

## **POINT AND LEVEL SYSTEMS: OVERVIEW**

### **What are point and level systems?**

Point and level systems are a behavioral management approach that have been commonly recommended by educators, used in programs for students that exhibit challenging behavior, and discussed in the literature. They are designed to be an organizational framework for managing student behavior where “students access greater independences and more privileges as they demonstrate increased behavioral control” (Heward, p. 306, 2003). Students learn appropriate behavior through clearly defined behavioral expectations and rewards, privileges, and consequences linked to those expectations. There are specific criteria for advancement to the next level where the student(s) enjoy more desirable contingencies. It is intended that students who proceed through the levels are more able to self-manage, capable of handling more responsibility and therefore enjoy greater independence. There are four main goals of point and level systems: 1) increasing appropriate behavior; 2) promoting academic achievement; 3) fostering a student’s improvement through self-management; and 4) developing personal responsibility for social emotional and academic performance (Farrell, Smith & Brownell, 1998).

### **What are the advantages and disadvantages of point and level systems?**

The primary advantage of level systems is that it specifies a hierarchy of skills that are needed to be successful in the educational setting. Teachers generally have found point and level systems to be effective in increasing appropriate behavior and academic achievement. Our experience supports the conclusion that point and level systems can be effective. However, there is little empirical evidence that the use of these systems result in the generalization and maintenance of behavior changes independent of extrinsic teacher control. In addition, concern has been raised that level systems may violate the basic principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) when implemented in a uniform, standardized fashion for all students in a give classroom or school. Although we do recommend the use of point and level systems as one tool of effective behavioral management, teachers should be careful to design the system to accommodate the specific goals of each student or each group of students with regards to initial level placement, use of rewards and consequences, and criteria for progressing through the system.

### **References**

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## **Additional Recommended Resources**

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- Barbetta, P. (1990a) GOALS: A group-oriented adapted levels systems for children with behavior disorders. *Academic Therapy*, 25, 645-656.
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