

NEWS FROM PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Special Edition

Behavior Mini Series - Part V

Establish a Continuum of Strategies to Respond to Inappropriate Behavior

The fifth critical feature of classroom management is establishing a continuum of strategies to respond to inappropriate behavior or a range of evidence-based strategies that are designed to decrease the likelihood of inappropriate behavior occurring in the future. These strategies can range from simple corrections to more complex responses such as differential reinforcement.

- **Brief, contingent, and specific error correction:** An informative statement that is given when unexpected/undesired behavior occurs. The person providing the error correction states the observed behavior and tells the student exactly what should be done in the future in a brief, concise manner.

Examples:

- After a student calls out in class the teacher responds, “Billy, you answered without being called on. Please raise your hand before calling out your answer.”
- After students are talking too loudly during group work, the teacher responds, “The noise level is too loud. Please use a quieter whisper voice while working with your partner.”
- When a student is out of their seat when they should be working at a desk, the teacher responds, “Please stop walking around the room and return to your seat to finish your work.”

Nonexamples:

- Why are you talking when I’m talking?
- Do you want me to send you to the office?
- What’s going to happen if I call your mother?
- What do you think you’re doing?
- Don’t you think you should be using your time better?

This method can be used in response to academic and social behavior errors. Error corrections for academic behaviors consist of direct and immediate feedback resulting in the student emitting the correct response rate. This has been found to increase future success rates. When delivered for social behaviors, direct, brief, and explicit error corrections have been found to decrease undesired behaviors. Quiet or discreet corrections as opposed to loud corrections have been found to be more effective. Additionally, brief corrections of 1-2 words and corrections delivered consistently have been found to be more effective.

- **Performance feedback:** Students are provided with data such as charts, graphs, and reports containing information on their engagement in target behaviors. With this approach, students receive visual representations of changes in their performance. Students also receive a reward if a certain criterion for behavior is met such as transitions under 2 minutes or less than 3 office referrals in a month. This strategy can also be used to track positive behaviors.

Provision of class-wide systematic performance feedback in response to target social behaviors has been linked to an increase in appropriate behaviors for a classroom of students. Public acknowledgments such as posting feedback has also been shown to decrease the frequency of undesired behaviors, decrease classroom transition times, and increase prosocial and academic behaviors including on-task behavior, self-esteem, reading, spelling, and writing.

- **Differential reinforcement:** Reinforcement that occurs contingent on one of the following - a) low rates of undesired behavior, b) behaviors other than the undesired behaviors (i.e., zero occurrences of undesired behavior), c) an alternative behavior (replacement behavior), or d) an incompatible behavior (a behavior that is impossible to engage in at the same time as an undesired behavior). These procedures can improve overall appropriate behavior while reducing inappropriate behavior.

Types of differential reinforcement:

- **DRA:** Differential reinforcement of alternative behavior
- **DRI:** Differential reinforcement of incompatible behavior
- **DRO:** Differential reinforcement of other behavior
- **DRL:** Differential reinforcement of lower rates of behavior



Differential Reinforcement of Alternate Behavior

- Reinforcement is provided after the occurrence of a behavior that is an acceptable replacement for the behavior targeted to reduce or replace. This behavior is not necessarily incompatible with the targeted behavior
- e.g. The function of the behavior to eliminate is escape, the individual will be provided with reinforcement anytime he requests a break.



Differential Reinforcement of Incompatible Behavior

- Reinforcement is provided after the occurrence of a behavior which is impossible to occur at the same time as the behavior targeted to replace
- e.g. The behavior to replace is spitting, the individual will receive reinforcement for engaging in drinking, talking, and having their lips closed because all these behaviors are incompatible with spitting.



Differential Reinforcement of Other Behavior

- Reinforcement is provided for any behavior that is not the target behavior. Reinforcement could also be provided if the behavior does not occur within a specified interval.
- Sometimes called, 'reinforcement of zero rates of responding' because it is reinforcement for the absence of the behavior
- e.g. Each recess that the child does not engage in kicking her peers, she will receive reinforcement.



Differential Reinforcement of Low Rates of Responding

- Reinforcement is provided when the learner engages in a behavior less frequently than they have in the past. The goal is to reduce the number of times a behavior occurs, not to eliminate the behavior
- e.g. A student who frequently requests the teacher check his work while he is working on it. The teacher will provide reinforcement if he only asks work to be checked over twice before submitting it.

- **Planned ignoring:** Systematically withholding attention when a student is engaging in an undesired behavior. Effectiveness of this strategy is dependent on the degree that a student's behavior is maintained or motivated by receiving teacher attention.

This strategy combined with other strategies such as establishing rules and positive reinforcement has been found to be associated with increases in appropriate social and study behavior.

- **Response cost:** A response method in which a reinforcer is removed after a student engages in an undesired behavior. Research has found that use of response cost results in decreases in swearing, aggressive behavior, and inappropriate behavior.

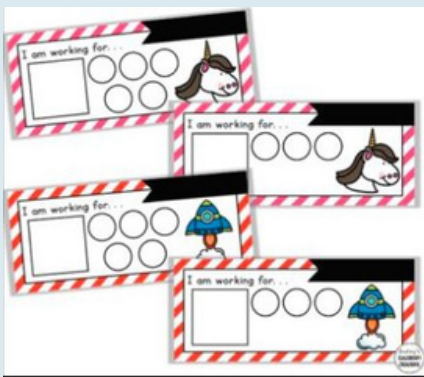
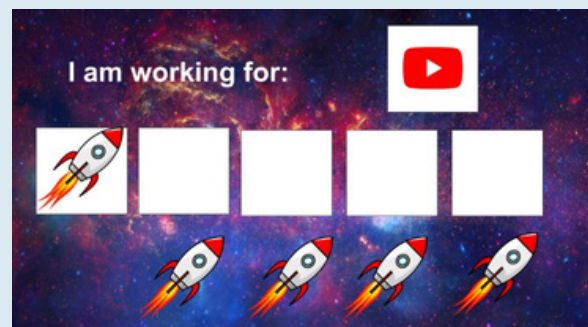
~ Do's and Don'ts of Response Cost ~

Do:

- Only use response cost systems as part of an overall positive reinforcement system
- Reinforce more frequently than taking away
- Plan out ahead of time the costs and define behaviors they are used for - clearly define the behaviors that will result in loss of tokens and share it with the student and staff who will implement the plan
- Communicate how the response cost system works to the student
- Make the cost appropriate for the misbehavior. Removal of too many tokens for a smaller offense may result in loss of buy-in for the student

Don't:

- Wait to remove or award tokens - waiting to reinforce or remove tokens for behavior makes it unclear to the student what specific behaviors lead to an outcome
- Remove tokens in anger
- Give multiple warnings - consistency in how the program operates leads to greater success. If warnings are part of the system, address them ahead of time so expectations are clear
- Allow the student to go into a negative balance
- Continue the plan if it is not effective for the student

Free Token Board**Free Virtual Token Board**

- **Time out from reinforcement:** A method in which a student is removed from a reinforcing environment to a less reinforcing environment after engaging in an undesired behavior.

Example: Student is removed from play with peers during recess for name calling to a less reinforcing environment such as on a bench next to a teacher.

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Sources:

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Discouraging Inappropriate Behaviors (pbissmissouri.org)

DOs and DON'Ts of Using Fines or Response Cost to Reduce Challenging Behavior -
Autism Classroom Resources

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