Classroom Conversations and Participation

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Contents

Implementing Behavioral Strategies

Purpose:

This set of behavioral strategies was developed for classroom teachers to use with students who may require academic and/or behavioral support. The strategies are intended to support teachers working with students with primary academic deficits and challenging behaviors. For students with more intensive behaviors, potential intensification strategies also are included.

Structure:

Each strategy includes a description of the (a) purpose and overview; (b) type of strategy; (c) behavior(s) addressed; (d) setting; (e) required materials; (f) implementation procedures and considerations; (g) sample scripts or formats; (h) potential intensification strategies; and (i) additional resources (where available).

Terminology and Definitions:

1. **Reinforcement:** Actions to make a target behavior more likely to occur in the future.
   - **Positive Reinforcement:** Adding something pleasant or desirable (e.g., toy, food, attention) to make a target behavior more likely to occur.
   - **Negative Reinforcement:** Taking something unpleasant or undesired away (e.g., aspirin to relieve a migraine) to make a target behavior more likely to occur.

2. **Reinforcers:** Incentives (either a reward or the removal of something undesired) that are given to students after they display an appropriate/expected behavior. Use of reinforcers should increase students' continued demonstration of the appropriate/expected behavior.

3. **Punishment:** Strategies used to decrease or terminate students' demonstration of a challenging behavior, including time-out or loss of privileges.

4. **Consequences:** Events that occur after the demonstration of any behavior. Consequences can be positive or negative.

5. **Consequence Clause:** A clause that identifies specific consequences that will be delivered if students do not meet goals/success criteria.

6. **Replacement Behavior:** An appropriate behavior that a student is taught to use to replace a challenging behavior. The replacement behavior should serve the same function as the challenging behavior.

7. **Consequence Modification:** Strategies to encourage students' demonstration of an appropriate/expected behavior.

8. **Antecedent Modification:** Strategies to prevent students' demonstration of challenging behavior by clearly defining appropriate/expected behaviors.

9. **Schedule of Reinforcement:** Established rules or procedures that a teacher follows to deliver reinforcers.

10. Intermittent Reinforcement: Delivering reinforcers at random time intervals that do not follow a pattern.

Considerations for Successful Implementation:

- These strategies may coincide or be used along with other interventions/strategies (e.g., Check In Check Out).

- The strategies should be aligned with school- and class-wide expectations.

- The reinforcers should be aligned with the hypothesized function of student behavior (e.g., attention, escape, avoidance, sensory).

- When using behavior management systems that award students points for demonstration of appropriate/expected behavior, it is important not to take away points after students earn them. Taking away earned points diminishes their value and may cause students not to care about earning future points.

- When using consequence clauses that include a form of punishment (e.g., time-out, loss of privileges), it is important to accompany them with strategies to teach replacement behaviors and/or strategies that encourage student demonstration of appropriate/expected behavior.

- For students with more intensive behavior, individualize class-wide strategies (using the potential intensification strategies) and consult with a behavior specialist/team in the event that strategies are not resulting in progress.

Examples of Reinforcers

Tangible	Activity-Based	Social	Intangible
Tokens, stickers, posters, prize from a prize box, snack or favorite food item (if appropriate), coloring page, books	Extra time on computer, silent reading time, partner reading, allowed to be a leader, given a classroom job, assisting secretary or teacher	Tell a joke, lunch with teacher, positive phone call home, game with a friend, being a peer model for a younger student	Verbal praise, smiles, thumbs-up, giving eye contact, positive comments written on work

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Classroom Conversations and Participation

Purpose and Overview:

To increase student participation in class discussions or small- or whole-group activities where students are expected to participate. Participation expectations should be concise, stated each time a new activity or task begins, and visually displayed for easy reference. Teachers should reinforce the behaviors they want to increase by immediately attending to them. A reinforcement system should be in place to help motivate students.

Reinforcers can be tangible, activity based, social, or intangible.

Type of Strategy:

Antecedent modification

Behavior(s) Addressed:

Lack of participation or motivation during small-group or class-wide activities or discussions

Setting:

During whole-class or small-group activities

Materials:

- Chips, markers, cubes, or other tangible items that the student can hold and turn in when he or she participates. (In the examples below, the word "markers" is used.)

Implementation Procedure:

1. At the start of a small-group activity or class-wide discussion, pass out three markers (the number can vary based on time or activity constraints) to all students.
2. Provide an explanation of what the markers will be used for (see sample script on next page).
3. As students participate (e.g., asking a question, making a comment, responding to a peer), have them turn in their markers. Once all of the markers are given back, the student has met the contribution requirements.
4. Provide access to reinforcers for students who exceed the expectations and make additional contributions.
5. As overall participation increases, increase the number of markers.

Implementation Considerations:

- When implementing any behavior management system, teachers need to be clear about the expectations and how students are to redeem their markers.

- Teachers can give students any number of markers, but students should be able to successfully meet the criteria.

- If implementing in a whole-class setting, take into account student personalities with regard to how much participation is expected of them.

- If using a point system or report card, make sure that the participation is tied to that system as well. For example, tell students that if they turn in all three markers they can earn their participation point for that activity block.

Sample Script

Describe System to Students (Small Group or Whole Class):

I really want to make sure that everyone has a chance to participate in our discussions. We have a lot of people who contribute all the time, and others who rarely contribute. To ensure that everyone has a chance to contribute, we are going to implement a new system that will help ensure that everyone participates.

I am going to give you three markers. My expectation is that during our discussion today you will contribute three times. You can ask a question that's related to our topic, share about a topic experience, or add to the discussion in any other school-appropriate way. Each time you participate in class, you will hand me a marker. Once you turn in all your markers, your participation in our class discussion is completed.

Potential Intensification Strategies:

- Individualize the system by only providing markers to students who require additional motivation to participate in class discussions.

- Reverse the strategy for individual students by setting a goal and handing out markers for appropriate participation, rather than giving students markers in advance and collecting them during the discussion. For example, set a goal with students to earn five participation markers during a discussion and award them a marker each time they appropriately contribute.

- For students who tend to engage in attention-seeking behavior during classroom discussions (e.g., blurting out answers, making inappropriate comments, sharing unrelated information), individualize the system by having them earn markers for demonstrating a replacement behavior for appropriate participation (e.g., raising their hand to participate, writing down their comment or response instead of blurting it out).

- Identify if the student has a skill deficit that inhibits his or her ability to demonstrate the appropriate/expected behavior and teach the required prerequisite skills for successful performance.