



# Preventative Strategies to Address Challenging Behaviors

June 12, 2024

WV Behavior and Mental Health Technical Assistance  
Center Conference



# How was your morning?



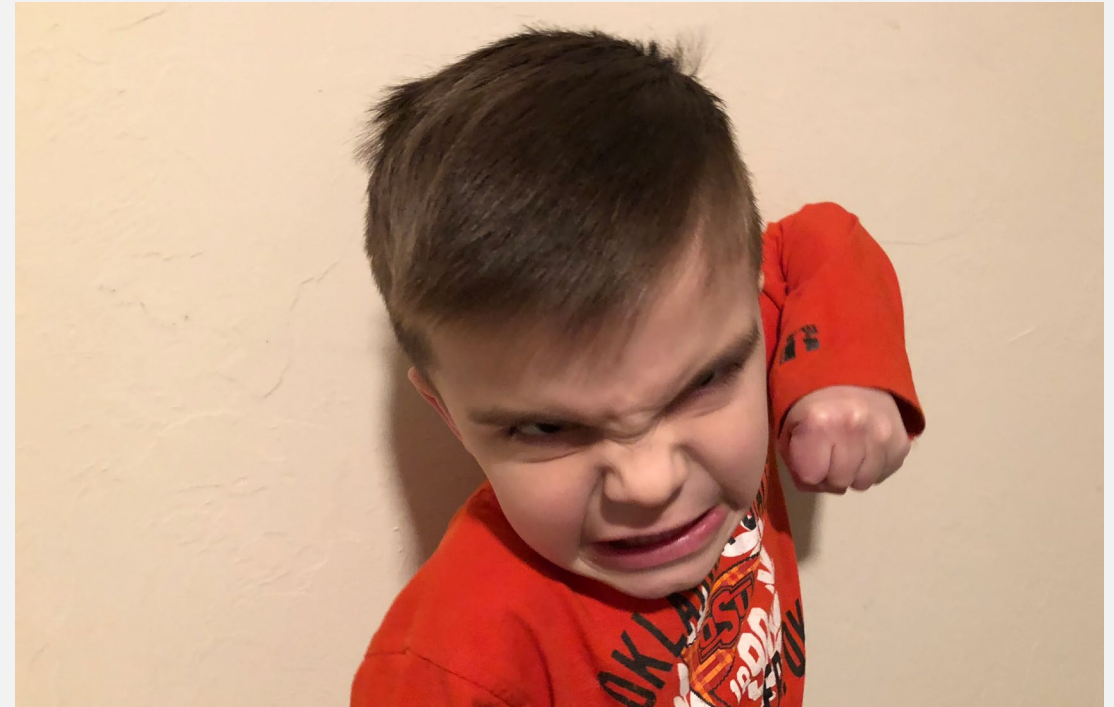
**“There is no such thing as a bad boy, only bad environment, bad modeling and bad teaching.”**

Father Edward J. Flanagan – Founder of Boys Town



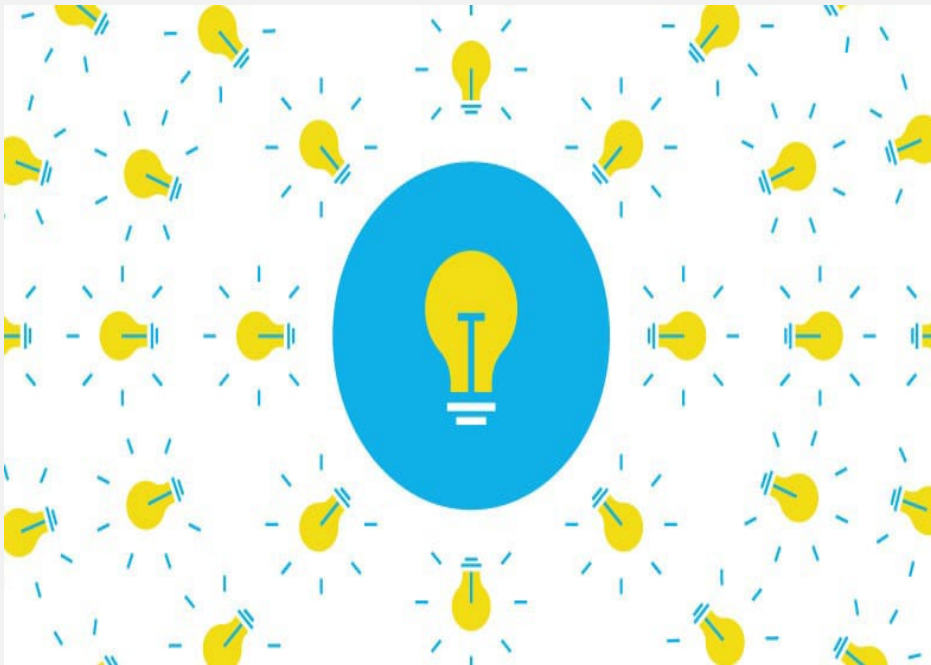
# Facing Challenges in the Classroom

- Physical Aggressive Behaviors Towards staff and students
  - Definitions – hitting, kicking, pushing, biting, pinching, pulling hair, grabbing
- Disruptive Behavior
  - Verbal disruptions – screaming, yelling, cursing
  - Material and property destruction
- Refusal
  - Doing anything else except what is instructed
  - Examples – head down, dropping to the floor, crawling under furniture, swiping materials away
- Other Examples?





# Concepts for Understanding Behavior



- Behavior can be a symptom of an underlying cause
  - Behavior is communication
  - Behavior has a function (to get something or to get away from something)
  - Behaviors occur in patterns
  - Behavior can be changed
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# Function of Behavior





# To get something

**We get access to things, activities, interactions that we like**

- Money
- Coffee
- Cheesecake
- Watching TV
- Sleeping in
- Spending time with our favorite people

**Our students get access to things, activities, interactions that they like**

- Fidgets
  - Toys
  - Cheez-its, favorite candy
  - Playing a game (Mine-craft)
  - Helping a teacher
  - Taking a walk
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# To Get Away from Something

**We get away from things, activities, situations, people that we don't like**

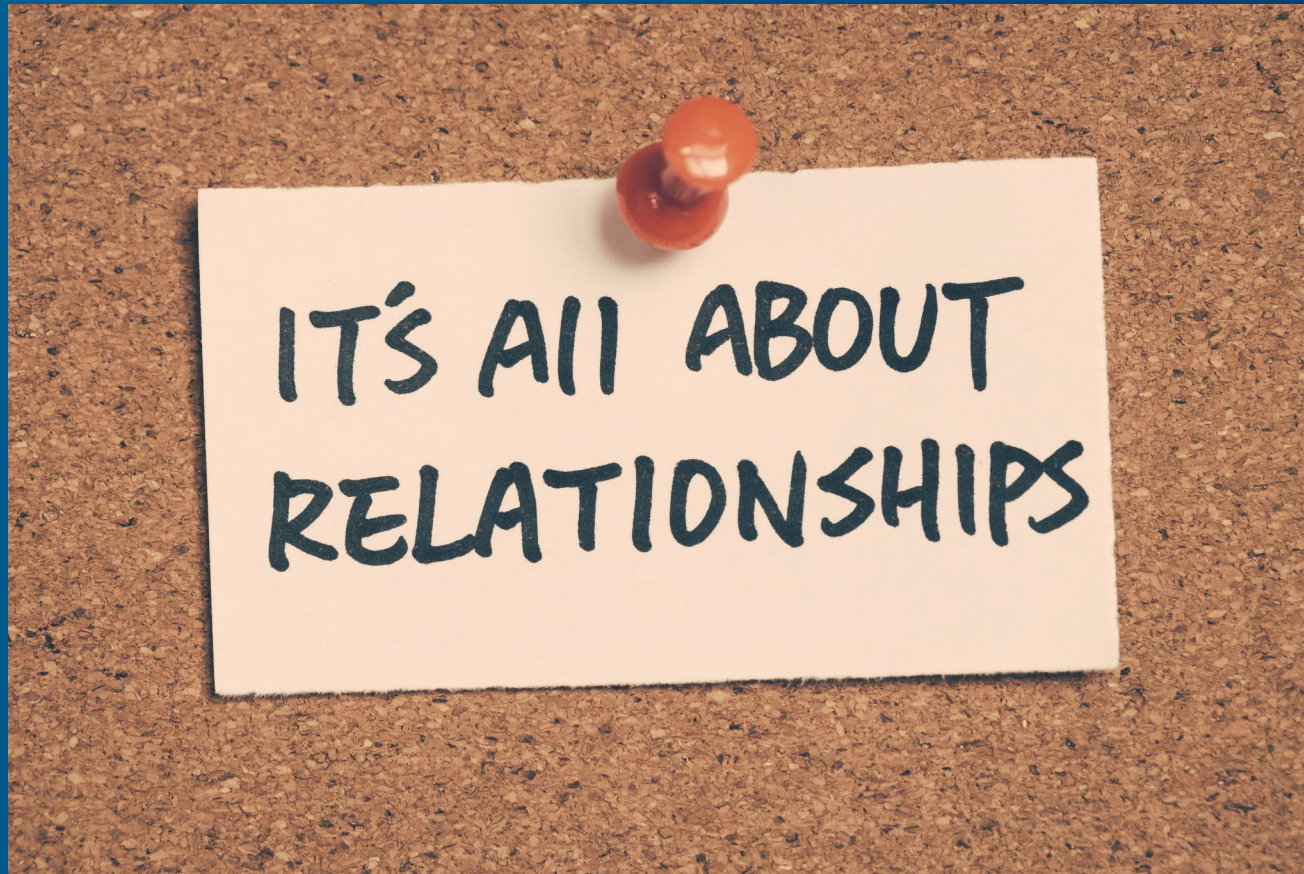
- A person (grocery store)
- Sounds, sights, textures
- Rain
- Cold/hot weather
- Going to a gathering
- Away from demands/work

**Our students get away from things, activities, situations, people they don't like**

- A specific peer
  - Sounds, sights, textures
  - A staff member
  - Away from demands (work)
-



# Where do we Start?





# Getting to Know your Students

## Review Information



## Relationships!!





# Information Good to Know

**Past Trauma**

**Characteristics related  
to the disability**

**Communication Skills  
Strengths/Deficits**

**Specific Skill  
Strengths/Deficits**

**Precipitation/Triggering  
Factors**

**Likes and Dislikes**

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# Relationships are Key!

- Why is it important?
  - Research supports the impact of relationships
  - We see it work
    - Working for a someone you like vs. working for someone that you may not like as much. How does this change your behavior?
- Find out what they like – activities, items, people, characters, conversation topics, etc....
- Spend time engaging with them in what they like (Making Time)
  - 3-5 minutes out of the day to devote to 1 student engaging with them in what they prefer.
- Observe – watch and see what they do and how and what they interact with.

Things they don't like – just as important.

- Sensory (textures, tastes, sounds, sights)
- Specific Activities or Items
- People





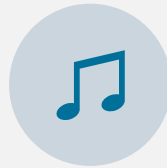
# Ideas for Building Relationships



GO FOR A WALK  
WITH THE  
STUDENT



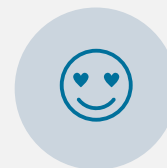
TAKE THEM  
ALONG TO RUN  
ERRANDS



LISTEN TO THEIR  
FAVORITE MUSIC



HAVE LUNCH WITH  
THEM



BRING IN ITEMS  
THEY LIKE



TALK ABOUT  
THEIR FAVORITE  
TOPICS



USE HUMOR



HAVE THEM HELP  
ORGANIZE IN  
CLASS

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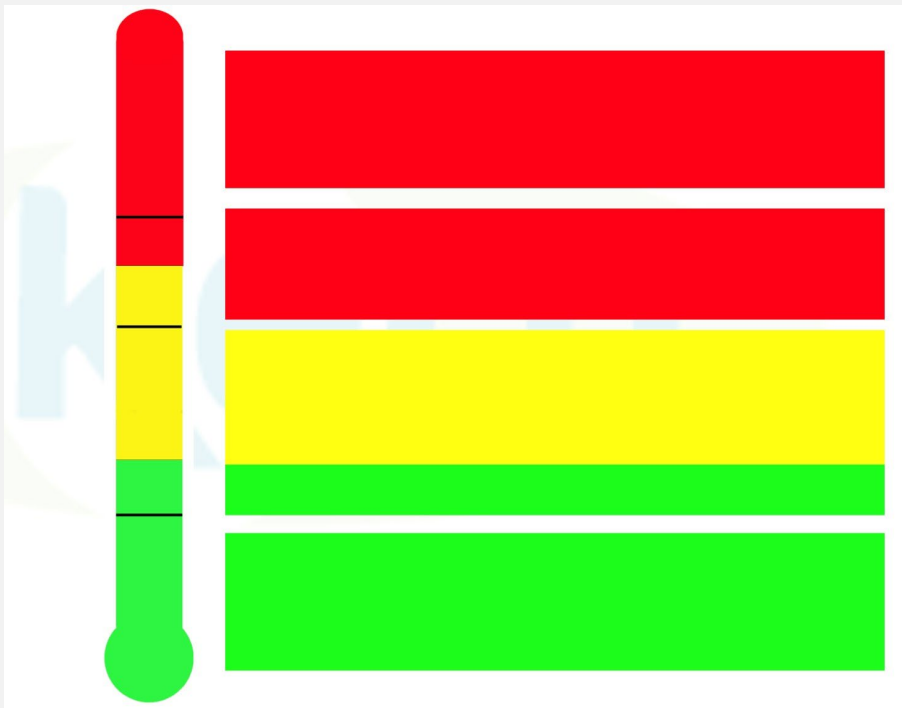


## **(3) This Special Ed Teacher Gives Touching Compliments To His Students Everyday - YouTube**

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# Feelings Thermometer



- Check-in – how are you feeling today?
- What does this look like for your student?
- Ask yourself –what has been going on?
- Can they be redirected by talking about another topic or change the task/environment?
- Be mindful of proximity





# Classroom Set up and Planning

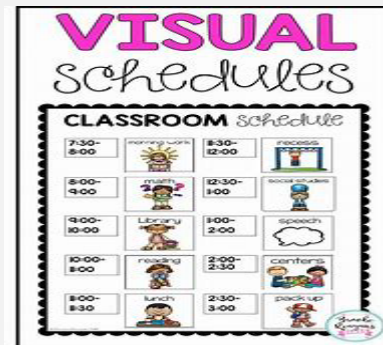
- Large Group Instruction
- Small Group Instruction
- Be Prepared
- Avoid Downtime
- Minimize Transitions
- Minimize Clutter
- Furniture Arrangement
- Safe Space/Sensory Area





# Schedules

- Class wide
- Individual
- Predictability
- Routine



Mrs. Ross'  
Schedule 2014-15

Time	Activity
7:45-8:00	Doors open, morning routines
8:00-8:45	Calendar
8:45-9:15	SMART Time
9:15-10:25	Reading Block
10:32-10:52	Lunch
10:55-11:15	Math
11:15-12:25	Activity
12:30-12:45	Snack/Read Aloud
12:45-1:20	Writing
1:20-1:45	Recess
1:45-2:00	Silent Reading
2:00-2:30	Start Dismissal

Science and Social Studies are integrated into the reading block.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
PE	Music	Computer	PE	art





# Schedule for Staff

- Staff Assignment Sheet
    - Class schedule
    - Student need
    - Responsibilities
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**Staff Assignment Sheet**

Classroom: Ms. Teacher

Time	Activity	Teacher	Aide
7:10-7:50	Breakfast/ Arrival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepping for the day</li> <li>• Meet students in Cafeteria and walk down to the classroom</li> <li>• Assist students in unpacking backpacks, completing morning work and <b>toileting</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breakfast Duty with students</li> <li>• Assist students with unpacking backpacks.</li> <li>• <b>toileting</b> &amp; hygiene checks</li> <li>• help Student 1 finish nutritional shake</li> </ul>
7:50-8:30	3-5 Pullouts/ K-1 Reading Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unique Learning ELA Lessons</li> <li>• Students rotate in small groups using L3 Skills</li> </ul>	Supervise and assist students while being pulled out into special with general education students
8:35-9:15	Calendar/ Handwriting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement Calendar Lesson</li> <li>• Alphabet Lesson with small group</li> <li>• Brain Break</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>15 Minute Break</b></li> <li>• Check Homework</li> <li>• Handwriting with small group</li> <li>• <b>Toileting</b></li> </ul>
9:20 – 10:00	Math/ Spelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement Math Lessons to three small groups rotating</li> <li>• Unique Learning on iPads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement spelling lesson and/or HWWT to three small groups rotating</li> </ul>
10:05 – 10:45	Computer Lab/ Adaptive PE/ Counseling	<b>Planning</b>	Assist students in specials or computer lab
10:45 – 11:15	TeachTown/ News 2 You	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachtown lesson</li> <li>• N2Y</li> <li>• Assist students getting ready for lunch handwashing, <b>toileting</b></li> </ul>	<b>LUNCH</b>
11:15-11:45	Student Lunch	<b>LUNCH</b>	Assist students in Cafeteria
11:50 – 12:30	Hygiene Tooth Brushing Recess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read aloud</li> <li>• Supervise students at Recess</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist students in toileting and toothbrushing.</li> <li>• Assist Student 1 in finishing nutritional shake.</li> <li>• <b>15-minute Break</b></li> </ul>
12:35-1:15	K-2 Pullouts/ Reading 3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unique Learning ELA Lessons</li> <li>• Students rotate in small groups using L3 Skills</li> </ul>	Assist Students in Specials with general education students
1:20 – 2:00	Snack, Pack Up, Reward Recess, Homework Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist students with snack and packing up, homework support.</li> <li>• <b>toileting</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist students with snack, packing up, and Homework support.</li> <li>• <b>toileting</b></li> </ul>



# Additional Proactive Strategies

- Build in breaks in the schedule
  - Movement breaks
  - Break pass or card when needed
  - Provide choices (embed into academic tasks)
  - Relationship building (number of positive statements vs. negative)
  - Use a timer
  - Be consistent across people and activities
  - Start off with easier tasks first
  - Remove items that can potentially be harmful
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# Reward Systems (Positive Reinforcement)



- Motivation
- School wide system (will vary)
- Classroom system (will vary)
- Individualized systems (modifications of classroom system, then more individualized when necessary for success)



# Praise and Feedback

- Goal – Intrinsic motivation
- Beware of using generic praise (at first)
  - Good job!
  - Great!
  - Awesome!
- Do this instead
  - You did such a great job washing your hands!
  - I love when you clean up your desk!
  - You walked down the hall so quietly. Awesome!
- Sometimes Extrinsic motivation is needed in order to make the praise worth it.
  - Things can be faded







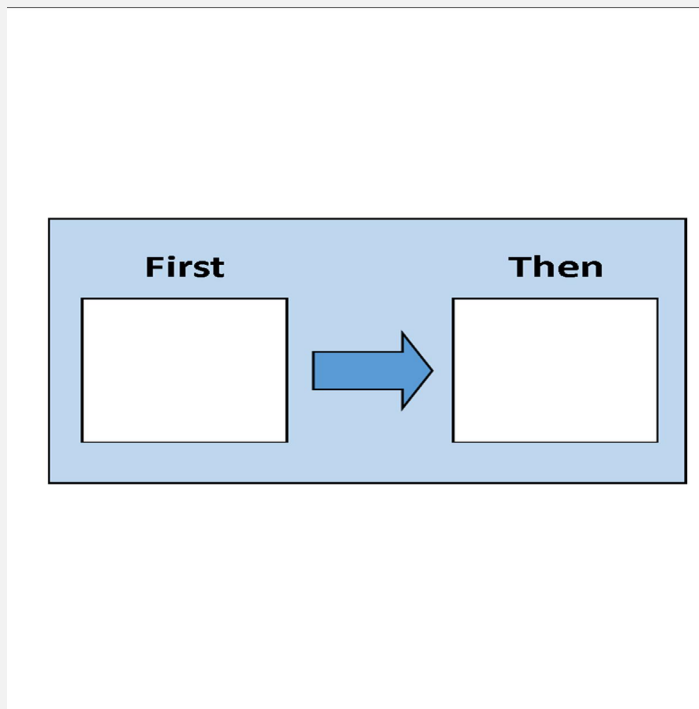
# First/Then (The Premack Principle)

- Most basic behavior principle used to pair something we don't like with something we do like to make worth doing
- I do this (behavior) – then I get this (reinforcement)





# Teaching a First/Then

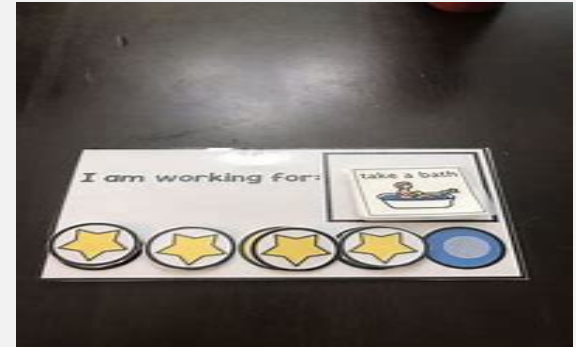


- First/Then (set up and materials – use a first/ then board to identify what needs to be done “first” before getting the preferred and have materials and reinforcers ready).
  - TEACHING STEPS
  - Step 1 Place the required or scheduled activity on the “FIRST” section of the First-Then board
  - Step 2 Have the student choose what he wants in the “THEN” section of the First-Then board or help him by showing/asking him if he wants a particular thing.
  - Step 3 Place or write the preferred item/activity on the “THEN” section of the First-Then board.
  - Step 4 Only use the language “First \_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_.” It is important to be clear and concise.
  - Step 5 When the first activity is finished (use prompting if needed), allow the student to engage with the “then” activity/item
  - Fading As the student is successful, a token economy system can be introduced to promote working for intermittent reinforcement.



# Token Economy

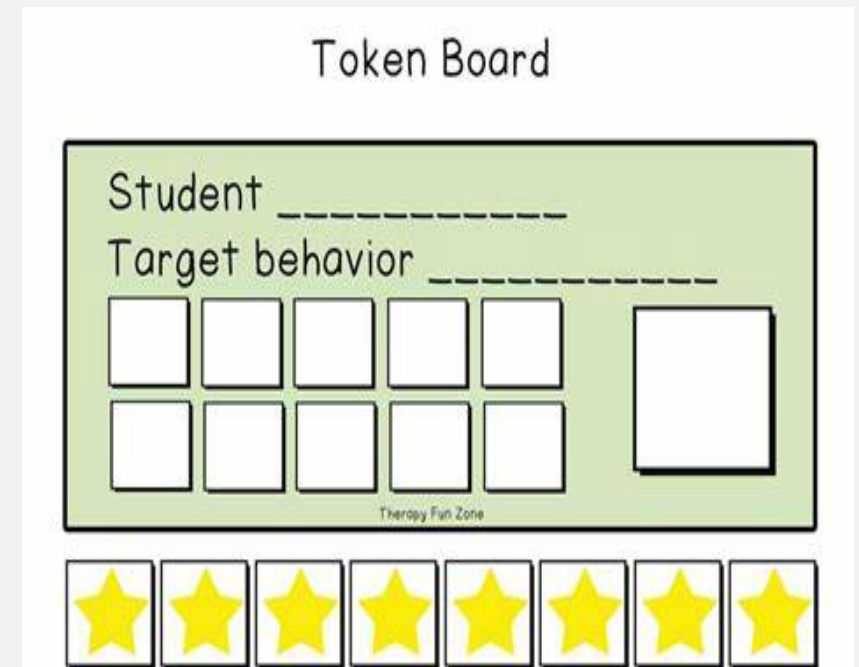
Token economy is a strategy where the student receives a token after completing a specified academic task or using an appropriate behavior. Anything that is visible and countable can be used as a token. The token itself has no value but is traded in for a backup reinforcer after a specific number of tokens are earned. Backup reinforcers are meaningful items, activities, or privileges such as food items, extra recess, toys, etc. The success of a token economy relies on the appeal of the backup reinforcer.





# Teaching a Token Economy

- **Token Economy System (Can use a favorite character for a themed token system):**
- Develop a token economy system for the student to earn his preferred activity/task. He is able to complete with a first/then system and now it is time to increase the amount of time he will access the reinforcer.
- Begin with a 5 token system and use until the end of the school year. Next school year, begin with a 5 token system and work up to a 10 token system.
  - The student will earn a token for work completion (in the beginning, the student may need to do smaller amount of work to access reinforcement and for this to be effective). Vary the amount of work he must do in stages for example (the more unpredictable for him, the more likelihood of strengthening the behavior:
    - Start: Variation of 2-3 worksheets, 1 worksheet, 3 minutes of work, 5 minutes of work, etc.....
    - Next: Variation of worksheets/tasks- 1 task, 5 tasks, 1 task, 3 worksheets, 10 minutes of work, 5 minutes of work, etc.....
  - The student can also earn tokens for appropriate interactions with peers, such as sharing, turn taking, using nice words, taking a break, etc.... He can also earn tokens for using nice words in general.
- When the student earns all tokens:
  - The student can choose what he would like to do when he earns his tokens. These should be possible to do and provide him with choices. It is ok if he changes his mind. He can look at a favorite book, free time on the iPad, etc.... The student will need a set amount of time he can engage in reward time.





# Behavior Influences Behavior

- Be aware of your tone of voice and what words you use
  - Yelling or screaming will escalate a situation (be mindful)
  - Neutral and/or stern (when necessary) is more effective and less likely to escalate behavior when it is occurring.
    - Screaming – long, loud piercing cries expressing extreme emotion or pain.
    - Yelling – give a loud, sharp cry.
    - Stern – serious and unrelenting, especially in the assertion of authority and exercise of discipline.
- Distance and Proximity (Personal Space)
  - Give the student space and remain at a safe distance
  - Do not move closer when a student is escalated
  - Ask before approaching them (if they say no or indicate that they do not want you near them, accept this)
- Getting back to the schedule following a challenge (don't take it personally)

**Your behavior matters!**

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# Defining Behavior



The What?



Define the behavior in specific,  
observable, measurable terms.

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# Activity: Defining Behavior



Choose one of these words and write down what it “looks” like to you.

- Meltdown
  - Disrespectful
  - Disruptive
  - Aggression
  - Acting out
  - Insubordination
  - Outburst
-





# Let's Share

Meltdown

Insubordination

Disrespectful

Outburst

Aggression

Disruptive

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# Definitions

- Meltdown – defined as getting up from seat, dropping to the floor, lying down, kicking feet and moving arms quickly in a back-and-forth motion while crying with tears and screaming at a higher-than-normal volume.
  - Disruptive – defined as throwing sharp pencils across the room at the teacher's desk.
  - Aggression – defined as making a facial expression of scrunching up nose and frowning while looking an adult in the eye for 20 seconds without turning away.
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