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## **BEHAVIOR MONITORING in SCHOOL**

### **with a BEHAVIORAL MONITORING CARD**

The first step in changing behavior is always monitoring. By becoming aware of what we do, we change. This principle can be used to track and improve a child's behavior in the classroom using a **Behavioral Monitoring Card**. The Card is a simple, customized tool that combines three elements to make it effective.

- \* First, it tracks a few specific behaviors that are framed in a positive way.
- \* Next, the behaviors are scored repeatedly at intervals over the day.
- \* Third, the child participates in the monitoring, scoring his or her own behavior.

The following paragraphs describe how to make and use Behavioral Monitoring Cards.

Throughout each step, a key factor is the involvement of the child in the process. The child's ownership of the cards and participation in their design and use is essential for success.

Without it, the child risks feeling manipulated by yet another "Behavior Modification Program."

The child's sense of autonomy and control must be respected if they are to cooperate in changing their own behavior.

### **Label Behaviors to Change**

The first step in helping to change behavior is to give it a description and name. Just this process helps a child separate themselves, or dissociate, from the behavior. Dissociation is powerful. When we can think about a behavior, or any problem, as separate from ourselves, we feel more control over it.

The teacher(s), child and parents can discuss behaviors together. The child ought to be encouraged to describe the problem behaviors. It might help for him or her to act the behavior out on purpose in order to really understand it (and demonstrate control). Common examples are:

- \* “When you have to tell me stuff over and over again.”
- \* “When I draw on my math paper instead of doing the math problems.”
- \* “When I forget to turn in my homework.”
- \* “When I talk to my friends during reading time.”

After they are described, the teacher and child select the top three behaviors that get in the way of being a successful student. Experience shows that two behaviors are not enough and four are usually too many. Three seems just right.

Next, with the teacher’s help, a short name can be applied to that behavior. The name ought to frame the behavior positively, in terms of the best expected behavior. This is very important because we tend to go where we are looking. When we think in a positive direction we tend to go there. When we think about avoiding a negative, we go there. A good example of the latter is when we try not to think of purple elephants.

For the problem behaviors already listed, the reframing and naming could be:

- \* Listening to directions the first time. “First Time.”
- \* Staying on an assigned task until I am done. “On Task.”
- \* Remembering to turn in my work on time. “On Time.”
- \* When I let other people to their work as I do mine. “Good Neighbor.”

Finally the teacher and child list the behaviors down the left side of the Behavioral Monitoring Card.

<b>On Task</b>				
<b>On Time</b>				
<b>First Time</b>				
<b>Comments</b>				

### **Create a Monitoring Scale**

The next step is to create a scale to measure degrees of the problem behavior. When we appreciate that the *intensity* of a behavior varies (it is not just “on” or “off”) we begin to value efforts to change the behavior in small ways.

Again, the child’s has a central role in designing the monitoring scale. The child is asked to choose a range of numbers from zero or one to 10 and to decide which end is the best and worst behavior. For example, one child may decide that the scale goes from one to five and five is the best. Another may make a scale ranging from zero to six and zero is the best because there is zero misbehavior. Whatever feels right to the child is right.

In order to calibrate the scale, the teacher can ask the child how he or she would rate his or her own behavior “right now.” For example, if staying on task is a goal and the child is engaged in the process of making the rating scale, they ought to give themselves the best score for their behavior. Then the teacher can ask, “So act the way you would if you were to give yourself a” (number for the worst behavior). With this act of awareness, the scale makes sense to the child who has just demonstrated that he or she is able to control the behavior being examined.

Finally, the child helps write the scale in the upper left corner of the Behavioral Monitoring Card.

<b>My Scale</b>					
<b>Worst 1 2 3 4 5 Best</b>					
On Task					
On Time					
First Time					
Comments					

### **Determine Monitoring Frequency**

Now that behaviors have been named and there is a way to measure them, the teacher and child can look at the school day schedule and decide the best times to check in. These intervals can correspond to specific subjects, teachers, activities or simply the time of day. The choices of time intervals will vary with each classroom and each child's needs. The most important aspect of this step is that there are at least three time periods over the school day to assign a score to the child's behavior. The more frequent the feedback, the more carefully the child learns to pay attention to his or her behavior. Each time interval is a new chance to improve. Each time that the behavior score is written down, the child gets a "clean slate" for the next time period.

The time periods are placed across the top of the card.

<b>My Scale</b>	<b>Teaching/ Deskwork Time</b>	<b>Group Activity Time</b>	<b>Lunch Time</b>	<b>Afternoon Activities</b>
<b>Worst 1 2 3 4 5 Best</b>				
On Task				
On Time				
First Time				
Comments				

## The Scorers

The most powerful part of this behavioral awareness program is that *both the child and teacher participate in rating the child's behavior*. Each time period column is subdivided into a "Teacher" and "Student" column. Both are equally responsible for their own columns over the day.

My Scale Worst 1 2 3 4 5 Best	Teaching/ Deskwork Time		Group Activity Time		Lunch Time		Afternoon Activities	
	Me	Teach	Me	Teach	Me	Teach	Me	Teach
My Jobs								
On Task								
On Time								
First Time								
Comments								

## Design the Card

Now that all the elements of the card are in place, the student can design it to make it more colorful and unique, just the way he or she likes it. Clearly, this helps with the child's ownership of the card and the process of changing behavior. Parents can help with design on a home computer and play the role of secretary, keeping the cards produced and stored at home.

My Scale Worst 1 2 3 4 5 Best ☹️ 😊	Teaching/ Deskwork Time		Group Activity Time		Lunch Time		Afternoon Activities	
	Me	Teach	Me	Teach	Me	Teach	Me	Teach
My Jobs								
On Task								
On Time								
First Time								
Comments Today is:								

**Use It**

Obviously, the last step is to use the card. The card is placed by the student on his or her own desk for the day. Both teacher and student record scores throughout the day and both can add comments to the comment section and to the back of the card. The child brings the card home daily to share with parents. It is best for parents not to discipline or express disappointment if their son or daughter has a bad day. School behavior stays at school.