

8. Positive Behavior Support

Motivation for students in the social skills group can be provided in a few important ways. The first method is using positive behavior support to facilitate students' sense of ownership, belonging/sharing, and interest.

One type of positive behavior support is using rewards to reinforce positive behavior. Individual and group rewards can be used alternately at group meetings depending on the motivation and behavior of the group. If the group is not working well together (i.e. being disrespectful, not taking turns), perhaps group rewards would be a motivator. Group rewards, such as points for a popcorn party, help keep everyone more aware. For targeting skills that individuals need to work on (i.e. not interrupting, keeping hands to self), then individual rewards would be appropriate.

Students may earn reinforcers (e.g. tokens, points, or coupons) for completing an assigned job that helps the group get organized, for following group rules, participating during group, etc. Reinforcers can be exchanged for rewards (e.g. activities, snacks, toys, parties) daily or weekly, depending on the needs of the students. Younger or more impulsive students may need a daily reward to maintain motivation; older or less impulsive students may sustain motivation with less frequent, (e.g. weekly) rewards.

Individual Reinforcement and Rewards

At the beginning of the group meeting, the students can decide how many tokens, chips, play money, stickers, tickets, etc. are needed to earn a reward. These tokens, chips, etc. are kept in individual containers near the group leader so that she/he can make "deposits" during group and ensure that only the leader has access to them (see photo at right.)





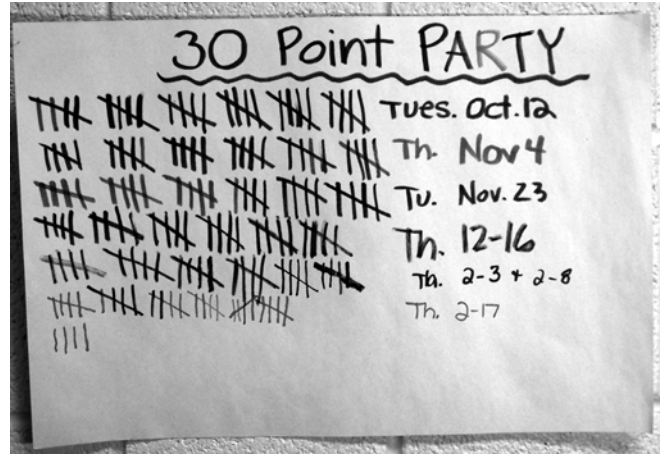
When making deposits, identify the positive behavior and the student who demonstrated it. If the reward is daily, then the students count their chips at the end of the meeting (see photo at left.) If it is a weekly reward, then students can keep a running record on a chart. The following is a partial list of suggested types of reinforcements and rewards:

Reinforcements	Rewards
Points	Food (e.g. granola bar, juice box)
Play money	Free choice time
Stickers	Choice of activities
Tokens, plastic chips	Small toys
Tally marks on poster	Eat lunch with teacher
Links in a chain	Popcorn party
Coupons, tickets	Game time

Intermediate students can be taught to make deposits for other group members when they observe selected behaviors. At the beginning of group meetings, each student is given a limited number of tokens to deposit at the end of group. The group or teacher can decide on which skills/behaviors to reward. At the end of group, students take turns and state positively who performed the skill, naming it. This allows students to remain aware and practice skills, also to support each other in a positive way.

Group Reinforcements and Rewards

One method for a group reward is the “30 Point Party” system. The facilitator of the group creates a poster with the title “30 Point Party.” This poster is taped on a wall where everyone in the group can see it and is within reach of the facilitator. The photo at right shows our 30 point party poster. The students like to have the date we had each party listed on the right side of the poster.



Each time the facilitator sees a positive behavior, a point is given to the group by making a tally mark on the poster. Each time a tally mark is made, the facilitator names the student and their positive behavior. For example, when a student remembers to raise his/her hand to make a comment, the facilitator states, “Kyle, thanks for remembering to raise your hand. That’s a point for the group.” If students (Dave and Gerry) are demonstrating disruptive behavior such as poking each other and laughing, you can give points to the students who are listening quietly. For example, “Ryan, Kyle and Krista- thanks for listening quietly and keeping your hands to yourself. You each earned a point for the group.” Then make three tally marks on the poster. As soon as Dave and Gerry stop poking each other and sit quietly you can say, “Dave and Gerry, thanks for keeping your hands to yourself and for listening quietly. You each earned a point for the group.” Then make two tally marks on the poster.

When the group has earned 30 points, they earn a “party.” If they earn the 30 points at the end of group time, they can have the party the next time they meet. If they earn the 30 points at the beginning of a group meeting, the party can occur during the last few minutes of the same meeting. The facilitator determines party details like time frame, snacks, and activities. Of course, knowing student preferences and/or seeking input from students in planning is an important consideration to ensure that the party is truly rewarding to students. If a snack is distributed, students will have the opportunity to practice “social party manners” with “thank you” or “no thank

you” responses. Similarly, activities like board games or card games, provide opportunities for practice with taking turns, and competitive and collaborative game playing skills.

In the beginning, the group should earn many points (5-10) during each group meeting. They should earn the first 30 Point Party within two to three group meetings. Students will often start to remind each other to do the positive behaviors. Also, they will often ask, “Do I get a point for _____?” or “Why didn’t I get a point for _____?” It is explained to them that for the first few meetings they’ll get points more easily while they are learning how the system works. Then, it will be more of a surprise later. They won’t get a point every time they do a positive behavior, but they should keep showing the good behaviors because they never know when it will earn them a point!