

SCHOOL-HOME NOTE

A Guideline for Parents and Teachers

Clayton R. Cook, PhD

University of Washington

School-home notes are easy-to-use interventions that improve students' behavior and the daily communication between parents and teachers. Each day the classroom teacher rates the behavior of a student, who then brings the note home to his/her parent. It is then the parent's responsibility to deliver consequences at home depending on whether the child met his/her daily behavioral goal at school. For example, if the child receives a negative school-home note indicating inappropriate behavior at school, the parents would deliver disappointing consequences to their child by restricting access to desired privileges (TV, play with friends, computer, video game, use of cell phone, late bedtime, etc.). On the other hand, if the child receives a positive school-home-note indicating appropriate behavior at school, then the parents would praise their child and deliver rewards or permit access to preferred activities (extra video game/computer time, play with friends outside, invite a friend over to spend the night, trip to get ice cream, later bedtime, etc.).

When parents deliver consequences at home based on their child's behavior at school, the child is able to learn that enjoyment at home depends on good behavior at school. Alternatively, the child also learns that behaving badly at school will result in home life being boring and aversive because desired privileges are taken away. This system relieves the teacher of some of the burden associated with trying to choose effective rewards for many different students. Also, it may not be feasible for a teacher to deliver some types of rewards in a school setting. Delivering rewards at home allows us to use items or activities that we know a child will work to earn.

A school-home note allows parents to be knowledgeable of their child's behavior at school every day, which fosters greater parental involvement in the academic life of the child. Also, a school-home note is a simple and efficient intervention, which requires little time for both the teacher and the parent involved. It has been found to be effective in reducing many undesirable behaviors in the classroom, including: aggression, being out-of-seat, talking out of turn, not completing assignments, being disruptive, and not participating correctly with teachers or peers.

The following steps outline how to develop and utilize a school-home note:

- 1. Select target behaviors.** These can be considered areas in which the child needs improvement in the school setting. All teachers and school staff who have daily contact with the student should contribute to determining these target behaviors. Examples include: remained seated unless given permission, raised hand to speak, kept hands and feet to self, followed directions the first time, said nice things to others, completed class work in a timely manner, and turned in completed homework. Keep in mind target behaviors should be easily observable by the teacher and should be worded positively. For instance, rather than "Did not blurt out" or "Did not hurt

others,” you can use “Raised hand to speak” and “Kept hands to self.”

2. **Set a goal.** Estimate how often the target behaviors are occurring based on teacher input. Start off by setting an easily attainable goal so that the child will experience reinforcement early-on in the intervention. Goals can gradually be increased, as described below. Also, goals can be set for the entire day, for the morning and the afternoon, or for each subject/class period, depending on your child’s schedule. The following is an example of a well written goal for a child who was engaging in 4 out-of-seat behaviors per day: *Johnny will have equal to or fewer than 2 incidents of out-of-seat behavior each day. This means that Johnny will remain in his seat with his bottom connected to his chair.*
3. **Explain the school-home note to your child.** Have a meeting with the teacher, the child, and the parent(s) to discuss the school-home note and explain each person’s responsibility in the procedure. Let the child know it will help him/her show better behaviors throughout the school day. Explain that good behavior at school will earn rewards at home. Make sure the child knows he/she is responsible for bringing the note home after the teacher fills it out each afternoon. The child also must bring the note, signed by a parent, back to school the following day. This correspondence keeps both the teacher and the parent informed as to whether each party is keeping up with their responsibility.
4. **Establish the home-based reward system.** In order to ensure effective and desired rewards are used, your child should provide ideas for prizes to earn for good behavior. The items/activities that are included must be openly discussed and finally, approved by the parent(s). Examples of daily rewards include: snacks, later bedtime, playing a board game/electronic game after homework, and extra television time. Weekly rewards are also an option. Some include: renting a movie, going to a friend’s house, having friend over, getting an allowance, going shopping, and going out to eat.
5. **Monitor and modify goal.** Once your child meets the goal twice, the goal can be adjusted, requiring more appropriate behavior in order to obtain a reward. This will slowly shape your child’s behavior by gradually increasing the amount of appropriate behavior needed to earn a reward.

Here is an example of a school-home note for a 7-year-old:

Date: _____

MORNING

1. **Followed directions.**



2. **Looked at teacher during instruction.**



3. Raised hand to speak. ☺ ☹ ☠

4. Kept hands to self. ☺ ☹ ☠

5. Remained seated unless given permission. ☺ ☹ ☠

AFTERNOON

1. Followed directions. ☺ ☹ ☠

2. Looked at teacher during instruction. ☺ ☹ ☠

3. Raised hand to speak. ☺ ☹ ☠

4. Kept hands to self. ☺ ☹ ☠

5. Remained seated unless given permission. ☺ ☹ ☠

Goal for Today: _____ Met Goal? Y/N Teacher Signature: _____

Reward Delivered at Home? Y/N Parent Signature: _____

Imagine that the child who this school-home note was developed for had difficulty displaying 4 of these targeted behaviors in the morning and all 5 in the afternoon on an average day. On the first day the school-home note is used, his goal should be to obtain only 2 smiley faces because it is very likely he will meet this goal and experience success. When he meets this goal, he earns a reward at home and quickly learns the association between good behavior and receiving a reward. After achieving this goal a second time, his goal can be increased to 2 smiley faces, and then 3 smiley faces, etc. After multiple days of receiving all 10 smiley faces, the note can be gradually removed by only using it every other day, then only weekly, etc. until the note is no longer required. However, if the inappropriate behavior becomes a frequent occurrence in the classroom again, the note can always be re-introduced.

Another option with a school-home note is to remove privileges based on how much lower the earned score is compared to the goal. For instance, imagine a child has a bad day and only earns 3 smiley faces when the goal was to get 5. Because she was 2 points away from reaching the goal, two privileges, such as watching TV after homework and having a snack

before bed, can be withheld. This procedure can be added if a child does not seem to be improving his/her behavior simply in response to earning rewards. Because inappropriate behavior in this system not only prohibits earning rewards but can also result in the loss of privileges, the stakes are higher to reach the goal.

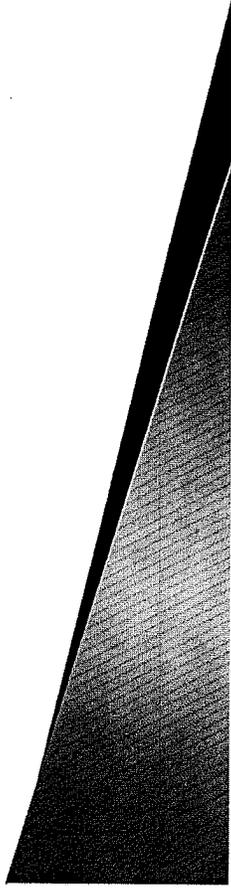
The key to success with a school-home note is consistency. If the child meets the goal for the day, it is crucial to deliver the earned reward that afternoon! If the child does not meet the goal, be sure not to cave in and allow any rewards/extra privileges. Also, children can grow tired of the same rewards, so be sure to mix it up and keep them involved in reward choices so that they will continue to work for things they want!

School-Home Note System

- ▶ A method for establishing school-home collaboration to address targeted behaviors
- ▶ Involves two-way communication regarding student performance
 - Teacher to parent and parent back to teacher
- ▶ Encourages parents to deliver consequences at home based on student behavior at school
- ▶ Parent can share information with school about outside stressors that may be impacting student behavior at school

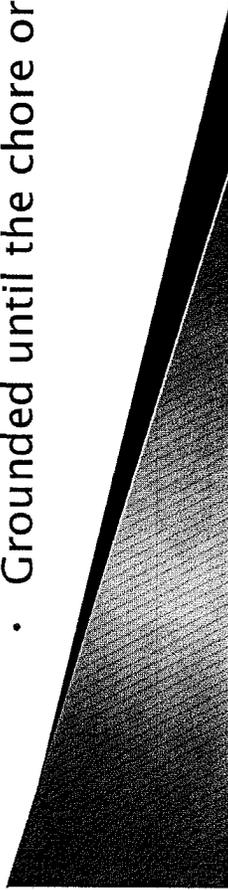
Candidate Students for School- Home Note

- ▶ Students who are unaffected by typical school-based disciplinary consequences
 - Reprimands, office referral, & loss of privileges don't work
- ▶ Students whose parents are open and willing to collaborate with the school
- ▶ Students whose parents could benefit from learning effective parenting strategies



Consequences Delivered by Parents

- ▶ **Celebrating the child's success** (aim is to create positive contrast by making the child's life more exciting, pleasurable, and/or fun)
 - Access to privileges
 - Computer time, video games, talking on the phone, staying up later, hanging out with friends
 - Reward with item or activity
 - Buy-out of chore, money, invite friend over, play outside, after dinner dessert
 - Praise and positive recognition
- ▶ **Disciplining to encourage a better day tomorrow** (aim is to create negative contrast by making the child's life boring, unpleasant, or introducing nothing)
 - Loss of privileges
 - Removal of TV time, computer, video games, playing outside, talking on the phone, or anything else that is considered to be fun
 - Task-based grounding
 - Have the child perform chores that are outside of typical responsibilities
 - Grounded until the chore or chores are completed





School-Home Note

Name: _____ Date: _____ Goal: _____

	Classroom					
	Before Lunch			After Lunch		
Behaviors	Needs Work	Okay	Excellent	Needs Work	Okay	Excellent
Respected other students						
Worked on class assignments						
Followed Teacher Instructions						
Target Behavior:						

TEACHER SECTION

Goal attainment for the day (circle which one applies): Goal Met or Goal Unmet

Teacher comments:

Teacher Signature: _____

PARENT SECTION

Check the one that corresponds with how you responded to your child's performance today:

YOUR CHILD **MET** BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS AT SCHOOL

CELEBRATED MY CHILD'S SUCCESS BY (check which ones apply):

- Earned access to normal privileges (for example, cell phone, TV, video games, computer, hang out with friends outside, skateboarding, etc.)
- Praised and recognized your child for having a good day
- Delivered a reward (
- Granted access to an extra privilege (extended bedtime by 30 minutes, 30 minutes extra video game time, get out of chores)

YOUR CHILD **DID NOT MEET** BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS AT SCHOOL

ENCOURAGED MY CHILD TO HAVE A BETTER DAY TOMORROW BY (check which ones apply):

- Restricted access to *all* privileges (for example, no cell phone, no TV, no video games, no computers, no hanging out with friends)
- Assigned a chore that lies outside of the normal household responsibilities (for example, swept and mopped the floors, vacuumed the house, cleaned the windows, pulled weeds, etc.)
 - My child was not able access privileges (anything fun) until chore was completed

Comment for teacher:

Parent Signature: _____

Cook and Browning Wright (2008)

HANDOUT 12

HOME-BASED CONSEQUENCES BASED ON THE STUDENT'S BEHAVIOR AT SCHOOL

YOUR CHILD **MET** BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS AT SCHOOL

CELEBRATED MY CHILD'S SUCCESS (check which ones apply):

- Earned access to typical privileges (for example, cell phone, TV, video games, computer, hang out with friends outside, skateboarding, etc.)
- Praised your child for
- Earned a reward
- Earned an extra privilege (for example, extended bedtime by 30 minutes, 30 minutes extra video game time,

YOUR CHILD **DID NOT MEET** BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS AT SCHOOL

ENCOURAGED MY CHILD TO HAVE A BETTER DAY TOMORROW (check which ones apply):

- Restricted access to privileges (for example, no cell phone, no TV, no video games, no computers, no hanging out with friends)
- Assigned a chore that lies outside of the typical household responsibilities (for example, swept and mopped the floors, vacuumed the house, cleaned the windows)
 - My child could not access privileges until chore was performed