

# The Step Up to Good Behavior Level System

Training School Psychologists to be Experts in Evidence Based practices for  
Tertiary Students with Serious Emotional Disturbance/Behavior Disorders

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# Introduction

Many popular interventions in the schools use only a single behavioral technique and are designed to work with an entire classroom. The Step Up to Good Behavior level system combines several behavioral techniques and is designed to modify the behavior of a single child. It is a point based system that primarily relies on positive reinforcement but also includes a reductive consequence.

This intervention is based on a system of different levels of privileges. There are three increasing levels of privileges: Supervision, Trust, and Reward. The Supervision level removes privileges and opportunities for reinforcement. It also removes the student from the environment where the problem behavior occurs to that they can succeed in the future. On the Trust level the student is treated like the other students in the class. He has access to the same reinforcers as the rest of the class and

has the standard classroom privileges. The highest level is the reward level. On this level the student receives a special reward or privilege for the day in addition to the standard classroom privileges and reinforcers.

## Target Population

This level system is designed to be used with early elementary school students, typically 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. It can also be adapted to use with older elementary school students by changing the pictures and presentation to be age appropriate for older grades. It should not be used with developmentally appropriate middle or junior high school students. Level systems for children at that age usually have four or more levels and are more complex than the Step Up to Good Behavior Level System.

The Step Up to Good Behavior Level System is for use in the general education classroom on top of existing class wide

behavior management strategies. It is meant as a supplement to rather than a replacement for those strategies. The level system is meant to target the problem behavior of a single student in the classroom who is not responding to the existing class wide strategies. The student targeted by the level system should have a sufficient level of problem behavior that it warrants extra intervention, and he should have control over the behavior. This intervention will not likely be successful with students who are unable to control the problem behavior.

## Rationale: What it will do for you

The Step Up to Good Behavior Level System will reduce problem behaviors in the classroom that have not been successfully addressed with less intensive interventions. Examples of the behaviors that it can target are aggression, non-compliance, and off-task behavior. In short, it can be used to reduce

any measurable behavior that disrupts classroom instruction.

If successful the Step Up to Good Behavior Level System will create an environment where the student can be successful and meet the behavioral expectations of the classroom.

## Evidence Base

There are no direct studies done on this specific intervention since it is newly developed. However, the components that make up the Step Up to Good Behavior Level System are evidence based. The following is a sample of the research that supports the components of this intervention:

### Level Systems

Research has demonstrated that level systems are an effective means of shaping behavior. Level systems usually consist of a hierarchy of levels. Each level has an

increasing level of privileges. Some form of token, such as points, is given to the child throughout the day for appropriate behavior. The child is able to move up or down levels based on the number of points that they earn.

Jones et al. (1992) demonstrated the use of a level system in a psychiatric children's unit. The level system was used to control behavioral excess and shape prosocial behavior. The study demonstrated that over time children progressed to higher levels, which indicates improving behavior over time.

Mastropieri, Jenne, and Scruggs (1988) evaluated two level systems in a resource classroom. Both level systems reduced talk-outs and out of seat behavior. Assignment completion and accuracy were also increased. This study demonstrated the effectiveness of level systems on different types of behaviors.

## **Verbal Praise**

Verbal praise is the practice of positively acknowledging and describing, with words, desired behaviors to an individual who has just demonstrated those behaviors. Hester, Hendrickson, and Gable (2009) state that teacher praise is a well-documented strategy that can enhance children's behavior, positively impact teacher-child relationships, and promote teachers' sense of self-efficacy. In another study Hancock (2002) found that graduate students exposed to verbal praise by the professor had higher achievement levels on exams, spent more time doing homework and exhibited more motivation to learn. This demonstrates that verbal praise can be an effective behavior change tool for people of any age.

## **Mystery Motivator**

A mystery motivator is an unknown positive reinforcer. It usually consists of a

reward written on a piece of paper that is placed in an envelope. The child does not know what the reward is. When the reward is earned the child opens the envelope to find out what the reward is and then receives it. The fact that the reward is unknown makes it more enticing for the child to earn.

In a study Hoag (2007) examined the effects of Mystery Motivators versus a menu of reinforcers. It was found that the Mystery Motivators were more effective at reducing disruptive behavior than a menu of reinforcers. Moore and Waguespack (1994) demonstrated that Mystery Motivators are an effective and socially valid intervention that can be implemented in the classroom with integrity.

The combination of level systems, verbal praise, and mystery motivators provides a system to reward desired behavior with a variety of means.

## Materials Needed

1. Level Description
2. Game board
3. Level Chart
4. Rewards Menu
5. Reinforcement Monitoring Sheet

## Steps for Implementation

In order to implement the Step Up to Good Behavior Level System the following procedures should be followed:

1. Identify the target problem behavior. For this program you can have two goal behaviors at most so choose the most important behaviors. The behavior should be observable and measurable. The goals that are chosen should help remedy the problem behavior and should be worded positively. They should state what the child should do.
2. Identify appropriate reinforcers and privileges to earn. Almost anything the child likes can be used as a reinforcer. If in doubt ask them. It should be something that

is easy enough or inexpensive enough to give them almost every day if they continue to stay on the reward level.

3. Identify situation in which the problem behavior occurs. The situation can be a physical setting, certain peers, or anything in the environment that is related to the problem behavior.

4. Adjust the sample level system (provided in the appendix) so it fits the child. The supervision level should be a restricted environment where it is less likely that the problem behavior will occur. This should also be an environment that is undesirable to the child so they will want to progress to the next level.

5. For the reward level decide whether you will use a die or spinner as the randomizer. Fill out the rewards menu with the rewards decided on earlier. Make sure one option is a mystery motivator. The mystery motivator can be any reward. To create the mystery motivator write a

reinforcer on a piece of paper and put it in an envelope.

6. Customize the rest of the materials in the appendix for the student. Add their name and put pictures they like on the materials to increase their interest. Next, create a placeholder for the student to use with the level chart. This can be any random picture as long as it can be used to mark which level they are on. A piece of velcro can be put on each space on the level chart and on the back of the placeholder so that it can be easily moved between each level.

7. Introduce the child to the level system. They should be told about the privileges of each level. The behavioral expectation of the classroom should be made clear. Emphasis should be placed on the two goals that the child is working towards.

8. When you catch the child doing the goal behavior verbally praise them and tell them that they earned a point. Make sure to be specific in your praise and describe the

desired behavior that they performed. Then allow the child to fill in a box with the appropriate color marker. The color of markers changes based on the time of day to aid in record keeping and make the sheet colorful.

9. Fill out the reinforcement monitoring sheet during each interval to make sure you are giving points when they are earned. Put a check mark in the correct box each time the child would have had an opportunity to earn a point.

10. At the end of the day review the child's progress with him and have him move his marker on the level chart to the appropriate level. If he increases a level or stays on the highest level praise him. Use specific examples of his good behavior throughout the day. If the child remains on a lower level or drops back a level review the day and what he could improve.

11. Once the child reaches the reward level, in the morning have the child roll a die

or use a spinner to determine what his reward will be.

## Troubleshooting and Cautions

The intervention may not work properly the first time so some common issues and solutions are as follows.

### Student is constantly on the lowest level

The student should be excited about the intervention and the possibility of receiving rewards on the highest level. If they are not excited the rewards need to be reexamined to ensure that they are motivating for the student.

If they are motivated, then the teacher needs to ensure that the supervision level helps remove them from the problem situation and removes reinforcers. Additionally the teacher need to make sure that they are trying to catch the students

being good and giving points when deserved. The reinforcement monitoring sheet can be used to help ensure that points are being given regularly. Finally, the points needed to move up a level may need to be adjusted at first to make it easier for the student and then slowly increase criteria as students improve

The student may not have the executive function necessary to inhibit inappropriate behavior. A different intervention would need to be tried.

Student earns the number of points to move up a level or stay and then misbehaves.

You may need to randomize points needed to move up or stay so student keeps trying to earn points. This way they do not know how many point are needed for the day so will not stop trying to earn points. Make sure you actually write down a number at the beginning of the day so that the student does not accuse you of making

up a number at the end if they do not reach the goal.

Student consistently fails to earn points

Make sure you are looking regularly to see if the child is performing one of their goals. The reinforcement monitoring sheet can help you track this. A beep tape or some other timed method may be necessary to remind you to see if the child has earned a point.

Reinforcement may not be happening immediately enough. More points possible may need to be added to each time period. Some students need reinforcement more often than others so more than four times per time period may be needed.

Cautions.

For the supervision level you cannot take away things that the child has a right to such as restroom access or food. Make sure to follow all national, state, and local laws



that govern what rewards and consequences can be used with children.

The supervision level should be undesirable by the lack of privileges and reinforcement that other students receive. It should not include deliberately aversive stimuli. Thus, you should not have to add anything to the environment only take it away.

## References

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## Appendix: Materials for the level system

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_ 's Daily Gameboard



FINISH

12

11

10

9

8

7

6

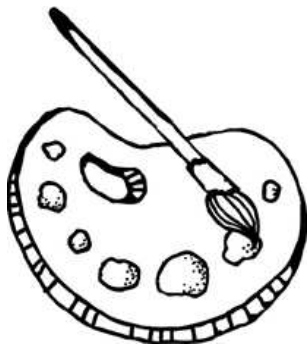
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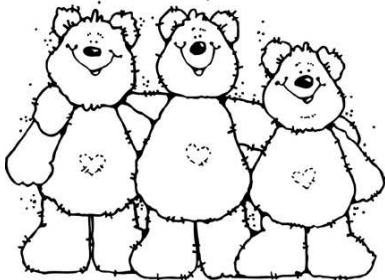
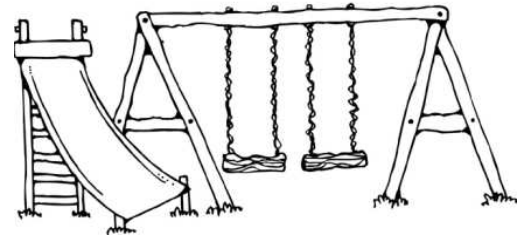
3

2

1



Time Of Day	Marker Color
Before Morning Recess	Blue
After Recess to Lunch	Red
After Lunch	Green



Goal 1: Follow Classroom Rules
Goal 2: Keep Hands and Feet to Self

Goal 1      Goal 2

Total Points for the day=\_\_\_\_\_ . Percentage=  
\_\_\_\_\_%

# Level Chart

## Level 1 Supervision

- Eat lunch alone
- Supervised recess- Can play or exercise alone
- Desk is moved away from the group
- Sits away from other students during carpet time

## Level 2 Trust

- Same privileges as the other students

## Level 3 Reward




- In the morning spin to see what the reward for that day will be

# Rewards Menu



1. Earn coupon for 10 minutes on the swings
2. Earn a coupon to work on an art project with a friend
3. Earn coupon to play a game with principal
4. Mystery Motivator
5. Earn a coupon to help janitor around the building
6. Pick a prize from the prize box

## Step Up to Good Behavior Level System

Level	Description of Level	Level Change Criteria
<p>3 Reward</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily- In the morning spin to see what the reward for that day will be</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay on level: Earn 15-24 points for the day</li> <li>Move Down: Earn 0-14 points for the day</li> </ul>
<p>2 Trust</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Normal School Privileges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Move Up: Earn 18-24 points for the day</li> <li>Stay on level: Earn 13-17 points for the day</li> <li>Move Down: Earn 0-12 points for the day</li> </ul>
<p>1 Supervision</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eat lunch alone</li> <li>Supervised recess- Can play or exercise alone</li> <li>Desk is moved away from the group</li> <li>Sits away from other students during carpet time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Move Up: Earn 18-24 points for the day</li> </ul>



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Reinforcement Monitoring Sheet

		Rewarded with a point	Did not earn point
Before Recess	Point 1		
	Point 2		
	Point 3		
	Point 4		
After Recess	Point 1		
	Point 2		
	Point 3		
	Point 4		
After Lunch	Point 1		
	Point 2		
	Point 3		
	Point 4		