

Highly Structured Rewards and Consequences (Tier 3)

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Intervention O (Pages 639-688)

Structured Reinforcement Systems

Purpose

To motivate students to improve their behavior through the use of an external structure of points, tokens, or other incentives and rewards. This temporary intervention may assist with any chronic behavior or motivational problem that seems firmly established in the student's repertoire by moving the student in a more positive direction.

Types of behavior that may be positively affected

Structured Reinforcement Systems can be used to help students increase engagement in particular skills or behavior, such as amount of work completed, time on task, and positive interactions with peers. It can also assist students in reducing or eliminating the frequency of negative behavior such as using profanity, interacting disrespectfully with adults, and fighting.

Common questions and concerns

- “Shouldn't the student behave just because it is expected?”
- “Why should this student get extra rewards that the good students do not receive?”
- “Won't my other students object?”
- “Isn't this bribery?”
- “Will this turn the student into one of those children who always ask, ‘What will you give me if I do that?’”

Rationale

- Some students may not know how to be successful and require instruction and practice.
- Some students may need additional motivation because new behavior requires a lot of effort.
- Some students may not value school success—motivation to change may initially require an external reward to link school success with something worthwhile to the student.
- Some students may need more than success and encouragement because their needs are more fulfilled when engaged in inappropriate behavior.

Summary of intervention steps (See Step-by-Step Summary, pages 680-681)

Step 1: *Develop an intervention plan.*

- Identify specific behavioral goals—what the student must do and/or not do to show improvement. Be sure to review the outcomes from any intervention that has already been attempted. Identify when and where the student should demonstrate improvement. Plan for gradual improvements.
- If the behavior is not currently in the student's repertoire, design lessons to teach the student the appropriate behavior. See Intervention M for details on how to teach replacement behaviors.
- Design a reinforcement system:
 - ✧ Choose an easy method for monitoring behavior by counting positive behaviors, counting both positive and negative behaviors, counting absence/reduction of behavior or increase of behavior within time intervals, rating positive behavior on a predetermined scale, recording the length of time, and counting completed work—see Forms O-1 to O-9 in the book.
 - ✧ Identify a menu of possible rewards or privileges by either observing what the student likes to do or brainstorming with the student and the parent. Identify a variety of rewards.
 - ✧ Determine how many points are needed to earn rewards. Make it easier at first and avoid time limits. Consider a reinforcement ladder if the student needs fairly immediate gratification (see Figure O2 on page 663 for an example).
 - ✧ Specify consequences for misbehavior if necessary.
 - ✧ Determine if and how parents will be included in the plan.
- Identify ways to determine whether the intervention is helping the student reach the goal.
- Identify procedures for gradually modifying the system (e.g., change rewards, more points, etc.).

Step 2: *Meet with the student to describe the plan, including goals, points, rewards, lessons, etc.*

Step 3: *Implement the plan (i.e., encouragement, give feedback, evaluate, and fade).*

Intervention P (Pages 689-730)

Defining Limits and Establishing Consequences

Purpose

To correct chronic misbehavior fluently and effectively through the judicious use of consequences. The goal is to provide fluent consequences (i.e., with minimal impact on the instructional process) that are performed calmly, consistently, briefly, and immediately.

Types of behavior that may be positively affected

Defining Limits and Establishing Consequences has the potential of having a positive impact on any recurring misbehavior or unwanted behavior that may necessitate a consequence but is difficult to respond to with consistency. This intervention addresses disruptive (e.g., blurt-outs, arguing, profanity), disrespectful (e.g., talking back, sarcasm, rudeness), manipulative (e.g., testing limits and getting the last word), and excessive behavior (e.g., tattling, complaining, questioning).

Rationale

There are many problems with unclear limits: (a) when consequences are implemented inconsistently, some students will test the limits to see how much they can get away with, (b) for some students, upsetting the teacher or getting away with some misbehavior can be very reinforcing, and (c) consequences that are implemented with irritation or anger may result in students feeling that consequences are *done* to them (i.e., unfair) rather than *earned* by them.

Fluency is the key to implementing consequences successfully.

Fluency can be impossible if no distinction exists between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors (i.e., the expectations are not clear). For example, when does friendly teasing become cruel teasing or when does language become unacceptable?

Summary of intervention steps (See Step-by-Step Summary, pages 729-730)

Step 1: *Develop a plan.* Consider using Form P1 on page 714.

- Identify all the problem behaviors the student exhibits during the day (annoying, bothersome, interferes with teaching, and/or disrupts the class). Then categorize and prioritize the problems. Next, select one to three intervention priorities to initially address by considering how manageable and practical it would be to address the selected problem(s) and how important is it to resolve the problem(s).
- Define limits for your top priorities (what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviors) by (a) establishing a set of rules, (b) defining limits by examples (both

positive and negative), and (c) defining limits in terms of quantity (how much is too much). Think of this as like establishing the strike zone in baseball.

- Select consequences for each category of misbehavior. Options include gentle verbal reprimand, verbal cues and warnings, delaying, parental contact, time owed, in-class timeout, behavioral improvement plan, out-of-class timeout, and detention. Strive for mild and consistent consequences. Deliver as privately and calmly as possible. Avoid setting differential consequences according to the severity of the misbehavior. Instead, use a clear and consistent consequence where the teacher doesn't have to constantly make judgments about the severity.
- Clarify additional priorities, limits, and consequences as needed.
- Establish a plan to encourage responsible behavior. Also implement other proactive interventions as needed (see the *Decision Guide* Form P2 on page 720).
- Identify how to determine whether the intervention is meeting the goals. Collect data and observe to identify small changes. Keep anecdotal notes of difficult situations.
- Review, rehearse, and refine the plan to build teacher consistency and confidence.

Step 2: *Meet with the student.*

With each priority, provide instruction on the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behavior through discussion, modeling, role-playing, and verbal rehearsal. Explain consequences, limits, and reinforcers. Provide encouragement.

Step 3: *Implement the plan by teaching any lessons, giving feedback, and evaluating.*