

## Using Star Charts for Positive Behavior Intervention

A positive behavior reinforcement system which incorporates the principles of consistency, predictability, structure, appropriate expectations and positive reinforcement is an effective tool in classroom management. Additionally, many students gain a sense of security when their environments are consistent, predictable, and expectations are clearly defined. Many of these principles can be met through the use of a "star chart." A star chart serves three functions:

- (a) it is a permanent reminder of the classroom rules and expected behavior
- (b) it provides simplified "bookkeeping" for the teacher
- (c) it provides concrete feedback and reinforcement to the student.

### Construction of a Star Chart

1. Place icons/descriptions of daily schedule down the left side of the chart. It may be helpful to add clock faces/times by each activity. Even if the student cannot tell time, he may be able to match the clock face on his desk to the class clock.
2. Place icons and rules across the top of the star chart. Actively teach easily generalized, specific rules. Rules should be stated as positive manner that is incompatible with undesirable behaviors. Some of the rules that contain multiple behavior in a components (see "friendly talking" and "quiet working" below) will need to have the individual components taught to the students. A few example rules are:
  - *Hands and feet to self*
  - *Friendly talking* (includes politeness, turn taking, and an overall positive, pleasant interaction style)
  - *Good listening/following directions*
  - *Good working*
  - *Stay in your area*

Display rules in a very concrete fashion; i.e., photos or drawings. Rules need to be stated or reviewed before the student begins work. For example, before the student begins a lesson, the teacher would state, "John, the rule is you must work quietly!" He would be reinforced for following that rule. Initially only one or two rules should be taught at a time. It is important that the student internalize each rule in turn, before others are taught.

Try to phrase rules so that they can be used for a variety of reasons with a minimum of rewording. Take "quiet working" as an example:

*Social Reinforcer:* "Good quiet working, John!"

*Prompt:* "Show me quiet working."

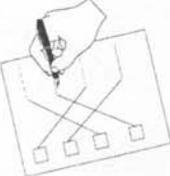
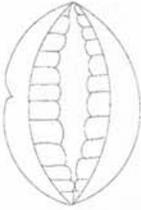
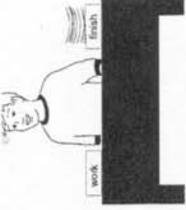
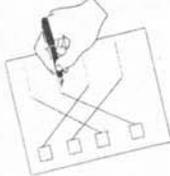
*Feedback:* "You are doing good quiet working, John!"

*Redirection:* "How can you earn your star, John? Do good working."

## Using the Star Chart

1. Use the star chart in a positive manner. Evaluate students regarding the appropriateness of their behavior and whether or not they demonstrate the predetermined behavioral criteria. If the student meets the criteria, the teacher or instructional assistant "stars" the square with a marker (e.g., a broad tipped pen) and provides the student with positive feedback: "You did quiet working, and kept hands and feet to self. Great!" Following each activity and/or time period, the adult reviews the student's behaviors for that period. Give specific, behavioral feedback; e.g., "You did quiet working" rather than a more global, "you were good." Mark (with a star, sticker, stamp) each square for rules that were followed. Do not mark sad faces, Xs, etc., on rules that are unmet. Rather, simply leave the square blank. State in a matter-of-fact tone of voice "I'm sorry you didn't earn your star for (rule). I'm sure you'll earn it next time." If the student persists with questions the adult regarding a blank square and why it does not contain a star, the adult should present the student with a question rather than with more feedback which may be perceived as negative. For example, "John, did you work quietly during math time?", rather than "You were yelling at Betty." Be sure to use a matter-of-fact voice style.
2. If the student does something appropriate that is not usually demonstrated, extra stars are given as bonus points. Social praise is always paired with the distribution of bonus points, i.e., "Good listening! Extra Star."
3. Eventually, some students can take responsibility for marking their own charts. They mark the chart at the end of the time period. This is reviewed by the teacher or instructional assistant.
4. If the student begins to misbehave, he can be redirected by referring to the appropriate rule while reminding him of how he can earn reinforcers. For example, if it appears that the student is not following directions, the teacher could say, "How do you earn your star, John? (by following directions)."
5. Differentiated Reinforcements of Others (DRO) can be used with star charts. When using this technique, adults reinforce other students for exhibiting the appropriate behavior that the student is not exhibiting. For example, if John is off-task, the teacher goes to Kim, who is on-task, and marks her star chart ("Kim is doing good quiet working. Bonus star!"). This often causes a "ripple effect", and indirectly motivates students to exhibit appropriate behavior. When the student does display the appropriate behavior, reinforce him immediately.
6. Determining the interval at which the chart is reviewed needs to be based on the student's ability to meet criteria. If the student is consistently not receiving stars, the teacher needs to determine the reason why. Some reasons could be that:
  - the student needs to have his chart reviewed on a more frequent basis,
  - the goals/expectations may need to be modified,
  - the student does not understand the goals,
  - the student has satiated on the reinforcer or does not find it reinforcing at all.

On the other hand, if the student is easily earning his stars, the time interval can be increased in successive increments.

<p><b>Stay In Seat</b></p> 	<p><b>Follow Directions</b></p> 	<p><b>Hands and Feet to Self</b></p> 	<p><b>Finish Work</b></p> 	<p><b>Friendly</b></p> 
<p><b>Work Completed</b></p> 	<p><b>Hands and Feet to Self</b></p> 	<p><b>Friendly Talking</b></p> 	<p><b>Good Listening</b></p> 	<p><b>Following Directions</b></p> 
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