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Time On Task

A Strategy for Teachers

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Introduction: This handout describes a token economy program designed to increase on-task behavior. Program components include immediate reinforcers, several daily mini-conferences with the teacher, and daily and weekly rewards. Before beginning this program, teacher and student should review on-task behavior expectations. It is recommended that teachers make sure students understand what it means to *begin work immediately, work quietly, remain seated, ask good questions, complete work, work carefully and follow instructions*. Understanding these seven on-task behaviors is critical because the program specifies that target students be reinforced for displaying them.

Immediate Reinforcers: As frequently as possible, during the school day, the student should be given immediate verbal praise whenever any of the seven on-task behaviors are displayed. For example, the teacher might say: "I like the way you began work right away!", or, "I like how quietly you are working!"

Mini-Conferences: At several previously specified times during the day, the teacher has a one to two-minute mini-conference with the student. Making use of an on-task sticker sheet (Figure 1), the teacher gives the student a sticker and verbal praise for each of the seven on-task behaviors demonstrated during the just completed instructional period. For example, the teacher might say: "You completed your work! You've really earned this sticker!" Also, encouragement and instruction regarding on-task behaviors not displayed should be offered. For example, the teacher might say: "Looks like you added instead of subtracting on some of these problems. That's not working carefully and I can't give you this sticker. I know you can earn this sticker next time! Remember to pay attention to the operation."

The number of mini-conferences held is a decision to be made by the teacher. As a general rule, the more conferences held the better. However, it is essential that it be feasible for the teacher to consistently provide all scheduled conferences. A natural time for these conferences is before each recess and lunch period, and at the end of the school day.

Daily Rewards: Using this program the student can receive a maximum number of stickers per day (7 times the number of mini-conferences). Before implementing the program, teacher and student should set a daily goal for number of stickers to be earned. This goal should be written on the on-task sticker sheet (Figure 1). During the initial stages of the program the daily goal should be set low and at a level that ensures success. The daily total of stickers necessary to earn the reward may be increased as the student's on-task behavior improves.

If the student reaches the on-task behavior goal, one or more daily rewards would be given. A behavior contract should be written to specify what rewards are earned when goal is met. One reward possibility, that would serve the dual purpose of facilitating home-school communication, is to send home a positive note to the student's parent(s) (Figure 2). This note encourages the parent(s) to further reinforce the positive on-task behaviors seen at school.

Weekly Rewards: As an optional component of this program, teacher and student may also set a weekly goal for the number of stickers to be earned. If the student reaches this goal a reward would be given. This reward might include the privilege of participating in a special activity on Friday afternoon. For example, the student may earn the privilege of eating lunch with the teacher. During the initial stages of the program the weekly goal should be set at a level that ensures success. The weekly total of stickers needed to earn the reward may be increased as the student's on-task behavior improves. Figure 3 provides an example of a weekly sticker total contract.

Concluding Comments. Counseling from the teacher during the mini-conference and not receiving the rewards specified above would serve as the contingency for off-task behavior. In implementing this program, it is important to remember that consistency is critical. This is especially true during the early stages of the program.

Figure 1

ON-TASK STICKER SHEET

Instructional Period	Begins work immediately	Works quietly	Remains seated	Asks good questions	Works carefully	Follows instructions	Completes Assignments	Total

My daily total

My daily total goal for this week

If I meet my daily total goal, I will earn _____

Figure 2

SUPER WORKER REPORT

Date: _____

Dear _____,

Your child had a good day today. The on-task behavior goal was met. It would be appropriate for you to do something special for your child tonight to reinforce this good work.

Sincerely,

Classroom Teacher

Figure 3

WEEKLY STICKER TOTALS

Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Sticker Total					

My weekly total goal is

If I meet my weekly total goal, I will earn _____