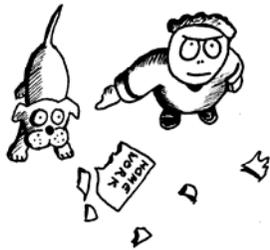


THE USE OF DAILY REPORT CARDS



Why are Daily Report Cards Used?

Daily report cards allow parents an opportunity to motivate and monitor their children's school performance on a regular basis. This, in turn, allows parents to reward good performance and to discipline poor performance. It also allows parents to determine whether or not progress is being made in school and to make appropriate changes to continue or enhance improvement, to document the effectiveness of attempted strategies to improve school performance, and to more accurately determine the nature of school problems.

What are Daily Report Cards?

Daily report cards are small forms that are sent back and forth

between the parents and teachers. The format of daily report cards can be designed based upon the information parents and teachers need to share. Information reported on daily report cards usually includes daily grades, the completion of homework, and classroom behavior. The critical components of daily report cards include: a fill-in-the-blank format that permits the cards to be completed in a brief amount of time; a place for brief comments; the inclusion of specific information such as grades, scores, and number of occurrences of behaviors rather than general information such as whether the student was good or bad; and spaces for the teacher(s) and parent(s) to initial the card.

Who Should Use Daily Report Cards

As described, daily report cards are used with students with mild to severe school problems. These students should be receiving appropriate school instruction, yet they do not appear to be motivated. Such children often fail to attend school, fail to complete assignments, fail to behave appropriately, fail to do the best they can, or often "forget" their homework. Students

for whom the daily report card can be useful should also have parents who are concerned and can provide consistent rewards and consequences based upon the results of daily report cards. Likewise, teachers must also be concerned and consistent in completing the cards, even if initial success is not readily apparent. The daily report card is also useful with students referred for remedial services as a pre-intervention technique prior to testing.

How are Daily Report Cards Used?

The initial step in using daily report cards is for parents to explain daily report cards to their children. In doing so, parents should emphasize the positive aspects of the cards in allowing children to earn rewards and privileges for jobs well done, as well as the negative aspects such as removal of privileges when goals are not met. Children should be informed of what they will be required to do (take the card to school, give it to the teacher, and bring the card home). Next, parents should negotiate with their children the rewards for good performances and the consequences for poor performance. This requires parents to define what good performance is.

Good performance should be defined in terms of making children's school behavior more consistent or in terms of small improvements. For example, if a child's daily grades are primarily D's with some B's, C's and F's, an initial definition of a good performance may be a day in which only D-'s or higher are obtained. A poor performance can then be defined as a day in which one or more F's are obtained.

The next step is for parents and their children to negotiate rewards and consequences. Because daily rewards should be used during the initial weeks, the rewards should be small and easy to provide. The giving of privileges almost always works better than the giving of tangible rewards like money. Many parents find that the easiest thing to do is to make a list of privileges and rewards that can be obtained with a good performance. Children should be allowed to suggest what goes on the list. However, parents should make the final decision regarding the content of the list. Examples of items on the list are privileges such as getting to stay up an extra half hour, getting to choose an activity to play with parents, or choosing a dessert after dinner. Examples of tangible rewards include a small amount of money, a treat such as

soda pop or candy, and small toys. For daily rewards, the amount of money given as a reward should be no more than \$.50. A bonus may be agreed upon if children show large improvements. For example, parents can suggest that their children be allowed to select a Saturday activity for the family, in addition to the daily rewards, if all grades are a C or better.

Consequences for poor performance may include an early bedtime, removal of TV watching privileges, removal of outdoor privileges, or an extra chore to perform. Children should be told that failure to bring the daily report card home at the end of the school day will automatically result in implementation of consequences even if the children say they had a good day at school.

A supply of blank daily report cards should be kept by the parents. Before children leave for school, parents should have their children carry a new card to school. If there was a card from the previous school day, then parents should initial the **new** card as an indication that they received the previous card. Once children get to school, they should give the card to their teachers. During the school day, teachers

should complete the card, make any comments, and initial the card to indicate they have no additional information to add. If children have more than one teacher, children should carry the card from teacher to teacher, with each teacher initialing when finished adding information.

Children should then take the card to their parents after school. Parents should review the card to determine if the criterion for a good performance or poor performance was met. If the criterion for a good performance was met, children should be allowed to choose a reward or privilege. If the criterion for poor performance was met, privileges should be removed as soon as possible. Failure to remove privileges may result in loss of effectiveness of daily report cards. Parents should then file the card for later reference and review. The next day, a new card is sent to school.

At the end of the week, any bonus that has been decided upon should be given. Parents should also discuss the results for the week with their children, and they should make any adjustments to the definition of good and poor performance. New

items may also be added as rewards, privileges, bonuses or consequences.

Once children consistently show good performances, the definition of a good performance can be raised slightly. For example, this initial change may be that the only days grades of D or better will be rewarded, and days with a D- or lower will result in loss of privileges. At the same time the size of the rewards, privileges, bonuses, and consequences can be raised slightly. The definition of good and poor performance is thus adjusted each time children consistently meet the definition of a good performance. "Consistently" means at least four days a week for four or more weeks in a row.

As parents use the daily report card a goal should be developed as to the acceptable level of performance that is ultimately desired for children. The goal should be realistic and parents should keep in mind that not all children can be A students. When children consistently reach the acceptable level, then the daily report card can be extended so that rewards are provided less frequently. For example, once children are consistently attaining an acceptable level of performance on a daily basis, the schedule can be

changed so that rewards are given every other day. When a consistently acceptable performance is attained with the new schedule, then it can be extended so that rewards are given one time per week. Schedules can be extended when a consistently acceptable performance is obtained. However, schedules of delivering rewards should never be extended to less than one time per month. Schedules longer than one time per week are usually not effective with younger children. Each time that a schedule is extended, the size of the rewards and privileges should be increased. For example, if children are being rewarded every other day when the criteria for a good performance are met, then the size of the reward should be about twice the size of the daily reward.

Though the schedule for delivering rewards and privileges may be extended, the schedule for consequences should continue to be daily. Thus, children being rewarded for good performances every other day may have a poor performance on Monday and have a privilege removed and/or an extra chore. Good performances on Tuesday and Wednesday would result in a selection of a reward after school on Wednesday.

Although the schedule for rewards may be extended, parents should continue to give attention and genuine praise daily for good performance. Hence, although a student on a weekly schedule may have to wait until Friday after school to choose a reward, attention and praise should be given each day a good performance is attained. Such attention need only include a few minutes spent discussing a good grade, a performance on a difficult test, or a positive comment made by a teacher. However, the attention should focus on something children have done well at school rather than a non-school activity.

Modifications That can be Made to the Daily Report Card

The flexibility of the daily report card allows it to be adapted to a variety of situations. Listed below are some common adaptations.

***School delivery of rewards.** Instead of parents providing rewards or privileges, the teacher reviews children's daily report cards at the end of the school day and provides privileges and/or rewards.

***Incorporation into allowance.** Particularly with older children, monetary rewards are often the

most appealing. Since many older children receive allowances, daily report cards can be used with good performances adding to allowance and poor performances resulting in subtractions from the allowance.

***School adoption as a classroom management technique.** Some classrooms or entire schools use daily report cards to manage children's behavior. Several important behaviors are included on the card, such as arriving to class on time, completing homework, and raising a hand before speaking. Children receive privileges in school based upon their behavior as recorded on the card.



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