

## Using a Daily School Behavior Report Card

A daily school behavior report card involves having the teacher send home an evaluation of your child's behavior in school that day, which you can use to give or take away rewards available at home. These cards have been shown to be effective in modifying a wide range of problems with children at school. Because they are convenient and cost-effective, and involve both the teacher(s) and parents, they are often one of the first interventions you should try if your child is exhibiting behavior problems at school. The teacher reports can consist of either a note or a more formal report card. We recommend the use of a formal behavior report card like those shown at the end of this handout. The card should list the "target" behavior(s) that are to be the focus of the program on the left-hand side of the card. Across the top are columns that correspond to each class period at school. The teacher gives a number rating reflecting how well the child did for each of these behaviors for each class period. Some examples are provided at the end of this handout.

### HOW THE DAILY REPORT CARD WORKS

With this system, teacher reports are typically sent home on a daily basis. As the child's behavior improves, the daily reports can be reduced to twice weekly (Wednesdays and Fridays), once weekly, or even monthly, and finally phased out altogether. A variety of daily report cards may be developed and tailored for your child. Some of the behaviors targeted for the program may include both social conduct (shares, plays well with peers, follows rules) and academic performance (completes math or reading assignments). Targeting low academic performance (poor production of work) may be especially effective. Examples of behaviors to target include completing all (or a specified portion of) work, staying in the assigned seat, following teacher directions, and playing cooperatively with others. Negative behaviors (e.g., aggression, destruction, calling out) may also be included as target behaviors to be reduced by the program. In addition to targeting class performance, homework may be included. Children sometimes have difficulty remembering to bring homework assignments home. They may also complete their homework but forget to return the completed work to school the next day. Each of these areas may be targeted in a school behavior report card program.

It is recommended that the number of target behaviors you work on be kept to about four or five. Start out by focusing on just a few behaviors you wish to change to help maximize your child's success in the program. When these behaviors are going well, you can add a few more problem behaviors as targets for change. We recommend including at least one or two positive behaviors that the child is currently doing well with, so that he or she will be able to earn some points during the beginning of the program.

Typically, children are monitored throughout the school day. However, to be successful with problem behaviors that occur very frequently, you may want to have the child initially rated for only a portion of the school day, such as for one or two subjects or classes. As the child's behavior improves, the card can

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## **Using a Daily School Behavior Report Card** *(page 2 of 4)*

be expanded gradually to include more periods and subjects until the child is being monitored throughout the day. In cases in which the child attends several different classes taught by different teachers, the program may involve some or all of the teachers, depending on the need for help in each of the classes. When more than one teacher is included in the program, a single report card may include space for all teachers to rate the child. Alternatively, different report cards may be used for each class and organized in a notebook for the child to carry between classes. Again, the cards shown at the end of this handout can be helpful because they have columns that can be used to rate the child by the same teacher at the end of each subject or by different teachers.

The success of the program depends on a clear, consistent method for translating the teacher's reports into consequences at home. One advantage of school behavior report cards is that a wide variety of consequences can be used. At a minimum, praise and positive attention should be provided at home whenever a child does well that day at school, as shown on the report card. With many children, however, tangible rewards or token programs are often necessary. For example, a positive note home may translate into television time, a special snack, or a later bedtime. A token system in which a child earns points for positive behavior ratings and loses points for negative ratings may also be used. Both daily rewards (e.g., time with parent, special dessert, television time) and weekly rewards (e.g., movie, dinner at a restaurant, special outing) may be included in the program.

### **ADVANTAGES OF THE DAILY REPORT CARD**

Overall, daily school behavior report cards can be as or even more effective than classroom-based behavior management programs, with effectiveness increased when combined with classroom-based programs. Daily reports seem particularly well suited for children because they often benefit from the more frequent feedback than is usually provided at school. These programs also give parents more frequent feedback than would normally be provided by the child. As you know, most children, when asked how their school day went, give you a one-word answer, "Fine," which may not be accurate. These report card programs also can remind parents when to reward a child's behavior and forewarn parents when behavior is becoming a problem at school and will require more intensive work. In addition, the type and quality of rewards available in the home are usually far more extensive than those available in the classroom, a factor that may be critical with children who need more powerful rewards.

Aside from these benefits, daily school report cards generally require much less time and effort from your child's teacher than do classroom-based programs. As a result, teachers who have been unable to start a classroom management program may be far more likely to cooperate with a daily report card that comes from home.

Despite the impressive success of report card programs, the effectiveness of the program depends on the teacher accurately evaluating the child's behavior. It also hinges on the fair and consistent use of consequences at home. In some cases, children may attempt to undercut the system by failing to bring home a report. They may forge a teacher's signature or fail to get a certain teacher's signature. To discourage these practices, missing notes or signatures should be treated the same way as a "bad" report (i.e., child fails to earn points or is fined by losing privileges or points). The child may even be grounded for the day (no privileges) for not bringing the card home.

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## **SOME EXAMPLES OF DAILY SCHOOL REPORT CARDS**

Several types of school behavior report cards that rely on daily school behavior ratings are discussed here. Two examples are provided at the end of this handout. These are the cards we recommend most parents use if they want to start a school behavior report card quickly. One card is for classroom behavior, the other is for recess behavior. Use whichever card is most appropriate for the problems your child is having at school. Two sets of each card are provided so that you can make photocopies of that page and then cut the page in half to make double the number of cards.

Notice that each card contains five areas of potential behavior problems that children may experience. For the class behavior report card, columns are provided for up to seven different teachers to rate the child in these areas of behavior or for one teacher to rate the child many times across the school day. We have found that the more frequent the ratings, the more effective is the feedback for the child and the more informative the program is to you. The teacher initials the bottom of the column after rating the child's performance during that class period to ensure against forgery. If getting the correct homework assignment home is a problem for some children, the teacher can require the child to copy the homework for that class period on the back of the card before completing the ratings for that period. Then the teacher merely checks the back of the card for the child's accuracy in copying the assignment and then completes the ratings on the front of the card. For particularly negative ratings, we also encourage teachers to provide a brief explanation to you as to what resulted in that negative mark. The teachers rate the children using a 5-point system (1 = excellent, 2 = good, 3 = fair, 4 = poor, and 5 = very poor).

The child takes a new card to school each day. These can be kept at school and a new card given out each morning, or you can provide the card as your child leaves for school, whichever is most likely to be done consistently. As soon as the child returns home, you should immediately inspect the card, discuss the positive ratings first with your child, and then proceed to a neutral, businesslike (not angry!) discussion with your child about any negative marks and the reason for them. Your child should then be asked to formulate a plan for how to avoid getting a negative mark tomorrow. You are to remind your child of this plan the next morning before your child departs for school. After the child formulates the plan, you should award your child points for each rating on the card and deduct points for each negative mark. For instance, a young elementary school-age child may receive five chips for a 1, three chips for a 2, and one chip for a 3, while being fined three chips for a 4 and five chips for a 5 on the card. For older children, the points might be 25, 15, 5, -15, and -25, respectively, for marks of 1 to 5 on the card. The chips or points are then added and the fines subtracted, and the child may then spend what is left of these chips on the privileges on the home reward menu.

Another daily report card program is provided for dealing with behavior problems and getting along with others during school recess periods or free time periods each day. Again, two cards are provided on the page, so that you can make photocopies of the page and cut the pages in half to double the number of cards. The card is to be completed by the teacher on recess duty during each recess or free time period. It is inspected by the class teacher when the child returns to the classroom, and then should be sent home for use, as just discussed, in a home chip/point system. The classroom teacher should also be

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### **Using a Daily School Behavior Report Card** *(page 4 of 4)*

instructed to use a “think aloud–think ahead” procedure with the child just prior to the child’s going out for recess or free time. In this procedure, the teacher (1) reviews the rules for proper recess behavior with the child and notes that they are written on the card, (2) reminds the child that he or she is being watched by the teacher on recess duty, and (3) directs the child to give the card immediately to the recess monitor so the monitor can evaluate the child’s behavior during recess or free time.

As these cards illustrate, virtually any child behavior can be the target for treatment using behavior report cards. If the cards shown here are not suitable for your child’s behavior problems at school, then design a new card with the assistance of your therapist, using the blank cards provided at the end of this handout. They do not take long to construct and can be very helpful in improving a child’s school behavior and performance.

### DAILY SCHOOL BEHAVIOR REPORT CARD

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Teachers:**

Please rate this child's behavior today in the areas listed below. Use a separate column for each subject or class period. Use the following ratings: 1 = excellent, 2 = good, 3 = fair, 4 = poor, and 5 = very poor. Then initial the box at the bottom of your column. Add any comments about the child's behavior today on the back of this card.

	Class periods/subjects						
Behaviors to be rated:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Class participation							
Performance of class work							
Follows classroom rules							
Gets along well with other children							
Quality of homework, if any given							
Teacher's initials							

Place comments on back of card.

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