

National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASET)

THE PRACTICAL TEACHER

This Month's Topic:

Points for Grumpy

Teachers often have students in their classrooms who are verbally defiant and non-compliant. These students will often act out and be disruptive to everyone. It is important that teachers have specific tools and strategies to work with students who exhibit these types of behaviors. The focus of this issue of the NASET Practical Teacher is to present one response-cost strategy to use with students who are verbally defiant and non-compliant with the teacher.

This response-cost strategy is appropriate for younger students who are verbally defiant and non-compliant with the teacher.

Materials:

- Two coffee cans with lids
- Point tokens (e.g., poker chips, pennies, etc.)

Preparation:

Obtain two coffee cans with plastic lids. Cut a slot into the lids of both coffee cans. Decorate one can with the name of the target student. (You may want to invite the student to decorate his or her coffee can with drawings or other artwork to personalize it.) Label the other coffee can "Grumpy." (You can embellish the "Grumpy" can with pictures of frowning faces or other symbols of irritation.)

Steps in Implementing This Intervention

Step 1: Create a menu of rewards for the student. For each reward, decide how many good behavior points the student must earn to get the reward.

Step 2: Tell the student that he or she can earn points for readily and politely following adult requests. Introduce the "Points for Grumpy Program":

- At the start of each monitoring period, you will put 10 "good behavior" tokens (poker chips or pennies) into your pocket.
- Each time that you have to approach or address the student because he or she is verbally defiant or non-compliant, you will take one of the "good behavior" points and drop it into "Grumpy's" coffee can.
- At the end of the period, you will give the student any tokens that remain in your pocket and let the student drop these tokens into his or her coffee can. The student will be able to 'cash in' these tokens or points rewards according to the reward system that you have set up.

Step 3: Tell the student what your behavioral expectations for ready and polite compliance. The child will lose a point if you have to approach him or her for:

- Talking back to you.
- Using a disrespectful gesture or facial expression (e.g., eye-rolling)
- Muttering
- Failing to comply within 60 seconds of your making a request.
- Inform the child that if he or she complains about your taking a point, you will deduct additional good behavior points.

Step 4: Start the program. Use the chart at <http://interventioncentral.org/html/docs/interventions/behavior/grumpy1.php> to record any good behavior points that the child earns each day.

Troubleshooting: How to Deal With Common Problems in Using 'Points for Grumpy'

Q: How should I respond if the student becomes angry and confrontational when I take away a 'good behavior point' for misbehavior?

Students will frequently test the limits of a behavioral program when it is first introduced. If a child becomes belligerent or uncooperative with you deduct a point, you should remain calm and avoid addressing the student in a confrontational manner. If the student continues to be disrespectful and violates the behavioral expectations that you have set up, deduct additional 'good behavior' points. Keep in mind also that this intervention does not replace your existing disciplinary code. You may decide to impose other appropriate consequences (e.g., phone call to parent) if the child's behavior does not correct itself within a reasonable amount of time.

Teachers should also be aware that a small number of students are not able to adapt to response-cost programs because they become very upset whenever points, tokens, or privileges are taken away from them. If you suspect that a student is temperamentally ill-suited to a program like "Points for Grumpy", you should probably not use it with that child.

Reprinted with permission from Jim Wright from www.interventioncentral.org.