



Teaching Threads

STARS Classwide Behavior Management Program

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The STARS program is designed as a basic classwide behavior management program which can be adapted for elementary through secondary grade levels. This program is recommended for beginning as well as experienced teachers looking for an easy to implement, adapt, and enrich program. The STARS Program is a low cost and low hassle program designed to increase desired student behavior and decrease student undesired behavior through the use of activity rewards and engaging themes. This program can be implemented within RTI (Response to Intervention) and PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) models.

The STARS Program involves:

- a set of five target desired behaviors, selected by the teacher,
- positive reinforcement of desired classroom behavior,
- teaching and reteaching of each desired behavior to ensure student ability to perform behavior,
- the use of reinforcers which are activity oriented, teacher controlled, inexpensive, and
- frequent feedback on student behavior.

➤ Target Desired Behaviors

The STARS Program is designed to target five basic classroom behaviors. **These target behaviors must be classroom behaviors desired of all students which when demonstrated increase student success and achievement.** Listed below are some suggested target behaviors. Teachers should select those behaviors most directly related to success in their classrooms or those included in their school's program.

Select five, adjust wording to fit grade level.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| • Use OK Language | • Respect Others |
| • Follow Directions | • Ask for Help When You Need It |
| • Be Ready to Learn | • Wait Your Turn to Talk |
| • Be In Control of Self | • Keep Hands, Feet, and Objects to Self |
| • Work to Learn Something New Today | • Help Your Classmates Learn |
| • Accept Responsibility | • Complete Assignments at a Passing Level or Above |
| • Help the Class Learn | • Listen to Others |
| • Try Your Best | |

➤ The STARS Sheet

Stars sheets are used to document student performance and to provide feedback to students on their behavior. These sheets can be easily made for use at either the elementary or secondary levels. Elementary star sheets can consist of a simple outline of a 5-pointed star. Each point would be labeled to represent one target behavior. Secondary star sheets could consist of 5 boxes, again each representing one target behavior. These sheets must be designed to enable the teacher to easily draw stars as they are earned by the students who demonstrate the targeted behaviors.



➤ Teaching the STARS Program to the Class

As with all behavior management programs, teachers must teach each and every target behavior to all students. Only after direct observation of a student's performance of a target behavior can teachers expect that student to perform the desired behavior. Teachers should not assume that students know what they are supposed to do or that they can actually do it. Therefore, the first step in program implementation requires teachers to teach the program and the targeted behaviors to the students. Role playing is one way to observe a student's ability to perform a desired behavior and is a more accurate assessment than asking a student "What would you do if . . .?" Teaching behavior skills is very similar to the explicit teaching of academic skills.

Steps for Teaching Desired Behaviors

Teach one behavior at a time.

- Step 1: Tell Them.
 - Tell the students exactly what you want them to do. Clearly and positively state the what, when, why, and how if the desired behavior.
- Step 2: Teach Them.
 - Teach students exactly what and how you want them to demonstrate the behavior. Actively model this for the students.
- Step 3: Watch Them.
 - Ask your students to demonstrate the behavior and then watch them carefully.
- Step 4: Coach Them.
 - Coach students who look unsure or do not demonstrate correctly. Give students encouraging and corrective feedback on their performance.
- Step 5: Encourage Them.
 - Encourage students every step of the way!

Research has shown that teachers who spend time teaching, re-teaching, reminding, and praising students for desired classroom behavior have decreased misbehavior and increased student achievement throughout the school year.



- Step 6: Remind Them.
 - Remind students frequently as they learn new behavior skills throughout the entire school year. Use verbal, signal, text, and graphic reminders.
- Step 7: Practice, Practice, Practice.
 - Practice makes perfect! Students need many chances to practice a skill to be able to use it accurately and automatically.

➤ Implementing the Program

The following implementation steps occur after the teacher has taught the target behaviors and program to the students and assessed every student's ability to perform each target behavior.

Elementary. At the start of each day, the teacher informs the students that it is time to begin the STARS Program and asks the class read and review all five target behaviors on the STARS sheet, which have been taped to their desktops and posted prominently in the classroom. A timer is set for 15 or 20 minutes and placed so that the ticking can be heard but the time cannot be seen to avoid unnecessary distractions.

During the 15 or 20 minute period the teacher verbally praises students for demonstrating STARS behaviors as often as possible without distracting from the instruction taking place. When the timer goes off, the teacher quickly goes around the room and gives students one star for each behavior they demonstrated during that 15 minutes. (Teaching assistants can be especially helpful now.) Using a pen in a color not available to the students, teachers can quickly complete each student's sheet in a few seconds. Teachers must verbally praise students and the class for demonstrating the target behaviors. Moving quickly, the teacher announces to the class that the timer is being reset for the next STARS period. This continues throughout the morning.

Wait a minute!
Before you toss this idea
because you can't imagine
recognizing student
performance every 15 or 20
minutes, consider this. Short
time periods are required at
the start of this program so you
can closely monitor student
behavior, reminding and
reteaching along the way.
Remember you students are
learning the target behaviors
and need your frequent
recognition and praise. As your
students get proficient in
demonstrating the target
behaviors, you will lengthen
the time periods.

Five minutes before lunch, the teacher asks each student to count up the stars they earned that morning and write the number on their STARS sheet. The program is repeated after lunch. Each day the total stars earned by each student is added to their STARS bank account. Bank account totals can be posted on the bulletin board or recorded in individual student STARS bank books, with a separate teacher record as back up data. Teachers need to retain all STARS sheets for documentation of student behavior and changes in student behavior.

Secondary. Teachers of older students should follow the same implementation procedures presented for elementary grade with the following adaptations: lengthen the time periods, for most secondary students 20 to 30 minute periods are appropriate; STARS sheets need not be taped to student desks; and for most situations, totaling stars earned at the end of the class period is necessary, as students often change classes. Therefore, a student who attends 1st period English class, 3rd period math class, and 6th period government class, could have three STARS bank accounts if all teachers use STARS.

➤ **STARS Rewards.**

Teachers should allow 15 to 20 minutes once or twice a week for purchasing STARS Rewards. Spending more than 20 minutes for reinforcement takes too much time away from academic instruction! At the beginning of each week, provide students with the rewards/reinforcement menu for that week. Teachers need to carefully determine what rewards will be offered to students and how much each will cost.



Teachers have control over which rewards will be offered to their students.

Teachers should select from 3 to 5 rewards/reinforcers which will be available to their students each week. This reduces the confusion caused by offering and then managing multiple rewards. Student motivation and desire for rewards will be maintained with variety and change. Students typically do not desire rewards that are used over and over and over again. The secret to any successful reinforcement program is that the rewards must be reinforcing to the students and acceptable to the teacher! Teachers can use rewards related to classroom themes, seasonal activities, and current *cool* activities for the age level. Teachers should remember that even though students may request other rewards, each teacher determines which rewards he/she will make available in his/her classroom. A second reminder, just because students ask for certain things, doesn't mean they should be given those things (ex. free time to hang out with friends, no homework, leaving class early, unhealthy treats).

This STARS program is focused on the use of activity rewards as evident in the list included in this document. Activity rewards are used for several important reasons.

- They can offer students opportunities to practice a variety of skills.
- They can offer opportunities for social interaction.
- They have been shown to increase student engagement and interest.
- They involve higher-level skills than those required by edible, sensory, and tangible reinforcers.

Some activity rewards include suggested time limits that should be adjusted as needed by teachers. As stated previously, 15 to 20 minutes once or twice a week should be set aside for STARS rewards. This program is designed to improve student behavior and increase time on task. It is not designed to reduce instructional time.

STARS Rewards Menu - Week 1

- Using stamps and ink pads for 10 minutes = 75★
- Sitting and looking out the window for 10 minutes = 75★
- Making a cartoon on the computer/tablet = 50★
- Writing tomorrow's assignments in the board = 100★
- Listening to an audio-book for 10 minutes = 50★

STARS Rewards Menu - Week 2

- Lifting weights for 10 minutes = 100★
- Working with the radio on for 10 minutes = 75★
- Creating a video on a computer/tablet = 75★
- Working on the classroom mural = 50★
- Reading a story to someone for 10 minutes = 50★

Teachers need to determine approximately how many stars their students might earn per day and how many rewards might be purchased each week. It is important that students experience success in this program, rather than frustration at not being able to earn a reward. On the other hand, rewards cannot be so easy to purchase that the focus on student effort is lost. The STARS program is designed so that teachers can make changes each week in what rewards are offered and the cost of each reward. This allows teachers to accurately match student behavior and effort to rewards offered. In many cases students will not be able to cash in all their stars, teaching students to save is a important part of this program. A STARS bank account is set up for each student for this purpose.

➤ Theme Ideas.

Students and teachers lose interest and motivation if the same behavior management program is used throughout the entire school. On the other hand, consistency in expectations, rewards, and procedures is helpful for many students with challenging behavior and teachers with many other things to do. Therefore, the addition of a monthly theme coordinated with the STAR Program is highly recommended and fun! Teachers can exercise their creativity in developing instructional units, bulletin boards, STAR sheets, and related activities around the following suggestions for themes.

- Star- a geometry unit on shapes, angles, drawing figures, 5- and 6-pointed stars, etc.
- Star Attraction- a study of the star attractions of the last decade (or 100 years) including people, places, and events in the news.
- Star Light. Star Bright, The First Star I See Tonight- a unit on wishing, what people wish for, how and when people make wishes, and how to make wishes come true.
- Star Patterns- a unit on the use of various star patterns in American quilting, including the history and construction of quilts.
- Star Search- searching for stars in our class with activities involving self-awareness, identification of personal strengths, skills, interests, and goals and what makes each student a star.
- Star System, Falling Stars, Shooting Stars, North Star- instruction on the science of the solar system and the stars within it.
- Star Wars and the Star Trek- instructional activities involving these two popular movies/TV shows.
- Starboard- instructional activities related to sailing, navigation, ships, and nautical terminology.
- Starburst- a unit on candy, how candy is made, what are our favorite, how much candy is sold per year, and the nutritional value of candy.
- Stargazing- a unit on the constellations and their mythological origins.
- Starry Starry Night- instructional unit on art, famous artists, and works of art.

- Stars and Stripes Forever and Star-Spangled Banner- the study of the history of our flag and national anthem.
- Stars in your Eyes- the study of popular phrases expressions, their meanings, and their origins.
- Lucky Stars- a study of probability, including mathematics, and luck.
- Movie Stars, Sport Stars, TV Stars, and Rock Stars- instructional activities can include biographical information, what it's like to be a star, and what qualities do stars have, or should have.
- Superstars- the identification of superstars in our schools, neighborhoods, state, country, world, of today and in the past, and what makes someone a super star.
- Rock Stars- instructional activities of songs about stars, and the songwriters and artists

➤ Program Evaluation.

As mentioned earlier, STARS Sheets are kept by the teacher and used to document student behavior and changes in behavior. Teachers can easily determine the behaviors demonstrated and not demonstrated by each student, noting patterns in time of day, activity, classmates, day of the week, etc. This will allow teachers to consider making changes to STARS on either a classwide or individual basis. Teachers working in PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) schools or RTI (Response to Intervention) programs will value this data.

The goal of STARS is to increase desired behavior, engagement, and achievement while decreasing student undesired behavior and time off-task. If STARS is working effectively, teachers can consider gradually lengthening the time periods from 15 to 20 or even 30 minutes. Teachers can also vary time limits - for example, 15, 17, 14, 19, 16, and 21. Both of these changes will strengthen student behavior skills.

As with all behavior management programs, **nothing works for all students and nothing works all the time!!!!** This program is intended to promote positive classroom behavior and will be effective for many students. Students with more challenging behavior and for whom this program is not effective will need individually designed behavior change programs that will include a combination of positive behavior interventions. PBIS and RTI teams can assist teachers in developing effective behavior plans for students.

➤ Rewards/Reinforcers for use with the STARS Program

While suggestions for time limits are included with some of the rewards/reinforcers listed, time limits can be set for many others. Teachers are the best judges of the appropriate time limits for their students. Some of the reinforcers listed can be given immediately, others require planning. Again teachers are the best judges of which rewards they should offer to which students. It is a valuable life skill for students to learn to wait to experience their reinforcement.

Finding fun ways to recognize student effort and achievement is a challenge for all teachers. This task is complicated by the fact that there is no one reinforcer or reward that is valued by all students and even the most valued reinforcers or rewards weaken with repeated use. What motivates one student does not motivate another. What motivates students today may not motivate them next month. Therefore teachers can benefit from a list of possible reinforcers, especially those that are cheap, fun, and healthy. When using this or any other list of possible classroom reinforcers, teachers should be mindful of the following.

- Teachers decide which reinforcers they will incorporate in their classroom, not the students. As all parents learn very early, just because child wants something does not mean the child should have it. Teachers are also the best judges of when and for how long reinforcement should be given to students. Many teachers follow the guideline of 5 minutes of reinforcement per hour. The time periods included in this list are only suggestions.
- Reinforcers with multiple sources of reinforcement are recommended over more limited reinforcers. If a group of three students is rewarded with the opportunity to present a 5-minute

joke telling presentation to the class, they will receive recognition and reinforcement from several sources. If this same group of students were each given a very cool pencil, their sources of recognition and reinforcement are much more limited.

- *Absence makes the heart grow fonder* is also true for reinforcers. For example, teachers can develop a list of five reinforcers available in September and then change the list each month.

This list provides some fun suggestions - but the options are limitless. Be creative in offering variety and choice to your students. As stated previously, select a few (five) reinforcers to offer to your students and change your reinforcement menu weekly.

Activity Reinforcers that are Cheap, Fun, and Healthy

- Arm wrestling
- Surfing the Internet
- Using the computer/tablet
- Making a phone call/texting
- Using the copy machine
- Sitting near the class pet
- Telling a joke to the class
- Using stamps and ink pads
- Recording themselves
- Having lunch with the teacher
- Writing on the board or projector
- Working on a classroom mural
- Lifting weights
- Being line leader/ Being the first in line
- Learning a magic trick
- Taking a 5 minute break
- Taking roll or lunch count
- Listening to music
- Being the teacher for 10 mins
- Having something laminated
- Leading or making up a class rap
- Making cartoons
- Inviting someone special to visit the class
- Using a special pen or pencil for the day
- Shaking hands with the entire class
- Changing one class rule for one hour
- Being the neat desk or locker inspector
- Staring out the window for 10 minutes
- Having school lunch with someone special
- Taking home a class game for one night
- Earning a coupon to skip one test question
- Receiving a Happy Gram from the teacher
- Thumbing through magazines for 10 minutes
- Creating a video and playing it for the class
- Having a special sign displayed on your desk
- Getting the Thumbs Up from the whole class
- Watching an old cartoon with the class
- Adding two words to this week's spelling list
- Shooting baskets in mini-basket hung on door
- Sitting in any chair you'd like for the afternoon
- Getting special recognition from the principal
- Playing a game with a classmate for 15 minutes
- Leaving 2 minutes early to lunch, recess, or the bus
- Wearing a "My Teacher Thinks I'm Great!" pin or shirt
- Choosing the book for the teacher to read to class
- Wearing a hat in the classroom for the afternoon
- Designing a special section in classroom newsletter
- Making up and teaching a new secret handshake
- Using special stationery to write and send a letter
- Having your teacher use your favorite way to learn
- Having the teacher call your parents to brag about you
- Listening to a scary, funny, spooky, or silly audiobook
- Bringing in and listening to your favorite CD for 15 minutes
- Sharpening your pencil without asking for the day
- Spending recess inside playing a game with a special friend
- Making an announcement over the school's intercom
- Making a 5 minute speech to the class on a topic of your choice
- Receiving class applause with the class applause sign
- Receiving a class "3 Cheers for ____, hip. hip. hurray!"

- Having the teacher or class sing “For s/he’s a jolly good fellow”
- Having the teacher send a note home or to someone you request
- Decorating the bulletin board or door to the classroom
- Putting stickers on the papers as the teacher corrects them
- Singing/lip syncing a song to the class or leading the class in singing
- Reading a story to younger children, the principal, the class, or someone special
- Having lunch in the classroom, with a special table cloth, napkins, and a friend
- Taking and editing fun photos
- Playing the radio in class for 20 minutes
- Tossing balloons in class for 10 mins
- Writing the assignment on the board
- Listening with headphones for 15 mins
- Sitting at the teacher’s desk for 20 mins
- Recording the spelling test for this week
- Choosing any classroom job for the week
- Making this week’s spelling crossword puzzle
- Moving your desk to a new location for the day
- Sending a Valentine to someone (when it’s not even Valentine’s Day)
- Sitting in the special chair (an old chair painted with lots of colors)
- Getting total listening time from the teacher or principal for 5 minutes
- Being a helper in the kindergarten, lunch room, media center, or office
- Receiving Thank You notes from the teacher, classmates, principal, staff, etc.
- Making a greeting card on the computer/tablet or with art supplies
- Wearing a funny arrow through your head, rabbit ears, clown nose, or crazy glasses for one hour

Add your own activity rewards to the list!

As always, my intent in presenting these activities is to help teachers answer this question -

What can I do to make it easier for my students to learn and behave?



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