummet.

### ***What causes conflict with the hostile-aggressive student to escalate?***

Student frustration triggers hostile-aggressive behavior. Frustration with others or oneself is dealt with through physical or verbal aggression or vandalism. With this behavior, the student gains negative attention from the teacher or peers. The teacher instinctively responds by reprimanding the student or asking him or her to cease the behavior which the student is using to gain attention.

This leads to the next phase of the cycle: student defensiveness. The student begins to lose control and will verbally lash out at the teacher, usually assuming the role of the victim ("You always pick on me," "Leave me alone," "I didn't do anything").

At this point, the teacher is probably angry, confused, and wants to re-establish that "the teacher is in control and will be listened to and obeyed at all costs." Through his or her hostile acts, the student has succeeded in getting the teacher to aggress.

The student will now begin to exhibit more hostile-aggressive behaviors until the teacher "lays down the law," which, although it ends the cycle, reinforces the student's belief that he or she is the victim and that adults unfairly take their anger out on students.

The teacher is left with feelings of failure, defeat, and confusion, while negative feelings toward the student are reinforced. This leads to the probability that the teacher will respond more quickly and angrily to the student in the future, reinforcing the student's behavior and leading to further deterioration of both student and teacher self-esteem.

### ***What are the typical teacher responses to these behaviors, and how do students react to these responses?***

Teachers typically respond in one of two ways: authoritatively or attempting to reason with the student. When teachers respond authoritatively, it is because they feel they have lost control over the situation. Reacting as an authoritarian figure, the teacher gives ultimatums: "You better do what I say or else." The hostile-aggressive student responds by acting as if he or she really does not care what the teacher says or does and continues hostile-aggressive behavior, whether physically or verbally: "I hate you! You can't make me do anything." The irony of this is that they are right. You can not make any student do anything. While reacting authoritatively is an understandable response from the teacher, it is simply ineffective.

The other way teachers typically respond is by attempting to reason with the hostile-aggressive student. They understand that the student's behavior is not a personal attack but indicative of an inferior ability to deal with emotions. This teacher attempts to explain with kindness and understanding what is really going on. However sincere these attempts are, they usually lead to circular arguments, dead ends, or resentment from the student. The teacher ends up expending huge amounts of energy and is left feeling frustrated and unsuccessful.

### ***How do I intervene with a hostile-aggressive student?***

Identify those behaviors which are inappropriate and perform a functional assessment. Doing an "A-B-C" (antecedent, behavior, consequence) chart can be very helpful in understanding what particular situations tend to set the student off.

Next, examine how you have been dealing with the behavior and evaluate what has been contributing to conflict and whether anything has de-escalated these situations in the past. Drop what is not working and identify any methods which are working. A good rule of thumb is if you are left feeling angry and out of control, your method is ineffective.

After you have evaluated the behavior of both the student and yourself, it is time to put together a proactive intervention plan. This includes outlining proactive behavior modification strategies, reinforcement plans, and teaching new functional behavior which will replace the student's inappropriate ways of dealing with emotion. It can be helpful to hold a conference with the student and, if possible, with the student's parents. Let the student know what is and is not acceptable and how you will help him or her to learn behavior which is appropriate. Using a cue when you sense the student's behavior is escalating can be helpful in teaching the student to be aware of his or her own behavior and to remind the student to use the appropriate behaviors which you have taught.

Stick to and periodically evaluate your intervention. Keep in mind that it took the student a long time to learn these behaviors and it will likely take a long time to replace them with others. Do not let yourself fall into old patterns of reacting angrily.

Let the student know you care about him or her. Make it a point to give the student some brief friendly attention each day. Give the student the opportunity to talk about feelings and give reinforcement. Give the student special responsibilities. This will show that while you do not appreciate his or her behavior, you do see him or her as a worthwhile and capable individual.

It is important that the student learn that it is okay to feel frustrated and angry and that there are acceptable ways of expressing these emotions.

### ***What proactive interventions are effective in changing hostile-aggressive behavior?***

**Positive reinforcement** is very important in improving the student's self-esteem and changing his or her self-perception. **Modeling** and **role-playing** help the student learn new behavior. **Token economies** can also be useful in motivating the student to change behavior. **Cooperative learning** gives students the opportunity to learn from their peers. **Self-monitoring** and **cuing** can help a student assume more responsibility for his or her behavior. (See tip sheets with respective titles.)

### ***How do I avoid being drawn into the conflict or get out of it once I recognize that it is going on?***

Remember, these tactics are only to help you avoid or get out of a conflict cycle. They alone will not ultimately change the student's behavior. To do this, you must perform a functional assessment and implement a long-term proactive intervention plan, including techniques such as those listed earlier.

First, you must learn to not allow yourself to be emotionally manipulated. Use self-talk to tell yourself, "I know what the student is doing and why. It is not a personal attack against me, and I will remain calm while trying to help the student."

When you recognize the student is becoming hostile, remember that this stems from frustration. The student needs support. Helping the student to recognize his or her emotions and giving the student the opportunity to deal with them effectively will help. You might have a quiet spot in the room where students can go when they feel that their emotions are getting the best of them.

If the cycle has not been stopped at the frustration stage, you will have to deal with the next stage: defensiveness. At this point, you will need to set limits for the student. For example, if the student has been verbally abusive to another student, you might establish limits in the context of a choice: "Lisa, you need to either quietly continue with your English assignment or put your head down on your desk until you are calm and ready to talk about this." You have defined the limits and left the decision up to the student. You have also stepped out of a conflict cycle by remaining calm.

If the student persists and becomes more aggressive, for example, by beginning to verbally abuse you, you need to provide control. Say, "Lisa, come with me," leave the room, and wait for her to follow. Do not give her the opportunity to argue with you and escalate the conflict further. When you are alone, you could tell her, "Your behavior is unacceptable. You can either come and sit quietly in the class or you can sit here in the hall until you are able to control yourself. Either way, I need to attend to the other students in the class. We will talk about this after you have demonstrated that you are in control by either sitting quietly here or in the classroom until I am ready to speak with you."

Once the student has regained control, you will want to take time to talk to her about what occurred and how you can both work to prevent it from happening again.

### ***How will I know that progress is being made in changing the student's behavior?***

The ultimate measure is the degree to which the student's behavior is maintained and generalized. The student may begin to behave acceptably in your classroom, but is he or she improving in other classrooms/situations? Often hostile-aggressive students see authority figures as deliberately waiting for them to mess up, as waiting to set them up for failure, and this view can hinder progress. It can be confronted by having a private conference

with the student. You may begin by talking about all the progress and positive change you have seen. Let the student know that you see that he or she can continue to have more and more success, but that this will be difficult if teachers, etc., are seen as enemies and treated suspiciously. Engage the student in a conversation about what generally happens to students (or people in general) who do and do not cooperate with teachers and other authority figures and rules. Remain calm and courteous so that you display the fact that you do care and that you do want the student to succeed. Finally, let the student know that it is up to him or her to decide whether to take this final step. Do not expect the student to make a decision then and there. It may take time, so continue to be caring and courteous, modeling a friendly authority figure.

Not every student will make that final leap and it is something which only the student can decide. Continue to be consistent in dealing with the student and do not hold yourself responsible for the student's decisions. Remember that there are many other areas in the student's life (home, friendship, etc.) which exert great influence over the student and over which you have no control.

One thing you can continue to do, no matter what, is to work with the student to build their self-esteem. This may help the student to choose to see authority figures as people who can help and to see him- or herself as worthy and entitled to this help. Positive reinforcement, being given special responsibilities in the classroom, and tutoring peers (see tip sheet entitled "Peer Tutoring") are all ways to help build student self-esteem.

### ***Other issues in dealing with hostile-aggressive students...***

First, as you get to know a student and he or she begins to make progress, there may be times when the student appears to be behaving in a hostile fashion, but closer observation reveals that he or she is following through with what has been requested. For example, Josh has knocked all of his books on the floor in frustration and you have said, "Josh, that is not acceptable behavior. If you want help, raise your hand. In the meantime, please pick up your books." Josh retorts, "You're always picking on me. I hate this stupid class and I hate you, too!" But you observe that Josh is, in fact, picking up his books. This is a time to ignore his outburst, let him pick up his books, cool off, and talk about it later.

Second, *never corner a student who is emotionally out of control*. Leave a student who is out of control with a large personal space and a way out of the room. Running out of the room is much more appropriate than hitting a teacher.

Finally, do not argue with students. Give choices and the option to discuss an incident later, but do not argue. These are not the same. Discussion leads to collaborative solutions while arguments lead to defensiveness.

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# Maintenance and Generalization...

## *behavior modification beyond the classroom*

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*This Intervention Tip Sheet has been developed to assist teachers and parents in providing the best possible educational opportunities to students with emotional and behavioral disorders. This Tip Sheet was published by the Institute on Community Integration, College of Education, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis and was authored by Kareen Smith of the Institute.*

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### ***Introduction***

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Behavior modification aims to change the antecedents and consequences of behavior to increase the likelihood of appropriate behavior and decrease inappropriate behavior. The ultimate goal of behavior modification is that changes in behavior persist after the intervention is terminated and that behavior change occurs outside of the environment within which behavior modification interventions are being carried out. These characteristics of a behavior intervention plan are referred to as maintenance and generalization, respectively. This guide should increase your understanding and appreciation of their importance, as well as provide guidelines to incorporate these aspects of behavior modification into your intervention plan.

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### ***Why do maintenance and generalization need to be programmed into an intervention plan?***

Very often, changes in behavior achieved through behavior modification techniques are not maintained after the intervention has ended. This is often because there has been no deliberate planning for how to end the initial intervention and still maintain the behavior. For example, a student who is reinforced with cookies for keeping his desk neat may stop cleaning his desk when cookies are withdrawn as a reinforcer.

Generalization is the degree to which a change in behavior will transfer to another setting or situation or the degree to which a behavior change program influences behaviors other than the target behavior. Generalization rarely happens spontaneously. For example, if you are teaching a student to raise her hand before speaking, you would like the student to display this behavior in appropriate situations other than your classroom. For this reason, generalization must be planned as part of the intervention.

### ***How do I begin to incorporate goals of maintenance and generalization into my intervention plan?***

Zirpoli and Melloy (1993, p. 192) give the following guidelines for consideration when implementing maintenance and generalization:

- Teach desired behaviors, whether they are social or academic, within the natural setting where they should occur.
- Employ a variety of caregivers for training (for example, several teachers, parents, peers). This decreases the probability that the behavior will become situation-specific.
- Train in a variety of settings. If you must use a pull-out setting, establish some training within the setting in which you want the behavior to occur.
- Shift from artificial means of controlling the behavior (for example, tokens, prompts, or cues) to natural controls (praise, better grades, more classroom privileges). This can be accomplished by pairing natural with artificial controls and gradually decreasing (fading) the artificial controls as soon as possible.
- Shift from continuous to intermittent and from fixed to variable schedules of reinforcement (see tip sheet entitled "Schedules of Reinforcement").

- Gradually introduce delays in the delivery of reinforcement in accordance with delays occurring in the natural environment. For example, increase the amount of time between the intervals at which a student can exchange tokens. (Make sure the student knows when he or she will receive the reinforcement.)
- Reinforce students when you see them maintaining and generalizing appropriate behavior.

Other guidelines in fostering maintenance and generalization are included in Kerr and Nelson's (1989, p. 361) discussion:

- Teach behaviors that are likely to be naturally reinforced, i.e., social skills which are likely to elicit positive reinforcement from peers.
- Make sure the student becomes proficient at the skill or behavior; otherwise, reinforcement will be inconsistent and the skill is not likely to be maintained.
- Modify environments that support maladaptive behavior. For example, if off-task behavior is encouraged by city workers visible through the window, keep the shades shut or arrange student seating so as to avoid distraction.

***With these guidelines, what are the critical considerations when designing behavioral maintenance and generalization goals and objectives?***

Always consider the following when developing behavioral goals and objectives (Rutherford & Nelson, 1988):

- 1) Will desired behavior changes persist when students leave the structured, highly controlled training settings?
- 2) Will students exhibit newly learned behaviors in nontraining settings in the presence of other teachers or peers, and over time?
- 3) Will learning new skills facilitate the acquisition of similar behaviors which were not targeted for training in the original setting? For example, learning to wait in line for one's turn may help facilitate the student in learning to wait to be called on when raising his or her hand.

When the goals of maintenance and generalization are systematically included in behavioral interventions, the probability of success is increased. The questions listed above, while not a template for intervention design, should always be considered.

Finally, after an intervention is concluded, follow-up assessment is necessary in order to make a determination about whether a behavior is being maintained and generalized. Such assessment can include the use of behavioral rating scales and interviews with teachers and parents. If a behavior is not maintained or generalized, it may be necessary to provide some additional reinforcement.

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# Modeling...

## *a proactive intervention for the classroom*

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### ***Introduction***

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Role models are important to human development. When a person consciously exhibits specific behavior in the hope that it will be imitated, this is referred to as "modeling." This guide explains the principles of modeling and the conditions under which it can be expected to be an effective intervention.

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### ***What is the foundation of modeling?***

The research of Albert Bandura supports his hypothesis that behavior is strengthened, weakened, or maintained by the modeling of behavior by others. When a person imitates the behavior of another, modeling has taken place. It is a kind of vicarious learning by which direct instruction does not necessarily occur (although it may be a part of the process). For example, an athlete's violent outbursts on the football field can serve as a model which a high school player might imitate, although the high school player is not being directly instructed on how to have a violent outburst. On the other hand, a parent can serve as a model for downhill skiing by showing interest and enjoyment in the sport, and through the child watching the parent, successfully master the slopes while also providing his or her child with direct instruction on the techniques of downhill skiing.

### ***Who will serve as an effective model?***

The two most important factors which contribute to model effectiveness are the importance or prestige of the model and the model's similarity to the student. As a teacher you have much prestige in the classroom and you will serve as a model, whether or not this is conscious on your part. Peers also serve as effective models due to similarity. Depending on their prestige in the classroom, peer models can be very powerful.

Models do not have to be "live." People on television-puppets and cartoon characters-can, and do, serve as models. Prosocial T.V. shows such as Sesame Street and Mister Rogers all serve to model appropriate behavior, just as violent shows are often cited as models for inappropriate behavior.

### ***What kinds of behaviors can be modeled?***

Just about any type of behavior can be modeled. Modeling has been shown to be especially effective in the development of social skills (i.e., saying "please" and "thank you," helping others, etc.), appropriate classroom behavior (i.e., staying on task, working quietly), and work skills (i.e., punctuality, taking initiative).

Remember that inappropriate behavior can also be modeled. Peers often serve as such models; throwing spitballs, cheating, and name calling are often modeled by students. Adults, too, often serve as models for inappropriate or undesirable behavior, such as swearing and smoking. For this reason it is very important that you view yourself as a model whenever you are around students, whether or not modeling is your intent.

Some examples of modeling are:

- keeping your desk neat as a model for your students,
- not interrupting students or adults,
- apologizing when appropriate,
- not eating or drinking during classtime if this is not permitted for students,

- giving instruction for written work (arithmetic or writing) on an overhead or blackboard so that students can see how their assignments should look,
- making "I" statements (i.e., I feel bad when you talk while I am teaching class).

There is an unlimited number of examples of modeling; these are just a few common examples.

### ***What makes modeling an effective intervention?***

As already stated, the prestige and similarity of the model are what makes him or her potentially effective. What serves most to make it effective, however, is reinforcement. This can occur in one of two ways. First, a student can be directly reinforced for modeling appropriate behavior. When you observe a student imitating another's desired behavior and reinforce this (see guide entitled "positive reinforcement"), you increase the likelihood that the behavior will be repeated. Similarly, you must be careful not to reinforce imitation of undesirable behavior.

The second way reinforcement can be delivered is vicariously. For example, when a teacher says, "My goodness, Chris, you sure are working hard today. Your work is coming along very nicely," not only is Chris being reinforced, but other students, for whom praise is reinforcing, are likely to imitate this behavior in order to receive reinforcement themselves.

In the same vein, modeling can decrease behaviors. When you redirect a student from an inappropriate to an appropriate behavior, other students learn through their peer model what is unacceptable behavior.

### ***How do I make a big impact and achieve long-lasting effects with modeling?***

Modeling is easy to use, is widespread, and is one of the oldest methods of changing behavior. However, modeling alone has not been shown to have a big impact or to have long-lasting effects. It can be made a much more effective intervention if used in conjunction with another behavioral intervention.

The preceding example of reinforcement is one way which has been shown to make modeling a successful reinforcement. Other interventions which can successfully be paired with modeling are shaping, cuing, cooperative learning and token economies (*please see tip sheets entitled "Positive Reinforcement," "Cuing," "Shaping," Cooperative Learning," and "Token Economies"*).

Most importantly, though, remember that you always serve as a model. Students watch how you behave, and what they observe shapes their understanding of what is and is not acceptable. They observe how you interact with others, how you deal with conflict, and how you deal with making mistakes and apologies. These are perhaps the most important things you model to your students, as they are ongoing behaviors and are not always consciously exhibited.

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# **Passive Aggressive Behavior...**

## ***preventing and dealing with challenging behavior***

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### ***Introduction***

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Of all the particular types of behavior profiles which exist in students, passive-aggressive behavior is one which has most certainly led many teachers to their wit's end. This tip sheet looks at the characteristics of the passive-aggressive student, breaks down the process of how and why passive-aggressive behavior escalates, and offers suggestions for dealing effectively with passive-aggressive behavior.

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### ***What characterizes the passive-aggressive student?***

Most teachers could, no doubt, describe the characteristics of a passive-aggressive student who has driven them to distraction. The first time a teacher encounters a passive-aggressive student, he or she often does not understand why the student frustrates him or her so much. However, once the teacher starts to recognize the manipulative behavior of the student, it will be possible to begin to effectively help the student to change his or her behavior.

Passive-aggressive students deal with their anger and frustration by eliciting these feelings in others, thereby appearing to be the victim of the other's irrational behavior. Typical characteristics of the passive-aggressive student are:

- passive listening: hearing only what they want
- slow-motion: moving very slowly when asked to go somewhere or complete a task
- purposeful forgetting
- "accidental" destruction
- frequently out of seat
- frequent behavior which is either inappropriate or exhibited at the wrong time
- cruel cut-downs
- constant complaining
- incomplete work if not constantly nagged

### ***How do these behaviors compare between passive-aggressive and other students?***

The passive-aggressive student exhibits these behaviors generally for two reasons: attention or expressing anger. During the student's development, he or she was either not given attention for appropriate behavior or was not taught ways of gaining attention through appropriate behavior or expressing anger effectively. Therefore, the student learned that attention could be effectively gained by annoying and provoking others in indirect ways "while appearing to be proper, polite, sorry, and confused by the teacher's behavior" (Berres & Long, 1979).

While the student's behavior at first glance may appear to be an attempt to avoid and escape tasks or activities, a closer examination of the behavior will reveal that it is the conflict resulting from the behavior which drives the student. It is that attention received from teachers and peers which reinforces the student's behavior, not the prospect of avoiding or escaping a disliked activity.

### ***Why does the student seek attention in this manner?***

As previously stated, the student has likely learned, over the course of his or her life, that he or she can quickly gain attention through this behavior. He or she was probably not reinforced for appropriate behavior and likely lacks the skills necessary to elicit positive attention.

Another reason students exhibit this behavior is that they lack self-esteem. They underestimate their potential, *as do their teachers and peers*. This negative perception is reinforced every time they behave in this manner. This leads to more negative perception by self and others, which continues the downward spiral.

Furthermore, passive-aggressive students may feel that it is not okay for them to express feelings of frustration and anger, which leads them to vent these feelings by manipulating and controlling other's emotions (something which they may very well have learned from someone else). These students "do not accept their own aggressive feelings, yet have a need to 'best' authority figures" (Beck, 1985).

### ***What triggers passive-aggressive behavior and how does it escalate into conflict?***

Student frustration triggers passive-aggressive behavior. Whether it is frustration with others or self, the student will begin to express this emotion indirectly by swearing, fidgeting, ripping up assignments, making noises, etc. The student wants the feeling to go away but does not know how to elicit positive attention, and, therefore, gets attention the quickest way that he or she knows how.

The student has now succeeded in gaining the attention of the teacher by annoying him or her. The teacher instinctively responds by reprimanding the student or asking him or her to cease the behavior which the student is using to gain attention.

This leads to the next phase of the cycle: student defensiveness. Although the student has gained attention he or she still feels pretty lousy and is not only frustrated but also angry. The student begins to lose control and verbally lashes out at the teacher, usually assuming the role of the victim: "You always pick on me," "Leave me alone," "I didn't do anything."

At this point, the teacher is probably angry, confused, and wants to re-establish that "the teacher is in control and will be listened to and obeyed at all costs." Through his or her "passive" acts, the student has succeeded in getting the teacher to aggress.

The student will now begin to exhibit more passive-aggressive behaviors until the teacher "lays down the law," which, although it is what ultimately ends the cycle, is what reinforces the student's belief that he or she is the victim and that adults unfairly take their anger out on students. The student and teacher reestablish some modicum of self-control. The teacher is left with feelings of failure, defeat, and confusion, while his or her negative feelings toward the student are, if not understood, reinforced. This leads to the probability that the teacher will respond more quickly and angrily to the student in the future, reinforcing the student's passive-aggressive behavior and leading to further deterioration of both student and teacher self-esteem.

### ***How do I intervene with a passive-aggressive student?***

Identify those behaviors which are inappropriate and perform a functional assessment. The functional assessment should indicate that the behavior is being reinforced by the delivery of attention to the student by others. *If the functional assessment does not indicate attention as being the motivating factor, you need to reevaluate whether the student is really passive-aggressive.*

After this, you need to look at your behavior. Specifically, examine how you have been dealing with the behavior, and evaluate whether your actions have contributed to the conflict and whether anything has seemed to de-escalate situations. One good reflection of what works and does not work are your feelings after a conflict. If you end up feeling helpless, powerless, angry, and confused, your methods have not worked and you should change them. If you end up feeling calm, the student has regained composure and you believe that they may have learned something to help improve behavior, your methods are an effective way of dealing with the student. In short, drop what is not working and identify methods which are working.

Next, make a list of those student behaviors which annoy you the most. Target the top three to five first. Along with this list, make another which outlines alternative behaviors which you would find acceptable. For example, if the functional assessment reveals that the student throws paper clips and taps her pencil after 10 or 15 minutes during which you have not interacted with her, you may list coming up to your desk or raising her hand as being a behavior you would find acceptable.

You also need to find a way to keep yourself emotionally calm and to protect yourself from being manipulated by the student when he or she begins to display these behaviors. Decide on several proactive interventions to use in teaching the student to change his or her behavior.

It can also be helpful to hold a conference with the student and, if possible, with the student's parents. Let the student know what is and is not acceptable and how you will help him or her to learn to behave appropriately.

Stick to and periodically evaluate your intervention. Keep in mind that it took the student a long time to learn these behaviors and it will likely take a long time to replace them with others. Do not let yourself fall into old patterns of reacting angrily.

Let the student know you care about him or her. Make it a point to give the student some brief friendly attention each day. Give the student the opportunity to talk about his or her feelings and provide reinforcement. Give the student special responsibilities and ensure that he or she knows what the expectations are by asking how the task will be completed. For example, if you ask the student to bring the roll call to the office ask, "How long do you think this should take you?", "Is it necessary to stop anywhere along the way (i.e., bathroom, other classrooms)?" This helps define and organize the task for the student, promoting success. Finally, reinforce all appropriate and thoughtful behavior, all appropriate bids for attention, and all acceptable expressions of anger and frustration.

It is important that the student learn that it is okay to feel frustrated and angry and that there are acceptable ways of expressing feelings. Furthermore, it is important to build the student's self-esteem by reinforcing him or her and encouraging the student to reinforce him or herself.

### ***What proactive interventions are effective in changing passive-aggressive behavior?***

**Positive reinforcement** is very important in improving the student's self-esteem and changing his or her self-perception. **Modeling** helps the student learn new behavior. **Token economies** can also be useful in motivating the student to change behavior. **Cooperative learning** gives student's the opportunity to learn from their peers. **Self-monitoring** can help a student assume more responsibility for his or her behavior. (See tip sheets with respective titles.)

### ***How do I avoid being drawn into a conflict or get out of it once I recognize it?***

Remember, these tactics are only to help you avoid or get out of a conflict cycle. They alone will not ultimately change the student's behavior. In order to do this, it is imperative that you perform a functional assessment and implement a long-term, proactive intervention plan, including techniques such as those listed earlier.

First, you must learn to not allow yourself to be manipulated emotionally. Once you have been emotionally drawn in by the passive-aggressive student, it is very difficult to regain composure. Use self-talk to tell yourself, "I know what the student is doing and why. It is not a personal attack against me, and I will remain calm while trying to help the student."

When you recognize the student displaying annoying, attention-seeking behavior, remember that this stems from frustration. The student needs support. If a student is working on a math assignment, you might approach the student by saying, "Ripping up math papers is not acceptable, John. Let's get you another and I'll sit down with you and we can work on it together." In this way, you are letting the student know that you do not accept his or her behavior but you are not nagging. You are also letting the student know that you care and want to help.

If the cycle has not been stopped at the frustration stage, you will have to deal with the next stage: defensiveness. At this point the teacher will need to set limits for the student. For example, if John refused to cooperate in getting another math paper and accepting assistance by stating, "Leave me alone, I don't need your help," the teacher might state, "Your math work needs to be completed. You may do it with or without me, but you need to get your math sheets, sit down, and work on them quietly. If you reach something you don't understand, you will raise your hand and ask me for help." In this case, you have defined the limits and left the decision up to the student as to whether he will or will not follow your instructions. You have also stepped out of a conflict cycle by remaining calm.

If the student persists and becomes passive-aggressive, the teacher needs to provide control. For example, if John gets a stack of math papers and proceeds to sit at his desk and loudly scribble on them, you might calmly say, "John, come with me," leave the room, and wait for him to follow. Do not give him the opportunity to argue with you and gain peer attention by waiting in the room. When you are alone, you could tell him, "Your behavior is unacceptable. You can either come and sit quietly in the class or you can sit here in the hall until you are able to control yourself. Either way, I need to attend to the other students in the class. We will talk about this after you show that you are in control by either sitting quietly here or in the classroom until I am ready to speak with you." The interaction is brief and should not reinforce the student's inappropriate behavior. It lets the student know that attention will be given for appropriate behavior.

### ***How will I know that progress is being made to change the student's behavior?***

The ultimate measure is the degree to which the student's behavior is maintained and generalized. The student may begin to behave acceptably in your classroom, but is he or she improving in other classrooms/situations? More often than not, passive-aggressive students see authority figures as the enemy. This can be confronted by having a private conference with the student. You may begin by talking about all the progress and positive change you have seen. Let him or her know that you see that he or she can continue to have more and more success, but that this will be difficult if teachers, etc., are seen as enemies and treated suspiciously. Engage the student in a conversation about what generally happens to students (or people in general) who do and do not cooperate with teachers and other authority figures and rules. Remain calm and courteous so that you display that you do care and that you do want the student to succeed. Finally, let the student know that it is up to him or her to decide which way they will deal with this final step. Do not expect the student to make a decision then and there. It may take time, so continue to be caring and courteous, modeling a friendly authority figure.

Not every student will make that final leap and it is, indeed, something which the student must decide for him or herself. Continue to be consistent with the student and do not hold yourself responsible for the student's decisions. Remember that there are many other areas in the student's life (home, friendships, etc.) which exert great influence over the student and over which you have no control.

One thing you can continue to do, no matter what, is to continue working with the student to build his or her self-esteem. This may help the student to choose to see authority figures as people who can help and to see him or herself as worthy and entitled to this help. Positive reinforcement, being given special responsibilities in the classroom, and tutoring peers (*see tip sheet entitled "Peer Tutoring"*) are all ways to help build student self-esteem.

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# Peer Tutoring...

## *a proactive intervention for the classroom*

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### ***Introduction***

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Peer tutoring is an organized learning experience in which one student serves as the teacher or tutor, and one is the learner or tutee. It gives students an opportunity to use their knowledge in a meaningful, social experience (Conrad, 1974). Tutors reinforce their own learning by reviewing and reformulating their knowledge. Tutees gain one-on-one attention. Both tutors and tutees gain self-confidence (Howard et al., 1986), the tutor by seeing self-competence in his or her ability to help someone and the tutee by receiving positive reinforcement from peers.

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### ***Who should be a tutor?***

All students with some level of responsibility should be given the opportunity to be tutors. Research has shown that the achievement level of the tutor does not matter in terms of tutee gains (Conrad, 1974).

### ***How do I train tutors?***

In order to have a successful peer-tutoring program, tutors do need to be trained. Basing a tutor-training program on the following method has been shown to produce effective peer-tutors:

**Positive verbal feedback:** Teach your tutors the importance of positive verbal feedback. Prompt students to come up with a list of standard statements which they feel may be positively reinforcing. They also need to be taught how much positive feedback to give. Giving feedback after each and every response can take too much time and diminish its effect. Teach tutors to give genuine praise after every third or fourth correct response and after particularly difficult problems. Make sure to have them practice.

**Corrective feedback:** Teach your tutors how to respond when an incorrect answer is given. When an incorrect answer is given, the tutor should promptly give and explain the correct answer *without being critical of the tutee*, and then give the tutee an opportunity to repeat the correct answer.

**Modeling by you, the teacher:** Model these behaviors for the tutors-in-training. Give correct and incorrect examples of how to give positive and corrective feedback. This is a good opportunity for the tutors to ask any questions they may have.

**Role-playing between teacher and tutors:** Role- play the tutoring process with each tutor, alternately playing the role of both tutor and tutee. This is a good time for those observing to practice using their positive and corrective feedback knowledge, to give suggestions, and to share any ideas for improvement.

**Role-playing between students:** This is identical to the role-playing between teacher and tutors except that, in this step, the teacher observes and coaches tutors.

### ***How do I initiate peer-tutoring?***

Tutor-training, including those components listed above, should take place over several sessions so that the tutors have plenty of opportunity to practice and begin to feel comfortable. It will probably also be necessary to provide assistance during the onset of tutoring.

It is important that the tutor is trained specifically for each type of activity or topic they will be tutoring. The tutor should understand, for example, how to use the flashcards, what the rules of the game are, or other activity specific knowledge.

### ***What are some ideas for using peer-tutoring?***

Peer tutoring is most effective with drill and practice activities rather than with the introduction of new information. With this in mind, the following are some ideas for implementing peer tutoring:

#### Reading:

- reading books together
- sight word practice (i.e., flashcards)
- writing a story together
- completing reading comprehension tasks together

#### Math:

- practice math flash cards
- solve word problems together
- seriation tasks (tasks which involve a series of steps)

Just about any kind of seat work can be worked on in tutor-tutee pairs. With a little creativity on the part of both teachers and students, games and activities can be adapted to learning tasks for tutors and tutees.

### ***Should I monitor progress?***

Monitoring the effectiveness and productivity of tutoring sessions is necessary in motivating students. This can be accomplished by quizzing students on the material they have covered, having them turn in their work, or having students monitor themselves, for example, by having the tutor keep track of correct and incorrect answers by making marks on a card. The results from each monitoring card from a tutoring session can then be used to fill in a progress chart which, over time, will be an indicator of progress.

### ***How should I deliver reinforcement?***

Reinforcers should be given to reward productive tutoring sessions and to motivate students. The reinforcement schedule can be based on the amount of work completed and how much of that is completed correctly; student self-monitoring cards can be very useful in keeping track of this aspect of the program. It is important to distribute reinforcers equally to both the tutor and tutee, whether they are edibles or a preferred activity for the student.

### ***Final points on peer-tutoring...***

Not all tutor-tutee pairs will work well together. And, while pairs may need to be changed, it is not necessary that they are homogeneous. Students can benefit socially from a partner who has a different gender, ethnicity, age, etc. Not every method will work for every student in every situation.

While peer-tutoring can not replace direct teacher instruction, it is a tool which can strongly enhance the students' overall achievement. In addition, it is inexpensive and relatively easy to implement.

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# Physical Restraint...

## *an emergency procedure*

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*This Tip Sheet has been developed to assist teachers and parents in providing the best possible educational opportunities to students with emotional and behavioral disorders. This Tip Sheet was published by the Institute on Community Integration, College of Education, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis and was authored by Kareen Smith of the Institute.*

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### **Introduction**

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Physical restraint is a procedure with which a person uses his or her body to effectively and immediately control or immobilize another. It may sometimes be necessary to physically restrain a student in order to protect the safety of staff and students.

It is also a procedure which has often been misapplied and overused, and it has led to lawsuits contending the violation of student constitutional rights. For these reasons, it is important to examine the risks of physical restraint, to establish when it is or is not appropriate, and how the need for it can be prevented.

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### ***What is the appropriate use of physical restraint?***

The only appropriate use of physical restraint when working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders is to prevent a student from injuring him- or herself or others, or from damaging valuable property. It should be used only for protection. For example, if an angry student begins to physically assault another student or attempts to knock over a television-VCR stand, physical restraint would be appropriate. When it is used for these reasons, it should be done in a way that calms the student and does not frighten or hurt him or her (Stone, 1990).

It is important that a student be given every opportunity to control his or her own behavior before physical restraint is used. Schloss and Smith (1987) give the following steps to be followed before resorting to physical restraint:

- "(a) verbally instruct the student to engage in nonaggressive behavior;
- (b) if the student remains in an aggressive posture 3 seconds after the verbal prompt, provide a gentle manual prompt (e.g., softly press against the learner's shoulder) and repeat the verbal prompt;
- (c) if after 3 additional seconds the student is still in an aggressive posture, physically direct him/her to a safe area using accepted manual restraint techniques;
- (d) once restrained in the safe area, provide frequent verbal cues indicating "I can let go of you when you are relaxed;"
- (e) once the student has remained relaxed for 3 minutes, the educator should gradually relinquish physical control and proceed in educational and therapeutic aspects of the behavior management program.

If the student's behavior escalates so rapidly that waiting 3 seconds between steps would be hazardous, manual restraint should be used immediately."

It is also very important for the teacher to maintain a calm and impartial manner when this procedure is undertaken. Research has shown that this facilitates the efficacy of physical restraint, while using a harsh tone, threatening, or using excessive force causes escalation of aggression (Schloss & Smith, 1987).

### ***When should physical restraint not be used?***

First and foremost, physical restraint should not be used by anyone who has not been formally trained in its proper and effective implementation specific to dealing with students.

Second, it should not be used simply for convenience when dealing with challenging behavior. For example, if Choua asks Josh to sit down so that he can see the filmstrip and Josh refuses to sit down and starts verbally

attacking Choua, physical restraint would not be appropriate. As long as neither Choua, Josh, nor any equipment in the room is in danger, there is a better way to deal with the situation. Although restraint may seem like a more efficacious intervention, it will not teach Josh anything except that others will control his behavior, and it is likely to incite more anger from him.

Finally, physical restraint should not be used as a substitute for meaningful programming. Any challenging behavior, violent or not, will only change if a student learns behaviors which are appropriate and effective for meeting his or her needs. Mastering desirable behaviors and eliminating others is effectively facilitated with behavior modification. (*See tip sheets entitled "Positive Programming" and "Positive Reinforcement."*)

### ***What are the risks of using physical restraint?***

While physical restraint might initially seem like an effective and relatively easy way to stop an out-of-control student, it is not. There are many risks involved with using physical restraint. One of the most obvious is that of injury, to both the out-of-control student and to the person performing the restraint. Even if a student is small, someone who is out of control can exhibit uncharacteristic strength.

Another risk is that physical restraint can actually cause an increase in violent behavior. Some students may find it reinforcing to be restrained by a teacher. They may find the struggle helps them vent their emotions or they may simply enjoy being the center of attention. For these reasons, it is very important to assess the reasons which may be behind a student's aggression. (*See tip sheet entitled "Positive Reinforcement."*)

A final risk is the possibility of legal recourse. Historically physical restraint has been overused and abused (Morgan & Jensen, 1988). If a student or a student's parents feel that the use of physical restraint was excessive or inappropriate, they may, as others have, take legal action against a teacher and a school.

### ***What are the potential effects of physical restraint?***

Physical restraint can have long-lasting negative effects on both the student and the teacher. As previously explained, it can actually serve to reinforce undesirable behavior in the student. On the other hand, the quick cessation of undesirable student behaviors can reinforce the teacher to use it more often and with greater intensity.

Increased student/teacher tension between the teacher and all students can also result. Students seeing a teacher implement physical restraint may not feel that they can trust that teacher and may not feel safe when in his or her classroom. A teacher's tension may increase in anticipation to having to implement physical restraint and the teacher may begin to experience high levels of stress in the classroom from using this aversive procedure.

### ***What should precede the use of physical restraint?***

The most important thing which should take place before implementing physical restraint is professional training and guided practice. This is imperative even if you doubt that you will ever need to implement it or and even if you are already trained in some other form of self-defense.

Before ever using physical restraint, you need to form a plan for your classroom and make sure that your students know and understand this plan. This is something which is often overlooked and is very important, especially when working with older students who can be very difficult to control. Develop a plan for obtaining assistance from another adult. This may involve sending a student to get a specific teacher in a nearby classroom or having a student call the office on the phone or intercom. Make sure that you have worked out your plan with the designated adult ahead of time so that they will know why they are being summoned, will what to do, and will respond quickly. Also, make sure there is a back-up person in case one adult is gone.

Also, in case it is necessary that the rest of your students leave the room, make sure you have an evacuation plan. The students should know where they are supposed to go and be able to get there quickly. You may make a reciprocal agreement with a neighboring teacher that your students will go to his or her room in case of emergency and vice versa. This way, your students are being supervised and you do not need to worry about further problems arising.

### ***What should I do when violence seems imminent?***

First, put your plan into action. Then move anything which may be used as a weapon (chairs, books, pencils, etc.) away from the student. Consider whether it is necessary for the other students to leave the room. Make sure that the student has about three feet of space around him or her and that he or she is not cornered. A student who feels caged is much more likely to attack. Furthermore, make sure that the student has an escape route. If you stand between the student and escape, he or she may do whatever is necessary to access that escape.

When approaching a student who is upset, Hughes (1985) recommends taking the following steps:

1. Assume a nonthreatening posture. Keep your hands in front of your body and free in case you need to block a punch if the student does attack.
2. Speak in a soothing voice, calling the student by name. Tell the student what you want him or her to do and do not lie to the student about what you will or will not do.
3. Approach the upset student slowly, from the front and slightly to one side. Leave the student personal space, maintain eye contact, and speak softly.

### ***Where can I get more information and training in the use of physical restraint?***

It is very important for all staff to have formal training from professional trainers so that if physical restraint ever is necessary, everyone is comfortable and confident in using it properly. Contact your school district office or your district's special education office to find out if inservice training is provided. Other resources include:

National Crisis Prevention Institute, Inc.  
3315-K North 1245h Street  
Brookfield, WI 53005  
1-800-558-8976

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# Positive Classroom Environment and Student-Teacher Rapport...

## *preventing challenging behavior in the classroom*

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### **Introduction**

While not every student will like you (nor will you like every student) the more students with whom you have a positive rapport the easier your job will be. This means it is necessary to show students that you respect and care about them. This tip sheet examines three vital components involved in developing a positive rapport with your students: communication, the teacher as model, and positive expectations.

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### **Communication - how does it affect rapport with students?**

Every communicator plays two roles: sender and receiver. How you say things to people affects how they respond to you. A tone dripping with sarcasm or belting out a command will cause the receiver to respond much differently than a tone which conveys empathy and sincerity. These are qualities of "sending."

"Receiving" refers to how we respond to someone who is attempting to transmit information. Do we continue the task at hand without looking up or do we stop, look the person in the eye and nod and ask questions when appropriate? These skills will determine how open lines of communication remain.

### **How do I develop effective sending skills?**

You will be most effective with your students if you first begin by **dealing in the present**. While it is important to document patterns and to give specifics of behavior, bringing up events from the past when dealing with a potential conflict will only cause students to become defensive.

It is also important to **talk directly to the student**. This shows respect and helps the student to take responsibility for behavior, whether it is inappropriate behavior or positive progress. Talking first (or only) to parents or other staff sends a signal to the student that you do not respect his or her privacy and that you do not think that he or she is capable of taking responsibility or credit for behavior independently.

Being **courteous** is also very important. This includes giving students your full attention when you are talking or listening to them as well as saying "please." "thank you." "excuse me." and so forth.

Using **"I" statements** is very important in communicating effectively with students. "I" statements convey how the consequences of a student's behavior make you feel. They put emphasis on the student's behavior rather than on the student.

Consider the following example. During history instruction, Jake is turning around in his seat talking to classmates behind him. The teacher stops talking, looks at Jake and says loudly, "Jake, can't you ever be quiet? You are constantly interrupting me and I'm not going to take it anymore!" Jake likely feels angry, humiliated, and defensive. The teacher could instead calmly say, "It is frustrating to me when students whisper while I am trying to teach. It distracts me and makes me feel disrespected. I would appreciate it if private conversations could wait until later." If Jake did not respond to this cue, the teacher could take him aside and say, "Jake, it makes me feel frustrated when you whisper during my lecture. I lose my concentration and am less effective in my teaching." Here the teacher is drawing Jake's attention to his behavior and challenging him to take responsibility for it. She is

not attacking him and she is avoiding embarrassing him by taking him aside. Students are far more likely to respond positively to this type of communication.

**Feedback** also helps cultivate positive rapport. Specific, nonjudgmental comments about student behavior, both appropriate and inappropriate, communicate to students that they are responsible for and in control of their behavior. Avoid comparing students. Feedback must be contingent upon behavior, which means it is dependent upon and immediately following it. It should also specifically describe the behavior being evaluated. The preceding example of the "I" statement applies here.

This is also important in giving praise. Students are often told that they are good at something rather than that their hard work and determination have resulted in success. It is important that students attribute success and failure to factors under their control. For example, "Sheila, this is excellent work. It shows that you worked very hard on this assignment and put a lot of thought into it. You should be very pleased with the result. I am very pleased."

Judging when to use **questions versus statements** is also important. There are many situations when it is tempting to use statements when a question may be more appropriate. For example, Durand has come in late for the third time in two weeks, interrupting your lecture. Up to this point, you have not made an issue of it, but now you are very frustrated at having been disrupted. It would be very easy to say, "If you come to class late again, you'll be spending your lunch period with me doing extra work." This is likely to humiliate Durand and make him angry. It would be much more productive to ask Durand, "This is the third time you have been late. What's going on?" You might find out that he has been running errands for another teacher who was unaware that this was causing him to be late or that he has to help get his little brothers and sisters ready for school and this is causing him to be late. Even if there is not a good reason, you have communicated to him that he has the opportunity to explain himself and that you can work together to come up with a solution.

At other times, statements might be more appropriate. There are some questions which students have a difficult time answering, especially in front of their peers. If you and Karen both know that she is typically five minutes late to class because she stands in the hall and talks to her friends, asking her why she is always late will probably only lead to anger and defensiveness. In such a case, taking Karen aside and making a statement such as, "Karen, it disrupts my class when you come in late. I need you to come into the room when the first bell rings" may be more appropriate. If you notice that a student appears extremely angry or embarrassed about something, asking how he or she feels will also probably be unproductive. It is probably better to suggest that he or she go work at the computer or give an errand to run to relieve him or her of an uncomfortable situation.

Finally, making **positive statements** is very important. The bulk of research shows that teachers make far more negative than positive statements. Research also shows that an increase in positive statements can lead to a decrease in negative behavior. Again, it is important that these comments are contingent upon positive behavior and are specific and credible.

### ***How do I become a skilled receiver?***

Being a skilled receiver means being an active listener. First and foremost, you need to practice being an empathic, nonjudgmental listener. This is very important in keeping lines of communication open. Even if you do not agree with or approve of what a student is telling you, the important thing is that they are communicating with you. You do not want to discourage this communication.

By giving the student your full attention, nodding, saying "M-hm," "Yes," paraphrasing, and asking questions, you let a student know that it is okay to talk about feelings which may be uncomfortable. Also, you give the student an opportunity to reexamine and clarify their options for dealing with the situation.

### ***My role as a model: How can it affect my rapport with students?***

First, by improving your communication skills in the ways listed above, you serve as a very important model for students who are developing their own methods of communication.

By modeling the behavior you want students to imitate at the very beginning of the year, you portray yourself as caring, competent, and possessed of clear expectations for your students. This can make the first few days of

school, which are often very uncomfortable for students, much more bearable. This also pertains to students who come into your class after the beginning of the year. Taking extra time with them to explain classroom expectations and to get to know them a little can make their transition much smoother.

### ***Expectations: How can they help develop positive rapport?***

Having positive expectations for all students is very important. Teacher expectations and evaluations are directly linked to achievement. No matter the skill level or natural ability of the student, all students have the ability and desire to succeed. Despite different expectations for different students, all students are entitled to your help, attention, and feedback. Be careful not to communicate otherwise by seating less able students at the back of the room or eliciting participation only from those students who wildly raise their hands and invariably have the correct answer.

Giving students cues, prompting, and giving time to think of an answer are all signals to the student that you have positive expectations for them. Research reveals that the majority of teachers only wait one second for a response before calling on another student. Monitor yourself. Give students five seconds and if they are unable to answer, prompt them. Encourage nonparticipants by asking them questions you know they can answer. These teacher behaviors communicate to students that each and every one of them is valuable and can succeed.

### ***What activities can help establish positive rapport with my students?***

Jones and Jones (1986) list many activities for developing a positive rapport with students. Several of these are as follows:

**Eating lunch with students.** Many students find it reinforcing to be allowed to bring a friend and eat in the classroom with the teacher. The lunchroom is stressful and chaotic to students as well as teachers. Having a sign-up sheet for students who would enjoy eating lunch with you in the room gives you an opportunity to step out of the "teacher" role and to get to know your students on a more personal level. (Some students might be motivated to earn lunch with teachers.)

**Attending student performances.** Many students are involved in activities outside of school, such as athletics, music performances, etc. Attending these performances and giving positive feedback afterwards communicates to students that you are interested in and care about them.

**Sending letters and notes to students.** Sending a personal letter to your students before school starts can help them to feel welcome and convey that you are looking forward to having them in your class. During the school year, letters or notes can be sent or given to the student commending them for improved achievement, particular accomplishments, etc. This can be a very strong form of reinforcement for students who are easily embarrassed when they are singled out in front of the class.

**Employing a suggestion box.** Putting a suggestion box in the classroom and using the suggestions for problem solving sessions with your students will communicate to students that you want them to enjoy your classroom and that the responsibility for this falls on everyone in the room.

**Joining in student games.** Joining in athletic and board games is fun for both the teacher and students. The atmosphere during games is less structured and the teacher's role becomes that of equal participant rather than director. It also gives students an opportunity to show skills and talents which may be more advanced than the teacher's.

**Making birthday cards.** Birthdays are very important to students, especially as they grow older and less attention is given to them. Recognizing student's birthdays is generally reinforcing to students.

**Discussing report cards, projects, or students' behavior.** This is a very important and valuable activity in which to engage students and should be undertaken in a serious and friendly manner. Discuss with the students their ideas on what the criteria for evaluation should be. Many students do not evaluate this on their own at all. Compare the criteria by which you do evaluate their work. Then go through the criteria with them and give them the opportunity to evaluate their work and discuss ideas for improvement. You may be surprised to find that most students take this very seriously and will be very hard on themselves. Be sure to point out positive aspects of their

work which they may not see or may be hesitant to verbalize. This activity helps students to take more ownership and develop more of a sense of responsibility in their work.

### ***Questions to ask in evaluating your classroom environment and student rapport...***

Rogers (1990, p. 158) lists the following questions to ask yourself in evaluating the climate of your classroom:

- Do I speak hastily, calmly, clearly? Do I nag? How would my students describe me most of the time?
- Do I have clear rules and procedures that are known and reinforced?
- Am I aware of what my students are doing? Do I encourage them, listen to them, notice their positive cooperative behaviors as well as their off-task, disruptive behaviors?
- Do I plan to cater for mixed abilities with variety in my approach?
- Do I ever use small groups or cooperative learning? (See tip sheet entitled "Cooperative Learning.")
- How positive is my discipline? Do I proactively plan ahead for disruptions?
- Do I respect students even if I dislike them? Am I consistent in my discipline?
- Do I follow up on disruptive students?

Creating a positive classroom environment and positive rapport with your students is a cooperative endeavor. It requires evaluation and modification of both student and teacher behavior. Committing to it at the beginning of the school year will pay off greatly in the long run.

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# Positive Programming...

## *teaching appropriate behavior*

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### **Introduction**

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All behaviors that people exhibit are learned. When working with students who exhibit inappropriate behavior, the most vital component of any intervention is to teach appropriate behavior skills—skills which may not yet be possessed by the students. This process is referred to as *positive programming*. You will find here a detailed description of positive programming, its advantages, requirements, and a list of interventions which fall into the category of positive programming.

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### ***What is positive programming and how is it different from other behavioral interventions?***

Positive programming is a "gradual educational process for behavior change involving systematic instruction in more effective ways of behaving. Positive programming teaches new behavior over time and is based on full functional analysis" (LaVigna & Donnellan, 1986, p.29). Although it does serve to change a student's behavior, it is different from traditional behavior modification procedures in several ways. First, it is very gradual in bringing about a change in behavior. Secondly, it is mandatory that instruction be systematically planned. For example, if you are trying to teach a student how to state his opinions during class discussion without his inciting verbal abuse, you may first need to teach the student to raise his hand, then not to interrupt, and finally teach him that everyone is entitled to their own opinion. Thirdly, unlike many other behavioral interventions, positive programming is continuous. It is not "on" at some times and "off" during others. Contingent use of rewards is an example of an intervention which is "on/off." It applies only to certain behaviors and is not active if appropriate behavior is not being exhibited. The example of the student learning to appropriately state opinions is not "on/off" as it applies to many different situations, is always desirable, and will always help the student to more effectively meet his or her needs.

For clarity, LaVigna and Donnellan (1986) provide a framework of four variations of the basic positive programming themes:

- 1) Teaching a new behavior or class of behaviors, for example, social skills.
- 2) Substitute the means of communication, for example, a student might be exhibiting an inappropriate behavior to communicate and needs to be taught an appropriate behavior which will more effectively communicate his or her needs and will substitute the inappropriate behavior.
- 3) Substitute a more socially appropriate behavior, for example teaching a substitute behavior when an inappropriate behavior is not necessarily serving a communicative purpose (i.e., self-stimulatory behavior);
- 4) Assign meaning, for example, when a student displays appropriate behavior but not necessarily in the correct situation (such as continuously asking questions), you want to bring the behavior under stimulus control so that it will be predictably displayed only in the appropriate situation.

### ***What are the advantages of positive programming?***

LaVigna and Donnellan (1986) outline the advantages of this intervention. Positive programming is an approach which increases the learner's repertoire of appropriate behavior. It is generalizable because it teaches skills that will serve the learner in many situations. Secondly, research shows its effects are long-lasting. Thirdly, it prevents future problems for the learner by increasing the amount of time spent in positive social interaction and teaching how to effectively have needs met. Fourthly, it is more efficient than interventions aimed at reducing behavior because it replaces undesirable behavior with desirable behavior as the student becomes proficient in and has a larger repertoire of appropriate behaviors. Finally, it is ethical, socially valid, and enhances the learner's human dignity.

### ***What are the prerequisites to implementation of positive programming interventions?***

First and foremost, a thorough functional analysis must be carried out to establish the purpose of undesirable behavior or to establish appropriate behaviors which are deficient in the student.

You must also be careful to identify appropriate instructional goals. This involves prioritizing which behaviors are most necessary and would be most beneficial to the student socially and academically, and choosing behaviors which are age-appropriate. For example, while it might be beneficial to the student, teaching a five-year-old to take detailed phone messages is a behavior which would not be age-appropriate. This is a behavior which would be more suitably targeted at an 11- or 12-year-old.

Finally, your intervention must be carefully and systematically designed and the instructional sequence must be longitudinal. This involves breaking the target behavior into steps which can be achieved one at a time and which build on each other. It also involves viewing the intervention as a long-term program—part of the student's general educational program—and not as something which will be terminated after a month or two. For example, when a student masters the behavior of taking a self-directed "time-out" when angry, you can then go on to teach him or her other techniques of handling anger: writing down his or her feelings, talking to an adult, telling the person how they feel, etc. This way, the student will learn many appropriate options for dealing with a given situation. If the learner continues to be taught appropriate behavior, as in this example, change in that student (like the nature of the intervention) will be gradual and longitudinal in nature.

### ***What specific interventions are included in the category of positive programming?***

Positive programming techniques include; shaping, chaining, fading, and modeling (see accompanying tip sheets on each). Teaching coping skills like relaxation training is beneficial with students who have low frustration or anger thresholds.

### ***Final words on positive programming...***

Positive programming as an intervention can vary in degree of structure. You are probably already using it in attempting to teach students skills such as sharing, taking turns, and communicating effectively.

It is often overlooked as a useful intervention with more bothersome behaviors, such as name-calling or fighting, usually because no functional analysis has been done. Performing a thorough functional analysis creates many more opportunities for positive programming to be effective and can preclude the need for implementation of more intrusive interventions.

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# Positive Reinforcement...

## *a proactive intervention for the classroom*

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### **Introduction**

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Reinforcement is a stimulus which follows and is contingent upon a behavior and increases the probability of a behavior being repeated. Positive reinforcement can increase the probability of not only desirable behavior but also undesirable behavior. For example, if a student whines in order to get attention and is successful in getting it, the attention serves as positive reinforcement which increases the likelihood that the student will continue to whine.

This tip sheet describes different kinds of reinforcers which have been found to be effective in changing student behavior and a discussion of how to select and deliver appropriate and effective reinforcers. There is much literature on this topic and you are strongly encouraged to consult additional resources for a more in-depth discussion of positive reinforcement. Additionally, negative reinforcement and satiation (when a reinforcer loses its effectiveness) are also discussed.

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### **What are different types of reinforcers?**

**Natural and Direct Reinforcement:** This type of reinforcement results directly from the appropriate behavior. For example, interacting appropriately with peers in group activities will lead to more invitations to join such activities.

The natural reinforcement for appropriate bids for attention, help, participation, etc. is providing the attention, help and opportunity to participate. *The goal should always be to move the student to natural and intrinsic reinforcement.*

**Social Reinforcers:** These are reinforcers which are socially mediated by teachers, parents, other adults, and peers which express approval and praise for appropriate behavior. Comments ("Good job," "I can tell you are working really hard," "You're nice"), written approval ("Super"), and expressions of approval (nodding your head, smiling, clapping, a pat on the back) are all very effective reinforcers.

**Activity Reinforcers:** Activity reinforcers are very effective and positive for students. Allowing students to participate in preferred activities (such as games, computer time, etc.) is very powerful, especially if part of the reinforcement is being allowed to choose a classmate with whom to participate in the activity. This also provides social reinforcement from the partner.

**Tangible Reinforcers:** This category includes edibles, toys, balloons, stickers, and awards. Edibles and toys should be used with caution. Parents may have reason to object to edibles as reinforcement (for example, if a student has a weight problem) and toys can make other students envious. Awards can be in the form of certificates, displaying work, and letters home to parents commending the students progress. These are powerfully motivating reinforcers.

#### **Token Reinforcement:**

Token reinforcement involves awarding points or tokens for appropriate behavior. These rewards have little value in themselves but can be exchanged for something of value.

### ***Isn't giving reinforcement like bribing a student?***

Planned positive reinforcement is very effective in promoting desirable change in student behavior. Some teachers question whether reinforcing or rewarding students for improving their behavior is really just bribing them to do what is desired. This is not the case. A bribe is something which is unacceptable or inappropriate (and illegal). Reinforcement is given to *bring about desirable change and to teach students to take responsibility for behavior*. Your paycheck is reinforcement for doing your job and commendations and bonuses are reinforcements for going above and beyond expectations. Without these reinforcements, how likely is it that you would exhibit the appropriate behavior of showing up at work each day?

### ***How should I choose a reinforcer?***

Reinforcers must be valued, preferred, and individualized. What may be extremely motivating for one student may be entirely useless for another. Use the following guidelines in choosing a reinforcer:

**Observe the student:** What kinds of activities does he or she seek out? What objects or events are presently serving to reinforce his or her behavior?

**Ask the student:** When designing a plan to modify behavior give the student a list of choices and ask what he or she would like to try to earn. For example, if setting up a token economy for work completed, let the student choose from a list of activities to find out which he or she is interested in earning.

**Monitor:** Periodically review by observation and discussion whether the reinforcer remains preferred or whether a new reinforcer is necessary.

**Evaluate:** Do a formal preference assessment.

### ***How should reinforcement be delivered?***

In order to make positive reinforcement, an effective intervention use the following guidelines:

1. Reinforcement must be consistently delivered, according to a planned reinforcement schedule (see "Reinforcement Schedules"). If it is not, no connection will develop between appropriate behavior and the reinforcement and the behavior will not change.
2. Reinforcement must be delivered immediately. Students should know when they can expect reinforcement. If you wait until the end of the day to reinforce a student for remaining in her seat during second period, the effect of reinforcement is reduced if not lost. If it is impossible to deliver reinforcement immediately, verbal reinforcement should be given and the student should be told when he or she can expect to receive other reinforcement. In this way, a contingency between behavior and reinforcement will be strengthened or maintained.
3. Improvement should be reinforced. Do not wait until the student's behavior is perfect to deliver reinforcement. You should recognize improvement and let the student know that you recognize the effort.
4. Do not give reinforcement because you feel sorry for a student. If a student does not achieve the required criterion, delivering reinforcement will only teach the student that rewards are readily available regardless of behavior and may even lead to an escalation of the behavior. Rather, recognize that you know the student is disappointed but that they will have the opportunity to try again tomorrow. **Reinforcement must be contingent on behavior.**
5. Whenever possible, pair any reinforcement with social reinforcement. If your reinforcement plan is letting students participate in preferred activities, make sure to give some sort of social reinforcement, such as telling the student, "You really did an excellent job today. You should be really proud of yourself" or let the student choose another student for the activity.
6. Make sure that social reinforcers are not ambiguous. They should be sincere, clear, and identify the specific behavior for which they are being delivered.

7. Reinforcement should be age-appropriate. Expecting a high school student to change his behavior by rewarding him with stickers is likely to be ineffective and insulting to the student.

### ***What is negative reinforcement?***

Negative reinforcement is often, mistakenly, equated with punishment. Punishment is the application of aversive stimuli in order to reduce the chance of a behavior being repeated. Negative reinforcement is the removal of aversive stimuli in order to increase the probability of a behavior being repeated.

For example, reinforcing students for using class time to do math work appropriately by removing five story problems from the math homework negatively reinforces appropriate behavior by removing the undesirable stimuli of a longer homework assignment.

Negative reinforcement can be very effective, especially to create an environment which feels safe to a student. It is often more naturally occurring than, for example, tangible reinforcers. As with the other reinforcement categories, it is important to pair negative with social reinforcement.

### ***What is satiation and how should it be handled?***

Satiation is the term used to describe the situation of a reinforcer losing its effectiveness. For example, if a student is receiving jellybeans as reinforcement, it is likely that after a period of time he or she will tire of them and no longer find them desirable. Satiation can also occur if too much reinforcement is being delivered. Earning up to ten minutes of computer time a day may serve as reinforcement for a long period of time, while being given the opportunity to earn an hour of computer time, for example, may quickly lead to satiation.

When satiation begins, the rate at which the desired behavior is displayed tapers off until it halts. This is very common with edible reinforcers. Reinforcement in the form of activities, social opportunities, and learning activities tend to be more immune to satiation.

Zirpoli and Melloy (1993, p. 160) make the following recommendations to prevent satiation:

- Varying the reinforcer or using a different reinforcer for each target behavior.
- Monitoring the amount of reinforcement delivered and using only enough to maintain the target behavior.
- Avoiding edible reinforcers (if you must use edibles, vary and apply minimally).
- Moving from a constant to an intermittent schedule of reinforcement as soon as possible (see "Schedules of Reinforcement").
- Moving from primary to secondary reinforcers as soon as possible.

Furthermore, any type of reinforcement schedule or system should include ongoing, systematic assessment of the reinforcement effectiveness through observation. Another option is incorporating a menu of potential reinforcers and allowing the student to choose his or her reinforcement.

It is likely that satiation will eventually occur with any type of reinforcement. If systematic assessment is diligently carried out, however, one can maintain the behavior modification plan by changing reinforcers before satiation occurs and by delivering reinforcement on varying schedules.

Finally, in designing a positive reinforcement plan, it is very important to move from less natural reinforcement (tokens, tangibles) to more natural reinforcement (social reinforcement, direct, and natural reinforcement).

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# Schedules of Reinforcement...

## *planning reinforcement to improve behavior*

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### ***Introduction***

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A schedule of reinforcement refers to a deliberate plan which determines when and how often reinforcement is given to a student for appropriate behavior. The different schedules of reinforcement are outlined here, along with when and how they are most successfully used and with what kinds of behaviors the schedules are recommended.

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#### ***What is continuous reinforcement?***

When a target behavior is reinforced each and every time it is exhibited, this is referred to as continuous reinforcement.

This schedule should be used when teaching a student a new behavior not previously part of the student's repertoire and is especially useful with young students because it is very systematic. It is very effective in establishing an association between the target behavior and the reinforcement.

While continuous reinforcement will create an association between behavior and reinforcement, it will not produce long-term changes in behavior. If only continuous reinforcement is used, once it is withdrawn, the desired behavior will also cease. Also, if used too long, a student may learn to manipulate the intervention by behaving appropriately only when reinforcement is desired. Once an association has been established, it is time to change to one of the following schedules.

#### ***What are ratio reinforcement schedules?***

When a target behavior is reinforced after a number of occurrences, this is referred to as a ratio reinforcement schedule.

This schedule is useful after having established a contingency between the reinforcement and appropriate behavior with the continuous reinforcement schedule. It is also a good option when continuous reinforcement would be too cumbersome.

There are two types of ratio reinforcement, each with its own benefits. Fixed ratio reinforcement is delivered after a given number of occurrences. Examples of fixed ratio reinforcement are reinforcing a child after every fifth math sheet is completed or after every third time a child exhibits sharing behavior.

Fixed ratio reinforcement is useful in establishing a contingency between behavior and reinforcement, when used consistently, because it is systematic. It is also often preferred by teachers to continuous reinforcement if attempting to establish the exhibition of an appropriate behavior which the student already understands to be desirable as it can be much more easily managed. However, research has shown that once a fixed ratio reinforcement schedule is terminated, the gains in positive behavior will also deteriorate if the behavior does not continue to be reinforced with some other schedule. Furthermore, a student can learn to manipulate this schedule if he or she figures out how often reinforcement is received. For these reasons, it is recommended that a fixed ratio schedule not be used for very long.

A variable ratio reinforcement schedule involves delivering reinforcement after an approximate number of times the target behavior is exhibited. Reinforcement might be delivered on average after every fifth math sheet is completed but could range in delivery from every third to every eighth sheet. This schedule is useful for

beginning maintenance of a reasonable well-established behavior and can be used when fading out a fixed ratio schedule. Since it is less systematic or consistent than either continuous or fixed ratio reinforcement variable reinforcement is not good for teaching a new behavior.

### ***What are interval reinforcement schedules?***

When a target behavior is reinforced after a period of time, this is referred to as an interval reinforcement schedule.

This schedule is useful for behaviors which can be measured in terms of their duration, for example, in-seat behavior, on-task behavior, etc.

As with ratio reinforcement, there are two types of interval reinforcement. The first type is fixed interval reinforcement, which designates a specific interval of time, after which reinforcement is delivered contingent on appropriate behavior. Delivering reinforcement after every five minutes of on-task behavior would be an example of fixed interval reinforcement. This is a very systematic and consistent schedule which is excellent for strengthening a behavior. However, as with fixed ratio reinforcement, if reinforcement is simply stopped research shows that the gains made in behavior will also deteriorate. Variable interval reinforcement is like variable ratio reinforcement in that reinforcement is delivered after an average length of time. This schedule is effective for already established behaviors and can be used when fading out a fixed interval schedule.

### ***How do I choose a reinforcement schedule?***

Recommendations have been given about which types of behaviors tend to be best reinforced with which types of schedules. It is likely that you will find ways to modify these to make them most effective and easily delivered within your classroom and with particular students. What is most important, however, is that you consciously decide which type of schedule to use and if it seems not to be having an effect, reevaluate it or your functional analysis.

Choosing the wrong type of reinforcement schedule can be detrimental to improving behavior. For example, a student who already possesses a desired behavior in his or her repertoire but simply does not choose to exhibit it will not benefit from continuous reinforcement. He or she may, in fact, learn that manipulating you is possible by refusing to exhibit the behavior unless it is known that you will deliver the desired reinforcement. For such reasons, it is very important that choosing a schedule of reinforcement be an integral aspect of your behavior intervention plan.

### ***Final Note...***

It is imperative that the reinforcement delivered is appropriate for each individual student. If what is delivered to the student as reinforcement is not preferred by him or her, none of these schedules will work. If you are having problems with schedules of reinforcement, you may want to reevaluate the reinforcement itself. For information on selecting appropriate reinforcers, please see the tip sheet entitled "Positive Reinforcement."

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# Self-Monitoring...

## *a proactive intervention for the classroom*

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### ***Introduction***

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Self-monitoring involves having a student keep track of his or her behavior. During research involving students monitoring their own behavior, it has been observed that subjects alter their behavior simply after consciously keeping track of it. One reason for such change is that self-monitoring helps decrease impulsivity by training the student to be aware of his or her behavior.

The implications of this finding are easy to recognize. First, this intervention is useful in helping a student become aware of his or her behavior. Secondly, self-monitoring is a valuable tool in achieving generalization of appropriate behavior to other contexts, i.e., classrooms. Finally, self-monitoring has the benefit of actively involving the student in the process of behavior modification.

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### ***How can self-monitoring be used in the classroom?***

Self-monitoring can be used to increase or decrease behavior, to teach new skills, and to help a student maintain appropriate behavior in a different environment. Studies have been conducted showing Self-monitoring to be effective in the following specific areas:

- teaching neat-paper skills
- increasing on-task behavior
- increasing productivity
- assignment completion
- reducing calling-out behavior
- increasing positive statements
- decreasing negative statements

### ***How does a student monitor him- or herself?***

There are several methods which are commonly used:

**Frequency counts:** The student tallies each occurrence of the target behavior. This can be done by making hash marks on a piece of paper, circling numbers, putting items in a container, etc. Frequency counts are most helpful in monitoring behaviors such as task completion (i.e., one hash mark per worksheet completed) and specific behaviors such as calling out or making positive/negative statements.

**Interval counts:** After a specific time interval, the student is signaled to record their behavior. Teachers often use cassette tapes which play a tone, such as a bell chime, after each interval. For example, the chime might sound every two minutes at which time the student should ask him- or herself a question such as "Was I following classroom rules?" or "Was I on task?" Then they would put a hash mark in a "yes" or "no" column or write a "+" or "-" on their monitoring card. Students can also rate themselves on a continuum; they were not on task, sometimes on task, or almost always on task. When beginning the program, intervals of 40-45 seconds are recommended.

Gradually increase intervals to as long as 12-15 minutes. This method is most useful in monitoring on-task behavior, increasing appropriate classroom behavior, and decreasing disruptive behavior.

**Independent monitoring:** With this method, the student monitors his or her behavior whenever he or she thinks about it. This would be used for the same types of behaviors as those in the interval count method. This is useful when the student is in a different classroom from where the behavior modification normally occurs. A student might, for example, carry a self-monitor card to each class and after class rate his or her performance during class in terms of participation and on-task behavior.

### *How do I begin using self-monitoring in my classroom?*

The first step to take is **to define the behavior** to be measured. This should be **discussed with the student** to help insure that your interpretations of desired and undesired behavior are the same.

You should then together **decide on how best to measure the behavior**. This may be different for each student.

**Training** is then necessary. If this technique is to be used to teach a new skill, give instruction in the skill first. Instruction should then be given on the self-monitoring method to be used.

**Modeling** of self-monitoring should be done for the student. The student should then be given the opportunity to **practice** the self-monitoring procedure.

**Feedback** should be given on the students progress and he or she should be given further opportunity to practice, if necessary.

**Reliability checks** should also be done periodically. In order to check reliability you should make opportunities to measure the student's behavior, along with him or her, and compare your results.

Depending on the cognitive abilities of the student, a 20-minute training session should suffice before implementation of the program. It is recommended that, to begin, the student only monitor one behavior. After he or she becomes adept in the procedure, it may then be possible for him or her to monitor two or three behaviors.

While accuracy of recording may enhance the degree to which the student's behavior improves, it is not a significant factor. Factors which do improve results are:

**Monitoring a positive behavior rather than a negative one.** Focusing on a negative behavior (i.e., calling out) may cause the student to feel negative about him- or herself, while counting the occurrence of positive behavior (i.e., raising hand and waiting to be called on) puts the student in a positive light.

**Using an obtrusive recording device.** It is more effective to have a large piece of paper taped to the child's desk than a small card. This will help the student to remember to record behavior and serve as a reminder to modify behavior.

**Using reinforcers to motivate change.** Once the program is implemented and the child is aware of his or her target behavior, introduce reinforcers for the positive behavior. This may help in motivating the child to improve that behavior.

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# Shaping...

## *a proactive intervention for the classroom*

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### ***Introduction***

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Shaping is a technique by which a student is reinforced for exhibiting closer and closer approximations to desired behavior. It is useful in teaching new desired behavior and is a natural way of encouraging the student to increase the prevalence of desired behavior.

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### ***What kinds of behaviors can be modified with shaping?***

Shaping is most effective for increasing positive behavior. For example, shaping can be very effective in increasing productivity and accuracy of schoolwork, for increasing pro-social behavior, and for encouraging shy students to participate.

### ***I know what behavior I would like my student to exhibit. What is the first step I need to take?***

After you have defined the behavioral objective in clear and measurable terms, assess the present level of the student's skills. For example, if your goal is that the student consistently complete 90% of math problems, first determine how many he presently consistently completes. If your goal is that a student be able to play an entire game of kickball without getting in a fight, observe how long she usually plays before a fight begins.

### ***How do I help the student get from his or her present level to the behavioral objective?***

After having determined what the gap between present and desired behavior is, break your goal into "steps." If your student presently completes 10 math problems, set a goal of 12 problems. Once he is able to consistently achieve this, raise the goal to 14, etc. In the example of the kickball game, if your student can participate for one inning without fighting, set a goal for 1-1/2 innings, etc.

### ***How is the behavior "shaped"?***

As each step is achieved, the behavior is taking a "shape" closer and closer to that of the goal. These approximations represent modification of the behavior. Positive reinforcement is provided for each step toward the desired behavior. Reinforcement is delivered naturally in the form of praise and recognition. **It is the student's interpretation of your reinforcement which motivates him or her to change.** As a student moves closer and closer to achieving the desired behavior, only the new step which is being learned is reinforced. Previous steps no longer need to be specifically reinforced as they have already been achieved.

## ***How do I shape a behavior which the student does not exhibit in any form?***

Interpret any action which can be approximated as any form of the behavior as the behavior itself and reinforce it. For example, if your goal is that a shy student participate in class discussion, interpret any movement of his hand as raising his hand. "Tom, you wanted to say something? Did you agree with the author's opinion?" Posing questions such as this make it easy for the student to participate as they require only a "yes" or "no" answer. After Tom answers, you can reinforce him by asking, "How many people agree with Tom? (hands go up) Wanda, why do you agree with Tom?" This gives the student important peer reinforcement.

Another example of shaping a new behavior is that of in-seat behavior. If a student is invariably out of her seat, catch her in her seat and reinforce her for it. "Sharisse, you've been sitting quietly in your seat. How would you like to help me hand out worksheets?"

## ***What are the advantages of shaping?***

The biggest advantage of shaping is that it focuses your attention and the student's attention on positive behavior. It recognizes progress and helps the student feel good about him- or herself. It creates the opportunity for positive interaction between the student and teacher, something which may not be that common for a student who exhibits high rates of problem behavior. Additionally, the effects of shaping are long lasting and become a solid part of the student's repertoire.

Shaping is easy to implement and, since reinforcement is natural, it does not draw undue attention to the process of behavior modification. This may be very important in specific cases, such as drawing out shy students, or with some high school students.

## ***Are there any precautions to be considered before implementing a shaping program?***

Yes. Remember that shaping is a slow process and that achieving steps which are very small, in light of the end goal may take quite some time. Don't give up! Give the process and the student the time needed to change.

If change is not occurring to the degree you had hoped, perhaps the steps you have set are too big and need to be reevaluated or perhaps there are other behaviors which are interfering with your goals which need to be modified first.

Be sure that each situation you reinforce will be interpreted by the student as positive reinforcement. **It is the student's interpretation of your reinforcement which motivates him or her to change.** For example, if you are attempting to draw out a shy student, be sure that he or she is paying attention when you elicit his or her opinion. If you inadvertently ask for participation when the student is not paying attention, he or she may interpret your actions as an attempt to humiliate him or her and withdraw even further.

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# Social Contracts...

## *a proactive intervention for the classroom*

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### ***Introduction***

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A social contract is an agreement negotiated between students and teacher which states classroom principles, rules, and consequences for classroom behavior. Contracts are different from traditional classroom rules in that students are involved in designing them, they ensure clarity of rules, include consequences and not punishments, allow for change with class needs, have safeguards to protect the dignity of students, and increase communication (Curwin & Mendler, 1988).

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### ***What components should I consider including in a social contract?***

There is no one way to construct a contract, but the following are components you should consider including (Curwin & Mendler, 1988):

**Classroom Principles:** Principles provide a value system and guidelines for behavior. They are general and not intended to be enforced but provide a context for classroom rules. Examples are:

- \* Everyone has the right to share his/her opinion.
- \* Be courteous and respectful.
- \* Everyone is welcome.

**Effective Rules:** Rules clearly define which behaviors are and are not acceptable within the context of classroom principles. It is best when they describe a specific behavior but are not so specific that they are cumbersome. Curwin and Mendler (1988) give examples of rules which are too vague, too specific, and just right:

*Too Vague:* Each student must not interfere with another student's learning. (This makes a fine principle but not a rule.)

*Too Specific:* Do not poke your fingers in another student's eye.

*Just Right:* Respect each other's space—keep your hands to yourself.

**Be Positive When Possible:** This gives students a clearer idea of how they should behave, which is more constructive than only telling them how they should not behave. There are, however, some rules which may be difficult to express in positive terms. For example, "say only nice things about each other" is a rather awkward and unclear way of expressing "no put-downs of others are allowed."

**Logical Consequences:** Consequences are essential to a social contract but can be hard to develop. Curwin and Mendler (1988) give the following criteria for consequences:

- \* Clear and specific.
- \* Have a range of alternatives.
- \* Not punishments.

- \* Natural and/or logical.
- \* Related to the rule.

Consequences should also:

- \* Preserve the student's dignity.
- \* Increase student motivation.

Four generic consequences which work for any rule are: reminders, warnings, practice following the rule, and a written plan. Contingency contracts, conferences, or meetings and practice sessions are examples of non-punitive consequences (*see "Contingency Contracts," "Shaping," and "Self-Monitoring"*).

Threats are effective only in creating combative environments. Furthermore, many traditional consequences result only in making the student dislike school or aspects of it. Writing "I will not throw paper" 100 times only makes the student's hand sore, makes him or her hate writing, is an illogical consequence, and teaches nothing.

### ***How do I draw up a social contract?***

Foremost, the contract should be drawn up with the students. Student involvement makes the contract more immediate and it is ultimately more likely that students will follow a plan which they help draw up.

**Students can develop rules for each other**, making sure that they are not too vague or specific, as stated previously. They can be involved in developing consequences as well. However, do not accept any rules or consequences which you would not feel comfortable enforcing.

**Students can be allowed to vote on negotiable rules.** Do not put rules which you deem absolutely necessary up to a vote. It is advisable that a vast majority (75%) of the students pass the rule.

Furthermore, **students can include rules for the teacher.** While you should not accept a rule you cannot live with, such rules can be quite useful. If you are caught breaking a rule, the opportunity is provided to model an appropriate response. Examples of rules imposed on teachers are:

- \* If students cannot eat in class, the teacher cannot drink coffee during class.
- \* Do not call a student's home without first telling him or her of your intent.
- \* Tests will be corrected and handed back within three days.

### ***What if a student pleads ignorance to a rule or principle in the contract?***

You can prevent this from happening by requiring each student to take a test on the social contract. This can include short answer, true and false, and/or multiple choice questions concerning acceptable behavior for the classroom and permitted consequences for unallowable behavior. Students must score 100%, although nothing happens if they do not pass. Go over their incorrect answers with them and have them repeat the test.

### ***How long should I plan on devoting to the formulation of a social contract?***

The greater portion of two or three class period leaves plenty of time for discussion, dissent and reaching consensus and gives students time to think about what they want rather than pressuring them to sign on directly after being introduced to the idea.

A contract should be drawn up by each class in which you intend to use one. Even if there are only two different students in second period, do not use the same contract from first period. Every student should be included in the process.

## ***What are other considerations in utilizing social contracts?***

**Effectiveness:** If behavior standards are not being met, it is necessary for the class to discuss the contract, possible changes, or a completely new contract. If the contract is working for most students but not specific individuals, individual contingency contracts may be helpful.

**Accessibility:** It is advisable that each student be given a copy of the contract and that it be posted somewhere in the room so that it is clearly visible.

**Collaboration:** It is valuable to share the contract with parents and administrators. Sharing it with parents before there are behavior problems can aid in eliciting their cooperation. Sharing your contract with administrators can help decrease feelings of isolation when forced to take disciplinary measures. Administrators should have copies of the contract available to give to substitute teachers. The more people who are aware of your contract, the more likely it is that it will be effective.

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# Token Economies...

## *a proactive intervention for the classroom*

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### **Introduction**

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Token economies are programs in which students (entire classrooms or individuals) earn points or tokens for appropriate behavior and, at a later time, trade them for preferred activities, objects, or privileges. One of the most positive aspects of token economies is that they are set up to reinforce appropriate behavior and prevent inappropriate behavior, thereby minimizing the need to use reactive strategies in dealing with inappropriate behavior.

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### **How do I set up a token economy?**

**Set goals for your token economy.** A token economy is a tool which strives to modify inappropriate behavior and achieve specific goals. These goals can be behavioral (i.e., staying in seat during class time, raising hand and waiting to be called on before speaking, being on time for class) as well as academic (i.e., finishing at least 80% of homework, handing in work when it is completed, mastering 30 new vocabulary words). Take time to include the student(s) in setting and defining goals. Begin by targeting only one to three goals so that the student is not overwhelmed.

**Set point or token (PT) values.** Give a token value to each goal. You may choose to make each goal of equal value or to weight values. In the latter case, values should be assigned with respect to the difficulty of the goal. For example, if remaining seated is of lesser difficulty for the student than not speaking out of turn, remaining seated should be worth fewer points or tokens.

Additionally, it is useful and appropriate to reward tokens for partial achievement of a goal. For example, you might award two tokens for remaining seated for the whole class period and one token for remaining seated for 75% of the period. The value is in rewarding progress, avoiding student frustration, and keeping full attainment as the ultimate goal.

**Determine time intervals for assessment.** Intervals at which goal attainment will be judged and points will be awarded need to be determined before initiating the token economy. For some students, evaluation may take place every half hour and, for others, after the morning and afternoon. A good rule of thumb is, at the onset of the token economy, the interval should be half as long as the student is able to go without displaying the inappropriate behavior. For example, if the student can go for a half hour without leaving his or her seat, the initial time interval should be 15 minutes. Gradually, time intervals should be increased.

It is important that tokens are awarded contingent upon achieving the pre-specified goals. It is also good to explain to the student why the reinforcer is being given.

**Keep track of points or tokens earned.** Keeping track of tokens earned can be done in many different ways. This allows the student to see and assess his or her progress. The student(s) should always be able to find out how many tokens or points they have earned. Here are some suggestions:

**Tokens:** Give the student(s) the tokens they have earned. The student(s) must understand that once they are given the tokens, they are responsible for not losing them, or put a container somewhere in the room where the student can deposit and have access to earned tokens.

**Points:** Using a point system is very valuable when targeting more than one behavior or goal. The student(s) can see which goals they are reaching and in which areas they can still improve.

- 1) A card listing the goals and leaving space for each interval can be carried by the student or held by the teacher (this is very useful if the student goes to different classrooms). The points earned for each interval would be entered by the teacher after each interval in the appropriate space.
- 2) A chart can be posted in the room (on the student's desk or near the teacher's desk) in which students' points are tracked. In this way, a student can see his or her progress over time. Keeping formal records is very important. This will help prevent misunderstandings and disagreements about the rules.

### ***How can students use their tokens?***

When setting the token economy, it should be decided, with input from the student, what the student will be able to "buy" with his or her tokens and how often he or she will be able to cash them in. This is critical since some students may give up if they do not have the opportunity to earn some reward each day. In such cases, you should structure the point system so that it is possible to earn enough points to trade each day. For example, if it is possible to earn 40 points per day, 30 points may be worth 15 minutes of computer time which the student could "buy" at the end of each day. Other students may be more motivated by bigger reinforcers, i.e., at least 30 points each day for a week being worth no math homework for the weekend.

Make sure that you allow the student to spend his or her own tokens. Do not do this for him or her.

### ***Can a token economy be modified?***

A token economy can and should be modified throughout the year. This includes modifying goals and objectives as well as reinforcers available.

Over time, students should begin to consistently achieve the targeted goals. At this point, you should begin to reassess the areas in which they need improvement. You should begin working with the student to set new goals or longer intervals, *not forgetting to give congratulations and praise for "graduating" from the original/prior program.*

Conversely, not earning enough tokens to get rewards can result in the student becoming frustrated or giving up. In such instances, changes such as goal modification, shortened time intervals, or targeting fewer goals need to be made.

### ***What about response cost in a token economy?***

Some people include a form of "response cost" in their token economy. This involves penalizing students for inappropriate behavior by taking away tokens they have earned. The ethics of taking away what a student has fairly earned is questionable. Also, a threat to the student is implicit in response cost. Response cost may lead to a student behaving appropriately only out of fear or anxiety of losing points or tokens. Furthermore, it may lead to power struggles that escalate and become setting events for other undesired behaviors.

### ***How can I phase out a token economy?***

One way is by changing the rewards from which students may choose. For instance, rather than earning a candy bar for appropriate behavior, let the student take the attendance to the office every morning, contingent upon continued appropriate behavior. Focus can be moved from tangible rewards to focusing on grade improvement, classroom status, and providing more social reinforcement. You can also reduce the number of tokens that a student earns, requiring the student to do more work for the same number of tokens.

In some cases, you may find that no matter what you do, it seems that as soon as the token economy is dropped, so is the appropriate behavior. In this case, the token economy has become a behavior management tool rather than a behavior modification tool.

**It is recommended that other behavioral interventions be used in conjunction with the token economy** (see *"Contingency Contracts," "Cuing," "Cooperative Learning," "Self-Monitoring," "Differential Reinforcement," "Modeling," "Positive Programming," and "Shaping"*).

### ***Is there anything else I should consider?***

Token economies have the advantage of being an intervention which can be used in cooperation with parents. For example, students may wish to choose reinforcers which exist at home, such as television viewing. Additionally, parents may be able to carry out aspects of the token economy at home, increasing its generalizability.

When implementing your token economy in the classroom, it is important to remember to give the student verbal praise for appropriate behavior and for achieving goals, and to review the rules with students as needed. Also remember to choose tokens which are not easily accessible outside of the classroom. Otherwise, you may suddenly find that the student seems to be spending a lot more tokens than he or she is earning!

You do not need to wait to get to know your students before beginning a token economy. Starting one as soon as it is deemed necessary prevents the student from having to unlearn poor behavior that was previously tolerated in the classroom.

While a token economy can be very intricate and time-consuming, it can also be designed to be very simple and easy to implement.

Finally, as with any intervention, it is very important that a token economy be carried out with consistency and given some time to have an effect before it is modified or before its usefulness (or lack thereof) is determined.

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# Glossary

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*This Glossary has been developed as a supplement to the accompanying Intervention Tip Sheets to assist teachers and parents in providing the best possible educational opportunities to students with emotional and behavioral disorders. This Tip Sheet was published by the Institute on Community Integration, College of Education, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, and was authored by Kareen Smith of the Institute.*

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**A-B-C analysis** A technique to identify the relationship between environmental factors and behavior (antecedent - behavior - consequence).

**ALT-R** Reinforcement of alternative behavior.

**antecedent stimulus** A stimulus present immediately before the occurrence of a behavior. It may or may not serve as a discriminative stimulus.

**artificial reinforcers** Consequences used to reinforce behaviors which do not naturally occur outside of the intervention environment. For example, reinforcing appropriate peer interactions with stickers (*see natural reinforcers*).

**assessment** The systematic gathering of information in order to make educational decision.

**augmentative communication** Ways of exchanging information other than verbally, i.e., through hand signs, photographs, computers, etc.

**aversive stimulus** A stimulus which, due to its undesirable nature, serves to decrease the probability that a behavior will occur. Often occurs as a consequence of a behavior (i.e., punisher). Alternately, removal of aversive stimuli can serve to increase the likelihood that a behavior will be exhibited.

**aversive procedure** Any procedure which utilizes an aversive stimulus for the purpose of changing behavior (e.g., making a student write sentences for whispering during class time).

**backward chaining** Instructional method of teaching a task which begins with the last sub-task of the sequence and moves backward through the chain of sub-tasks as each is mastered (*see chained task/response, chaining, forward chaining*).

**baseline** The rate established by data collection of the natural occurrence of a target behavior.

**behavior** An observable and measurable act exhibited by a person which has a beginning and an end and can be reliably measured by more than one individual.

**behavioral objective** The desired behavior to be achieved after intervention, including the degree to which it will be performed (*see objective*).

**chained task/response** A skill or behavior which is comprised of sequenced, discrete sub-tasks.

**chaining** A teaching method which breaks a task into sub-tasks and teaches each sub-task one at a time, sequentially. Mastery of a sub-task is required before teaching of the next sub-task is undertaken (*see chained task/response, forward chaining, and backward chaining*).

**cognitive behavioral modification** Behavioral interventions which are based on the belief that a person's behavior is a result of his or her thoughts and beliefs. Cognitive behavioral interventions aim to help a person modify thoughts and beliefs in order to change their behavior.

**consequences** A stimulus which is presented after a behavior is exhibited and which is contingent upon the occurrence of the behavior.

**contingency** A relationship between behavior and consequences.

**contingent** Dependent on or upon.

**continuous measurement** Continuous data collection of each occurrence of a behavior for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating a student's behavior or progress.

**contracting** Designing contingencies for reinforcement of appropriate behavior and incorporating them into a written document to which both student and teacher can refer.

**controlling prompt** Behaviors or actions which elicit performance of a specific behavior.

**cooperative learning** A method for student learning by which students work together in groups. Thus, a teaching-learning exchange between students is created and cooperation, interpersonal and social skills, and interdependence are promoted.

**correct response** The accurate performance of the target behavior within the specified time interval.

**corrective feedback** Feedback given after an incorrect response which serves to point out the error in a neutral manner and demonstrate the correct response. The purpose of corrective feedback is to teach the correct response.

**criterion** A specified level of acceptable performance of a behavior. Criteria are used to evaluate success of instruction.

**differential reinforcement** Reinforcement which is delivered only after specific discriminative stimuli are presented or only after the correct behavior is exhibited.

**discrimination** The ability to distinguish between stimuli or environmental events.

**discriminative stimuli** Stimuli which cue a specific response (i.e., saying "bless you" after someone sneezes--sneezing is the discriminative stimulus).

**DRA** Differential Reinforcement of Alternative Behavior. Reinforcement of any behavior more appropriate than the targeted inappropriate behavior.

**DRI** Differential Reinforcement of Incompatible Behavior. Reinforcement of any behavior which makes it impossible for the targeted inappropriate behavior to occur.

**DRL** Differential Reinforcement of Lower Rates of Behavior. Reinforcement of a behavior when exhibited at a lower frequency. The behavior itself is not inappropriate, but the frequency of it is inappropriate (e.g., a student asking to sharpen his pencil every 10 minutes).

**DRO** Differential Reinforcement of Other Behavior. Reinforcement of behavior other than the target behavior to be decreased.

**DSM IV** (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition*) A manual that defines and classifies mental disorders according to the American Psychiatric Association guidelines (APA, 1994).

**duration recording** Recording the amount of time between the onset and termination of a behavior (e.g., the length of time a temper tantrum lasts).

**event recording** Tallying or recording the frequency of occurrences of a behavior during an observation period.

**externalizing** Acting out a behavior so that it is observable.

**extinction** Withholding reinforcement of a previously reinforced behavior in order to decrease the occurrence of a behavior.

**fading** The gradual removal of a prompt or an entire intervention program.

**fair pair rule** The principle which states that any intervention which aims to eliminate a nonfunctional behavior should include a component which teaches and/or increases a functional behavior.

**formative evaluation** Evaluation occurring while an intervention is being implemented to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

**forward chaining** Instructional method of teaching a task which begins with the first sub-task of the sequence and moves forward through the chain of sub-tasks as each is mastered (*see chained task/response, chaining, backward chaining*).

**frequency** The number of times a behavior is exhibited within a defined period of time.

**frequency count** A behavior measurement technique which tallies each and every occurrence of a behavior.

**function** The result which a behavior serves to achieve.

**full physical prompt** Manipulation of a student's hands or body in order to teach a student to correctly perform a kinesthetic behavior. For example, a student might be taught to correctly hold a pencil by the teacher forming the student's hand correctly on the pencil.

**functional analysis** An analysis which defines the undesirable behavior, predicts the times when the behavior will or will not be exhibited, and defines what it is that maintains or reinforces the student to continue displaying the behavior.

**functional assessment** The process of collecting information about the behavior patterns of an individual in order to complete a functional analysis. Collection may include interviewing the student or people who have direct contact with this individual, and observation and manipulation of specific situations to test your understanding of the predictability of a behavior.

**functional communication** Specific language behaviors which achieve specific results by conveying wants and needs.

**generalization** The exhibition of behavior in situations (across persons, settings, times, stimuli, etc.) other than that in which the behavior was learned.

**generalization training** Training which aims to increase the generalization of behavior or skills to other situations in which they are not being exhibited and in which they will be functional.

**goals** Broad and long-term statements about the behaviors to be achieved which include information about the activities which will take place, how often instruction will take place, and to what extent a student will participate.

**group contingency** The delivery of reinforcement contingent upon the behavior of a group of peers.

**home contingency** A contingency between a student's behavior at school and reinforcement delivered at home. For example, a student might be reinforced for improved grades with a later curfew on the weekend.

**independent monitoring** A behavior measurement/monitoring technique which is carried out by the student. The student periodically (whether independently or after specified intervals) he or she has achieved behaving appropriately.

**intensity** A function of the frequency and duration of a behavior. Also, the power, strength, or force with which a behavior is displayed. For example, if a student pushes furniture when angry, intensity would be described in terms of whether the furniture was slightly moved or was knocked over.

**intermittent schedule of reinforcement** The delivery of reinforcement after some, but not all, correct or appropriate responses. (Reinforcement can occur after a specific frequency or time interval, for example.)

**interval count** A behavior measurement technique which divides a time period into intervals (i.e., one hour is divided into six- to ten-minute intervals) and at the end of each interval, it is recorded whether or not the behavior occurred during the interval (as opposed to the number of times a behavior occurs)(*see partial interval recording and whole interval recording*).

**interval recording** *See interval count, partial interval recording, and whole interval recording.*

**interval schedule of reinforcement** Delivery of reinforcement contingent upon the occurrence of a behavior after a specified period of time.

**intervention** Involvement with a student in a systematic manner in order to improve his or her performance socially, emotionally, or academically.

**intrusiveness** The degree to which an intervention impinges or intrudes into a student's body or personal rights or the bodies or personal rights of others in the environment of the targeted student.

**maintenance** Continued performance of a target behavior after instruction has been faded out or terminated.

**modeling** An instructional procedure which attempts to prompt imitation of appropriate behavior through demonstration of that behavior.

**natural reinforcers** Consequences which reinforce behavior and occur naturally as they are contingent upon that behavior. For example, appropriate peer interactions being reinforced by resulting friendships.

**negative reinforcement** Reinforcement of behavior through the contingent removal or avoidance of an aversive stimulus. Successful avoidance or removal of the aversive produces an increase or maintenance in occurrence of the given behavior. For example, paying a bill on time is negatively reinforced by the avoidance of having to pay a late fee if the bill is paid late.

**noncompliance** Refusal to comply with teacher's request; the absence of stimulus control over a behavior (*see stimulus control*).

**objectives** Specific and short-term statements identifying target behavior, the conditions under which it will occur and to what degree of proficiency it will be performed.

**off-task behavior** Behavior which indicates that a student is not paying attention to or participating in the appropriate or designated activity.

**on-task behavior** When a student is paying attention to or participating appropriately in the designated activity.

**partial interval recording** Interval recording which records the occurrence of a behavior if it has occurred at all the designated time intervals (*see interval count and whole interval recording*).

**positive programming** A "gradual educational process for behavior change involving systematic instruction in more effective ways of behaving. Positive programming teaches new behavior over time and is based on full functional analysis" (LaVigna & Donnellan, 1986, p. 29).

**positive reinforcement** Delivery of a consequence contingent upon a specific behavior which strengthens or maintains the occurrence of that behavior.

**praise** Positive verbal attention for appropriate behavior.

**pre-referral interventions** Straightforward and relatively easy to implement interventions implemented by the regular classroom teacher before referral for special services occurs.

**Premack Principle** A principle which states that any highly preferred activity can serve as a positive reinforcer for a less preferred activity.

**principle of partial participation** The provision of supports or adaptations which allow individuals to participate in activities (which they otherwise would be unable to participate in) which results in the individuals becoming more integral members of their community, school, etc.

**proactive interventions** Interventions which aim to eliminate undesirable behavior by employing positive programming and altering environmental conditions to prevent the given behavior from being exhibited (*see positive programming*).

**prompt** A stimulus which is delivered in order to increase the probability of and encourage a desired response.

**punisher** A consequence which decreases the future probability of the occurrence of a behavior.

**punishment** An aversive consequence following a behavior, or the removal of a positive consequence following a behavior which occurs, in order to weaken a behavior.

**rate** The frequency of a behavior during a defined time period.

**ratio schedule of reinforcement** The delivery of reinforcement contingent upon the frequency or number of times a behavior occurs.

**reinforcement** The delivery of positive or removal of negative consequences which results in an increase or maintenance of the rate at which a behavior is being exhibited.

**reliability** The consistency of test performance; the degree to which a student will achieve a relatively consistent level of performance in completing a test repeatedly. Also, the degree of consistency achieved between different test administrators or scorers.

**response interval** The amount of time between the delivery of a prompt or stimulus which serves as a cue and the response of the student.

**response generalization** Changes in untargeted behaviors which are the result of changes in those behaviors targeted by intervention.

**response maintenance** The continuance of behavior after an intervention is withdrawn.

**response prompt** A stimulus which is delivered in order to increase the probability of and encourage a desired response.

**restrictiveness** The degree to which an intervention inhibits a student's freedom to be treated like other students.

**rules** The component of a school's discipline code which states student and teacher expectations.

**schedule of reinforcement** A defined schedule which determines when reinforcement will be delivered for the purpose of maintaining or increasing the rate of behavior.

**shaping** Reinforcing closer and closer approximations of desired behavior.

**social contract** Contingencies designed for reinforcement of an entire classroom incorporated into a written document to which both student and teacher can refer.

**social reinforcement** Teacher or peer attention, feedback, or approval which increases or maintains the occurrence of behavior.

**stimulus control** The reliable contingency between a stimulus and a response; a response is exhibited in the presence of a specific stimulus and is not when that stimulus is absent.

**summative evaluation** Evaluation which takes place at the end of a program or intervention.

**systematic instruction** A methodical, deliberate approach to instruction which follows a series of steps to identify behaviors to be taught, plans instruction by which they will be taught, implements these activities, evaluates the effects of the instruction, and determines whether the student's behavior has been changed as desired.

**target behavior** A behavior identified for change that is observable and measurable, defined so that two persons can agree as to its occurrence. This behavior has been identified by professionals and families as being in need of instruction.

**token economy** An intervention by which students earn points or tokens for appropriate behavior and trade them for preferred activities, objects, or privileges at a later time.

**verbal reinforcement** Reinforcing comments delivered contingent upon appropriate behavior. For example, "Good job, " "This is a model example if a neat and accurate book report," "I can tell that a lot of effort was put into this project by every member of the group."

**whole interval recording** Interval recording which records the occurrence of a behavior if it has occurred continuously throughout the designated time interval (*see interval count and partial interval recording*).

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