

INTERVENTIONS FOR BEHAVIOR

Behavior Contracts

Purpose:

The behavior contract is a simple positive-reinforcement intervention that is widely used by teachers to change student behavior.

Description:

The behavior contract spells out in detail the expectations of student and teacher (and sometimes parents) in carrying out the intervention plan, making it a useful planning document. Also, because the student usually has input into the conditions that are established within the contract for earning rewards, the student is more likely to be motivated to abide by the terms of the behavior contract than if those terms had been imposed by someone else.

For example, a goal may be stated in the contract that a student "will participate in class activities by raising his hand and being called upon by the teacher before offering an answer or comment." Art, gym, or library instructors would then rate the student's behaviors in these out-of-class settings and share these ratings with the classroom teacher.

Materials:

Behavior Contract

Procedure/Steps:

Steps in Implementing This Intervention:

1. The teacher decides which specific behaviors to select for the behavior contract. When possible, teachers should define behavior targets for the contract in the form of positive, pro-academic or pro-social behaviors. For example, an instructor may be concerned that a student frequently calls out answers during lecture periods without first getting permission from the teacher to speak. For the contract, the teacher's concern that the student talks out may be restated positively as "The student will participate in class lecture and discussion, raising his hand and being called upon by the teacher before offering an answer or comment." In many instances, the student can take part in selecting positive goals to increase the child's involvement in, and motivation toward, the behavioral contract.
2. The teacher meets with the student to draw up a behavior contract. (If appropriate, other school staff members and perhaps the student's parent(s) are invited to participate as well.) The teacher next meets with the student to draw up a behavior contract. The contract should include:
 - A listing of student behaviors that are to be reduced or increased. As stated above,

the student's behavioral goals should usually be stated in positive, goal-oriented terms. Also, behavioral definitions should be described in sufficient detail to prevent disagreement about student compliance. The teacher should also select target behaviors that are easy to observe and verify. For example, completion of class assignments is a behavioral goal that can be readily evaluated. If the teacher selects a goal such as "student will not steal pens from other students," this goal will be very difficult to observe and confirm.

- A statement or section that explains the minimum conditions under which the student will earn a point, sticker, or other token for showing appropriate behaviors. For example, a contract may state that "Johnny will add a point to his Good Behavior Chart each time he arrives at school on time and hands in his completed homework assignment to the teacher."
- The conditions under which the student will be able to redeem collected stickers, points, or other tokens to redeem for specific rewards. A contract may state, for instance, that "When Johnny has earned 5 points on his Good Behavior Chart, he may select a friend, choose a game from the play-materials shelf, and spend 10 minutes during free time at the end of the day playing the game."
- Bonus and penalty clauses (optional). Although not required, bonus and penalty clauses can provide extra incentives for the student to follow the contract. A bonus clause usually offers the student some type of additional pay-off for consistently reaching behavioral targets. A penalty clause may prescribe a penalty for serious problem behaviors; e.g., the student disrupts the class or endangers the safety of self or of others.
- Areas for signature. The behavior contract should include spaces for both teacher and student signatures, as a sign that both parties agree to follow their responsibilities in the contract. Additionally, the instructor may want to include signature blocks for other staff members (e.g., a school administrator) and/or the student's parent(s).

Hints for Using Behavior Contracts:

Behavior contracts can be useful when the student has behavioral problems in school locations other than the classroom (e.g., art room, cafeteria). Once a behavior contract has proven effective in the classroom, the instructor can meet with the student to extend the terms of the contract across multiple settings. Adults in these other school locations would then be responsible for rating the student's behaviors during the time that the student is with them.

Evaluation of Effectiveness:

Comparison of student behavior before and after implementation.

Sources:

Courtesy of: <http://www.interventioncentral.org>

Sample Behavior Contract:

Effective Dates: From 10/20/99 to 12/20/99

Mrs. Jones, the teacher, will give Ricky a sticker to put on his 'Classroom Hero' chart each time he does one of the following:

- turns in completed homework assignment on time
- turns in morning seatwork assignments on time and completed
- works quietly through the morning seatwork period (from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m.) without needing to be approached or redirected by the teacher for being off-task or distracting others

When Ricky has collected 12 stickers from Mrs. Jones, he may choose one of the following rewards:

- 10 minutes of free time at the end of the day in the classroom
- 10 minutes of extra playground time (with Mr. Jenkins' class)
- choice of a prize from the 'Surprise Prize Box'

Bonus: If Ricky has a perfect week (5 days, Monday through Friday) by earning all 3 possible stickers each day, he will be able to draw one additional prize from the 'Surprise Prize Box'.

Penalty: If Ricky has to be approached by the teacher more than 5 times during a morning period because he is showing distracting behavior, he will lose a chance to earn a 'Classroom Hero' sticker the following day.

The student, Ricky, helped to create this agreement. He understands and agrees to the terms of this behavior contract.

Student Signature: _____

The teacher, Mrs. Jones, agrees to carry out her part of this agreement. Ricky will receive stickers when he fulfills his daily behavioral goals of completing homework and classwork, and will also be allowed to collect his reward when he has earned enough stickers for it. The teacher will also be sure that Ricky gets his bonus prize if he earns it.

Teacher Signature: _____

The parent(s) of Ricky agree to check over his homework assignments each evening to make sure that he completes them. They will also ask Ricky daily about his work completion and behavior at school. The parent(s) will provide Ricky with daily encouragement to achieve his behavior contract goals. In addition, the parent(s) will sign Ricky's 'Classroom Hero' chart each time that he brings it home with 12 stickers on it.

Parent Signature: _____