

SECTION 12:

RESOURCES: ENVIRONMENT, TEACHING, AND REINFORCING

SECTION 12: ENVIRONMENT, TEACHING AND REINFORCING RESOURCES

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TEACHING NEW BEHAVIORS

Social Skills, Classroom or Playground Desirable Behavior, Conflict Resolution, etc.

There are four basic steps to follow when teaching any new behaviors:

- 1. Modeling:**
Students are shown examples of competent use of the behavior;
- 2. Role-Playing:**
Students are requested to practice the behavior;
- 3. Performance Feedback:**
Students are provided with constructive feedback regarding the adequacy of their performance;
- 4. Generalization and Maintenance:**
Students are encouraged to use their newly learned behaviors in many settings. Support in the classroom, at home, and in peer groups optimizes outcomes.

Each step is discussed below:

Modeling

“learning by imitation”

Characteristics of the selected models:

- Skilled at the behavior
- High status with peers
- Same sex, approximate age, social status
- Friendly and helpful
- Rewarded for modeling (*very important)

Modeled behavior:

- Keep simple - one skill at a time
- Minimize irrelevant details
- Use repetition
- Use several different models

At least two examples should be modeled for each behavior so that the students are exposed to examples in different situations.

Role Playing

Students need to learn to only **what** to do, but **how** to do it.

Works best when student:

- Chooses to participate
- Has commitment to behavior role playing

Feedback

Positive reinforcement for enacting role-playing behavior. Forcing role-playing is not recommended.

Generalization

Training sessions should be conducted in settings that most closely resemble the application setting. For social skills, assign “homework” in which students try out the social skills they have role-played, in real life situations and report back on success. Sometimes pairs of students can agree to observe each other trying it out in other settings.

Encourage staff, relatives, and friends to provide verbal praise to students. Train students to reinforce themselves when practicing a new skill as well.

Environmental Factors Survey

School: _____

Classroom: _____

Informant(s): _____

Date: _____

Physical Conditions of the Environment	YES	NO	COMMENTS/CONCERNS
Is the room clean? Are there any noticeable odors?			
Is the lighting adequate for learning?			
Is the temperature comfortable?			
Is the room overcrowded? (too many students/desks) Does each student have a desk and is it set to the appropriate height?			
Does the seating arrangement provide for easy and safe movement around the classroom? Can all students see/hear?			
Is the environment visually over/under stimulating?			
Is the noise level appropriate for a learning environment? (consider fluorescent lighting, outside noise, etc.)			
Environmental Events/Peer Interactions:	YES	NO	COMMENTS/CONCERNS
Have students been taught how to manage unexpected events? (i.e., fire drills, guest at the door, substitute teacher)			
Are the students in the classroom developmentally compatible? (i.e., size, age, cognition, achievement)			
Are there any on-going peer/group conflicts which may be detrimental to learning?			
Are conflicts (peer to peer/peer to adult) addressed and resolved?			

Classroom Schedule and Curriculum Expectations	YES	NO	COMMENTS/CONCERNS
Has the classroom/school schedule been clearly outlined and, if necessary, taught?			
Do all students understand the schedule? Are all students able to follow the schedule?			
Have students been explicitly taught how to transition from one activity to the next? Is there a signal to mark transition times?			
Have students been explicitly taught the rules and expectations of unstructured time? Is there a signal to mark unstructured time?			
Are all students in the classroom able to handle/cope with unstructured time? Is there a plan for those who can't cope?			
Is the level of instruction compatible with the ability (cognitive and achievement) of all students? Are State Standards taught?			
Is the classroom instruction provided in several modalities to complement different learning styles?			
Students' Physiological and Emotional States	YES	NO	COMMENTS/CONCERNS
Are teachers and staff educated to discern signs of anxiety, challenged attention, depression, etc, in children?			
Are resources/supports offered to families who lack basic needs? (food, shelter, etc.)			
Are referrals consistently made to address vision, hearing and other medical/health issues?			
Are resources available and offered to address social problems? (conflict resolution, anger management, social skills training, out-side counseling, etc.)			
Is there a clear, consistent method to deliver prescribed medications? Has the student been taught the procedure?			

Adapted from the Positive Environmental Checklist by Albin, R. W., Horner, R. H., & O'Neil, R. E. (1993). Proactive Behavioral Support: Structuring and Assessing Environments. Eugene, OR, Specialized Training Program, University of Oregon.

KEY ELEMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT A CHECKLIST

Learning Environments	+ or -	Notes:
Areas of the classroom are clearly defined with visual/structural parameters		
Each learning environment has a clear purpose or function		
Distractions are minimized in the direct instruction and independent work area areas		
Children are seated and positioned to maximize focus on task or person		
Materials needed for activities are in appropriate places in the classroom where students can access them easily		
Materials are clearly marked with visuals for all students to see		
Materials are age and developmentally appropriate for the students		
Adaptations are made to materials where appropriate to maximize student success		
DIS services are provided in the least restrictive environment possible		

KEY ELEMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT A CHECKLIST

Activities	+ or -	Notes:
Activities have a clear functional purpose		
Activities are age and developmentally appropriate		
A variety of activity-types are available including sedentary, active, group, independent, cooperative, teacher directed, and independent activities.		
Students have access to the general education curriculum and typically developing peers for activities whenever appropriate		
Students are actively engaged in goal directed and/or social activities during free time		
Each student is engaged in at least part of each classroom activity, using same or similar materials as other students and carrying out objectives that are “invisibly” embedded in the ongoing activity		
In large group activities, students are actively addressed at least every 2-3 minutes by “lead” teacher		

KEY ELEMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT A CHECKLIST

Instructional Strategies and Programs	+ or -	Notes:
A variety of instructional strategies are being used and are based on the skills being taught and the students strengths.		
Specific curriculum (eg. PECS, social stories/comic strip conversations, etc.) are implemented as intended and when appropriate.		
Task analysis with forward or backward chaining used when appropriate.		
Whole task vs. Partial task presentation used when appropriate.		
Direct instruction (1:1/DIS/ Discrete trial) is used as necessary to teach initial acquisition of skills.		
Skills taught in direct instruction (1:1, DIS) are generalized into classroom/group activities as soon as possible.		
A variety of prompts are used and based on the skill being taught and the individual student.		
Error correction strategies are used consistently and are appropriate to the given task.		
Data is collected and progress is documented on an ongoing basis.		
Consistency in teaching is observed across trainers.		

KEY ELEMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT A CHECKLIST

Schedules	+ or -	Notes:
A classroom daily schedule of class activities is posted where all students and staff can see it.		
The classroom schedule is consistent and predictable from day to day.		
A staff schedule is posted outlining staff responsibilities.		
Students planning/organizational skills are assessed and goals are developed if appropriate.		
Instructional programs for planning/organizational skills are developed and specify setting, materials, prompts, error correction and reinforcement to be used.		
Targeted students have individual schedules which include each major transition.		
Individual student schedules are appropriate for each student's functioning level.		
Individual schedules are designed to support independent transitions, organization and planning.		
Schedules are reviewed with students/staff on a daily basis and are used as a tool to teach organizational/planning skills.		
Changes or new activities are visually indicated on the schedule.		

KEY ELEMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT A CHECKLIST

Transitions	+ or -	Notes:
Students transition skills are assessed and goals are developed if appropriate		
When appropriate, instructional programs for transition skills are developed and specify setting, materials, prompts, error correction and reinforcement to be used.		
Transition objects or icons are used when appropriate		
Students are actively <u>taught</u> to use the schedule and transitional objects.		
Destination points are visually marked.		
Transition path is clear and easy to navigate.		
No major distractions are present along the transition path.		
There are clear and consistent signals used to indicate need for transition.		
Teacher or activity is prepared when the student reaches the destination.		
When appropriate, students are taught how to wait using appropriate visual cues and activities.		

KEY ELEMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT A CHECKLIST

Rules and procedures	+ or -	Notes:
Procedures for materials storage and accessing materials are taught, reviewed and reinforced on a regular basis.		
Procedures regarding classroom boundaries (teacher's desk, storage areas, etc) are taught, reviewed and reinforced on a regular basis.		
Routines for entering, exiting, and moving within the classroom are taught, reviewed and reinforced on a regular basis.		
Procedures for getting help, getting a drink, going to bathroom, pencil sharpening, etc. are taught, reviewed and reinforced on a regular basis.		
Procedures for free-time and/or quiet areas are posted, taught, reviewed and reinforced on a regular basis.		
Procedures for transitions at recess, lunch, dismissal, and other predictable times are taught, reviewed and reinforced on a regular basis.		
Above procedures are posted visually when appropriate <u>OR</u> students are able to tell most of the procedures.		
Homework policies are reviewed and reinforced on a regular basis.		
Classroom rules regarding behavior expectations are posted, taught, reviewed, and reinforced on a regular basis.		
Classroom rules are stated in positive language.		
Classroom rules are limited to no more than 3-5 rules.		

KEY ELEMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT A CHECKLIST

Student Communication	+ or -	Notes:
Students communication skills are assessed and appropriate goals are developed		
Instructional programs for expressive communication are developed and specify setting, materials, prompts, error correction and reinforcement to be used		
Students have appropriate expressive systems to initiate, request, state needs, protest and make choices		
Expressive systems are conventional so that peers and “untrained” responders can comprehend them		
The environment is set up so that students need to communicate frequently		
Student initiated communication is responded to immediately		
All adults respond to student communication similarly		
Communication system is used across the school day and in a variety of environments		
If PECS is used, staff are following the protocol as outlined in the manual		

KEY ELEMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT A CHECKLIST

Personal Independence & Competence	+ or -	Notes:
Independence is facilitated by an adult when necessary, but not excessively to promote prompt dependence		
Students set up, complete and put away activities or are learning these skills		
Students are able to learn observationally/imitate others or are working to learn these skills		
Students abilities to stay on task and work independently are assessed and goals and objectives are developed as appropriate (i.e. on task time, sequences multiple tasks)		
Instructional programs for on task and independent work skills are developed and specify setting, materials, prompts, error correction and reinforcement to be used		
What independent work, amount of work, and what student should do following independent work are specified using visuals whenever possible		

KEY ELEMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT A CHECKLIST

Motivation	+ or -	Notes:
Ongoing reinforcer assessments are being conducted with preferred items documented where all staff can access.		
A variety of student selected rewards are available (activities, foods, tangibles, etc.).		
Reinforcement contingencies are visually mediated (token systems, behavior contracts, etc)		
Students pre-select the rewards from reward menus prior to beginning the designated task/interval.		
Reinforcement plans are contained within behavior plans and instruction plans for each student goal.		
Staff provide sufficient rates of enthusiastic social praise.		
Rewards are delivered in a timely manor based on the pre-set criteria specified.		
Highly desired activities follow less desired activities on the daily schedule.		
Student motivation is kept high through frequent changes in materials/activities		
Student motivation is kept high through maintenance trials/insured success during difficult tasks.		

KEY ELEMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT A CHECKLIST

Behavior	+ or -	Notes:
Students are given adequate access to positive reinforcement and feedback from staff re: appropriate behavior.		
Minimal social engagement occurs around unwanted behaviors.		
Intervention occurs early in the sequence of escalation.		
Staff utilize proactive strategies to manage behaviors rather than negative/punitive consequences.		
Students who engage in behaviors which are dangerous or interfere with learning have written Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs).		
BIPs are in writing and posted where all staff have access to and have been trained in plan implementation.		
Behavior plans are based on functional assessment information.		
Behavior plans include prevention, response to behavior, teaching and reinforcement of the alternative behaviors.		

Behavior	+ or -	Notes:
Replacement behaviors/alternative behaviors are being actively taught and there are instructional programs developed specifying setting, materials, prompts, error correction and reinforcement to be used.		
Ongoing data is being collected on target behaviors and replacement behaviors.		
Incident reports are used when appropriate.		
Physical management of students is not used except in emergency situations.		
Staff are trained in District and/or State approved strategies for responding to assaultive behavior and/or emergency behavior.		
BIPs implemented consistently by all teachers.		

KEY ELEMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT A CHECKLIST

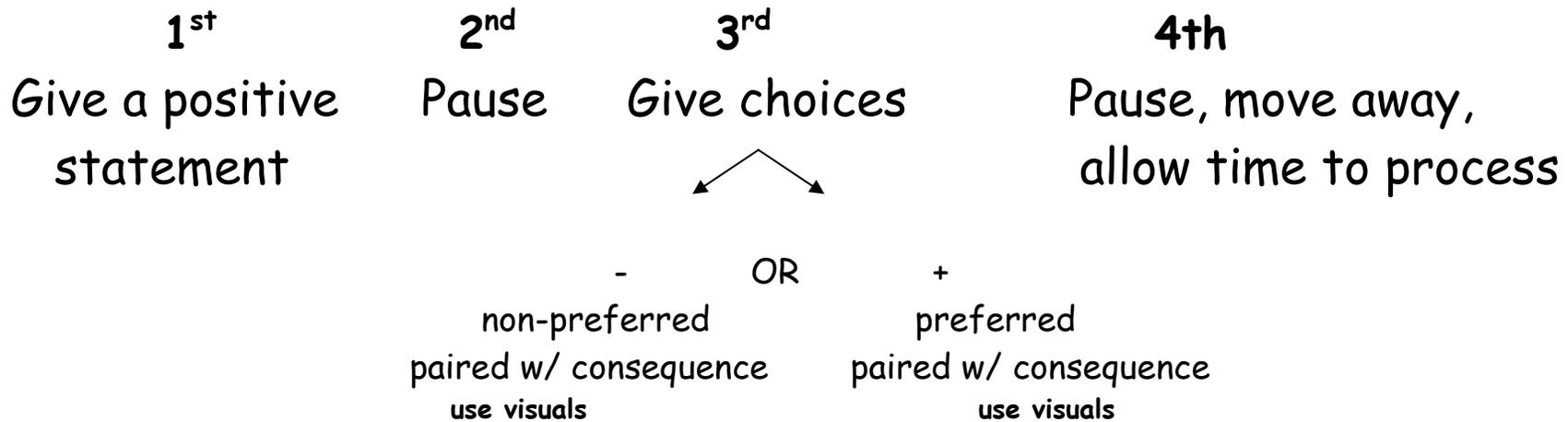
Staff Roles and Responsibilities	+ or -	Notes:
Teacher communicates with staff and volunteers regarding their specific role and responsibility.		
Teacher communicates with staff and volunteers regarding confidentiality.		
Teacher communicates with staff and volunteers regarding professionalism.		
Communication with parents and agencies is channeled through the teacher.		
A consistent place or time is established for exchange of pertinent staff information.		
Staff training for program implementation is provided by teacher.		
Teacher provides regular feedback to classroom staff regarding program implementation		

KEY ELEMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT A CHECKLIST

Documentation	+ or -	Notes:
Regular, consistent documentation of skill acquisition for IEP/goals and objectives is completed.		
Programming decisions are based on skill acquisition data.		
Teacher communicates with parents as per IEP regarding skill acquisition.		
Staff are trained in data collection systems.		

Notes:

OFFERING CHOICES



EXAMPLE:

<p>"You have had a great morning, so far."</p>	Pause	<p>"If you do not get done, you will need to finish during recess."</p>	OR	<p>"You can finish now, and go to recess."</p>	Pause, move away, allow to process
<p>"You have been quiet & paying attention during circle"</p>	Pause	<p>"You are being loud & touching others & will need to sit in quiet time away."</p>	OR	<p>" You can sit quietly with hands in lap and stay for snack."</p>	Pause, move away, allow to process

Pit Crews: Utilizing Peers to Positively Shape and Cue Positive Behaviors

Diana Browning Wright

Utilizing Peer Disapproval Often Backfires

Often teachers are exasperated by the behavior of a student in their class and seek to utilize peer disapproval as a method of motivating behavior change. This approach often backfires, as the student will accept negative attention as a way of feeling empowered, even at the cost of ridicule. This approach relies on challenging the student's sense of belonging, one of the five major life needs. (Belonging, Fun, Physical Needs, Empowerment and Freedom are the five needs identified in many different theoretical models.) When a student's sense of belonging is sufficiently challenged, challenging behaviors often increase, and the teacher's ability to "reach and teach" that student is reduced. This punishment approach, whether or not the behavior is eliminated, will often cause yet another unwanted outcome: "flight or fight," the side effects of punishment. In this situation the student physically or mentally withdraws from teacher influence and control as a result of the ostracizing technique; the "flight" side effect. Teachers sometime refer to this withdrawal as "passive aggressive" behavior. Alternatively, the student may demonstrate an escalation of challenging behavior, resulting in physical or verbal outbursts as a result of the negative interaction, the "fight" side effect.

Utilizing Peers to Shape, Model, Cue Behavior Can Avoid Side Effects

One way to achieve success in using peers to change behavior that can be more positive in approach and therefore result in less of a likelihood of side effects is called "Pit Crews." This technique relies on peers to shape, model and cue behavior in such a way that the student feels more empowered, while maintaining a sense of belonging. The overall goal of this program is to enhance a wide range of rule-following behaviors through the use of cueing and reinforcing prosocial behaviors that are minimally intrusive and minimally time consuming.

Pit Crew Description

The selected student receives "?" cards or "+" cards from the selected 2-3 peer "pit crew" members during an activity period the teacher has selected. "?" cards are given when the student is either about to enter a time period or activity he/she may have had difficulty with in the past, or when he/she has already begun engaging in a behavior that is not rule-following. This "?" card serves as a prompt or cue to begin, or switch to, the positive behavior the "pit crew" is to address. The "+" card is given during a time in which he/she is demonstrating the desired behavior or immediately after the student switches to the positive behavior after receiving a "?" card. At the end of the monitored time period, the teacher asks key questions. The monitored time period varies from 30 minutes to a full day, depending on the age and other characteristics of the students as well as how long the "pit crew" has been working with the student.

Key questions:

- For the "pit crew": "Did you find times to give your friend a "?" card that you thought might be helpful?"; "Did you find times to give a "+" card because your friend was on track? (i.e., class/activity rules were being followed well)" "Did you feel you were doing your best to help your friend?"
- For the "friend": "Did you find it helpful to be reminded before you had trouble, or after you got off track, by receiving a "?" card?"; "Did you feel your friends were doing their best to give you "+" cards when you were on track?"

If the teacher decides to utilize reinforcement other than the positive attention of the “pit crew,” reinforcement for both the student and the pit crew gains the best results. For example, a surprise reinforcer, such as extra time free time, or cokes after school, for both the student and the pit crew can be given, “because I am so pleased at how well we are all working together in this class to help each other do our best.” Alternatively, all can be contingently reinforced. For example, an opportunity to play a favorite game together at free time, 2 bonus points on the quiz of their choice, and so forth could be available if preestablished criteria are met, e.g., more than 10 “+” cards received in a 2 hour period.

Step By Step Methods For Instituting Initial Use of “Pit Crews” in the Classroom

Introduce the Concept

Sample dialogue to be altered for age level as follows:

“Students, I have noticed that some of us may need the help of all of us if we are to do our best in this class. What are some of the problem behaviors we have sometime in our class that we might want to change? (Brainstorm). I would like to establish “pit crews” for different students in our class whenever we believe that person could use our help to do his/her best. A “pit crew” is like the mechanics and other support people who cheer on the race car drivers. The driver does his best for a few laps and then comes in to hear how he/she did, what could be better next time, and then speeds on his way. The pit crew then watches to see how things go in the next lap. In our class, a pit crew will be any 2 or 3 volunteers who will help a friend do better. If you are the friend, you can expect your crew to give you “?” cards if you are about to go into a situation you might have difficulty with. That is to remind you to do your best. If your crew notices you are going out of bounds or off track, they may give you a “?” to remind you that you are off track. This may help you get back ON track. Your pit crew may give you a “+” card if they see you doing a really good job as well. If you are a pit crew member, your job is to give a card quietly, without talking at all, then return quickly and quietly to your work. I will tell you how many cards you will have, and how long a time period you have to give them to your friend. (Each member should have 2-3 “?” cards and 4-5 “+” cards minimally.) At the end of the time period, the pit crew and their friend will meet with me to hear how it went.” (If there are any contingencies you want to use, introduce them now, e.g., “If we all do a good job, there may be a surprise ahead,” or, “If we do a good job giving the cards, and receiving the cards, the team will earn extra free time.”) I will have a box on my desk. If you have a behavior of yours you want supported, or if you notice a friend’s behavior you want to help, suggest this in the box. (This is anonymous, so don’t have the students write who is recommending this.)

Establish the first and second “pit crews,” THEN a more problematic case

Identify two relatively high status students with minor behaviors. (You can even pretend their names were in the box!) If you want to publicly ask for volunteers, make sure there will be hands raised. You can pre-invite students to volunteer, then publicly request participation. (The goal is to enhance the student’s sense of belonging. Avoid at all costs situations in which no one will volunteer as that becomes a public humiliation.) Select students who themselves could use help with the behavior in question as pit crew members. If the teacher has been successful, by the time the targeted student gets a “pit crew,” he/she will have observed positive interactions and will likely have come to see this as a “circle of friends,” trying to help everyone do their best. Just knowing someone would volunteer to help is extremely validating for some of our more at-risk students who have received many negative peer messages in the past.

CLASSWIDE SYSTEMS TO CUE, SHAPE AND MODEL BEHAVIOR: STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS

by Diana Browning Wright

The goal of the following classwide systems is to provide the teacher opportunities to *shape, model and cue* behavior, ultimately achieving rapid classroom behavior change. These behavior support systems for whole groups of students rely on three principles: drawing attention to rule-following behavior, enlisting students as providers of reinforcement for their peers, and utilizing naturally occurring classroom activities and/or privileges contingently. These methods rapidly help teachers achieve a positive classroom environment because they facilitate meeting the common needs of students of all ages: “*power, freedom, fun, and a sense of belonging.*” When these four needs are amply met, difficult behaviors become much less prevalent and individual behavior intervention plans much less likely to be needed.

Rainbow Club¹

Each student in the class starts a time period (typically one week) with the first color of a six to eight color rainbow. This can be graphically presented in a wall chart or on a strip of paper posted on each student’s desk. As the week progresses, students earn additional colors. Teachers can hold up colors of the rainbow as they walk around the room as “cues” for rule following and task completion behaviors. During brief free time activities either at the end of the day or interspersed throughout the day, students may engage in activities for which they have earned eligibility. Having a special payoff at the end of the week can also be useful. Students themselves can suggest the highest status activities for each step in the rainbow and can participate in classroom meetings to establish where new activities fit in the hierarchy. Be ready to alter the system if it is found that the most highly desirable activities are listed below level 3.

Sample: Free Time Eligibility

1. **Red** free reading, notebook organizing, drawing at your seat, head start on homework
2. **Orange** all of **Red**, PLUS: board games, flashcard reviews in pairs, work on art project
3. **Yellow** all of **Red and Orange**, PLUS: checkers, mosaic work, feed animals, make a bulletin board design proposal
4. **Green** all of **Red, Orange, Yellow**, PLUS: chess, computer games
5. **Blue** all of **Red, Orange, Yellow, Green**, PLUS: office aide time, run errands for teacher, permission to eat food
6. **Violet** all of **Red, Orange, Yellow, Green**, PLUS: small group CD listening with headsets, dyad basketball (indoor trash can hoops), small group talking lying on the floor

Special Friday: Blue or Violet may use materials or watch a movie in the back of the classroom

Establish the Operating Rules

Tell the students: “*If you ask for a card, or ask me to look at your behavior, (i.e., nagging) you can not earn a color. Think about what good students do.*” The behaviors you are looking for should be prominently displayed in icons or words, or even on the students’ desks on small reminder cards. (See attached samples.) Use statements such as, *I will be watching with different behaviors in mind for each of you, because each of us has different behaviors we need to work on.*

¹The author has created this method as a positive alternative to a widely used punitive system in schools. In the punitive version, color cards are used as a response cost system whereby violations result in progressive consequences symbolized by movement from green to yellow to red.

Coaching the Student with Difficulties

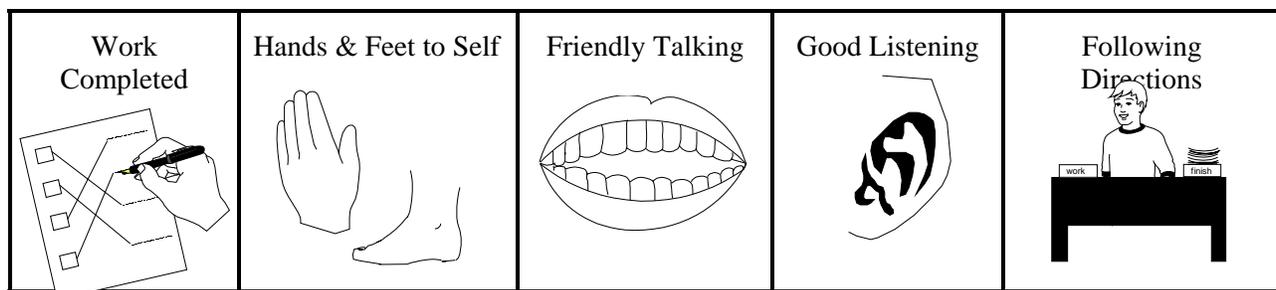
The most problematic students are the ones most in need of cuing with color cards, which become visual reminders of the need to follow rules. For example, take the student aside, confidentially inform him/her of the behavior(s) you will be looking for in the next 50 minute period, encouraging the student to show these behaviors. Walk around holding the array of color cards, looking questioningly toward the targeted student periodically.

Effective Use for Students with Difficulties

Remember: The program emphasis is on coaching a particular student on the specific behaviors he/she may want to perfect in order to advance a level in the next observation period, not on revoking status earned. One can, however, occasionally lower the student's status as a result of misbehavior, but continual threats and demotions will not likely achieve desired results. Consider warning the student privately that he/she is at risk if improvement is not shown in the next work period. Then, if necessary, non-emotionally change the card to a lower status, and provide encouragement about the prospect of re-earning the level in the next one or two work periods. Your goal is to be able to use the color cards as non-verbal cues that signify a whole range of expected behaviors you are looking for, and to have all or nearly all students at Blue or Violet by the last free-time session of the week. Even your best behaving, most rule following students should be striving to attain Violet. As a general rule, no student should arrive at Violet before mid-point in your eligibility period. Also, if at the end of the eligibility period (e.g., the week) the most difficult students have not advanced to at least level 4 or 5, your system is not motivating the most needy. Consider appointing coaches to help these students advance during designated classwork periods. Alternatively, focus your efforts on actively coaching the student with difficulties on which specific behavior he/she should aim to exhibit in the next work period, then be sure to catch the student doing the desired behavior and advance him/her a level for that behavior. Be sure that the taste of success happens frequently for all students or you will have students who believe they cannot be successful and therefore will sabotage the system.

Variation

If some student or group of students requires more frequent attention and reinforcement, consider an additional pacing/closure system. Place a small index card with lines that form five divisions on the student's desk. Using a marking pen, place a mark in each division progressively as you circulate around the room observing desired behaviors. When the student has five clearly visible marks, the card is completed and can be exchanged for the next color he/she is working towards attaining.



"Slot Machine" Game²

Older students are often very responsive to opportunities for "taking a chance or taking a risk" as a reinforcer. This element is emphasized in a classroom-wide game.

Tickets are given frequently to students, paired with the appropriate social praise that specifically states which desired behavior earned the ticket and why. (e.g., "You raised your hand to say that, Josh, and waited until I could break to call on you. That really helps me keep the class focused.") One half of a two-segment ticket is given to the student and the other half is kept for the up-coming drawing. These tickets can be easily made, or are available inexpensively through many theater supply stores, teacher supply outlets and catalog companies. When the selected time comes for a drawing (e.g., last 7 minutes of class), 4-5 different ticket numbers are pulled in turn. Each student with a winning ticket comes individually up to the front of the class for his/her moment of glory, choosing one of 4 to 6 upside down numbered cups on a table. Inside each of the numbered cups the teacher has placed a small strip of paper with a written description of the earned reinforcer. Potential reinforcers can be identified by students, then Xeroxed in list form. The list is then cut into strips with one reinforcer described on each coupon. Students must stay focused on the drawing because if their number is called and they need to come up to select a cup, they will not want to select one that has been already drawn. Initially the drawing should be held frequently, such as once per period. Potential reinforcers are only limited by the creativity of the teachers and students. A variety of privileges and contingent access to desired activities is suggested, as well as inexpensive tangibles. It is the opportunity to take a risk by selecting the cup that is most often the truly reinforcing element, not the quality of the earned privilege. Some commonly used reinforcers might include:

- * free hamburger at McDonald's or other fast food restaurants (usually available at no cost to educators if the educator requests certificates for academic incentives)
- * no penalty for one forgotten homework assignment
- * a pencil, or no-cost pencil borrowing privileges
- * right to be the first out the door for recess
- * permission to leave class briefly for a drink of water
- * do only odd-numbered math problems for homework
- * 5 minutes free time with a friend of your choice
- * 5 extra bonus points on a test of your choice
- * no penalty for leaving class to retrieve forgotten items
- * exchange seats with anyone for a particular work period
- * drink of water anytime
- * opportunity to be first out the door when bell rings

The class does not know which potential reinforcer from the longer menu will be placed under the cups. As each student is called to choose a cup, fewer and fewer cups with a reinforcer under them will remain. One cup can include a "gong" such as "Sorry, try again another day". This option would not typically be included for children under junior high age however. Older students usually find the opportunity to succeed at drawing a cup that does not contain the gong especially reinforcing, while younger children often find the "gong" a punisher. Students with fragile coping systems or low frustration tolerance or emotional disturbance may also not find the gong reinforcing.

² The author is indebted to G. Roy Mayer, Ph.D., Project Director of Constructive Discipline, an E.S.E.A. Innovative-Developmental Grant 1983, for initial descriptions of this system.

Ground rules are established so that students understand that tickets are not given to students who request them. The teacher silently holds up a ticket as a cue for rule following behaviors. The students come to understand that tickets will be given intermittently and that no one can predict when they will be given. Students then realize they should increase their appropriate behaviors to increase the likelihood of being "caught" doing the appropriate behavior. Frequently the class enjoys the activity as a whole and there is the laughter and social recognition for the person engaged in choosing the cup that might otherwise occur in a more negative manner. This activity gives students a sense of belonging to a group, having some *fun*, gaining some *power*, e.g., a privilege, and gaining some degree of *freedom*, e.g., to use the reinforcer when desired. It is important for teachers to assure all students periodically receive tickets or negative results can occur. Once the class has developed a strong interest in the game, often drawings can be held as infrequently as weekly and still maintain the desired positive behaviors. Be sure to fade down to less frequent drawings slowly, however, in order to keep student motivation high.

The teacher can selectively reinforce each student for the particular behaviors that the specific student most needs to develop. For one student it might be arriving on time, for another very shy student speaking out in class might be the behavior most desired. It is important for many students to gain tickets prior to each drawing. To facilitate this process, some teachers have used a student or adult aide who has been trained to distribute the tickets with teacher cues. The teacher might signal, "Ticket," then verbally announce "John is following directions" which provides the cue for the aide to walk over to give the ticket. Alternatively, the teacher might ask the aide to give 15 tickets or so throughout the lesson for "good listening during group instruction" or whatever a particular goal might be for the day.

Variations and Expansions

A rule can be instituted that further enhances the reinforcing quality of this system: The "winner" must retain the paper "coupon" to be cashed in when desired. Some students use their coupons at the first available time, while other students find simply storing up reinforcers satisfying. Having the student write his/her name on the back of the slip to avoid difficulties if it is either a lost or stolen is suggested for some groups of students with problem behaviors. Occasionally, a few students may even be observed giving their winning slips to others as a gift. This suggests that the coupon now is allowing the student to gain social recognition for his/her generosity. If the student enjoys the recognition, he/she will likely strive to earn more coupons in the future.

Frequency of giving tickets for appropriate behaviors can be varied independently of how frequent the drawings are held. Each student may have anywhere from one to ten or more tickets as he or she waits to hear the lucky numbers. Also, by watching students' reactions to the game and then asking them which reinforcers are enjoyed the most, it will be possible to identify the most potentially powerful reinforcers. It is possible to have students save their tickets from session to session, thereby increasing the students' perceptions that they may be a winner, or the teacher may elect to start with new tickets each session.

Some teachers find adding a class-wide consequence to be very effective. This can be done by having the slip of paper state the consequence such as: "Congratulations. You have won a Friday popcorn party for your class to be redeemed in the week of your choice." In this way social recognition/empowerment is earned for the student holding this coupon who must decide when to use it. Alternatively, some teachers have found that having a cumulative reward is helpful. For example, as soon as 400 tickets are earned by the class as a whole, the whole class will have a "good behavior" group surprise.

As with all effective classwide behavior programs, on-going modifications will be necessary to assure that the existing program meets the needs of the individual students and that the reinforcement needs of each student is identified.

Examples

This program has been successfully implemented in a variety of settings for a variety of purposes.

- **Junior high "basic skills" math class:** to increase homework completion and volunteering in class
- **High school remedial history class:** to increase homework completion and class attendance
- **After -school tutoring program:** to increase both tutor and tutee coming on time, and for successful use of both listening skills (tutee) and reinforcing skills (tutor)
- **A 6th grade class during sustained silent reading period:** to increase reading a book continuously to completion, maintaining silence, quickly beginning to read, and other desired individual behaviors

Golden Nugget Club

The teacher spray-paints a large quantity of small rocks with gold paint. During Golden Nugget Time, the teacher walks around, holding small rocks in her/his hand, which are the cue for rule following behavior. The teacher silently hands a rock to students who are following some rule he/she observes. At the end of the golden nugget time, each student with a nugget stands up. The student then attempts to guess the rule he/she was following when the nugget was given. If the teacher decides that the guess was correct, the student gains another nugget. (Note: It is not necessary to keep track of why the nugget was given; the teacher can decide on the spur of the moment whether the behavior the student names is the one the teacher had targeted.) If the other students make validating comments such as, Way to go, Steve!, the student is authorized to place the nugget(s) in a small box at the front of the room. Some teachers encourage the other students to give the nugget-earner high-fives on his/her way to and from the box. If the student is earning praise from the group, a sense of belonging is enhanced and social prestige, **power** is earned, often powerful reinforcement for many students. When the box is full, the class as a whole earns something special, which the teacher has frequently advertised as the payoff.

Consider whole class pay-off activities, some of which the teacher would have done non-contingently anyway, such as: an art lesson, extended library time, extra in-class free-time, a craft activity, use of school carnival game materials typically stored away on campus, a field trip, extra recess, longer recess time, a popcorn party, video access, and so forth.

Variations

Any cumulative, visually observable item could be used by creative teachers for this system, such as: colored fall leaves to completely cover a tree; Styrofoam popcorn to fill a large box made in the shape of a movie popcorn bag, pretend money to fill a bank; small balls to fill an enclosed basketball hoop, a tagboard pizza with places to adhere the sticker pepperoni and so forth.

Keys to Success

Be sure that praise is given from students, not just from the teacher. Use the item as a non-verbal cue, i.e., hold it up and look around expectantly. Frequently give the item to a student with difficult behaviors at the moment he/she is doing something correctly; you are shaping behavior. Not only are you recognizing the student for his/her success, the student will also be getting social recognition from peers for rule-following behaviors when, later, he/she attempts to name the behavior that was being followed. Have a short list of rules prominently displayed in the room or at the students' desks from which the student can guess.

Team Basketball Competition

Announce that basketball quarter is beginning. Announce that as coach, there are certain behaviors you hope to see in the quarter: List 3-5 rules, desired behaviors, outcomes, etc. Walk around the room, stopping at work groups of 4-8 students. Quietly whisper which student at the table is following a rule. If the other students whisper back a group validation, "Way to go, Steve", "Thanks, John" or an equivalent statement likely to enhance a sense of *belonging*, then the teacher quietly places the small ball he/she is carrying in the bucket or small box on the table. Be sure that each table is continually earning balls, i.e., keep up the competitive element. Hold up the ball (**cue**) as you look around for the table group and student you wish to reinforce. This can be accomplished while the teacher is correcting work or assisting students as long as movement around the room is occurring frequently. Alternatively, an adult or student aide who has been coached on the procedure can distribute the balls while the teacher is busy helping students with seatwork. At the end of the basketball quarter, have each team count their balls. The top two teams then select one team member to represent the team. He/she then comes to the front of the room for a free throw play-off competition. Standing behind a line, both students attempt in turn to make baskets in the trashcan basket. Have the remainder of the students in the room count each shot out loud, "11111, 222222, 333333," etc. This keeps the focus of the whole group for this brief process. Typically, it is not necessary to provide any further reinforcer. Some teachers of elementary age students, at the end of the free throws, have each of the winning team members give a high five to the losing team members, then return to their seat. High school teachers do not find this necessary or desirable. Teachers can choose to keep score of which team has the most points from day to day, if desired. It is important to assure that different students have opportunities to represent their group for free throws over time, and that the teacher makes sure the winning teams are varied from day to day. Also, be sure to have enough balls so that teams have at least 6 and up to 12 balls each.

Variations

Teachers have used small balls (nerf-ball soft 1" diameter are ideal), as well as crunched up pieces of paper. A small net laundry bag can be used to contain the balls by the dispensing party as he/she moves around the room, eliminating the need to continually return to a desk to get more balls.

CREATING POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTS THROUGH CLASS MEETINGS

The effectiveness of a positive approach depends on adult attitudes of mutual respect and concern for the long-range effects of interactions in the school environment on students. Family and class meetings provide the best possible circumstances for adults and students to learn cooperation, mutual respect, responsibility, and social skills. These are the important long-range goals that inspire many parents and teachers to try class and family meetings, but here are many more immediate fringe benefits.

Teachers, for example, are relieved to get out of the roles of policeman, judge, jury, and executioner when problems occur. Whenever students come with problems, teachers can simply request that the problems be put on the class meeting agenda. This alone is enough of an immediate solution to give the student satisfaction, while providing for a cooling-off period before trying to solve the problem.

Students are often able to solve problems much better than the teacher. They have many excellent ideas when they are allowed and encouraged to express them. Teachers are frequently amazed at the academic and social skills students learn in class meetings. Because the students are intensively involved in solving problems that are so relevant for them, they learn listening skills, language development, extended thinking, logical consequences of behavior, memory skills, and objective thinking about the value and mechanics of learning.

Teachers find that students are much more willing to cooperate when they have been involved in the decisions, even when the final solution is one that has been suggested by the teacher many times in the past to no avail.

Before outlining things to do in order to have a successful class meeting, we will look at some attitudes and actions to avoid:

1. Do not use the class meeting as another platform for lecturing and moralizing. It is essential to be as objective and nonjudgmental as possible. This does not mean you cannot have input into the meetings. You can still put items on the agenda and give your opinion and have an equal vote.
2. Do not use the class meeting as a guise to continue excessive control. Students see through this approach and will not cooperate.

Class meetings should be held every day (or at least three times a week). If class meetings are not held often enough, students will be discouraged from putting items on the agenda, because it will take too long to get to them. A cooling-off period of a few hours or days is recommended before discussing a problem. However, it is discouraging to have to wait much longer than three days. (A shorter cooling-off period is recommended for younger students. In kindergarten, one hour is often long enough).

Final decisions are made by a majority vote. This does not cause feelings of division in a class meeting when a positive atmosphere has been created. It provides a great opportunity for students to learn that everyone doesn't think and feel the same way they do. Students also learn that it is impossible to have everyone agree, but they can still cooperate.

Several ideas must be explained and discussed with students before actual agenda items are dealt with. During the first meeting, get the students involved as much as possible while teaching them the purposes of class meetings, the importance of mutual respect, how to give compliments, how to solve problems with logical consequences, the Three Rs of Logical Consequences, how to use the agenda, and the importance of a cooling-off period.

<p>Purposes of Class Meetings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To give compliments 2. To help each other 3. To solve problems 4. To plan events 	<p>The 3 Rs of Logical Consequences:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Related 2. Respectful 3. Reasonable
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Many Teachers start every meeting by asking the students, "What are the two main purposes of class meetings?" The two main purposes are to help each other and to solve problems.

SOME OF THE GOALS OF CLASS MEETINGS

Teaching Mutual Respect

Teach students the meaning of mutual respect by having a discussion of the following questions:

1. Why is it disrespectful when more than one person talks at the same time? (We can't hear what everyone is saying. The person who is supposed to be talking feels others don't care, and so on.)
2. Why is it disrespectful to disturb others? (They can't concentrate and learn from what is going on.)
3. Why is it important to raise your hand before speaking in a large group? (To achieve order and remember whose turn it is.)
4. Why is it important to listen when others are speaking? (So that we can learn from each other, to show respect for each other, and because we like to have others listen to us.)

Giving Compliments

Spend some time with students exploring the meaning of compliments. This can be done informally during the first meeting. Compliments should consist of acknowledgment of others in the following areas:

- Accomplishments
- Helpfulness
- Sharing

Have students brainstorm for specific examples in each of these areas. Then teach them to use the words, “I would like to compliment (*a person’s name*) for (*something specific that person did.*)” Using these words helps students stay on the task of recognizing what others do, rather than what they wear. In classrooms where the prescribed phrasing is not used, the compliments tend to be less specific and more superficial.

At first many students might say, “I would like to compliment Jill for being my friend.” Let this go for a while during the learning process, but eventually the group could again brainstorm on how to be specific about what a friend *does* that we would like to recognize and appreciate.

The teacher may start by giving several compliments (from notes taken during the day, when noticing things students did that would merit recognition). Many teachers model giving compliments every day, making sure they eventually cover every student in their classroom, a few each day.

During the first meeting, have everyone give at least one complement to make sure they know how to do it. If anyone has difficulty, have the class help by asking if anyone has any ideas on something that happened to this student during the day that he could compliment someone for, like playing with him during recess. After this, compliments can be optional.

It is also a good idea to teach students to say thank you after receiving a compliment. You may have several class meetings just for compliments while the students learn this process.

Many teachers have shared that compliments alone have been significant in creating a more positive atmosphere in their classrooms. After the initial awkwardness, students love looking for, giving, and receiving positive recognition. *Where else do they get this valuable training?*

Teaching Logical Consequences

Teach the students to use logical consequences before trying to solve any problems. Start by having them brainstorm regarding natural consequences by asking what happens in the following circumstances if no one interferes:

- If you stand in the rain? (You get wet.)
- If you play on the freeway? (You might get killed.)
- If you don’t sleep? (You get tired.)
- If you don’t eat? (You get hungry.)

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Next explain that logical consequences are things that can be done to help others learn to be responsible for their behavior, when it is not appropriate to let them experience a natural consequence. Explain the Three Rs of Logical Consequences. Logical consequences must be 1) related, 2) respectful and 3) reasonable. It is a good idea to make a poster of the Three Rs for reference in the classroom. Have students brainstorm and discuss logical consequences for the following problems:

- Someone who writes on the desk
- Someone who rides the tether ball
- Someone who doesn't do their work during class time
- Someone who is late for school

It is much easier to give the students practice by working on hypothetical situations, so that there is a lack of emotional involvement and blame. After receiving as many suggestions as possible, go over each one and have the students see how well they fit the criteria for the Three Rs for Logical Consequences. Have them discuss their reasons why they think each suggestion is or isn't *related, respectful, reasonable*. Also have them discuss whether each suggestion will be helpful to the person, or will it be hurtful? Have the class decide which suggestions should be eliminated because they do not meet the guidelines of the Three Rs or because they are in some other way hurtful.

When any of the Three Rs of Logical Consequences are not present, the Three Rs of Punishment will likely sabotage the teacher's efforts to make class meetings and effective methods of teaching responsibility, mutual respect, and how to cooperate. These side effects of punishment are:

1. Resentment ("This is unfair. I can't trust adults or my peers.")
2. Revenge ("They are winning now, but I'll get even")
3. Retreat, in the form of rebellion ("They won't catch me again." "I don't care about them,") or reduced self-esteem ("I am a bad person.")

THE HOW-TOS OF CLASS MEETINGS

Using the Agenda

Introduce the agenda to the group. Some teachers reserve space on the blackboard. Others keep a sheet of paper on a clipboard where it is easily accessible.

Explain to the students that you are going to teach them to solve problems rather than trying to solve all of them by yourself. From now on, instead of coming to you with problems, they can put their name on the agenda, followed by a few words to help them remember what the problems are about. Warn them that at first they may forget and still come to you for solutions, but you will remind them to put it on the agenda. Eventually they will stop coming to you for solutions and will remember to put problems on the agenda. These problems will then be solved during the class meetings. Students often come up with better solutions than teachers and parents and are then willing to cooperate because they were involved in the decision. When solutions do not seem to work, simply put the problem back on the agenda for more discussion and problem solving in a cooperative

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atmosphere. When you yourself put items on the agenda, be sure to *own* the problem, rather than trying to place blame. Students feel good about helping you with your problem. The items on the agenda are to be covered in chronological order in the amount of time allotted. Any problem that is not finished before the end of the meeting will be continued the next day.

Quite often, by the time an agenda item comes up for discussion, the person who put it on the agenda will say that it has already been taken care of. Some adults say, “Fine,” and go on to the next item. Others ask the student if she would like to share the solution.

Using the Cooling-Off Period

Explain why problems can't be solved when people are upset. With older students you can ask them why. With younger students, explain that the purpose of waiting a few hours or a few days before solving problems on the agenda is to give people a chance to cool off and calm down so that problems can be solved respectfully.

Meeting in a Circle

It is important that students sit in a circle for class meetings. Remaining at their desks not only creates physical barriers, which retard the process, but I have yet to see a class meeting where students could keep from fidgeting with items in or on their desk while remaining at their desks.

Take time to train students to move their desks with as little noise and confusion as possible. Some classes spend several days practicing. I have seen every kind of desk moved from all kinds of arrangements so that students could sit in a circle facing each other. The shortest time was fifteen seconds. Most can do it in thirty to forty-five seconds. Many classes take pride in their efficient desk moving with reinforcement.

Training can involve several steps. First you might ask the students what they think they need to do to move with as little noise and confusion as possible. They will usually come up with all the things necessary for a smooth transition. Then ask them how many times they think they will need to practice before they can implement their good ideas.

Some teachers like to assign seats. On the first day they have one student at a time move his or her desk and put the chair into the assigned space. Other teachers have a few move at a time, by row or by team. If they are noisy and disruptive, have them practice until they solve the problems. Once they have learned to do it quietly, they can move at once.

Class-Meeting Structure

The steps listed below were developed by Frank Medder and are helpful guidelines teachers can use for successful class meetings. Without these steps, many class meetings fail because there is not enough structure. Without structure, students are not immediately impressed with what the teacher is trying to accomplish and will become disruptive. The teacher then “gives up,” commenting to the student, “Well, obviously you don't want a class meeting now. We'll try again later when you are ready.” In other words, without adequate structure, the teacher ends up blaming the students rather

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than effectively managing the procedure.

1. Begin with compliments. Students who want to give someone a compliment will raise their hand and the teacher or student leader should go around the circle and call on everyone who has raised a hand. Go around the circle once and call on everyone who has a hand raised. Go around the circle once and call on everyone who has a hand raised. When going around the circle it is important to start and stop at the same place. This avoids the accusations of “unfair” when a teacher calls on students at random and arbitrarily chooses when to stop. There is always one who claims he didn’t get called on. Some teachers have their students pass a pencil or a beanbag, instead of raising their hands. The person who has the object in his hands may either speak or pass it on.
2. Read the first item on the agenda. Ask the person who wrote the item if it is still a problem. If she says no, go on to the next item. If another person is involved, ask her to explain her side of the story.
3. Ask the person who has been “accused” if she has a suggestion for a solution. If she does, ask the group to vote on her suggestion. If the majority vote agrees with the suggestion, go on to the next item.
4. If a solution is not suggested or if the majority vote does not go along with the suggestion, go around the circle twice for comments and suggestions. Start with the person who wrote the item on the agenda and end just before this person after going around the circle twice.
5. Write down every suggestion exactly as it is given. You will find suggestions on what to do if students are being hurtful rather than helpful (by suggesting true logical consequences) under “Common Questions” at the end of this article.
6. Read all the suggestions before asking for a vote. Instruct students to vote for only one suggestion. Read the suggestions again one at a time and write down the number of people voting for each suggestion.
7. When the final vote is in, if the vote entails a logical consequence, ask the person for whom the solution was suggested when he would like to do it and give two possibilities to choose from, such as today or tomorrow, or during recess or after school. There is some psychological benefit in giving students a choice of when they would like to complete the consequence. It gives them a sense of positive power and commitment.

This method provides a process that can be followed step by step. However, it is not so rigid as to eliminate room for teacher individuality and creativity. Some teachers do not feel comfortable with a majority vote. After all the suggestions are in, they ask the student whose behavior is of concern which suggestion he or she thinks would be the most helpful. These teachers claim that the student usually chooses the most logical, even when it is not necessarily the easiest. Other teachers say this does not work for them, because their students choose the easiest and it does not seem to help change the behavior.

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After observing a class meeting where a student was asked to apologize in front of the class for a misbehavior that was put on the agenda, one adult objected. She felt it was humiliating for the student. When the teacher then invited her to ask the student and other members of the class if it bothered them to apologize in front of everyone. The class unanimously agreed that it did not bother them. It is important for each teacher to be aware of the student's developmental levels and comfort with various consequences, rather than assuming all students and groups respond similarly.

Teacher Skills

We have discussed many of the skills students need to learn for successful class meetings. There are several teacher skills that greatly enhance class meetings. It is most important to model what you are hoping the students will learn mutual respect and cooperation. Teachers **should model courtesy statements**, such as *please, thank you, you are welcome*, and so on.

One of the most important skills that both models mutual respect and allows students to develop their capabilities is **open-ended questioning**. Any statement you might like to make can be put in the form of a question. If you want to let students know you think they are being too noisy, ask, "How many think it is getting too noisy in here?" It is especially effective if you ask the question both ways. If you ask how many think it is okay, also ask how many think it is not okay. The less you let your own biases show, the more you allow students to think. It is amazing how often students come up with the same kind of lecturing and moralizing statements they reject when they are spoken by an adult.

Open-ended questions can change an atmosphere from negative to positive, as in the following example. A teacher requested help with a student who was causing a great deal of trouble on the playground. The consultant felt the best way to handle the problems was through a class meeting. This teacher had never held a class meeting and asked for assistance, so the consultant used this opportunity to demonstrate.

Billy was asked to leave the classroom. The general rule is that you do not discuss a child who is not here, but in this case he knew that a positive atmosphere had not been created and did not want to take chances that Billy would be hurt by the comments.

The class meeting was started by asking who was the biggest troublemaker in the class. They all chorused, "Billy." They were then asked what kind of things Billy did to cause trouble. They mentioned fighting, stealing balls, swearing, calling names, and so on. These first questions allow the students to express what they have been thinking and feeling.

The next questions allowed the students an opportunity to think and feel in a positive direction. "Why do you think Billy does these things?"

The answers included such things as, "Because he is mean." "He is a bully." "Finally one student said, "Maybe it is because he doesn't have any friends." Another student chimed in that Billy was living out of home with newly met relatives.

When the students were asked to discuss what this might mean to Billy, they offered such ideas as how hard it must be to leave your family, move so much, and so forth. They were now expressing understanding *for* Billy, instead of hostility.

Everyone in the class raised his hand when asked, “How many of you would be willing to help Billy?” A list was made on the board of all their suggestions of what they could do to help. These included walking to and from school with Billy, playing with him during recess, and eating lunch with him. Specific volunteers were then listed after each suggestion.

Later, Billy was told the class had discussed the problems that he had been having on the playground. When he was asked if he had any idea how many of the students wanted to help him, he looked at the ground and replied, “Probably none of them.” When he was told that everyone of the students wanted to help him, he looked up with wide eyes and asked as though he couldn’t believe it, “Every one?”

When the whole class decided to help Billy by being his friend, he felt such a sense of belonging that his behavior improved dramatically.

Another skill is to be willing to **take ownership** for some problems you have been trying to lay on the students. A seventh-grade teacher shared her experience with toothpick chewing. It drove her crazy, because not only did she think it looked disgusting, but she found toothpicks lying all over the classroom and school grounds. It was a problem for her, but not for her students. She had lectured and implored the students many times to please stop chewing toothpicks. Nothing happened. Finally she put it on the agenda and admitted she could understand it was not a problem for them, but she would appreciate it if they would help her with a solution to her problem. Because they had only fifty minutes for class, they could not spend more than ten minutes a day for class meeting; so quite often they didn’t come up with a final solution for several days. On the third day of discussing toothpicks, one of the students asked the teacher if she had seen anyone chewing toothpicks lately. She realized and admitted that she hadn’t. This student observed that maybe the problem had been solved.

This is an excellent example of how many times just discussing a problem is enough to make everyone aware of it and to continue working toward solutions outside the class meeting setting.

Be as **non-judgmental** as possible. When students feel they can discuss anything without being judged, they will bring many things out in the open for discussion and learning. One teacher expressed concern that if you talked about some things, such as spitting in the bathroom, it might give other students ideas they hadn’t thought of before. As we talked, he realized that the students knew what was going on and that not talking about it openly would not make it go away.

Do not censor agenda items. Some adults want to censor items on the agenda that they consider “tattletale” items. What may seem like a tattletale item to you is a real concern to the student. Other adults want to eliminate items if a similar problem has been discussed before. Again, it may be similar to you, but unique to the student. The important thing to remember is that the process is even more important than the solutions. Even if the item seems the same to you, the students may solve it differently or more quickly or more quickly because of their past experience with the process.

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Finally, it is important to be able to **find the positive intent** behind every behavior. This enables students to feel validated and loved, an essential prerequisite to changing behavior. During one class meeting, the students were discussing a problem of cheating. The girl whose problem it was explained that she had looked at the words before her spelling test because she wanted to pass the test. Mr. Meder asked, “How many think it is really great that people want to pass their tests?” Most of the class raised their hands. Another boy admitted that he had been caught cheating and had to take a test over again. Mr. Meder asked, “Did it help you out?” The boy said yes. These are two examples of finding the positive in what could be seen only as negative.

COMMON QUESTIONS

Question: Don’t students need immediate solutions to their problems? I don’t think my students could wait for their problems to come up on the agenda.

Answer: I worked with another teacher who felt the same way. She had been having class meetings right after lunch to handle all problems that occurred during lunch recess. I encouraged her to try having her students put their problems on an agenda and wait at least three days to solve them in a class meeting. She later reported that she was surprised at how much satisfaction the students demonstrated just from the simple act of writing their problem on the agenda. That was their immediate solution. Their body language indicated relief as they walked away from the agenda. She also reported that three days later the discussion of the problems was much more rational and helpful because tempers had cooled considerably.

Question: What if a consequence that has been decided on doesn’t work effectively?

Answer: The decision should stay in effect until someone puts it back on the agenda. In one class they were having the problem of students leaning back in their chairs. The class decided that anyone who leaned back would have to stand up behind their chair. This did not work effectively, because too many students enjoyed standing up behind their chairs and it was disruptive to the class meeting. The teacher put this problem back on the agenda. The students agreed that it was disruptive and decided that anyone who leaned back would have to leave the class meetings as a reminder, but that they could come back when they were ready to sit correctly.

Question: What if someone feels that a consequence is unfair?

Answer: They can put it on the agenda. One class decided that Julia should have to write fifty sentences that she would not cut in line. She wrote the sentences but then she put it on the agenda that she did not think it was a fair, related consequence. She pointed out that since she had to do it, others might have to, and they probably wouldn’t like it either. One student asked Julia if she thought it had helped her decide not to cut in line anymore. She admitted that it probably had, but the class still agreed that writing sentences was not as reasonable as some other consequence might be. This was an excellent example of the kind of communication thinking, and cooperation that can be realized in group meetings.

Question: What do you do if students suggest punishment instead of logical consequences?

Answer: Eventually, when students become familiar with the process, they will usually work it out as in the foregoing example. To help teach the process, you might try asking students to state how they think their suggestions will be helpful and if it meets all Three Rs of Logical Consequences by being related, respectful, and reasonable. This is especially effective if it is required for every suggestion rather than just those that seem “suspicious.” Some teachers feel this takes too much time. They write down each suggestion given, and then the students decide which suggestions fit all the criteria of helpfulness and logical consequences before they vote.

Question: What if students start to “gang up” on a particular student?

Answer: This does happen sometimes, even after the students have learned to be positive and helpful most of the time. During one class meeting demonstration being done by Frank Medder, they were discussing the problem of a new student who had used “bad “ language on the playground. They seemed to be ganging up on him in hurtful ways. Frank redirected them though effective questioning. He asked, “How many know what it feels like to be a new kid in school?” Several students commented on their experience with this. Then Frank asked how many of them had taken the time to be his friend and tell her about school rules. A few raised their hands. Frank turned to the new boy and asked him if students used bad language at his old school. He acknowledged that they did. Frank then asked how many would be willing to make friends with him and tell him about our rules. Many raised their hands. They then went back to the regular format, but the atmosphere was now very positive and helpful. The students decided there wouldn’t be any consequences this time, because he didn’t know about their rules.

In one eighth-grade class meeting it seemed obvious that the student being discussed felt he was being ganged up on. The teacher asked the students, “How many of you would feel you were being ganged up on if you were in Bill’s position right now?” Most of them raised their hands. I then asked “How many of you would be willing to imagine yourself in the other person’s position when making comments and suggestions?” They all agreed they would and admitted it was funny they hadn’t thought of that before.

The students in this classroom had already decided that everyone would put their head down and close their eyes while voting, so that no one could be influenced by the vote of others or be worried that someone would get mad at them for their vote.

Question: What if a problem involves a student from another classroom?

Answer: Many schools have class meetings at the same time so other students can be invited from one classroom to the next. Before inviting another student into your classroom, have the students discuss what it might feel like to be called into another room. Have them discuss what they can do to make sure the invited student feels the purpose is to help and not to hurt.

In some classrooms, students brainstorm on positive things about the invited student so that they can start with compliments. Stuart was invited into Mrs. Peterson’s classroom because some students complained that he had stomped on their sandcastle. They started by complimenting him

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for his achievements in sports and his leadership abilities. Mrs. Peterson then asked Stuart if he knew why he destroyed their sandcastles. He explained that one time it was an accident and another time it was because the bell had rung anyway. Stuart was asked if he had any suggestions for solving the problem. Stuart suggested that he would like to be the sandcastle patrol to make sure no one destroyed sandcastles. The class agreed unanimously with his suggestion.

Starting with compliments reduces defensiveness and inspires cooperation. Some classes start all problem solving by complimenting both parties involved on the positive things other appreciate about them.

Question: How do you stop tattletales from being on the agenda?

Answer: You don't. These are so often the kind of problems that are real to students. If teachers censor agenda items, students will lose faith in the process. Also, when students use the class-meeting process, these problems lose their "tattletale" connotation because students are trying to solve them in helpful, rather than hurtful, ways.

Question: What do you do when a few students monopolize the agenda?

Answer: Put it on the agenda and let the students solve the problem. One teacher shared that she had this problem. Tommy was putting as many as ten items a day on the agenda. I told her to put it on the agenda, but she discovered that another student already had. The class decided that each person could put one thing on the agenda each day. This teacher admitted that if she had tried to solve the problem herself, she would have allowed three to five times a day, but she liked the student's solution much better.

Question: Can students put the teacher on the agenda if they have a complaint?

Answer: If teachers have captured the spirit of the class-meeting process, they will feel comfortable discussing their own mistakes as an opportunity to learn. This is excellent modeling for the students.

One teacher allowed his students to hold a class meeting to discuss his behavior. An item on the agenda for discussion was that the teacher had taken a bag of potato chips from a student during recess because of the school rule against eating on the playground. On the way back to the teacher's room he ate some of the potato chips. The consequence decided on by the class was for the teacher to buy the student another bag of potato chips-but he could eat half of them first, because the bag was only half full when he got it.

Another time, a student put the teacher on the agenda for making a student run around the track for misbehaving during physical education. The students decided that this was punishment rather than a logical consequence. They decided that the teacher should run the track four times. The teacher accepted their decision, but after running the track, he put it on the agenda and discussed that it was unfair for him to be required to run four times when the student had only had to run once. He used this as an opportunity to discuss how easy it is to get into revenge when punishment is involved.

Question: What do you do when students won't admit they did whatever they have been accused of?

Answer: Once an atmosphere of trust and helpfulness has been established, it is rare that students don't feel free to take responsibility for their actions. Before this atmosphere has been established, you might ask if anyone else in the class saw what happened. Some teachers have the student's role-play what happened. The role-playing usually gets so humorous that everyone is laughing. This sometimes inspires the reluctant student to tell how it *really* happened.

You could take this opportunity to ask some questions about why students might feel reluctant to admit they did something, such as, "How many of you would want to admit you had done something if you thought other people might want to hurt you, instead of help you?" "How many of you have had other people accuse you of doing something when you did not think you had done anything?" Many teachers have found it effective to ask the students if they would be willing to take the person's word that they didn't do it this time and put it on the agenda if it happens again.

Question: What do you do if students use the agenda as revenge? My students go to the agenda and if their name is on it, they put the person on the agenda who put them on.

Answer: This happens quite often before students learn and believe that the purpose of the agenda is to help each other, rather than to "get" each other. Many teachers solve this problem by using a shoebox for the agenda. They have students write their problem on different colored paper for different days of the week, so that they can tell which problems are the oldest. Some teachers also have students put written compliments in the box. These written compliments are read before the oral compliments are given. Most teachers who use the shoebox at first start using the open agenda as soon as they feel their students are ready for it.

Question: What should I do about students gathering at the agenda on their way into the classroom after recess?

Answer: If students are gathering at the agenda when coming into the classroom, making it difficult to start lessons, have a rule that the agenda call be used only when leaving the classroom. Sometimes just waiting until the next recess is enough of a cooling-off period for the student to decide that something wasn't serious enough to put on the agenda. Some teachers start out with this rule and then later, when the students can handle this without being disruptive, they allow them to use the agenda anytime.

Question: Is it really necessary to have class meetings every day? I'm not having that many problems and hate to take so much time?

Answer: The main reason for having class meetings every day is to teach a process. Many students do not really learn the process if there is a time span of a week between meetings. Several teachers have learned that having them every day can make the difference between success and failure. One teacher with a particularly difficult class was about to give up on class meetings until he started having them every day. He found that his students learned and trusted the process when it was done every day. The atmosphere of his class changed because the students learned positive skills, which they continued to use throughout the day.

Another teacher said she hadn't been having class meetings because she had a very cooperative class and that she wasn't having problems. She tried to have a class meeting when a big problem came up

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and found that the class could not handle it because they had not learned the process. This teacher had not understood the importance of class meetings as a process to teach students skills that enable them to solve problems when they occur.

Another teacher discovered that the reason his students weren't putting items on the agenda was that it took too long for items to come up when they had class meetings only once a week.

It is better to have class meetings every day if there are not any problems on the agenda, use the time after compliments for planning or discussing other issues.

Question: What if an item on the agenda involves a student who is absent?

Answer: If the absent student is the one who put the item on the agenda, cross it out and go on to the next item. If the absent student is the accused, skip it, but leave it on the agenda as the first item to be discussed when the student returns. This reduces the possibility that absences are because of the agenda. However, if you suspect that students want to be absent because their name is on the agenda, this should be discussed in a class meeting so that the class can decide what they need to do to make sure people know they want to help each other, rather than hurt each other.

Question: What if parents object?

Answer: Invite them to come and observe. Very few parents object after they have seen the class meeting in action. Some students may feel they can get special attention from their parents by complaining about being "picked on" in class meetings. Even when students try to describe class meetings accurately, it can sound like a kangaroo court to parents. Express to parents that you can understand their concern and would probably feel the same way if you hadn't had a thorough explanation. Some parents may come. Others will be reassured by your understanding and invitation.

If parents still object after visiting, or if they refuse to visit but still insist that their student cannot participate, arrange for their student to visit another classroom or the library during class meetings.

Question: What if students don't want to participate?

Answer: Students should not have a choice in this matter, just as they do not have a choice regarding their participation in math.

Question: How does this process work with kindergarten and first-grade students?

Answer: Great! Often these children will surprise their teacher with their skill in using the same vocabulary and the same problem-solving skills.

Younger students may need more help with the agenda, however. Some primary teachers have the students come to them or an aide and dictate what they would like to put on the agenda. Others have the students write their name and draw a picture to remind them of their problem. In these early grades, half the problems are often solved because the student can't remember what happened by the time their name comes up on the agenda.

Younger students may need a little more direction and guidance, so the teacher may need to be more actively involved than for older students. At the beginning of each meeting, Mrs. Binns has her first-grade students recite the purposes:

1. To help each other
2. To solve problems

They then recite the three rules:

1. Don't bring any objects to the circle
2. Only one person can speak at a time
3. All six legs must be on the floor (two human and four chair).

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

Secret Pals

Some teachers like to use the Monday class meeting for each student to draw the name of a secret pal for the week. The Friday class meeting is then used for each student to guess who his or her secret pal was by sharing what nice things that secret pal did for him or her.

Some preliminary teaching is important for this to be effective. First, have the students brainstorm on things they could do for a secret pal, such as leaving nice notes for him, sharing something with him, helping her, playing with him, smiling and saying hello every day, or leaving a piece of candy in her desk. After several ideas have been listed on the board, have each student write down at least five that they would like to do. They can tape this list on to their desk and cross off an item after they have done it. This reduces the possibility that some students will be overlooked. This has significantly increased positive feelings of friendship in many classrooms.

Chairperson

Many teachers rotate chairperson and secretarial duties. One student will be the chairperson *for* a week and will follow the format. The secretary is the person responsible for writing down all suggestions and final decisions.

Planning

There are certain decisions students cannot be involved in, such as curriculum (unless you want to encourage them to talk to the adults who make those decisions). However, there are many areas where students could participate in planning decisions. When students are invited to participate and help make the decisions, they are more highly motivated to cooperate in the fulfillment of those decisions.

Most classrooms have rules posted somewhere in the room. In one teacher's room the rules had the heading "We Decided." The rules were almost identical to those she had posted herself, but she

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noticed that cooperation and mutual respect improved when the students were involved in the discussion.

Many teachers have found that field trips are more successful if they are discussed first in a class meeting. Have the students discuss all the things that could go wrong on the field trip to make it a bad experience and decide on solutions to these potential problems. They can then discuss what they need to do to make it a pleasant field trip.

Class meetings have also been helpful in making the substitute's job easier. Have a discussion about substitutes. Ask the students what they could do to "bug a sub." After they discuss this, ask them how a substitute might feel when being "bugged." It is amazing how many students never consider the substitute's feelings. Ask for ideas on how to make things pleasant for the substitute. Then ask how many are willing to help instead of hurt. When class meetings are a regular part of classroom procedure, student misbehavior is reduced when there is a substitute because self-discipline and cooperation increases. When students forget, misbehavior is reported on the agenda.

How to End Class Meetings

When class meetings are effective, students often get so involved that they would like to continue beyond a reasonable time. This problem is eliminated if meetings are held just before lunch or recess. It is rare that students want to continue into lunch or recess time.

Enforcing Consequences

It is not necessary for the teacher to enforce the consequences decided upon by the group. The students will be very aware of what happens, and if another student should "forget," he or she will be reminded, or it will go back on the agenda.

Things Often Get Worse Before they Get Better

Remember this point so that you won't become discouraged. Students quite often don't trust that adults are really willing to listen to them and take them seriously. It may take some time for them to get used to this. At first they may try to use this new power to be hurtful and punishing, because this is the model they have been used to.

Keep your long-range goals in mind and maintain the courage to be imperfect. Many teachers have been tempted to quit before they make it through the rough part. Some probably do. Those who "hang in there" express their delight with all the benefits for themselves and their students as time goes on.

Possible Reinforcers

The following list of reinforcers are provided as possibilities to help implementers begin to brainstorm other ideas available in the student's environments. It will be important to remember that some children may find a reinforcer listed here as highly aversive rather than truly reinforcing. Developmental level, chronological age and unique likes and dislikes must always be considered in selecting potential reinforcers to validate by either discussing it with the student or caregivers or provisionally trying it out. Immediacy, frequency, power and variability needs of the student must be considered equally in selecting reinforcers.

Reinforcers Which are Available in Almost Any Classroom

- praise
- self-graphing
- model building
- field trips
- messenger
- party after school
- class proctor
- nurse's helper
- cafeteria helper
- library passes
- library time
- lunch counter
- stars on paper
- get to sit by a friend
- picnic
- class leader to restroom
- class leader to cafeteria
- smiles of teacher
- pat on back by teacher
- happy faces on paper
- music pass
- chance to help other students
- magazine selection
- choose a game
- extra privileges
- teacher for the day
- game equipment manager
- clean chalk board
- stamps on hand
- read to younger children
- listen to records
- cross walk patrol leader
- flag raiser
- sharpen pencils for the class
- self-selected activity
- roll call leader
- sit in front of classroom
- sit in back of classroom
- sit by windows
- sit by door
- feed classroom animals
- turn lights off/on
- go to locker one minute early
- daily, weekly, and monthly good reports home

Home Reinforcers *(The teacher may find these useful in developing plans involving multiple environments)*

- money
- candy
- gum
- praise (verbal)
- pat on the back
- extra TV time
- extra time before going to bed
- watch more TV shows
- new clothes
- extra play time
- new toys
- entertain friends
- extra portion at dinner
- choose a particular food
- records
- swimming time
- charting
- outside parties
- coloring
- soda
- get a pet

- friend to spend the night
- choose a TV program
- opportunity to try out for sports at school
- have a friend over for dinner
- increase allowance
- play a game with parents
- have a picnic
- making something in the kitchen
- have breakfast in bed
- washing/drying dishes
- wrap gifts
- buy something for car
- fewer chores
- sleep later on weekend
- go on an errand
- watch dad shave
- go out to restaurant
- go to summer camp
- choose own clothing to wear
- choose own hairstyle
- take pictures of friends
- use dad's tools
- put soda in refrigerator
- work to go to the circus
- not to have to wash clothes for a week
- put things on the wall
- not to have to iron for a week
- piggyback ride on dad
- lick stamps or stickers
- slide down the banister
- make something for the teacher
- video games
- choose a gift for a friend or sibling

Activities and Tangibles for Contingent Access at School

- storybooks
- pencil holder
- pictures from magazines
- stationery
- college materials
- compasses
- counting beads
- calendars
- paint brushes
- buttons
- paper mache
- pins
- book covers
- pictures
- crayons
- musical instruments
- coloring books
- drawing paper
- paints
- elastic bands
- records
- paper clips
- flash cards
- colored paper
- surprise packages
- pets
- bookmarks
- flowers
- pencils and names
- classroom equipment
- seasonal charts
- chalk
- pencil sharpeners
- clay
- computer, software
- subject matter accessories

Individual Activities and Privileges

- leading student groups
- putting away materials
- running errands
- displaying student's work
- subject matter
- choosing activities
- answering questions
- caring for class pet or plants
- making school materials
- show and tell
- reading a story
- collecting materials, papers, workbooks, etc.
- leading discussion
- recognizing birthdays
- working problems on the board
- dusting, erasing
- cleaning, arranging chairs
- assisting other children with drinking, cleaning

- first in line
- decorating room
- assist teacher to teach
- ushering, etc.
- outside help-patrols, directing parking
- making gifts
- correcting papers
- special seating arrangement
- presenting hobby in class
- “Citizen of the Week”
- “Best Kid of the Day”
- responsibility for on-going activities during school holidays (pets, plants, etc.)

Unusual Opportunities to Observe Novel Actions

- watch teacher organize material
- watch teacher playing sports
- watch teacher do handstands
- watch principal doing work at desk on roof
- watch new construction
- watch teacher riding tricycle around campus
- being principal's shadow for an hour
- see teacher eat something unusual
- see teacher in costume

Social Reinforcers for Individuals and/or Group

- movies
- dancing
- decorating classroom
- presenting skits
- going to museum, fire station, court house, etc.
- picnics, etc.
- playing records/cds
- puppet shows
- participating in group organizations (music, speech, athletics, social clubs, etc.)
- preparing for holidays
- talking periods
- making subject matter games
- recess or play periods
- parties
- field trips
- planning talent shows (joking, reading, music)
- musical chairs
- performing for PTA
- competing with other classes
- visiting another class

Expressions — Approval — Facial

- looking
- widening eyes
- smiling
- wrinkling nose
- winking
- blinking
- rapidly nodding
- giggling
- grinning
- whistling
- raising eyebrows
- cheering
- opening eyes
- laughing
- slowly closing eyes
- chuckling
- signaling OK
- skipping
- thumbs up
- shaking head
- shrugging shoulders

Playthings

- toys
- stamps
- cartoons
- whistles
- kaleidoscopes
- bean bags
- flashlight
- jumping beans
- headdress
- masks
- rings
- straw hats
- banks
- kickball
- address books
- playground
- equipment fans
- tape recorder
- silly putty
- badges
- toy musical instruments
- pins
- birthday hats
- ribbons
- play dough
- balls
- dolls
- puzzles
- doll houses
- combs
- make-up kit
- comics
- trains
- jump ropes
- stuffed animals
- pick-up sticks
- commercial games
- cowboy hats
- bats
- boats
- marbles
- blocks
- toy jewelry
- miniature cars
- jacks, snakes, yo-yos
- class pictures
- plastic toys (animals, soldiers, etc.)
- inexpensive household items (pots, cans, cardboard boxes)
- money (play, real exchangeable)

Physical Contact of Proximity

- patting shoulder
- leaning over
- touching arm
- getting on same level
- hugging
- tickling
- touching hand
- “high fives”
- squeezing hands gently
- guiding with hand
- helping put coat on
- eating with students
- sitting on desk near students
- walking alongside
- standing alongside
- shaking hands
- nudging
- combing hair
- tying shoes
- interacting with class at recess

Abstracted from: Wright, D.B. & Gurman, H.G. (1994). *Positive Intervention for Serious Behavior Problems: Best Practices in Implementing the Hughes Bill (AB2586) and the Positive Behavior Intervention Regulations*. Sacramento, CA: Resources in Special Education.

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Questions and Answers Teachers and Parents Ask About Using Reinforcement

- **Why should I reinforce a child for something he should be doing anyway?**

If the student is not doing what should be done, how then are you going to get the student started? Obviously if the individual is already performing successfully and is finding natural satisfactions, no further rewards are necessary. If not, rewards may be helpful. It seems strange that adults sometimes expect a student to work under conditions that the adult himself would not tolerate. For many students, doing well now for payment in the distant future (e.g. praise from parents on a report card, getting into college, mastering multiplication, etc.) is too far away to be motivating. Developing an ability to delay gratification takes maturity and a positive learning history.

- **I shouldn't have to bribe the student to get him or her to do what should be done!**

There are several points you will need to make:

- a) Webster's Dictionary defines "bribe" as accepting remuneration (a reward or payment) for doing something *illegal*.
 - b) Would you continue teaching or working at your job if they stopped paying for it? What if you were only paid every three years?
 - c) Do you appreciate receiving positive comments, recognition, a "thank-you," etc.?
 - d) Rewards should be viewed as a temporary expedient. As the student starts obtaining natural self-satisfaction, other rewards can be gradually removed as they become unnecessary.
- **"Won't the other students in the class become upset and behave negatively if some students are receiving special reinforcers?" (This is the most common concern expressed by teachers at all grade levels.)**

Because each group is different, there is no single answer or solution to this question. Surprisingly, more often than not, once a special reinforcement program has been designed for a single individual, the whole group improves.

Peers appear relieved at times and often cheer the success of their fellow student. It may be that a student's behavior has been punished so often or reinforced so infrequently that peers are pleased that the individual is now receiving rewards and that the group is becoming more pleasant.

Sometimes classmates or siblings in a family ask, "How come he or she gets special privileges?" There are several ways of dealing with this situation. It can be pointed out that the individual is receiving the reinforcers (special privileges, objects, or activities) for making progress. It is also possible to invite others to design programs for themselves in areas in which they feel they need to improve. That is, they can *not* have special rewards for doing something they already do well, but they *can* have special rewards for higher achievement in something they have not been very successful at doing. The emphasis is placed on *improvement* over *previous* performance. Students gradually come to understand that the emphasis is *not* on what one individual is doing in comparison with what some other individual is doing. Once the adult's "rule" is understood by the student to be "all persons are entitled to all of our support to help them improve a necessary skill," students redefine what is "fair" from "everyone gets exactly the same" to "everyone is equally entitled to special help." Both teachers and parents with several children can assist this shift by either offering group discussions on the concepts or by conducting personalized conferences with any student who expresses concern.

Sample Teacher/Student Dialogue

"John needs special help staying on task for twenty minutes. You don't have that problem, but I notice you have difficulty maintaining your quality of work (or you talk too much to your neighbor, or you aren't trying your best, and so forth.) If you would like a special program to help you with this, leave me a note anytime and I will schedule a meeting with you, talk to your parents as I did with John, and we can get your individual program going."

Sample Parent/Child Dialogue

"John needs our special help and encouragement to complete his homework efficiently. You don't seem to need as much support as John in that area, Nick. However, I notice you haven't been as conscientious about your chores lately as you have in the past. If you would like to work with me on designing a program for you on this, let's do it. In this family, we all want to be helping each other improve."

Reinforcement Continuum

REINFORCEMENT

INTRINSIC

"How I feel about myself for earning the certificate I am awarded."

Examples: self-praise, self-"satisfaction"

PRAISE

"What my teacher says, what my peers say, when I get a certificate."

Examples: from adults, parents, teachers, staff, peers

SOCIAL STATUS AND RECOGNITION

"I get out of class earlier than my peers to get the certificate; I am recognized as a certificate earner."

Examples: peers or adults

PRIVILEGES

"Whoever has earned a certificate gets first choice of free time activities."

Examples: choice-making, sense of "power"

CONTINGENT ACCESS

"First I earn the certificate, then I can use the new computer program I want."

Examples: Premack Principle: (If-Then, 1st __, then __), activities, free time

CLOSURE

*"The certificate is earned after completing the 10 steps on my chart.
I like finishing the chart."*

Examples: completing a set, finishing a list has compulsive features

TANGIBLES

"I get to choose from the tangible awards box when I get a certificate."

Examples: money, stickers, camera, etc.

PRIMARY — EDIBLES, PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSES

"Going on stage to get the certificate is extremely exciting because of the elevator ride to the award room"

Examples: food, natural/synthetic stimulants, repetitive behaviors, massage, pacing, rocking, nail-biting, self-stimulation

Name: _____

Choosing What I Like

It is important for your teachers to know what you really like to receive as a reward for doing your best. “Doing your best” means your actions are safe, respectful and responsible. When your actions are SAFE, RESPECTFUL and RESPONSIBLE, school becomes a great place to be for everyone. Sometimes rewards are given to students who make school a great place to be. This survey helps your teachers understand what types of rewards you like best. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. (You will note that statements repeat. We want to know not just what you like, but what you like when comparing two different types of outcomes.)

Please tell us what you like best. **Choose only one for each number.** Thank you!

1. _____ Your teacher puts an “A” or 100% on your paper (A)
 OR
 _____ You are the first to finish your seatwork. (CM)
2. _____ You get a bag of chips (CN)
 OR
 _____ Your classmates ask you to be on their team (P)
3. _____ You are free to do what you like in the classroom. (I)
 OR
 _____ You get a bag of chips. (CN)
4. _____ Your classmates ask you to be on their team (P)
 OR
 _____ You are the first to finish your seatwork. (CM)
5. _____ You are free to do what you like in the classroom. (I)
 OR
 _____ You get a bag of chips. (CN)
6. _____ Your teacher puts an “A” or 100% on your paper (A)
 OR
 _____ Your classmates ask you to be on their team (P)
7. _____ You are the first to finish your seatwork. (CM)
 OR
 _____ You are free to do what you like in the classroom. (I)
8. _____ You get a bag of chips. (CN)
 OR
 _____ Your teacher puts an “A” or 100% on your paper (A)
9. _____ Your classmates ask you to be on their team (P)
 OR
 _____ You are free to do what you like in the classroom. (I)
10. _____ You are the first to finish your seatwork. (CM)
 OR
 _____ You get a bag of chips. (CN)

11. _____ Your teacher puts an “A” or 100% on your paper (A)
OR
_____ You are the only one that can answer a question (CM)
12. _____ You get a candy bar. (CN)
OR
_____ Friends ask you to sit with them. (P)
13. _____ You are free to go outside (I)
OR
_____ Your teacher puts an “A” or 100% on your paper (A)
14. _____ Friends ask you to sit with them. (P)
OR
_____ You are the only one that can answer a question in class. (CM)
15. _____ You are free to go outside. (I)
OR
_____ You get a candy bar. (CN)
16. _____ Your teacher puts an “A” or 100% on your paper (A)
OR
_____ Friends ask you to sit with them. (P)
17. _____ You are the only one that can answer a question in class. (CM)
OR
_____ You are free to go outside. (I)
18. _____ You get a candy bar. (CN)
OR
_____ Your teacher puts an “A” or 100% on your paper (A)
19. _____ Friends ask you to sit with them (P)
OR
_____ You are free to go outside. (I)
20. _____ You are the only one that can answer a question in class. (CM)
OR
_____ You get a candy bar. (CN)
21. _____ Your teacher writes “perfect!” on your paper. (A)
OR
_____ Your paper is the only one shown to the class as a good example. (CM)
22. _____ You get a can of soda. (CN)
OR
_____ Classmates ask you to be the class leader. (P)
23. _____ You are free to go outside. (I)
OR
_____ Your teacher writes “perfect!” on your paper. (A)
24. _____ Classmates ask you to be the class leader. (P)
OR
_____ Your paper is the only one shown to the class as a good example. (CM)

25. _____ You are free to go outside. (I)
 OR
 _____ You get a can of soda. (CN)
26. _____ Your teacher writes “perfect!” on your paper. (A)
 OR
 _____ Classmates ask you to be the class leader. (P)
27. _____ Have only your paper shown to the class. (CM)
 OR
 _____ Be free to play outside. (I)
28. _____ You get a can of soda. (CN)
 OR
 _____ Teacher writes “Perfect” on your paper. (A)
29. _____ Classmates ask you to be class leader. (P)
 OR
 _____ Be free to play outside. (I)
30. _____ Have only your paper shown to class. (CM)
 OR
 _____ You get a can of soda. (CN)
31. _____ Teacher writes “Excellent” on your paper. (A)
 OR
 _____ Have your paper put on the bulletin board. (CM)
32. _____ A pack of gum. (CN)
 OR
 _____ Friends ask you to work with them. (P)
33. _____ Be free to work on something you like. (I)
 OR
 _____ Teacher writes “Excellent” on your paper. (A)
34. _____ Friends ask you to work with them. (P)
 OR
 _____ Have your paper put on the bulletin board. (CM)
35. _____ Be free to work on something you like. (I)
 OR
 _____ A pack of gum. (CN)
36. _____ Teacher writes “Excellent” on your paper. (A)
 OR
 _____ Friends ask you to work with them. (P)
37. _____ Have your paper put on the bulletin board. (CM)
 OR
 _____ Be free to work on something you like. (I)

38. _____ A pack of gum. (CN)
OR
_____ Teacher writes "Excellent" on your paper. (A)
39. _____ Friends ask you to work with them. (P)
OR
_____ Be free to work on something you like. (I)
40. _____ Have your paper put on the bulletin board. (CM)
OR
_____ A pack of gum. (CN)

Other suggestions about classroom rewards:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Reinforcement Inventory

Scoring Key

- _____ Adult Approval (A)
- _____ Competitive Approval (CM)
- _____ Peer Approval (P)
- _____ Independent Rewards (I)
- _____ Consumable Rewards (CN)

Step One: Determine the students preferred category or categories of reinforcement.

Step Two: Consider least intrusive reinforcers which can be delivered with enough frequency and variety to support the desired behavior.

Step Three: Consider whether this student requires a high degree of immediacy so that he/she understands that a specific behavior is earning the reinforcer.

Step Four: Consider how powerful the reinforcer will need to be to support the desired behavior. Remember a very powerful reinforcer that cannot be delivered frequently may not be sufficient to support the desired behavior.

Step Five: Remember to vary your reinforcers and involve the student in reinforcer selection. Also observe what the student frequently seeks. Your direct observations will often lead to more effective selection of reinforcers.

Note: This reinforcer survey has been used for many years and been modified multiple times by educators to better understand student behavior. The origin of this survey is:

Cartwright, C. A., & Cartwright, G. P. (1970). Determining the motivational systems of individual children. TEACHING Exceptional Children, 2:3, 143-149

PARENTAL SURVEY

This questionnaire is designed to help us find some specific individuals, objects, events, or activities that can be used as reinforcers in a behavior intervention plan.

A. Consumable Reinforcers: What does your child like to eat or drink?

1. What things does this person like to eat most?

- a. Regular meal type foods: _____
- b. Health foods (dried fruits, nuts, cereals, etc.) _____
- _____
- c. Snack foods (popcorn, potato chips, etc) _____
- d. Sweets (candies, ice cream, cookies, etc.) _____

2. What things does this person like to drink most?

- a. _____ c. _____
- b. _____ d. _____

B. Activity Reinforcers: What things does your child like to do?

1. Activities in the home or residence:

- a. Hobbies _____
- b. Crafts _____
- c. Redecorating _____
- d. Preparing food or drinks _____
- e. Housework _____
- f. Odd jobs _____
- g. Other _____

2. Activities in the yard or courtyard:

- a. Sports _____
- b. Gardening activities _____
- c. Barbecue _____
- d. Yard work _____
- e. Other _____

3. Free activities in the neighborhood (window shopping, walking, jogging, cycling, driving, swinging, teeter-tottering, etc.) _____

4. Free activities further away from the home (hiking, swimming, camping, going to the beach, etc.) _____

5. Activities you pay to do (films, plays, sports events, bowling, dining out) _____

6. Passive activities (watching TV, listening to the radio, records, or tapes, sitting, talking, bathing, etc.) _____

C. Manipulative Reinforcers: What kinds of toys does your child like to play with?

1. Toy cars and trucks _____
2. Dolls _____
3. Wind-up toys _____
4. Balloons _____
5. Whistle _____
6. Jump rope _____
7. Coloring books and crayons _____
8. Painting kit _____
9. Puzzles _____
10. Other _____

D. Possessions as Reinforcers: What kinds of things does your child like to possess?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Brush _____ | 2. Nail clipper _____ |
| 3. Hair clips/Hats _____ | 4. Comb _____ |
| 5. Perfume/Cologne/After shave _____ | 6. Belt/Fanny pack _____ |
| 7. Shoelaces/String _____ | 8. Loose change _____ |
| 9. Other _____ | |

E. Social Reinforcers: What kinds of verbal or physical stimulation does your child like to receive from others (specify from whom).

1. Verbal:
 - a. "Good girl/boy" _____
 - b. "Good work" _____
 - c. "Good job" _____
 - d. "That's fine" _____
 - e. "Keep up the good work" _____
 - f. Other _____
2. Physical Contact:
 - a. Hugging _____
 - b. Kissing _____
 - c. Tickling _____
 - d. Patty-cake _____
 - e. Wrestling _____
 - f. Bouncing on knee _____
 - g. Other _____

IDENTIFYING REINFORCERS

POTENTIAL REINFORCERS BY AGE APPROPRIATENESS

1. Elementary School Children

a) Edible reinforcers of all types including:

Penny candy	Lemon drops	Juicy fruits
Jawbreakers	Smarties	Orange sections
Ice cream	Marshmallows	Apple slices
M & M's	Milk	Cake
Chocolate	Apples	Raisins
Sips of fruit juice/soda	Popcorn	Candy canes
Lollipops	Gum	Crackers
Dates	Candy kisses	Doughnuts
Melon balls	Sugar cane	Pineapple chunks
Animal crackers	Candy corn	Cereals
Jelly beans	Crackerjacks	Candy bars
Pretzels	Lemonade	

b) Material reinforcers (student may either earn the right to use them without owning them or may receive the item to keep):

Jump ropes	Hairbrushes	Address books
Silly putty	Bookmarkers	Jacks
Playground equipment	Stuffed animals	Ribbons
Story books	Pencils w/names	Coloring books
Pictures from magazines	Snakes	Comics
Toy musical instruments	Pennies/foreign coins	Toy watches
Miniature cars	Cards	Birthday hats
Combs	Pick-up sticks	Collage materials
Commercial games	Class pictures	Beanbags
Games	Counting pads	Paintbrushes and/or paints
Grab bag gifts	Yo-yo's	Subject matter accessories
Bats	Cowboy hats	Pins
Headress	Book covers	Perfume
Pencils/pens	Crayons	Marbles
Key chains	Fans	Tape recorders
Stickers	Dolls	Boats
Flowers	Pencil holder	Badges
Money (play, real, exchangeable)	Classroom equipment	Seasonal cards
Make-up kits	Doll houses	Compasses
Chalk	Puzzles	Calendars
Playdough	Purses	Buttons
Kaleidoscopes	Paper-mache	Plastic toys
Flashlights	Beads	Bubble blowing kit
Stamps	Jumping beans	Wax lips/teeth
Balls	Model kits	Striped straws
Household items (pots, pans, spoons, etc.)	Good citizenship award or certificate	Toy trains

Elastic bands	Dinosaurs	Scarves
Rings	Balloons	Cars
Masks	Magnifying glass	Pets
Banks	Flash cards	Eraser
Colored paper	Kickball	Old road maps
Sewing cards	Pencil sharpener	Old discarded textbooks
Crossword puzzle books	Hair barrettes	Dress-up clothes

c) Activity reinforcers:

Free time	Show and tell	Group leader
Extra turn in game	Extra lunch time	Line leader
Carry library books	Messenger	Getting seat choice
Throw a bean bag or ball	Helping clean up	Help collect displays
Walk around in high heels	Mark paper	Use extra art materials
Paint easel	Roll wheeled toys	Help the custodian
Read to the principal	Run errands	Read library books in class
Extra swim period	Movies	Help get milk for other classes
Build up or knock down blocks	Chew gum during class	Use playground equipment
Special library time	Write on blackboard	Look in mirror
First up to bat at recess	Listen to short recording	Pull another person in wagon
Be pulled in a wagon	Water classroom plant	15 minutes in library
Play with a magnet	Help with A-V equipment	Pass out papers
Lead the pledge	Sit at teacher's desk	Select seat or desk by a friend
Play with a squirt gun	Operate jack-in-box	Construct school materials
Wear funny hats	String beads	Play instrument
Look out the window	Go on a field trip	Run in hall for 2 minutes
Be a team captain	Tell joke to class	Buy extra straws
Sing a song	Do extra clay project	Study with a friend
Read a comic book	Draw color pictures	Perform for the PTA
Get swung around	File cards	Pass out scissors
Listen to a song	Turn off lights	Outdoor lesson
Be a student teacher	Play with typewriter	Cut with scissors
Solve codes and puzzles	Skip a test	Blow up balloon, let go
Prepare for holidays	Help other children	Assist teacher tech
Make a game of subject matter	Dance	Be a line monitor
Play with adding machine	Climb ladder	Blow bubbles with gum
Turn on filmstrip projector	Clean erasers	Put away materials
Have special party	Erase/clean chalkboard	Extra cookie at break
Answer telephone for day	Decorate classroom	Work problems on board
Pick a story for teacher to read	Have a "good day" off	Do crafts
Play musical chairs	Present a skit	Special time in science library
Display student's work	Ride the elevator	Model with clay
Straighten up room	Lead discussions	Be in a spelling quiz
Watch or perform puppet shows	Get milk at break	Be a pen pal
Answer questions	Talk period	Talking with a friend
Sit on adult's lap	Jump down from high place	Raise or lower flag
Go home 5 minutes early	Put blinds up or down	Run copy machine
Omit a specific assignment	Classroom supervision	Extra lunch time
Pour water through a funnel	Empty wastebaskets	Manager of windows
Give message over intercom	Plan daily schedule	Visit a relative or friend

Participate in group organization	TV in student lounge	Go to work with father/mother
Give book report	Free discussion	Helping in the cafeteria
Correcting papers	Compete with another class	Have a friend come overnight
Bring in games from home	Taking naps	Arm wrestle with teacher
Making/flying kite	Writing notes	Record progress on chart
Feed fish for week	Handing out snacks	Pick up litter on playground
Help build clubhouse	Early dismissal for whole class	Feed classroom animals for a week
Having coca with favorite person at school	Carry teacher's purse or briefcase	Listen to own voice on tape recorder
Pop a balloon, paper bag or milk carton	To be turned around in a swivel chair	Watch toy train go around track
Free choice of TV programs for one hour	Paint with water on blackboard	Take care of calendar by the week
Ten minutes for game during milk break	Pull down film screen or wall map	Extra time at recess for self, friend, class
Comb and brush own or adult's hair	Write on blackboard with colored chalk	Perform before a group (do a trick, talent shows)
Be pushed on swing, merry-go-round	Go home after school with teacher or secretary	Outside supervising (patrols, ushering)
Push adult around in a swivel chair	Doing special science experiments	Help bake and decorate a surprise cake
Take a class pet home on the weekend	Playing in gym (after school, free period)	

d) Social/personal reinforcers (verbal and non-verbal)

Smiling	Applause	Paying special attention to
Congratulating	Shaking hands	"Wow"
Praising	Graphs	"Thumbs up"
Self-motivation	Winking	Nodding
Peer attention	Recognition	Awards
"High five"	Charts	Notes

2. Junior High School Students

a) Edible reinforcers of all types including

Cokes	Other soft drinks	candy
Pizza	Popcorn	Ice cream
Gum	Pretzels	Fruit
Milk	Cookies	Doughnuts

b) Material reinforcers:

Flashlights	Records	Comic books
Stamps (foreign for collection)	Cassette tapes	Magazines

c) Activity reinforcers:

Teaching younger children	Exemption from quiz	Taking a nap
Seeing a movie	Exemption from homework	Doing puzzles
Eating snacks	Free reading time	Helping in office
Playing in gym	Taking field trip	Answer phone, run errand
Holding class outside	Using chaise lounge	Having a class party
Extra lunch time	Correcting papers	Dancing
Going home early	Free time with a friend	Being a teacher's aide
Listening to radio with head phones	Free time to watch TV in lounge	Going to and participating in assemblies, pep rallies, etc.

d) Social/Personal reinforcers (verbal and non-verbal):

Congratulating	Smiling	Recognition
Praising	Shaking hands	Winking
Paying attention to	Pat on back	Peer attention
Applause	"Thumbs up"	

Reinforcer Sentence Completion

Student: _____ Date: _____

This form may be filled out by a student or with the assistance of an adult.

If I had ten dollars I would _____

I am really good at _____

My best friends are _____

My favorite music is _____

My favorite subject at school is _____

I really want to go to _____

When I grow up I want to be a _____

I want to be just like _____

My favorite movie is _____

I really want to learn about _____

Two of my favorite foods are:

1) _____

2) _____

The three things I like to do most are:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

The best thing about me is _____

BUILDING INDEPENDENCE THROUGH THE USE OF ADAPTATIONS AND ENABLERS¹

Individuals with autism or other developmental disabilities often show limitations in independence in their homes, communities, and the work world. People with severe developmental disabilities are often eliminated from community programs and competitive employment because of interpersonal behavior problems brought about by impairment in their ability to communicate and to understand social interactions. Developing teaching strategies to enhance one's strengths and limit the reliance on one's deficits is essential to an individual's programming.

Teaching strategies and methods that use enablers, adaptations, supports, or prosthetics are vital to success. Enablers are created to help cope with an environment. They regulate stimuli, adapt materials to meet individual needs, modify sequences, and provide information in understandable ways. Enablers are as important to someone with autism as eyeglasses are to people with a visual impairment. They are essential for developing independence in an individual who has severe disabilities.

The following are enablers this paper will discuss:

- Consistent Routines/Schedules
- Knowledge of Expectations
- Desensitization Processes
- Rehearsal Strategies
- Stimulus Cues
- Environmental Adaptations
- Augmentative Communication
- Peer Advocates
- Motivational Procedures

Consistent Routines/Schedule

Consistent routines and schedules are necessary to provide the best learning situation for an individual with autism. Also, because most individuals with autism are concrete, visual learners, providing visual materials in the form of wall calendars, written schedules, picture boards to denote events, written steps of a task, or rules stated clearly and visually will aid in the individual's understanding of his or her routines. Other suggestions are:

- A morning routine as shown by a schedule board: get up, wash face and brush teeth, make bed, eat breakfast, pack lunch, go to work.
- Schedule the same activities at the same time each day (or week) and place the pictures, in order, on the schedule board to provide the knowledge and security that persons with autism require. For example, 15 minutes of exercise everyday just before leaving for home, or eating out every Friday night.

¹This article has been reprinted with permission from the Indiana Resource Center for Autism, Institute for the Study of Developmental Disabilities, The University Affiliated Program of Indiana University. S. Wagner 8/89; Revised N. Dalrymple 09/91.

- All staff/family know all cue words and become familiar with needed visuals for particular routines. This ensures that all routines are directed consistently.
- Review schedule boards with the individual each morning, or each half day, so s/he knows what will be happening.
- Explain changes in routines through the use of the schedule boards. Actually remove one activity and help the learner put on the new activity.

Consistency in programming provides the structure that is often needed for someone with autism. The success of programs for individuals with autism often depends on how consistent these programs are and how they are presented to each individual. Frustration occurs when the individual does not understand the plans and expectations for the day. Independent behaviors can be increased by using consistent teaching methods that include clearly defined visual materials.

Knowledge of Expectations

When teaching individuals with autism, giving clear instructions or directions is crucial to their understanding of what to expect in their day. Unnecessary words or sentences containing abstract thoughts, such as “in a little while,” “just a moment,” “just a little bit,” etc., often confuse or frustrate someone with autism. Most people with autism are concrete, visual learners. S/he needs to know exactly when an event will occur (“we leave in 5 minutes or when the timer goes off.”), and to have strategies to cope with waiting until the event begins.

Support staff often assume that someone with autism will automatically understand when they are finished with a project or job, that they are to work faster because they will earn more money, or how long 10 minutes lasts. Often, staff or teachers need to clearly state when a project is finished (“You do 15 problems and then you are finished,” or “Fill the template two times and then it’s break time”). Also, since time itself is an abstract concept, use of timers can clearly define the passage of time and can be used to help someone know when one event stops and another begins.

Other examples are:

- Visual templates specifying the steps to be performed in a set routine.
- A check off list or a sheet of paper marked into squares telling a worker that s/he must put one assembled unit in each box, then s/he is finished.
- A simple chart with a box to mark each step completed and a picture of the reinforcer at the end, telling the worker exactly what is to be done and the reason for working.
- Using the “First _____, then _____” strategy tells exactly what is expected of the person. Examples are “First use the bathroom, then wash your hands,” “First go shopping, then we get ice cream,” “First set the table, then make the salad.”

These strategies tell the individual everything s/he needs to know about that particular order of events or routine. Many times the directive expressed in these terms is enough for the person to understand what s/he is to do. However, supplementing the verbal with a pictured or written sequence is often necessary and facilitates independence in routines.

Desensitization Procedures and Rehearsal Strategies

In many instances, the learner with autism may have unusual anxiety and fears surrounding new or unusual situations, people, places, or routines. Often these interfere or disrupt the successful accomplishment of a task or event. Examples of fears and anxieties include doors that are open, certain types of medical or dental procedures, loud noises, passing trucks, rain, animals, or other objects, events, or people.

Other examples are:

- Strong obsessions with needing certain objects to be in certain places.
- Particular people being only in particular environments.
- The need to perform a certain ritual such as straightening all the chairs in the room before leaving, or checking the sink drain every time s/he passes the kitchen.
- Not allowing a vending machine door to be opened for servicing.

If an obsession or ritual interferes with programming, a desensitization procedure may be necessary. A desensitization procedure is the gradual introduction or exposure to the particular object or event. During this exposure, the individual is reinforced for remaining calm while the object is near or the event is occurring. The process starts with a short exposure to the object or event, with a gradual increase as the person becomes less anxious. Reinforcement for remaining calm is an important component of the process, keeping in mind the individual preferences of the person.

Many fears/anxieties can be eliminated entirely by prior planning and preparation. If staff or family know that an individual is fearful of new situations or transitions, then before s/he moves to a group home, for example, short visits can take place to introduce the situation gradually. Preparation for next year's class could include desensitization in the spring to the new teacher, new room, and new materials; then, only a shorter introduction is needed in the fall. Careful planning is always needed.

Many individuals with autism are burdened with unusual concerns that prevent them from enjoying aspects of their lives and programs. With carefully planned and executed desensitization procedures, these same individuals can improve and enhance their lives.

Rehearsal strategies, like desensitization practices, also help the learner with autism feel comfortable with a particular situation. Many individuals with autism do not need intense desensitization procedures, but do benefit by short rehearsal strategies. Examples of when such strategies are useful are rehearsing the ordering sequence at a restaurant, practicing a banking sequence, practicing a signature before cashing a check, writing down the grocery list and finding the aisle numbers, and rehearsing an already familiar dental routine.

Rehearsing familiar events and routines before they occur can give the individual with autism the added comfort of knowing that s/he can function in the situation comfortably. Many times that is all the preparation needed to be successful.

Stimulus Cues

Because learners with autism have difficulty processing verbal instructions, they often need to rely on environmental cues. Many times the individual understands what is going to happen by observing what is happening around him/her. Staff or family members can plan for stimulus cues (or programmed environmental cues) to eliminate confusion and the necessity of relying on verbal instructions.

Examples of stimulus cues are:

- Having the same event at the end of every day's program. This would tell the learner when it is time to gather his/her things and get ready to go home.
- Performing the same routine before going out, such as turning off all the lights, checking the locks on the door, and turning on the answering machine. When the learner sees the parent or staff member performing these duties, s/he knows that it's time to leave.
- Using the same object to perform the same task each day; a certain bucket is used only for cleaning tables or a certain pillow is kept only for a particular relaxation routine. When the bucket is taken out of the closet, then it is time to start work; when s/he is given the pillow, it's time for the relaxation routine.
- Setting only enough chairs or placemats as needed at the table to show where to put the plates and silverware.
- Bringing out everyone's raincoats to let the learners know it is raining and they will need to wear them.
- Mom picking up her purse to indicate it is time to leave. (Remember, sometimes there are miscues. The learner may expect to go with Mom every time she picks up her purse.)

Stimulus cues can be a valuable, verbal or non-verbal method to increase the learner's independence in his/her everyday activities.

Environmental Adaptations

Adapting the environment and materials to an individual's needs often creates a more successful learning situation. Eliminating objects or routines that might confuse, disorient, or upset a learner with autism can make the difference between him/her feeling comfortable with his/her surroundings or feeling frustrated and anxious. Eliminating loud noises, bright light, messy shelves or materials, or decreasing the number of people in a group can help to decrease this anxiety.

One example of adapting the environment is providing a relaxation area to direct an anxious child or adult to until s/he learns to initiate relaxing. This gives the individual the opportunity and the knowledge of a place to which to withdraw from an upsetting situation. It also provides the person a place to calm down. This may be as simple as having a bean bag chair in a corner of the room or a particular shelf with the person's favorite toy or object. When anxiety or frustration occurs, the person can independently choose to calm down in this area or can be directed there by the parent or staff.

Teachers or staff often need to analyze materials for particular jobs or tasks to determine if adaptations need to be made for an individual. Once the task has been taught, additional adaptations may be needed if the learner has difficulty with a particular step of the job. Many times, simple adaptations can mean the difference between dependence on staff and individual independence. Adaptations on the job can open up new possibilities for learners by offering them opportunities for competitive employment. Teachers and support staff often utilize creative methods to meet these needs and offer increased opportunities.

Augmentative Communication

Half of all people with autism are non-verbal, and more are minimally verbal. People with autism often rely on means other than speaking to communicate their wants and needs. The use of sign language, communication boards, or electronic devices can enable learners to better communicate wants or needs in their daily lives. Consistency in the use of the augmentative system is a major key to its success. The system must be used across all settings and environments; all staff must be used across all settings and environments, all staff must be familiar with and help initiate its use; and, the system must be functional for the individual.

Individuals with autism are often low initiators of communication. In the beginning, responsibility for the use and maintenance of a system must fall to family or staff. The services of a speech and language pathologist can guide family member's or relevant staff in the use of the augmentative system and ensure that the system or format is functional for the individual.

Augmentative communication systems can be simple or complex. They can be as small as an index card with a specific order for a restaurant or as large as a book with hundreds of labeled pictures. Other examples include small communication books that are made specifically for a job routine, morning exercise workout, or community outing.

Having an augmentative communication system means that the individual has a better way to communicate wants and needs that otherwise might be exhibited as inappropriate behavior. Increased independence and self-esteem is often a result of improved communication.

Peer Advocates

Peer advocacy programs are used in many school systems and some work sites, pairing a person with a handicap with someone who does not have a handicap. Peer advocates can open the door to many social and instructional events which teachers cannot. Peers can teach activities and social gestures and nuances so the learner can successfully interact with a wider group. Some examples of activities that peers could teach are after school games, sports skills, home living skills, community recreation or outings, shopping, and leisure skills. The skills gained through peers often help the individual with autism understand social rules, help to integrate the individual into larger peer groups and may enhance self-esteem. Peer advocates are a valuable resource for teachers, parents, staff, and the individual with autism.

Motivational Procedures

Many learners with autism are not motivated by the common reinforcers of most people. Often, it is assumed that the individual with autism should be motivated by a monthly paycheck, verbal praise, social groupings such as parties or get togethers, or competition. Staff or teachers are often puzzled when the individual with autism does not respond in the same manner or enthusiasm as others. S/he can be perceived as unmotivated, lazy, or uncaring when responses are not like others. However with careful analysis of individual likes and preferences, motivators can be found and used effectively.

Examples of motivators for an individual with autism include time spent alone, time to talk to a favorite staff member or teacher, trips to the cafeteria, an exercise routine, a favorite object, music, playing in the water, set amounts of money for a specific treat, getting to perform a favorite routine, sensory objects, sitting at the window, or another favorite activity or object. Each person will need to be assessed periodically for motivators. What motivates a person one week may not motivate him/her the next week. Motivators will change occasionally to reflect new or different interests. Motivation can often be a determining factor of teaching strategies and programs.

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For more information, contact: The Indiana Resource Center for Autism, Indiana University, Institute for the Study of Developmental Disabilities, 2853 East Tenth Street, Bloomington, IN 47408-2601, or call (812) 855-6508.

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