

Laura W

Positive Intervention Assignment by Laura W.

Getting Your Stars

Background:

I am currently teaching in a private elementary school for special needs children. My class consists of eight students who are 11-13 years old. There are three girls and five boys in the class. In the first month of school, Eliana; one of the three girls, would yell at students and teachers then run into the hall. Eliana is twelve years old and is reading on an upper third grade level and was placed in the higher math group for the class. Eliana is an only child and comes into the classroom daily announcing she has arrived by yelling over all conversations. When students or teachers tell her that she should use a quieter voice, she would just raise her voice and talk over whoever is speaking. When the yelling stops, Eliana would run in the hall and wait for someone to bring her in.

Eliana's yelling would happen throughout the day. She would speak over other students when they are called on, and she would tend to yell at her related service providers to "LEAVE!" when she did not want to go. When students or teachers spoke to her about her behavior, she would just stare at the person speaking to her then run into the hall. Her outbursts would interrupt the class and learning time and at times set other children off. It was introduced the first day of school that whenever anyone needs to take a break, they are allowed as long as they ask. After two weeks of observing the yelling and running out of the room, I made Eliana a "Break Pass." The break pass can be used twice a day and she would just have to hand it to me or my Teaching Assistant and take the timer for five minutes. The pass worked for a month, but then she became too impatient to use it and would run out.

Other students would pick up on Eliana's disruptive behavior and mimic her fits. Eliana and half of my class switch with another class for Math and English Language Arts. The teacher in the other classroom would report back to me with similar stories about the same behavior occurring in her class. Eliana would complete her work and bring in her homework but the main problem that needed to be adjusted was her classroom behavior. In November, we had a team meeting with her parents present to talk about the situation happening at school. Her parents told us that it is occurring at home as well and they were unsure of how to handle it. Together, my team and her family decided to implement a behavior plan that can be used from school to home.

Goal:

The main goal is for Eliana to be able to calmly speak others and use the break pass to leave the room when needed. Eliana will still be able to use her break pass, but only twice a day. We decided to implement a behavior system where Eliana would have to earn stars by showing appropriate behavior of speaking to peers and teachers calmly and only taking breaks when she asks. By displaying appropriately behavior, Eliana will be able to have 6 minutes earning time from a given rewards menu.

Intervention:

Eliana has the opportunity to earn five stars during each class period if she is able to speak calmly in the room. At the beginning of the class period, Eliana chooses from a menu which reinforcement she would like to earn or work towards. Eliana was part of the reward menu-making process, so she can earn things that are of interest to her. Eliana's star chart for the class period is attached to her desk by Velcro so she can also take it with her when going to other teacher and service provider's rooms. The chart is always with Eliana so she sees what progress she has made and how many stars she has received.

During the class period, Eliana receives prompting and positive reinforcement in the form of verbal praise and encouragement, as well as reminders of what she is working towards earning. When Eliana earns a star, a check-mark is placed over it on the star chart by the use of a marker. If Eliana earns all five stars by the end of the class period, she receives praise and her chosen reinforcer. If she does not earn all five stars during the class period, the behavior that prevented her from earning the stars is reviewed and explained. However, she may still have the opportunity to receive a less desirable reinforcer for that class period.

At the end of the day, the total number of stars Eliana has earned is tallied. The tally of the total number of stars is sent home on "Eliana's Star Chart." If Eliana earns 20 stars throughout the day, she earns 40 minutes of television or computer at home. If she earns 15 or more stars, she earns 15 minutes of television or computer at home. If Eliana earns 10 stars, she can have a coloring page or mint candy. The total number of stars Eliana needs to earn is adjusted on a needs basis depending on how often she meets her goals and her average number of stars each week. Eliana's mother initials her star chart and returns it to school each day to show that she has seen it and Eliana was reinforced appropriately.

Results and Analysis:

With encouragement and praise from her teachers, Eliana is very motivated to earn all her stars. Eliana is very proud of earning her stars and will announce proudly when she has received all of the stars in a day. The first two weeks of earning on her star chart, we were very lenient with how easily she could earn stars. As the weeks went on, we became stricter, and Eliana was able to achieve what she wanted from the reward menu. Her parents were very involved in the process as well for the first month. After the first month of her home reward system, Eliana would come into class and tell me her parents let her have computer or television with or without stars and she does not care

anymore. We spoke to her parents to see if there was any information about this sudden change, and they explained to us that their work hours have changed and they cannot keep on top of it like these use to.

Although Eliana was somewhat unmotivated at home, she kept up her motivation in school with continuous encouragement. Other students started to ask about Eliana's star chart a month or two after she has been carrying it around. We began to make star charts for everyone in class on different target behaviors and it is now a class-wide procedure to carry around your star chart and all the students are able to earn. Eliana was very happy to hear other students wanted the chart, and I made it her duty to be a teacher for the first week and explain to the students how the star chart works.

Giving Eliana the teacher position in the classroom, along with her stars has shown a great change in Eliana. She rarely raises her voice anymore and uses her Break Pass appropriately. Her parents have contacted me mid-year to inform me that her home behavior has been on and off, and I recommended continuing with the stars and they told me it was a good idea. When Eliana is mad or upset, she will ask to speak to me individually or ask to go to the quiet room to release her energy. These are both appropriate decisions she makes and still give her the opportunity to earn.

Eliana succeeding with this plan is due to a lot of factors. There is motivation for her by choosing from the Reward Menu in the beginning of the day. She also is encouraged by all the teachers and service providers she visits. Eliana is praised every time she gets a star and the positive attention is what she seems to crave at school. When Eliana does yell, she is now apologetic and understands that her star would not be earned, but there are other chances for her to earn through the day if she remains calm.