

Practical Product: The Yes and No Program

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## Yes and No Program

The Yes and No Program is a contingency program that can be used with individual students, or as a class-wide reinforcer of positive behaviors. The program is easy to set up and use, making it a “teacher-friendly” method for managing behaviors for a wide variety of populations, both with and without disabilities. Most importantly, the Yes and No Program is effective in producing positive behavioral changes for the majority of students.

The Yes and No Program is essentially a lottery in which good behavior is rewarded with tickets that increase the likelihood of reinforcers. The program uses several components of evidence-based practice: use of a variable ratio reinforcement schedule, group contingencies, and positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors. The use of a variable reinforcement schedule strengthens the intervention by producing a high stable rate of target behavior displays (Zuriff, 1970). Perhaps the most powerful aspect of the program appears when the program is used to manage group behavior. Group contingencies (Davies & White, 2000; Theodore, Bray, Kehle, & Jenson, 2001) have been found to be extremely effective in managing a wide variety of behaviors, especially those most often troublesome to teachers. Teachers can be assured that the Yes and No program is comprised of principles that have repeatedly been found to produce improvements in subject behavior.

This program can be used with a wide variety of students. Regular classroom teachers will find the intervention useful for reinforcing appropriate classroom behaviors. In this case, it is likely that a teacher would include all students in the program. The intervention can also be applied to only those individuals who have demonstrated difficulty in obeying class rules. The Yes and No Program is also appropriate for students with a wide variety of disabilities and learning abilities. While tickets with printed “Yes” and “No” words are acceptable for students with reading abilities, they may be replaced with smiley and frowny face tickets, or green and red tickets. Target behaviors should be population appropriate, ensuring that intervention participants are capable of completing the desired behavior.

The Yes and No Program requires few materials not readily accessible to teachers—all that is needed is tickets labeled “yes” and “no”, and a place to deposit tickets earned by students. To implement the intervention, a specific target behavior should be selected. For example, a teacher may choose to target hand-raising behaviors if students are prone to talking out. As with any intervention, it is essential that reinforcers be selected that are motivating to students. It may be helpful to poll students on desired reinforcers.

Once reinforcers have been selected, appropriate tickets may be produced and the program introduced to the participants. It is helpful to have the “yes” and “no” tickets available to show to the students while explaining the program. During the introduction to the Yes and No Program, it is important that behaviors that earn “yes” tickets be clearly defined, as well as those behaviors that earn “no” tickets. In addition to oral explanation of how tickets are earned, role plays may be used to

help students conceptualize what behaviors earn “yes” and “no” tickets. A tv game show-style activity may also be used to reinforce concepts. During this time, it is important that the students gain a solid understanding of the functioning of the program. Students should be granted a time to receive answers to any questions they may have concerning the program.

Now that the students understand how the program functions, it may be implemented. When a student demonstrates the desired target behavior, verbally identify the behavior and reward the student with a “yes” ticket by writing their name on the ticket and depositing the ticket in the container. In a similar fashion, if a student does not demonstrate the desired behavior when appropriate, the incorrect behavior should be verbally identified, as well as the consequence—a “no” ticket. “No” tickets are also marked with the student’s name. In order to maximize the effectiveness of the program, students should receive “yes” tickets at a minimum of a 3:1 ratio to “no” tickets.

Tickets should be continually distributed and deposited in the selected container throughout the entire day. At the end of the day, tickets are drawn from the container. If individual contingencies are being used, randomly select several tickets from the container. If a student’s “yes” ticket is drawn, that student receives the predetermined reward. If a “no” ticket is selected, no reinforcement is given. To utilize a group contingency, it is only necessary for one ticket to be drawn. If a “yes” ticket is removed, the entire group receives the designated reward. However, none of the students receive a reward if a “no” ticket is selected. In both cases, the

drawing of “no” tickets should be followed by a review of the rules that earn “yes” and “no” tickets.

Although the names written on tickets are not used for the distribution of rewards in the group contingency model, names written provide an excellent source of intervention data. In both the individual and group contingency models of the Yes and No Program, frequency counts of “yes” and “no” tickets should be kept to determine progress over time. Data collected from the intervention should continually be evaluated and changes in the intervention should be made if necessary.

If the intervention is determined to be producing positive behavioral changes, the teacher should gradually begin to fade the intervention over time. Instead of rewarding target behaviors with “yes” tickets each time the behavior is demonstrated, the teacher may begin to reinforce every other demonstration of the behavior, or every third demonstration. Although “yes” ticket distribution should be gradually faded, “no” tickets should be consistently rewarded for non-appropriate behaviors. Doing this ensures that negative behaviors do not increase with the withdrawal of the program. Continue to withdraw the intervention as the target behavior becomes more frequently observed with less reinforcement through “yes” and “no” tickets.

The Yes and No Program can also be coupled with other reinforcement systems. Beep tapes, recordings or computer programs that produce a signal at random intervals, may be coupled with the Yes and No Program to produce a intervention that runs on a variable interval schedule, strengthening the response of

participants. Although the beep tape adds additional elements to the intervention, the program remains simple to use and teacher friendly. Commercially available programs, such as Get Em' On Task, (Althouse, Jenson, Likins, & Morgan, 1999). facilitate the use of random signals in the Yes and No Program. When using beep tapes, the teacher distributes tickets when the random signal is heard, instead of when the target behavior is observed. If the individuals or group members are in compliance with the target behavior at the time of the signal, they receive a "yes" ticket. If the participants happen to be engaged in behaviors contrary to the target behavior, "no" tickets are distributed. Due to the random nature of the signals, students are motivated to participate in appropriate behaviors at all times. Beep tapes further strengthen the variable reinforcement aspect of the Yes and No Program, making the intervention even more potent in eliciting the target behaviors.

Although the Yes and No Program can be implemented on an individual scale, it is recommended that the program be used as a group contingency. Due to the effects of peer pressure, members of the group are encouraged to work as a team and avoid earning "no" tickets. With the use of a group contingency, earning "no" tickets no longer only affects one member of the group—earning a "no" ticket may mean that group member is responsible for the entire group not receiving a reinforcer. Positive peer pressure associated with group contingencies helps group members to participate in the target behavior at a higher rate than when grouped individually.

During the implementation of the Yes and No Program as a group contingency, several problems may arise. With the use of group contingencies, it is

important to determine if all group members are capable of performing the desired behavior. If one group member is incapable of performing the behavior, that individual is likely to be responsible for an increased number of “no” tickets for the group—possibly leading to increased tension with other group members. Instead, that group member should be placed on an individual intervention with target behaviors that are achievable for that individual. It is also important that if a “no” ticket is selected

When the program is implemented on a group level, some members of the group may attempt to sabotage the intervention by earning as many “no” tickets as possible—ruining the groups chance to earn a reinforcer at the end of the allotted time. While students may attempt to sabotage the intervention to gain attention, escape undesirable activities, or due to lack of motivating reinforcers, sabotaging students should be placed on their own Yes and No system or a different intervention completely. Removing the sabotaging student from the group contingency prevents intergroup conflict and allows those students participating in the intervention to be appropriately reinforced for their behavior.

A visual reminder of the ratio of “yes” to “no” tickets is also useful for students or groups who seem unaware of the amount of negative feedback they have received throughout the day. In this situation, colored tickets should be used and placed in a clear container. Clear jars, pitchers, and boxes provide students a visual reminder of their current chance of earning reinforcement. Seeing many red tickets in the container provides students with immediate feedback, encouraging them to improve their behavior.

The use of the Yes and No Program is especially effective due to its ability to be implemented in a variety of groups without any potential legal or ethical concerns. As previously mentioned, it is important that considerations be taken to ensure that all participants in the program are capable of successfully producing the desired behavior. Selection of a target behavior that participants of the program are incapable of producing sets both the program and the students for failure.

## References

- Althouse, R.B., Jenson, W.R., Likins, M., & Morgan, D.P. (1999). Get 'em on task: A computer signaling program to teach attending and self-management skills. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.
- Davies, S., & White R. (2000). Self-management and peer-monitoring within a group contingency to decrease uncontrolled verbalizations of children with Attention-Deficit/hyperactivity disorder. *Psychology in the Schools*, 37, 135-147.
- Theodore, L., Bray, M., Kehle, T., & Jenson, W. (2001). Randomization of group contingencies and reinforcers to reduce classroom disruptive behavior. *Journal of School Psychology*, 3(39), 267-277.
- Zuriff, G. (1970). A comparison of variable-ratio and variable-interval schedules of reinforcement. *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, 13, 369-374.

## Appendix A

### Materials Needed

1. Container for holding “yes” and “no” tickets.
  - a. Clear container for added feedback for students
2. Copies of “yes” and “no” tickets
3. Rules poster with clearly defined rules
4. Beep tape program, such as Get ‘Em On Task (optional)

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NO**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NO**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NO**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NO**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NO**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NO**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NO**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NO**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NO**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NO**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NO**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NO**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ YES**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ YES**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ YES**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ YES**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ YES**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ YES**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ YES**

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**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ YES**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ YES**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ YES**