

How to Use Group Contingencies:

Specific Strategies of Effective Classrooms

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Outline for Today

1. Proactive Classroom Management
2. Types of Group Contingencies
3. Uses and Advantages / Disadvantages
4. Action Planning to Implement

Traditional Classroom Management

- Which students typically receive teacher attention?
 - Student who chronically misbehaves
 - Student who is quiet, compliant, attentive
- Student disruptions can result in confrontation between student and teacher and subsequent removal from class
- Classroom disruptions and lack of classroom management are significant barriers to learning

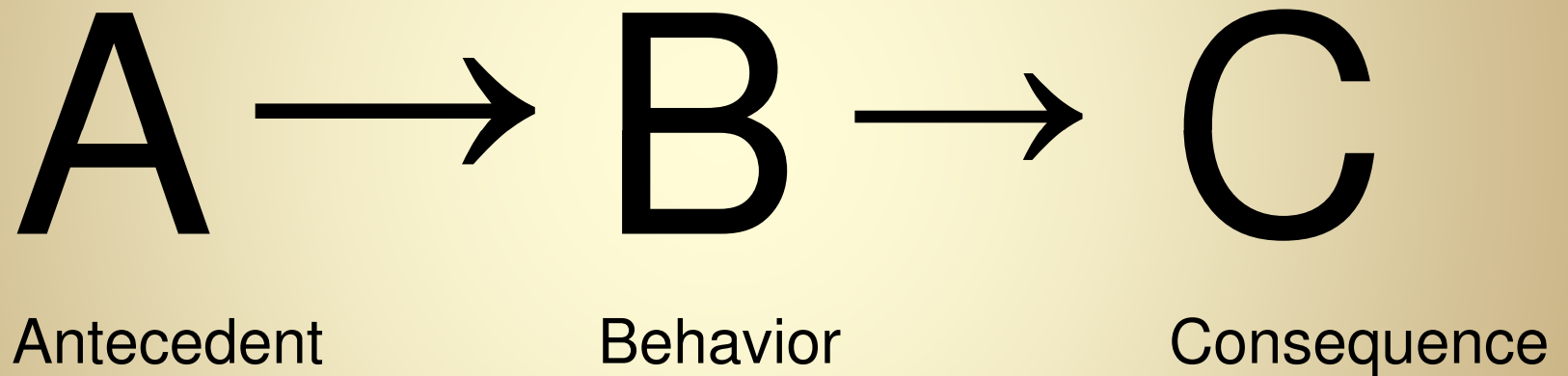
Contemporary Approach

- Best practice in classroom management and countless studies indicate a proactive and positive approach to classroom management is most effective (see Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 1987; Alberto & Troutman, 2009)
- Required by IDEA (2004) and NCLB (2001)
 - Positive behavioral supports for students with IEPs (§300.324.a.2.i & a.3.i)
 - Least intrusive alternative for addressing behavior

What is Proactive and Positive?

- **Proactive** – to anticipate and take efforts to prevent the occurrence of an event
- **Positive** – use of preventive and reinforcing strategies much more than reactive and punitive strategies when an event occurs

A Behavioral Event



Behavioral Event Example

- **Antecedent:** Teacher directs class to begin working on an assignment.
- **Behavior:** Alexis pushes her paper and book off the desk and says, “I’m not doing this stupid paper!”
- **Consequence:** Teacher says, “Alexis, you will do the assignment or I’ll send you down to the office.”

Antecedent

- Whatever happens before a behavior
 - Immediate antecedents (e.g., teacher requests, peer comment)
 - Long-term antecedent – termed setting events (e.g., illness, tired)
- Antecedents can trigger or prevent a behavior from occurring

Behavior

- Any observable and measurable act of an individual

Examples	Non-examples
Swearing	Bad attitude
Breaking a pencil	Lazy
Running	Good
Talking to a peer	Anger

- When addressing student behavior, focus on that which you can observe and measure

Consequence

any event that follows a behavior and influences the future rate of the behavior

- Whatever immediately follows the behavior
- Can be something positive or negative
- Two types...

Reinforcement and Punishment

- **Reinforcement** – an event / consequence that follows a behavior which results in maintaining or increasing the future occurrence of that behavior
 - Examples: verbal praise; money

- **Punishment** – an event / consequence that follows a behavior which decreases the future occurrence of that behavior
 - Examples: verbal reprimand; fine for speeding

However.....!

- The type of consequence is not based on our intent, but is determine by its effect on behavior
- You cannot determine whether a consequence that follows a behavior is a reinforcer or a punisher until you observe how **FUTURE** behavior is affected
- Verbal praise may be reinforcing for some....
- Verbal reprimands may be punishing for some....

Returning to Proactive and Positive Strategies

- Remember our definitions....
- **Proactive – antecedent** strategies
- **Positive – reinforcement-based** strategies to promote desirable behaviors

Thus....

- The most effective classroom management strategies are those that prevent or greatly minimize disruptive behavior (antecedent) and reinforce desirable behavior (consequence).

“It is easier to prevent a behavior from occurring, than to deal with it after it has happened.”

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The Best Classroom Management Strategy

- The most effective classroom management strategy is **effective instruction**
 - At students' instructional level
 - Viewed as valuable / motivating to the student
 - See Ellis & Worthington (1994) for review

Managing Classroom Behavior

- Most teachers are attempting to balance academic instruction with managing the (mis)behavior of many students in the class.
- Who has time to do all this when many, or even a few, students are misbehaving?
- Group Contingencies are effective strategies to address the behavior of one student, many students, or a whole group (Litow & Pumroy, 1975)

Group Contingencies

- What are they?
 - AKA “Group-Oriented Contingencies”
 - Strategies to change the behavior of a group of students
 - Method by which the teacher arranges consequences for the group based on the behavior of members of that group
- When are they used?
 - When the teacher needs to positively affect the behavior of a number of students simultaneously

Group Contingencies

- Proactive?
 - Yes, used to prevent undesirable / negative behavior from occurring.
- Positive?
 - Yes, many group contingencies are reinforcement-based to increase desirable behavior while simultaneously decreasing negative behavior.

Three Types of Group Contingencies

1. Dependent Group-Oriented
2. Independent Group-Oriented
3. Interdependent Group-Oriented

Dependent Group Contingency

- Two main characteristics:
 - Same standard of performance expected of every individual.
 - Reinforcement for the group is based on the behavioral performance of a subset of the group.
- **Examples:**
 - Free time for the class on Friday if Alexis completes her in-class assignments for an entire week.
 - Extra recess time if Elliott and Samuel earn at least a C on the spelling test.

Independent Group Contingency

- Two main characteristics:
 - Same standard of performance expected of every individual.
 - Reinforcement for each individual is based on the behavioral performance of each individual.
- **Examples:**
 - Free time on Friday available to any student who completes all his/her in-class assignments for the week.
 - Extra recess time for anyone who earns a C or better on the spelling test.

Interdependent Group Contingency

- Two main characteristics:
 - Same standard of performance expected of every individual.
 - Reinforcement for the entire group is based on the behavioral performance of the entire group.
- **Examples:**
 - Free time on Friday available only if all students in the class complete their in-class assignments for the week.
 - Extra recess time if everyone in the class earns a C or better on the spelling test.

What Type of Group Contingency?

- Think-Pair-Share the following scenarios:
 1. If every student enters class before the bell rings, the whole class earns 5 minutes of free time at the end of the period.
 2. Each student who earns 100 Bulldog Bucks may purchase entrance to the Friday night dance.
 3. If Sophie raises her hand without shouting for the entire class, the class earns a “homework pass.”

What Type of Group Contingency?

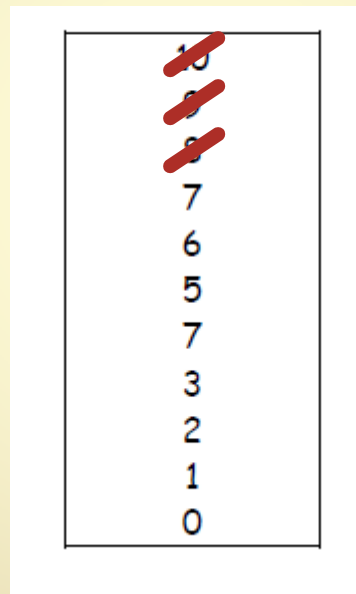
1. If every student enters class before the bell rings, the whole class earns 5 minutes of free time at the end of the period. - Interdependent Group Contingency
2. Each student who earns 100 Bulldog Bucks may purchase entrance to the Friday night dance.
- Independent Group Contingency
3. If Sophie raises her hand without shouting for the entire class, the class earns a “homework pass.”
- Dependent Group Contingency

Example (1): Response Cost

- Principle: Teacher offers reinforcement if group does not perform a particular inappropriate behavior.
- Method: Write numbers 0 to upper acceptable limit on the chalkboard. Begin with the upper acceptable limit. Cross out one number each time a student in the group displays the target behavior. Reinforcement is delivered if a 0 has not been crossed out after a specific period of time.

Response Cost

- Uses: for out-of-seat behavior, shouting out, hitting



- (Kazdin, 1972; Kerr & Nelson, 1983; Salend & Kovalich, 1981)

Example (2): Upper Limit

- Principle: Teacher offers reinforcement if group engages in the inappropriate behavior less than a pre-determined level.
- Method: Use baseline data to set an upper acceptable limit for the behavior. Record each time the behavior occurs. Reinforcement is delivered if the group behaves less than that pre-determined level.
- Lower the criterion gradually as group is successful

Upper Limit

- Uses: out-of-seat behavior, talking out, hitting
- Careful when slowly decreasing the upper limit
- (Deitz & Repp, 1974; Harris & Herman, 1973)

Example (3): Caught You!

- Principle: Teacher “catches” the group behaving appropriately
- Method: Randomly set an egg timer to ring at different intervals. Deliver reinforcement (e.g., point, one minute extra free time) if the group is behaving appropriately when the timer rings.
- Uses: off-task, out of seat, disruptive (Repp, Barton, & Brulle, 1983; Reese, Sherman, & Sheldon, 1998)

Example (4): Good Behavior Game

- Principle: Teams of students compete for a reinforcer.
- Method: Randomly divide into two or more teams. The team that demonstrates the fewest number of the target behavior will be reinforced.
- Encourages competition among teams; can be made into non-competitive game

Good Behavior Game

- Uses: disruptive behavior, talking out, out-of-seat
- (Barrish, Saunders, & Wolf, 1969; Tingstrom, Sterling-Turner, & Wilczynski, 2006; Swain, Allard, & Holborn, 1982)

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Uses of Group Contingencies

- For a variety of inappropriate, mildly disruptive behaviors that interfere with instruction
- When there are multiple students in a class who present behavioral challenges
- When **NOT** to use:
 - Address the behavior of just one student
 - For severe behaviors (e.g., severe aggression, self-injury, stereotypic behavior)

Specific Uses

- Dependent: hyperactivity, off-task, academic skills, social skills
- Independent: academic skills, studying, disruptive behavior, following instructions
- Interdependent: disruptive, calling out, studying, academic skills, noise in the classroom

Advantages / Disadvantages of Dependent Group Contingencies

- Advantages:
 - Student(s) who earn(s) reinforcement for the group is/are the hero/heroes
 - Peer group controls and enhances behavior
 - Peers assist the dependent person(s) in group
 - Feasible and practical
- Disadvantages:
 - Scapegoating and blaming
 - Can lead to threats

Advantages of Interdependent Group Contingencies

- Whole group motivated to comply with rule(s) and encourage good behavior in each other
- Deviant behavior is not reinforced by peers
- Convenient and easy to apply
- No one student needs to be singled out

Disadvantages of Interdependent Group Contingencies

- Excessive pressure may be placed on one or several individuals
- Possible sabotage by unmotivated students
- Scapegoating
- Ethical considerations

Ethical Considerations

- Take care to help avoid covert verbal statements or threats by other students to students who fail to reach the standard
- Avoid specifying a student contributing to a loss of reward by name
- Make sure that students have pre-requisite skills to reach the standard
- Make sure in advance that the *all for one and one for all* philosophy is acceptable by adults AND students.

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Action Planning: Step 1

- See Axelrod (1998) for more detail
- 1. Select and define the target behavior(s) to modify
 - Concrete, precise terms
 - Measurable and observable
 - Educationally meaningful
 - Somewhat easy to change

EXAMPLE Action Planning: Step 1

1. Aggressive acts during transition times
 - 3rd Grade classroom; N = 25
 - Hitting with a closed fist
 - During AM, Mid-morning, Lunch, and PM transitions

Action Planning: Step 2

2. Decide on data collection tool and who is responsible for data collection

Question of Interest	Dimension to Measure
How often?	Each event (frequency, rate, or percentage)
How long?	Duration (each event or cumulative)
How long to begin a behavior?	Latency

PaTTAN website has excellent data collection tools (www.pattan.net)

EXAMPLE Action Planning: Step 2

2. Decide on data collection tool and who is responsible for data collection
 - Frequency count
 - Collected by teacher

Action Planning: Step 3

3. Obtain baseline data for target behavior(s)
 - At least 3-5 days;
 - Ideally, 10 days

- Average the behavior(s) across the baseline days

EXAMPLE Action Planning: Step 3

3. Obtain baseline data

- 4 days; 21 aggressive acts
- Average = 5.3 per day

Action Planning: Step 4

4. Identify reinforcers

- Poll students
- What them during free time
- www.interventioncentral.org – Reinforcer surveys

- Have a menu of reinforcers
 - Some little value
 - Some large value

- Mystery Motivators

EXAMPLE Action Planning: Step 4

4. Identify reinforcers

- Stickers
- Class party
- Free time
- Movie
- Class pet

Action Planning: Step 5

5. Decide on type of Group Contingency program
 - Dependent
 - Independent
 - Interdependent

- If necessary, form groups of students (e.g., teams, small groups)
- Randomize the groups

EXAMPLE Action Planning: Step 5

5. Decide on type of Group Contingency program

- Interdependent – whole class
- Reinforcer:
 - Sticker chart; one sticker per day
 - 10 stickers = party / movie
 - 50 stickers = class pet

Action Planning: Step 6

6. Set a reasonable goal for the contingency
 - Refer to baseline data (Step 3)
 - If REDUCING a problem behavior, set goal ABOVE the baseline average
 - If INCREASING a desirable behavior, set goal BELOW the baseline average
 - WHY? To maximize success early on
 - Display the Goal to the group

EXAMPLE Action Planning: Step 6

6. Set a reasonable goal for the contingency

- Average = 5.2 per day
- Initial goal = 6
- Over time and with success, would decrease the goal to receive reinforcement

Action Planning: Step 7

7. Make sure everyone can perform the behavior
 - Evidence that every student can perform the behavior
 - If not, teach!

EXAMPLE Action Planning: Step 7

7. Make sure everyone can perform the behavior
 - Re-taught lining up behavior
 - Modeling and practice

Action Planning: Step 8

8. Implement the program

- Division of class into groups (if appropriate)
- Explain program to class
- Select a time of day to implement
- Start date
- Other

Action Planning: Step 9

9. Monitor group and individual performance

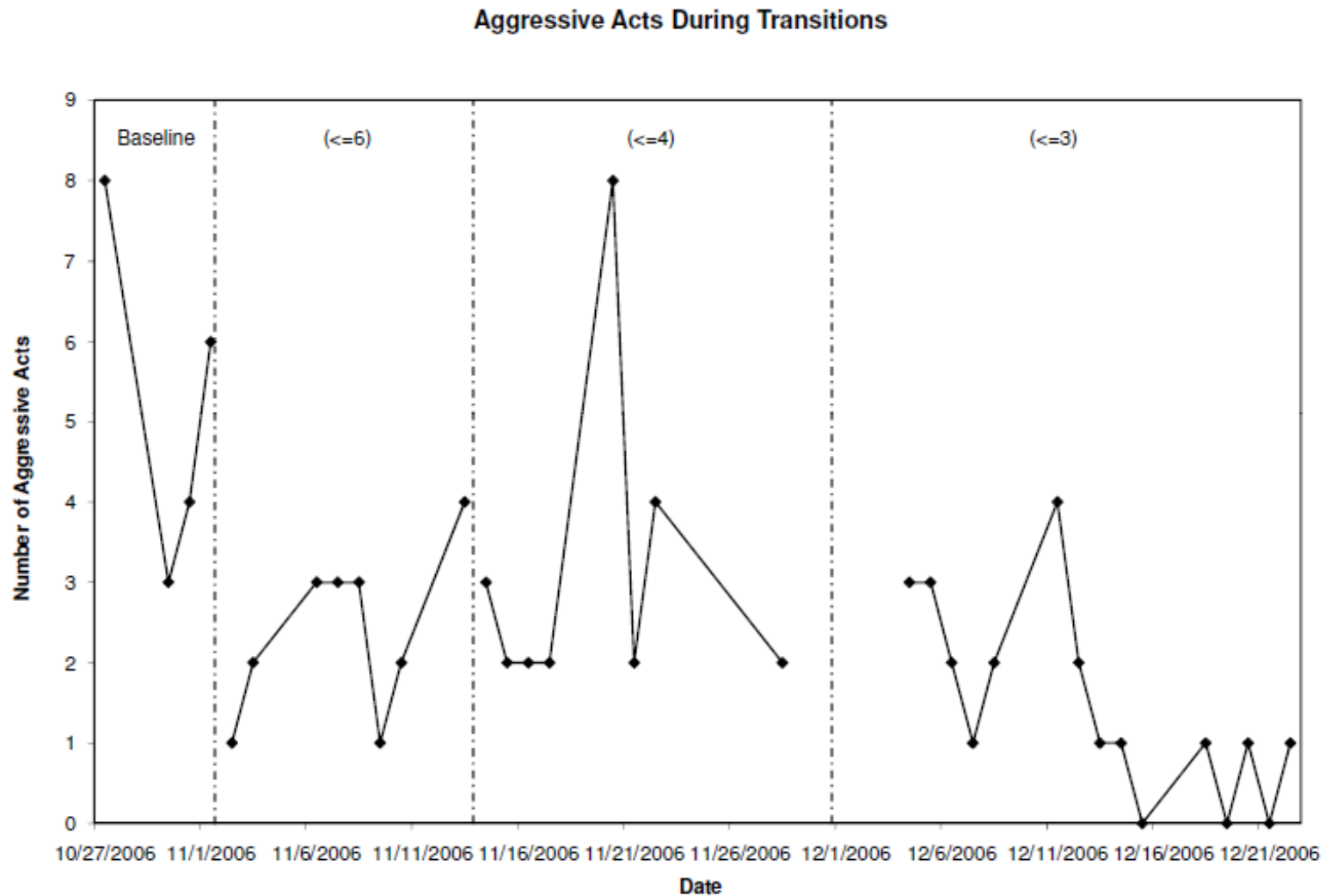
- Praise individual and group performance immediately
- Keep record of performance
- Is anyone sabotaging?
 - How do you know that?
 - Form own group

Action Planning: Step 10

10. Revise as needed

- Evaluate outcomes of the program
 - Need to change reinforcers?
 - Need to change goals?
 - Need to change groups?
 - Need to target different behaviors?
 - Need to change type of contingency?
-
- Return to appropriate step

EXAMPLE Planning: Steps 8-10



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References

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