BEHAVIORAL CONTRACTS: HOW TO GET WHAT YOU WANT BY GIVING THEM WHAT THEY WANT

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WHO IS HERE TODAY?

- Teachers/Educators?
- Paraprofessionals?
- Related Service Providers?
- Parents/Caregivers?
- Are you already using behavior contracts?
1. WHAT are Behavior Contracts?: A Brief Overview & Essential Elements;
2. WHY and WHEN to Use Behavior Contracts?: Identifying Behavioral Needs & Current Skills;
3. WHERE to Use Behavior Contracts?: At School and/or In the Home
4. HOW to Use Behavior Contracts?: Steps for Developing and Implementing Behavior Contracts that are (I) Fair and (II) Useful
5. Possible Problems and Potential Solutions: Strategies for Revising Behavior Contracts
6. Case Examples & Practice Activities;
7. Questions & Answers
BEHAVIOR CONTRACTS IN PBIS

- Tertiary (FEW)
  - Reduced complications, intensity, severity of current cases

- Secondary (SOME)
  - Reduce current cases of problem behavior

- Primary (ALL)
  - Reduce new cases of problem behavior
WHAT ARE BEHAVIOR CONTRACTS?

- “A formal written agreement between a student/child and a teacher, parent, peer, or other person” (Wang, 1988)
- “If-then” (i.e., the Premack Principle or Grandma’s Law) statements to help children do less preferred activities before more favorable activities
- Behavior contracts may be used for a wide variety of behaviors and have been found to be effective across academic performance and social skills (Downing, 2002)
- Can be individualized and take many different forms
WHY USE BEHAVIOR CONTRACTS?

• Provides students with individualized support and (extra) help
• Makes students accountable for their behaviors (think self-management and/or –regulation)
• Increases structure, predictability, and organization
• Promotes self-responsibility
• Improves student motivation and effort
• Strengthens school/home communication and collaboration
WHEN TO USE BEHAVIOR CONTRACTS?

• When students exhibit persistent challenging behaviors
• To increase desired behaviors
• When students are unorganized and consistently do not complete homework or assignments
• When students need extra motivation
• Difficult emotions (e.g., anxiety, frustration)
WHEN NOT TO USE A BEHAVIOR CONTRACT

- When teaching a new skill
- The student must be able to do the behavior(s) outlined in the contract
- If the student does not understand that their behavior is directly linked to an outcome (i.e., they must understand the contingency)
- If less restrictive interventions/supports will produce similar or better results
STEPS OF DEVELOPMENT

1. Customize a drafted contract
2. Set up a “meeting” with your student
3. Is it working?
4. Be consistent and patient
5. Fade contract
There are three main components to a contingency contract:

- A description of the task
- A description of the reward
- A task record (i.e., a schedule by which things should be done, and a score of how well things were done)
DEFINING THE TASK

• **Who:** (1) The person who will complete the task, as well as (2) the person who will get the reward

• **What:** Is the task or the behavior (i.e., operational definition)

• **When:** Identified the time (or date) by which the task must be completed (e.g., the end of the school day, each Friday, before going to bed)

• **How well:** The specifics of the task, including steps and/or subtasks
POSSIBLE DESCRIPTIONS OF A TASK

Example

• Sally will get ready for school reach morning with having received only one reminder to get out of bed and be in the shower by 6:30. Sally will then be out of the shower by 6:45 and will be dressed and at the table by 7:00. After breakfast, Sally will be waiting outside for the school bus at 7:15.
• In order for Sally to receive the chosen reward every Friday, she must be (1) ready and (2) on time for the bus every school day.

Nonexamples

• David will get ready for school;
• Sarah will walk the dog before dinner; and
• Thomas will do his homework.
DEFINING THE REWARD

• The reward (i.e., reinforcement) comes after the completion of the task
  • Details about the reward should be complete and accurate as possible
• A reward statement should include information about
  • Who will (a) judge task completion and (b) control the delivery of the reward
  • What the reward is, and how the reward will be delivered
  • When the reward will be earned and how long after task completion the reward will be given
POSSIBLE REWARD STATEMENTS

• Examples
  • If Sally was ready for school on time and ready for the school bus Monday-Friday, she can earn a pizza and movie night. Sally (and possible guest) can order a medium pizza and watch two movies before going to bed.

• Non-examples
  • Can have ice cream
  • Will be able to play video games
  • Will be able to watch TV
STEP 2: SET UP A MEETING

- Have all involved parties meet, including the child
- Communicate the behavior you want to see change and the rewards that correlate with the behavior change
- Let your student voice their feelings and opinions about the contract
- Be positive
- Adult and student sign the contract
### Rules of Contracts

Remember these simple rules for behavior contracts during your meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Clear</th>
<th>Honest</th>
<th>Rewards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Draft a fair contract</td>
<td>Draft a clear contract</td>
<td>Draft an honest contract</td>
<td>Build in layers of rewards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Goals should be doable</td>
<td>• It should not be difficult for a student to ascertain the rules</td>
<td>• Rewards are delivered on time and in the amount that was promised</td>
<td>• Can include bonus contingency for going above and beyond the task description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relationship between the difficulty of the task and the amount (size) of the reward</td>
<td>• The contract should specify each person’s expectations</td>
<td>• No reward should be given until the task is fully complete</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
STEP 3: IS IT WORKING?

• Track your student’s progress
• Student can attain points for each hour or day
• Review your student’s behavior with them
  • How do you feel?
  • What do you want to change tomorrow?
• Are the consequences working?
STEP 4: BE CONSISTENT AND PATIENT

Keep consistent with the behavior contract, do not let the behavior slide or inadvertently reinforce the more problematic response.

It may take a couple of days for your student to understand the contract, give it time to work.

Keep positive and celebrate the small successes with your student.
What if the contract is not motivating enough for the student?

• Problem-solving:
  • Check to see if your rewards are occurring frequently (dense versus thin schedules of reinforcement), consistently, and are still valuable to your student.
  • Check to see if the criterion for a reward is too high (i.e., must be achievable/doable).
STEP 5: FAADING THE CONTRACT

• Start to increase the amount of time or points it takes to get a reward (weekly, or monthly collection of reward)
• Slowly start to fade if child is constantly displaying desired behavior
• Move to naturally-occurring reinforcement or reinforcers
• Keep track of your student’s progress
CASE EXAMPLE

- Gracie is preschool student who has a very picky diet
- She will only eat hot dogs, goldfish, waffles, cookies, smoothies
- She LOVES apple sauce
- Each time a new food is introduced during snack she cries, screams, and throws the plate
- Her teachers want her to increase the number of foods she will try so she can have a healthier diet
- Her teachers set up a behavior contract to help her expand her diet
Gracie’s Behavior Contract

Mom will give Gracie a cup of applesauce after Gracie tries 1 bite of new food without crying.

Bonus: If Gracie tries 5 new foods in a week, she will be able to pick out a toy from the store.

Gracie, helped create this agreement and understands.

______________________________

Mom, agrees to give applesauce after trying new foods. Mom will also take Gracie to the toy store on Saturday if she tries a new food each day.

______________________________
## Gracie’s Food Bank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carrot</td>
<td>Mac and Cheese</td>
<td>Apples</td>
<td>Chips</td>
<td>Mashed potatoes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of new foods: IIII
CASE EXAMPLE 2

• Sam is 5-year old and keeps a very messy desk.
• He loves his action figures and anything that has to do with outer space.
• Sam has his desk before, but it requires a lot of vocal prompts from his teacher.
• Each time Sam’s teacher gives him instruction to clean his room, he ignores the request and throws his papers on the ground.
• His teacher wants him to keep his desk clean to ensure he is organized and practicing independent skills.
• His teacher set up a behavior contract to help him clean his desk.
PROBLEM SOLVING TIME

• Sam and his teacher made a contract in which they both agreed; however, it has been two weeks and Sam does not appear motivated by the contract.

• See if you can spot the possible “red flags” in the contract.

• What should Sam’s teacher do?
Sam’s Contract

Sam’s teacher will give Sam a new action figure after each week of cleaning his desk without throwing papers.

Bonus: If Sam goes above and beyond cleaning his desk, he will get a trip to the space museum with Mom.

Penalty: If Sam throws his papers twice in a week, he must stay in during recess for 10 minutes.

Sam signature

Teacher signature
• Thomas is a 13-year-old boy with ASD and continues to have problems (i.e., general task completion, attention to directions) in math class

• Thomas will submit assignments that are late (an average of 9 days after due date) and incomplete (missing around 3 of the 10 required problems)

• Thomas will not take notes in class and will not list any of the assignments in daily planner

• Thomas will usually doodle throughout most (an average of 29 of the total 44 minutes) of the math lesson
Thomas now has a **failing grade** (e.g., D or F) in the math class and the teachers is thinking about referring Thomas to the office as a “discipline problem” and for remedial help/support.

Thomas has never had trouble in mathematics before and continues to excel in terms of state-wide assessment and/or placement tests

(Think!: *can’t do versus won’t do*)

Thomas is a “gifted artist” and likes Japanese Anime and other graphic novels.
• **Workshop activity:**

  • Create a contingency contract that would *work* for Thomas:
    
    • Include a description of the task (e.g., the *who*, the *what*, the *when*, and the *how well*)
    
    • Include a description of the reward (e.g. *when* something will be given, *who* will give the reinforcer, and *how much* of the reinforcer will be given at any one time)
    
    • Include a description of the task record (e.g., what are the *deadlines* and *due dates*, is there a *criterion* or *criteria* of acceptable *performance* and/or *improvement*)
RESOURCES

• Books
  • Applied Behavior Analysis (2007) by John O. Cooper, Timothy E. Heron, and William L. Heward;
  • Handbook of Applied Behavior Analysis (2011) edited by Wayne W. Fisher, Cathleen C. Piazza, and Henry S. Roane; and

• Internet Websites*
  • https://www.pinterest.com/explore/behavior-contract/
  • https://www.freebehaviorcontracts.com/downloads.php
  • http://www.kidpointz.com/behavior-tools/behavior-contracts/

* It should be noted that no author of this presentation is seeking to endorse any one of these three websites, and that this is simply a list of possible resources that was found via simple Google search. Therefore, the statements, materials and products made available at Pinterest, Free Behavior Contracts, and Kid Points are the opinions and the products of other people and organizations and not being said to be the best or something that you should purchase or use in your home or at school.
ANY QUESTIONS?

• Feel free to contact!

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