

Intervention Name: Improving Group Behavior with Randomized Group Contingencies

Function of Intervention:

The primary purpose of this intervention is to increase the likelihood that a group of students (or one target student within a group) continues to act appropriately. This package can be used for a small group of students or an entire class. This intervention is appropriate after all of the target behaviors (appropriate behaviors - ex: capacity to sit in seat for at least 30 minutes, raise hand, etc.)

for the classroom have been learned and demonstrated by each member of the group or it can be used to teach appropriate or disruptive behavior rules to a population of students (this intervention incorporates teaching rules of behavior). It provides an effective and feasible way to teach and maintain appropriate group behavior.

Brief Description:

Randomized group contingencies is a classic evidence based intervention with articles reaching back to the early 1970 (e.g. Axelrod, 1973). This intervention employs a contingency-based reward system designed to alter a group of students' behavior. The special component of this intervention is that it relies on students working together as one group in order to earn a reward. By working together, it is implied that students rely on each other. This interdependence takes place when students learn how to self-monitor their own behavior, peer monitor each others' behavior, and learn how to motivate one another. When using an interdependent group reinforcer, students have to rely on one another to gain access to the reward.

This intervention brief (based on Kelshaw-Levering, Sterling-Turner, Henry and Skinner, 2000) has suggestions and guidelines for two different types of intervention: a reinforcement intervention (increasing appropriate behavior by rewarding it) and a punishment intervention (reducing inappropriate behavior through removal of potential reward). Standard practice is to try a reinforcement intervention first. A reinforcement intervention like this one increases the likelihood of positive behavior change because it teaches students how to behave like you want for them to by placing emphasis on their appropriate choices. A punishment intervention, on the other hand, teaches students what a teacher does not want for them to do. It is possible to teach students appropriate classroom behavior while simultaneously punishing inappropriate behavior, but it is not recommended. Choosing a group-wide intervention to reduce inappropriate behavior naturally places the students' focus on what not to do (inappropriate behavior) instead of practicing what to do (appropriate behavior). In short, although a punishment intervention is presented it is not recommended as a first attempt at a group-wide behavioral intervention.

What "Common Problems" Does This Address?

Provides motivation for students who engage in inappropriate classroom behavior and who are otherwise unmotivated to behave appropriately. It may also create classwide accountability for behavior that results in peers support one another instead of tattling/picking on each other. It can reduce disruptive classroom behavior.

Procedures:

1. Create proactive classroom rules that describe the behavior the teacher desires for the students to engage in. In other words, make a chart that tells them what to do instead of what *not* to do in the classroom.
2. Display the chart with the proactive classroom rules on it.
3. Remove any other behavior-related charts that do not directly reflect upon/reinforce the proactive classroom rules chart.
4. Make list of potential reinforcers for the class and have the class create their own list of reinforcers. When feasible and reasonable, include students' requests for reinforcers in the teacher list of reinforcers. Don't forget that reinforcers can be non-tangible items like a pass to read to Kindergarteners, a pass for a computer lab instructional experience during typical lecture-learning time, bring a soda to class day, or a group-wide "get out of quiz" pass (with an alternative, fun back-up assessment of the same skills that would be assessed in the quiz).
5. Create a contract that includes the specific expectations for group behavior in order to earn the rewards. This includes any "warnings" they may receive and any consequences for inappropriate behavior. Also include the schedule of reinforcement (how often (i.e. what times) they will have a chance to earn a reward for good behavior and what they can do to "start over" if their reward goal is not reached (reinforcement schedule). Have the students read and sign the contract. Display the contracts or store the contracts where they can be referenced at any time.
6. Demonstrate (teacher or student model) the desired classroom behavior and its opposite (undesired classroom behavior) so that students can be very clear about what the expectations for behavior are. Assess the students to make sure that ALL of them are capable of demonstrating the appropriate behavior or NOT engaging in undesired behavior (i.e. accommodate for maturity level or level of disability).

Option #1: Reinforce appropriate behavior

1. Locate the reinforcers list for students (see *procedures* for instructions on how to do this)
2. Place the reinforcers on small pieces of paper, fold them, and place them in a jar or hat.
3. Create an ending number of points (behavior goal) that represent the number of appropriate behaviors the class is expected to engage in (i.e.: Class must have at least 60 or more appropriate behaviors = class must receive 60 or more points).

4. Display the behavior goal clearly in the classroom.
5. Explain to the class which behaviors are considered appropriate.
6. Provide examples of appropriate behavior (demonstrations of what to do) and non-examples (demonstrations of disruptive behavior).
7. Explain the rules:
 - a. Each time every student in the group engages in an appropriate behavior the teacher will put a point on the board.
 - b. This game will last for x number of minutes (periods, subjects, etc.)
 - c. The class will earn a mystery reward at the end of the game time if they earn at least the goal number of points posted clearly in the classroom.
8. At the end of the game period, teacher tallies all of the points.
9. If goal is met, teacher allows a student who has behaved appropriately during the allotted game time to draw a mystery reward from the hat.
10. Teacher immediately distributes the mystery reward to the entire group of students.

Option #2: Design contingencies (behavior requirements) for the reduction of inappropriate behavior (punishment of inappropriate behavior)

1. Locate the reinforcers list for students (see *procedures* for instructions on how to do this)
2. Place the reinforcers on small pieces of paper, fold them, and place them in a jar or hat.
3. Create a starting number of points (behavior goal) that represent the number of disruptions the class is allowed to engage in (i.e.: Class must have 36 or fewer disruptive behavior episodes = class must receive 36 or less points).
4. Display the behavior goal clearly in the classroom.
5. Explain to the class which behaviors are considered disruptive.
6. Provide examples of disruptive behavior (demonstrations of what NOT to do) and non-examples (demonstrations of appropriate behavior).
7. Explain the rules:
 - a. Each time one student in the group engages in a disruptive behavior the teacher will put a point on the board.
 - b. This game will last for x number of minutes (periods, subjects, etc.)
 - c. The class will earn a mystery reward at the end of the game time if they do not exceed the goal number of points posted clearly in the classroom.
8. Every time a student exhibits inappropriate behavior (disruptive behavior), teacher places a point on the board.
9. At the end of the game period, teacher tallies all of the points.
10. Teacher allows a student who has behaved appropriately during the allotted game time to draw a mystery reward from the hat.
11. If goal is met, teacher immediately distributes the mystery reward to the entire group of students.

Alternative method of tallying points:

1. *For the reduction of disruptive behavior*, have 2 clear jars prepared: one with as many marbles or tokens as the goal number of disruptions in it, the other an empty jar. Each time a student engages in an inappropriate behavior, have that student transfer a marble or a token from the goal jar to the other jar. If there are still marbles at the end of the game, the group wins their mystery reinforcer.
2. *For the increase of appropriate behavior*, have the same jars set up, except for the empty jar, which should be labeled as the goal jar. The other jar should have the goal number of marbles/tokens in it as well as “bonus tokens” in case the students behave in a consistently appropriate way (beyond the set goal). When the students all behave appropriately, the teacher (or a randomly selected student) should transfer a marble from the marble jar to the goal jar. Once all of the marbles are transferred, class has earned their mystery reinforcer.

Critical Components that must be implemented for intervention to be successful:

A list of rules that inform students about what they are supposed to be doing must be posted so that everyone has quick access to the behavior guidelines that exist within the classroom. There must be access powerful reinforcers (things that the students will CLEARLY work for). All of the rules and the counter rules (non-examples) must be modeled to the students before the start of the intervention.

Critical Assumptions/Problem-Solving Questions to be Asked:

This intervention has the following assumptions:

- The class has been systematically observed and disruptive behaviors specifically identified prior to implementing the intervention.
- The percentage of students engaging in disruptive behavior must not represent more than 33% of the targeted classroom population.
- Rewards/Reinforcers must motivate at least 90% of the entire class to change their behavior (they must be powerful). One really great way to help resolve this is to have students draw 3 different rewards from the hat/jar and let the student who drew it select the reinforcer.
- The class is capable of working together in order to achieve the rewards (they have the skills needed to cooperate with each other).
- Reinforcement schedule is consistent (The teacher always reinforces the students immediately and often enough that the demand does not outweigh the reward).
- Teachers need to ask themselves: Are all of my students capable of successfully engaging in the appropriate/desired/required behavior?
 - If yes, continue with intervention as described
 - If no, implement an intervention that targets skill building for students *before* implementing this intervention. Otherwise it will fail as a classwide intervention. Some interventions for skill building can be found under the “Student has not learned behavior/skill” section of the website.

Materials

- Classroom rules chart
- Classroom rules contract
- Reinforcers list
- Jar (*Opaque*) or hat
- Small pieces of paper

References:

Axelrod, S. (1973). Comparison of individual and group contingencies in two special classes. *Behavior Therapy*, 4, 83–90.

Kelshaw-Levering, K., Sterling-Turner, H.E., Henry, J.R., & Skinner, C.H. (2000). Randomized interdependent group contingencies: Group reinforcement with a twist. *Psychology in the Schools*, 37, 523-533.