The Label Contract System (LCS):

A positive reinforcement system to decrease
Challenging behaviors in the schools

Virginia M. Ramos Matias

University of Utah – School Psychology

Introduction

   Children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) face special behavioral challenges at school, especially children that participate on the school's general curriculum. Due to the particular areas of deficits that children with ASD have, especially children with high functioning ASD, many struggle to perform and maintain appropriate behaviors within the school setting. Positive reinforcement systems, such as behavioral contracts (e.g. home notes, check-in/check-out, Daily Behavior Report Cards, etc.) have been shown to be effective in increasing appropriate behaviors at school, and thus decreasing inappropriate behaviors (Crone, Hawken & Horner, 2010; Kern, Maher Choutka & Sokol, 2002; Volpe & Fabiano, 2013). Many of these programs include a home component in which parents review and sign the sheet, and may also provide positive reinforcements at home. The use of contracts like the ones mentioned above, facilitates the communication between home and school, and increases the chances for the student to perform the appropriate behaviors.

   Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) has been increasingly used to assess the antecedents, consequences and functions of students' behaviors. This process is greatly advantageous when making decisions about reinforcement systems to manage a student's behavior because it provides information on what may trigger behaviors, what the student is obtaining from performing the behavior, and what is reinforcing to the child. The information gathered through an FBA helps the school team in deciding what could be the best approach to reducing inappropriate behaviors and increasing desired behaviors. Behavioral contracts benefit from the information provided by an FBA when choosing reinforcers, what target behaviors to reinforce and even the people that run the program with the student. However, sometimes conducting and FBA might be difficult or not possible to complete in a general education program.

   Many students with ASD that participate in the general curriculum have social, emotional and behavioral difficulties that although are not "major" enough to call for an FBA, do impact their educational progress. Some examples are on-task behaviors, difficulties with transitions, difficulty making and keeping friends or utilizing the skills taught in guidance sessions, using relaxation techniques, etc. Although many of these skills can be taught within the guidance office through individual or small group sessions it is difficult to measure generalizability in the classroom and daily school activities. For these reasons utilizing a reinforcement systems that targets each

child's particular needs in the school with a contract that also provides for home – school communication is important.

What is the contracting system?

The Label Contract System (LCS) is a program derived from the work of Crone, Hawken and Horner (2010), Jenson, Rhode and Reaves (2009), Volpe and Fabiano (2013) among others. In this system students earn points that can be used to exchange for an array of reinforces that are classified on a reinforcer menu specifically design for the student depending on the value of the reinforcers to the student. For example, a student loves to work with computers, and somewhat enjoys pokemon cards too. His reinforcer menu could include that Johny needs to get 75% of his daily points to obtain a pokemon card but would need 90% or more of his daily points to obtain 10 minutes of computer time. The base for this is that Johny will work harder to perform the appropriate behaviors to obtain the computer time.

The Label Contracting System (LCS) utilizes the student's planner and contracts printed on shipping labels to reinforce his appropriate behaviors in the school, and serve as a communication tool for parents and teachers. Many contracts are printed in sheets of paper that often times are lost, misplaced or forgotten by the student and teacher. The objective of utilizing labels and the planner is that many schools, students, teachers and parents have an established routine of utilizing planners to communicate with one another, and to display assignments, projects or important dates that parents revise each day. In this manner all parties involved in the intervention for the student can utilize an established routine and thus increase the probability of the use of the reinforcement system.

The label includes the social, emotional or behavioral goals that the student may have in his or her IEP or the behaviors that the school team, and parents want to increase. This program will include a bank of behaviors and goals that can be placed on the labels and edited as needed. In addition, the LCS contains a 1 to 2 page data tracking system that the service provider can utilize to write the points, create a bank of points, a reinforcer menu, display the rules of the contract, and graph the data with the student. This system was created for the use within the school setting to increase appropriate behaviors, and can be adapted and used by school psychologists, counselors, clinical social workers within the schools and special education teachers. The professionals need to have knowledge about reinforcement systems and behavioral modification techniques to ensure the appropriate use of the system, enhance implementation by teachers and

students, and safeguard the privacy of the information and establish a positive and strong rapport with the student.

Why should you use it?

As school professionals that work directly and indirectly with students with disabilities we encounter an overwhelming amount of responsibilities within the schools, especially for early career professionals and interns. Becoming competent within the education system, managing office and clinical work as well as prioritizing becomes increasingly difficult when we have to also attend to emergencies and crises that arise on a daily basis. This program offers the school professional an efficient way to generalize and reinforce positive behaviors taught and expected of the student at school, it provides teachers and parents a clear and simple way to communicate about the student's progress and allows the service provider an organized system that is cost and time efficient. Other factors to consider are:

a. The organization of the system minimizes time spent graphing, and keeping track of data, enhances the maintenance of psychological logs and has a neat and visual presentation of data that can be used when reporting progress to parents.

b. It offers an easy way for students, parents, and teachers to provide students with reinforcement and visual feedback without having to carry papers from one place to another.

c. It also serves as a communication tool between the teacher and parents.

d. Due to federal, state, district, and scientific push for data base decision making, and appropriate, consistent progress monitoring this system provides a way to track and use data for decisions, and easily view a student's progress.

With who can you use this system?

The behaviors and goals included in this program are especially design for children with ASD. However, many of the behaviors can also be observed in students with other disabilities. Thus this program can be used with students with behavioral difficulties that require individualized behavioral and emotional support within the schools.

The Label Contracting System (LCS)

Materials

    a. 2 x 4 inches labels (or depending on the planner your desired size)

    b. Card stock paper

    c. Student's Planner

    d. Behavior Database Form

    e. Data Tracking Form

    f. Student Contract Form

    g. Intervention Log

    h. 1" binder (or bigger depending on your case load) with A to Z binder dividers

How to use the system

This system can be used as part of a student's IEP goals or as part of a Tier 2 intervention to decrease inappropriate behaviors, and increase appropriate behaviors within the classroom. It is important that you meet with the parents and the school team before starting the program. During this meeting discuss the student's challenges, strengths, goals for the year and also possible reinforcers. Explain that the Label Contract System is a positive reinforcement system in which the student can earn points toward a particular reinforcer.

1. With the team choose 1-3 behaviors from the Behavior Database (Appendix A) to be reinforced. They need to be stated positively, for example, Johny is on-task at least 75% of the class period.

2. If appropriate, during your first session with the student have him/her choose a behavior that they would like to change.

3. With the team, and the student if appropriate, decide which method of points will be used:

    a. Numbers (e.g. 0, 1, 2)

    b. Faces (e.g. happy face = 1)

    c. Yeses and No's (Yes = 1, No= 0)

    d. Others (e.g. sometimes, often, always, not at all, etc.)

4. Choose how often the student will receive the rating by the teacher. (See examples in Appendix B)

    a. Daily per goal

      b.   For every period

      c.   Weekly

5. Decide how often you will reinforce, and track the data.

      a.   Daily

      b.   Weekly

      c.   Every 3 days

      d.   Randomly

6. Create the labels using the database.

7. Gathered baseline data!

      a.   Use observations

      b.   Have the teacher/s complete the system before the reinforcement program is started.

      c.   Use rating scales or checklists when appropriate.

8. Review data at least weekly, and make changes based on the data.

      a.   Print the Data Tracking Sheet, and the Student Contract in cardstock paper.

      b.   Print the Intervention Log Sheet in regular paper (see Appendix E).

      c.   Organize these documents by student's last name on the binder (see Appendix E).

Meeting with the student

It is important to assess the knowledge and skills of the student in performing the desired behaviors. Conducting observations within the classroom or settings in which the desired behaviors need to be displayed is recommended. Interview the student to assess his knowledge of the difficulties he might be having, reinforcers and to know how likely he/she is to follow trough with the program before starting it. It is important to get teacher and student buy-in since this will ensure the implementation of the system. Before implementing the system teach the student the appropriate behaviors that will earn him/her points. Use explicit teaching techniques and role-plays of positive and negative examples (remember the service provider does the negative examples, the student should only perform positive examples). Using the Student Contract Form (see Appendix C) explain how the system will work.

      a.   Who's responsibility it is to give the planner to the teacher

      b.   How often will the teacher rate his behavior

c. When are appropriate times to give the planner to the teacher

d. When reinforcements will be provided

e. What behaviors are going to be reinforced

f. Create a reward menu that includes either the amount of points or percentages needed to earn each reward (see Appendix E for completed example).

g. Remind him/her that they will not loose any points if they are not performing the behaviors they will just not earn any points.

h. Let the student know that during each reinforcing session with you they will be graphing the data and discussing any issues. (see Appendix D)

    a. Put the labels in the designated area of the planner and write in the dates

i. Discuss if you will include a Bonus Clause and what will be required to earn the bonus points.

j. Establish in advance how long the data tracking and reinforcement session will be (from experience students take anywhere from 10 to 20 minutes).

k. Have the student sign the contract and explain what an agreement is if they don't understand it.

Variations

1. **Drawer system and treasure box:** In this variation the service provider has a designated 3 drawer container that has a diversity of toys ranging in size and desirability by a variety of students. Each drawer "costs" an increasing amount of points or percentage that will depend on the quantity earned by the student. In addition, you can have a "Treasure Box" or "Special Bag" with reinforcers that are unique and highly desirable. This bag can include iPad time, computer time, less math problems, extra points, social time with friends in the office, etc. For example, Johny earns 30 points weekly. The Treasure Box can only be accessed if Johny has anywhere from 25 to 30 points (approximately 80%), Drawer 3 if he has 20-24, and so on.

    a. **Caution:** With the point system students can "save" points in their point bank (see Appendix D: Data tracking sheet) and use those points to earn bigger prices without having to display all the behaviors.

2. **The "Reward that you Want" section**: Within the reward menu you can have the student state what he/she would most want to earn. This can be the "top" reinforcement and should only be earned with at least 90% of the points.
3. **Using percentage instead of points:** This variation can be use with the drawer system or creating an individualized reward menu. Each reward is assigned a percentage instead of points. For example, computer time being the most desired can be obtained only if the student earns 90% or more of his points for the week.
4. **The Spinner variation:** You can also set up random reminders in which you can have Johny come to the office and if he is meeting his goal for that week have him spin for an extra reward. (This can also be used with a Mystery Motivator).
5. **Notebook variation:** If the student does not have a planner or looses the planner you can print the formatted labels on regular white paper and create a "Contract Notebook." The student can decorate it during the discussion sessions.
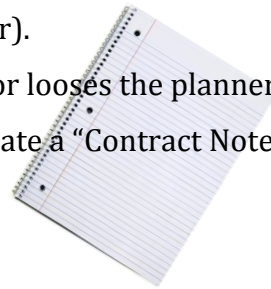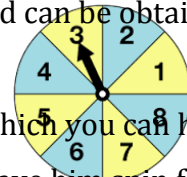
Troubles hooting

1. **When reinforcers are not reinforcing enough**. Go back on the data you have gathered and the information obtained from the team and parents. Ask the student directly what he/she would like to earn. Vary the reinforcers or change the schedule of reinforcement. Some students may require daily reinforcement at the start of the program while others, probably older, students can use a weekly reinforcement.
2. **Forgotten or lost planners.** In this case you can go back to the sheets of paper. However, ask the student what might be happening and what can be done so they remember. It is also important to assess if the system is not working for the student, if they are receiving negative comments or are not interested in it.
3. **Tangible reinforcers are being brought to the classroom and played with.** Change the reinforcing session for the end of the day. If that cannot be done, give the reinforcer to the teacher, and let the student know that the teacher will give them the object at the end of the school day.

References

Crone, D. A., Hawken, L. S. and Horner, R. B. (2010). Responding to problem behavior in schools: The Behavior Education Program, 2nd edition. New York NY: The Guildford Press.

Jenson, W. R., Rhode, G. and Reavis, H. K. (2009). The Tough Kid Tool Box. Eugene, OR: Pacific Northwest Publishing.

Kern, L., Maher Choutka, C. and Sokol, N. G. (2002). Assessment based antecedent interventions used in natural settings to reduce challenging behavior: An analysis of the Literature. *Education and Treatment of Children, 25*(1), pp. 113-130.

Volpe, R. J. and Fabiano, G. A. (2013). Daily behavior report cards: An evidence based system of assessment and intervention. New York, NY: The Guildford Press

APPENDIX A

Behavior Data Base

Behavior Database

Instructions:

Copy and paste from the "behaviors that can be tracked" column the desired behaviors to be increased to the predetermined label form, the Student Contract, and the Data tracking Sheet. Please note that these behaviors are not exhaustive and will vary across students. In addition, the examples of goals provided are general and should be revised and edited as needed.

Modular Behavior	Operational Definition	Behaviors that can be tracked	Example of IEP goal
On-Task Behaviors	The student visually tracks the teacher during instruction, remains seated appropriately, completes work within the time allotted by teacher, and utilizes class routines (e.g. raising hand) to ask questions or comments.	- Remains appropriately seated - Raises hand - Participates in class discussions - Completes work within time given - Has appropriate materials	_____ will increase his on-task behavior (e.g. remains quietly and appropriately seated, raises his hand, etc.) as measured by obtaining at least 70% of his weekly contract points over 3 consecutive weeks, from a baseline of 30% on-task.
Following Directions	The student starts or stops a task within 5 – 10 seconds of the teacher's request.	- Follows direction the first time - Follows directions with one extra prompt -	_____ will follow directions the first time at least ¾ of the opportunities given as measured by obtaining at least 75% of his contract points over 3 days, from a baseline of 25%.
Social-Emotional Reciprocity	Abnormal social approach and failure of normal back-and-forth conversation; to reduced sharing of interests, emotions, or affect; to failure to initiate or respond to social interactions.	- Provides 1-2 comments to another student's prompt or adult prompt - Waits turn to speak - Greets others when greeted - Initiates a greeting to a student or teacher at the start of the day - Stays within the topic of discussion for 3 passes in conversation	_____ will demonstrate the use of back and forth conversation by providing 2 or more comments or questions that remain within the topic of discussion in the classroom as measured by obtaining at least 80% of his

			contract points over 3 consecutive days.
Nonverbal Communicative behaviors	Poorly integrated verbal and nonverbal communication; to abnormalities in eye contact and body language or deficits in understanding and use of gestures; to a total lack of facial expressions and nonverbal communication.	- Utilizes some gestures while communicating with the teacher. - Maintains eye contact for at least 3 seconds while speaking to an adult - Smiles while talking about positive personal experiences - Identifies others facial expressions	_____ will maintain eye contact for at least 3 seconds when addressing another student or adult within the school environment, as measured by obtaining at least 90% of his contract points over a one month period.
Interpersonal Relationships	Difficulties adjusting behavior to suit various social contexts; to difficulties in sharing imaginative play or in making friends; to absence of interest in peers.	- Utilize relaxing strategies when anxious, upset, angry - Interact with at least 1 student during free time - Invite at least 1 student to play during recess time - Play for at least 5 minutes with another student during free time	_____ will demonstrate appropriate social interactions by daily inviting at least one student to play during recess as measured by obtaining at least 90% of his contract points over 10 days.
Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities.	Inflexible adherence to routines and behaviors, highly restricted, fixated interests, and abnormal reactions to sensory stimulations	- Timely transitions within the school or activities - Emotional and behavioral outbursts at changed routines or expectations - Repetitive and stereotypical behaviors or use of objects - Unusual preoccupation with objects, interests or fears - Patience and tolerance for change, people and expectations	_____ will calmly and appropriately transition from one activity or place to the appropriate one within the time allotted by the teacher, as measured by obtaining at least 75% of his contract points over a 3 month period.

APPENDIX B

Word processor instructions for creating Labels and

Label examples

Word processor instructions for creating Labels

Note: Here you will see some examples of how labels can be arranged. Utilize your word processor tools for labels to create a complete sheet of the label you have.

Instructions for Microsoft Word:

1. Go to Tools and Click on Labels
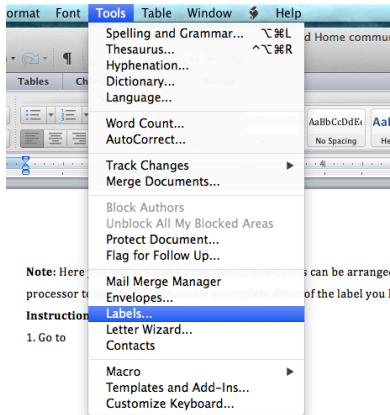
2. Leave the space tittle Address blank, and select "Full Page of the same label"
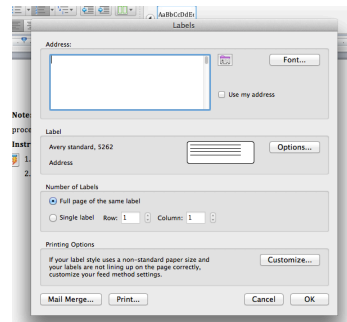
3. Select Options and select the label you will be using. The type of label will often be in the package they came in. Click OK.
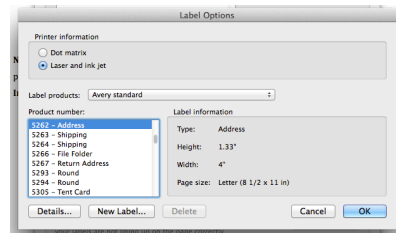
4. A new document will appear.

5. Move cursor to the corner until you see the square with the arrows. Click on that square so the blue lines appear.

6. Go to the option for lines and select "All Lines" this will help you in the copy and paste process.
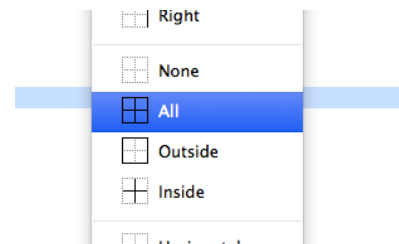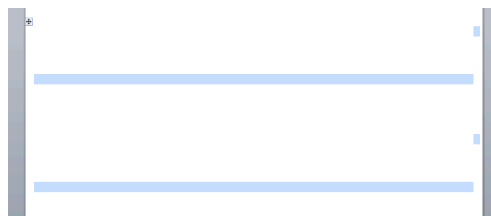
Examples of Labels

Date	__/__/__	__/__/__	__/__/__
Stays in seat			
Quiet mouth			
Following directions the first time			
Completes work			
Uses calm down skills			
Comments			Total:

Date	__/__/__	__/__/__	Bonus
Stays in seat			
Quiet mouth			
Following directions the first time			
Completes work			
Uses calm down skills			
Comments			Total:

Date	__/__/__		__/__/__		__/__/__		__/__/__		__/__/__	
	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 1	Teacher 2
Comments									Total:	

Teacher 1					
Date					
on-task at least 75% of the school day.					
Participate					
Complete at least 75% of work accurately					
Comments:					

Maestra 2					
Date					
Atento al menos 75% del día.					
Participa					
Completo al menos 75% del trabajo correctamente					
Comments:					

General Example: Fill in the behaviors, copy and paste into the label form.

Teacher					
Date					
Behavior 1					
Behavior 2					
Behavior 3					
Comments:					

General Example by class period: Fill in the behaviors, copy and paste into the label form.

__/__/__	Behavior 1	Behavior 2	Behavior 3	Behavior 4
Morning				
Before rece.				
Before lun.				
After lunch				
Check out				
Today's goal:		Today's total:		

___/__/___	Behavior 1	Behavior 2	Behavior 3	Behavior 4
Morning				
Before rece.				
Before lun.				
After lunch				
Check out				
Today's goal:		Today's total:		

Teacher

Date					
Behavior 1					
Behavior 2					
Behavior 3					
Comments:					

Teacher 1

Date				
on-task at least 75% of the school day.				
Participate				
Complete at least 75% of work accurately				
Comments:				

Maestra 2

Date				
Atento al menos 75% del día.				
Participa				
Completo al menos 75% del trabajo correctamente				
Comments:				

	Teacher 1		Teacher 2	
Date				
Behavior 1				
Behavior 2				
Behavior 3				
Comments:				

	Teacher 1	Bonus	Teacher 2	Bonus
Date				
Behavior 1				
Behavior 2				
Behavior 3				
Comments:				

Date	__/__/___	__/__/___	__/__/___
Behavior 1			
Behavior 2			
Behavior 3			
Behavior 4			
Behavior 5			
Comments		Total:	

Date	__/__/___	__/__/___	Bonus
Behavior 1			
Behavior 2			
Behavior 3			
Behavior 4			
Behavior 5			
Comments		Total:	

___/__/___	Behavior 1			Behavior 2			Behavi	
Morning	2	1	0	2	1	0	2	1
Before rece.	2	1	0	2	1	0	2	1
Before lun.	2	1	0	2	1	0	2	1
After lunch	2	1	0	2	1	0	2	1
Check out	2	1	0	2	1	0	2	1
Today's goal:				Today's total:				

___/__/___	Behavior 1			Behavior 2			Behavi	
Morning	☺	☺	☹	☺	☺	☹	☺	☺
Before rece.	☺	☺	☹	☺	☺	☹	☺	☺
Before lun.	☺	☺	☹	☺	☺	☹	☺	☺
After lunch	☺	☺	☹	☺	☺	☹	☺	☺
Check out	☺	☺	☹	☺	☺	☹	☺	☺
Today's goal:				Today's total:				

APPENDIX C

Student Contract Form

Student Contract Form

Reinforcer Menu

Percent/Points required for reward	

Operational Definitions (Change as needed):

Yes: Student will receive a yes if he/she is on-task at least 75% of the time, keeps his hands and feet to himself, and completes at least 75% of his school work within the time allotted.

No: If the student is on-task less than 75% of the time, is observed inappropriately and physically approaching others, and does not complete his school work within the time given.

	Teacher 1			Teacher 2		
Date						
Behavior 1						
Behavior 2						
Behavior 3						
Comments:						

How does the tracker look like:

Notes: What is in red should be changed for each student.

I _____, will perform the following behaviors: -

_____, _____, _____,

and _____, during my class time and during free/recess times.

If I obtain _____ points/% I will receive the rewards above from _____

during _____ on _____.

_____   _____

Student   Teacher/service provider

Bonus clause:

_____

_____

*This part of the contract was taken and adapted from Jenson, Rhode & Reavis (2009).

APPENDIX D

Data Tracking Form

Date										
Behavior 1										
Behavior 2										
Behavior 3										
Total earned										
Days										
Total Expected										
Percent										

90%														
80%														
70%														
60%														
50%														
40%														
30%														
20%														
10%														
0%														
date														

Date	Left	Earned	Total	Used	left

21

APPENDIX E

Intervention Log and Binder System pictures

Name of School **Name of District** **Intervention Log** **School Year**								
Student:				DOB:				
Grade/Teacher:				School Year:				
Classification:				IEP/Re-Eval Date:				
Parents:				Phone:				
Provider:				Signature:				

Date	Individual session/ # in Group	Time in minutes	Activity/ Topic	E = Evaluation O = Observation C = Counseling	Behavior Intervention /Tracker	Missed session due to schedule change	Absent: S = Student P = Provider	Provider Initials

Binder and System Pictures
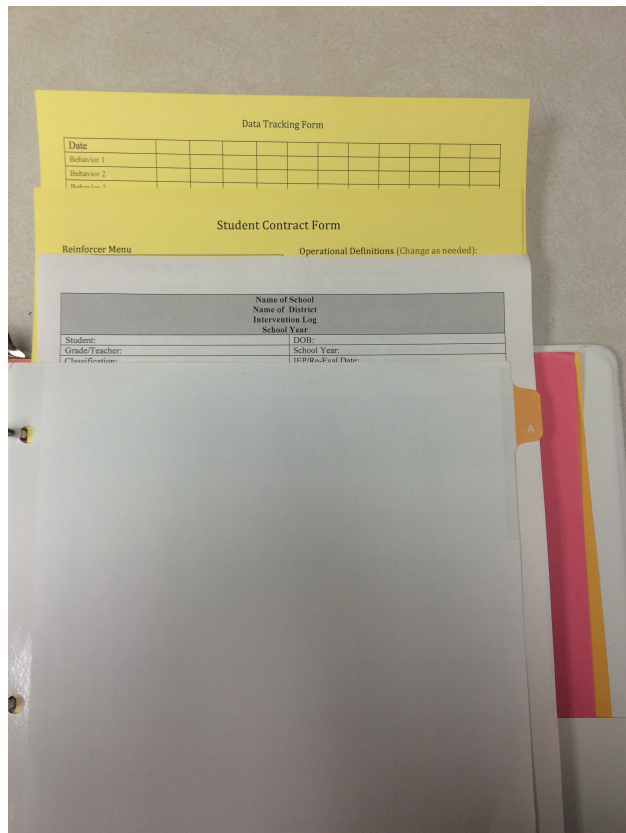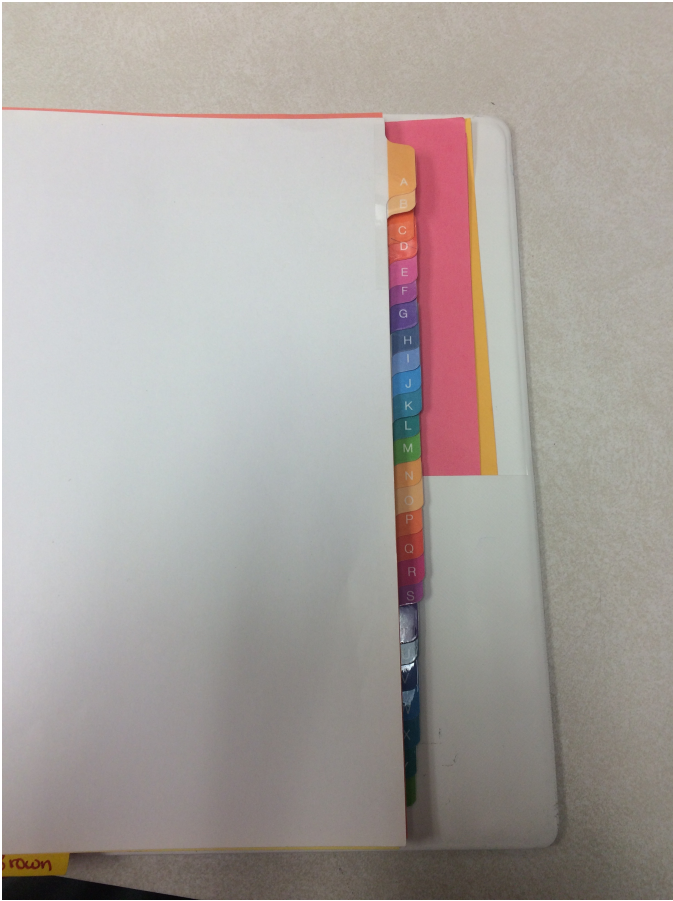
			Name of School
			Name of District
			Intervention Log
			School Year

Student: Johny Advantage	DOB: 8/20/2008	
Grade/Teacher: 3rd / Mrs. Sheet	School Year: 2015-2016	
Classification: Autism	IEP/Re-Eval Date: 10/31/15 - 10/30/2017	
Parents: Mrs. Advantage	Phone: (777) 777-777	
Provider: Violet Morgan	Signature: VM	

Date	Individual sessions/ # in Group	Time in minutes	Activity/ Topic	E = Evaluation O = Observation C = Counseling	Behavior Intervention /Tracker	Missed session due to schedule change	Absent: S = Student P = Provider	Provider Initials
5/21/15	Individual	20	- Confidentiality was explained. - Interview for contract information. - Rewards menu created.	C	✓	N	—	VM

Student Contract Form

Reinforcer Menu

Percent/Points required for reward	
95%	Only ½ of math homework for today
90%	iPad (5 minutes)
85%	Treasure Box
80%	Drawer 3
75%	Drawer 2
70%	Drawer 1

Operational Definitions (Change as needed):

Yes: Student will receive a yes if he/she is on-task at least 75% of the time, keeps his hands and feet to himself, and completes at least 75% of his school work within the time allotted.

No: If the student is on-task less than 75% of the time, is observed inappropriately and physically approaching others, and does not complete his school work within the time given.

How does the tracker look like:

	Teacher 1			Teacher 2		
Date						
Behavior 1						
Behavior 2						
Behavior 3						
Comments:						

Notes: What is in red should be changed for each student.

I __Johnny__, will perform the following behaviors: __stay on-task__, __use relax techni.__ __stay seated__, and __raise my hand__, during my class time and during free/recess times.

If I obtain __my__ points/(%) I will receive the rewards above from __Ms. Morgan__ during __guidance__ on __Fridays at 2:00p.m.__
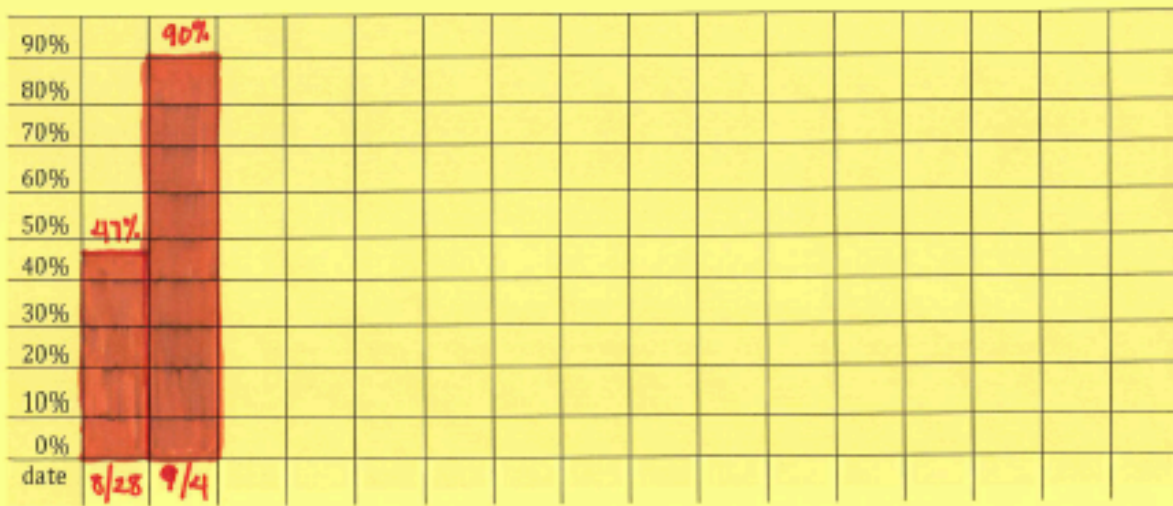
__Johnny__
Student

__MPM__
Teacher/service provider

Bonus clause: _____

*This part of the contract was taken and adapted from Jenson, Rhode & Reavis (2009).

Data Tracking Form

Date	8/28/15	9/4/15								
Behavior 1	4	9								
Behavior 2	5	10								
Behavior 3	5	8								
Total earned	14	27								
Days	5	5								
Total Expected	30	30								
Percent	47%	90%								

90%		90%											
80%													
70%													
60%													
50%	47%												
40%													
30%													
20%													
10%													
0%													
date	8/28	9/4											

Date	Left	Earned	Total	Used	left
8/28/15	----	47%	47%	No reward	No %
9/4/15	0	90%	90%	90%	0%