



## AUTISM CLASSROOM RESOURCES PODCAST EPISODE 29: 3 BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

URL: <http://autismclassroomresources.com/episode29>

Welcome to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast, the podcast for special educators who are looking for personal and professional development.

I'm your host, Dr. Christine Reeve. For more than 20 years, I've worn lots of hats in special education, but my real love is helping special educators like you. This podcast will give you tips and ways to implement research based practices in a practical way in your classroom to make your job easier and more effective.


### 3 Behavior Management Systems

Welcome back to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast. I'm glad that you are joining us today. Today I wanted to talk about three classroom management systems that you can use in a group setting. One of them is more group ... Well, two of them are more group contingencies, and one of them is more individualizable, so there should be something that will match the needs of all the different kinds of classrooms.

In our last podcast I talked about what makes a good behavior management classroom management system and some of the elements, and you'll hear those. Again, as I talk about these three specific systems and some of the pros and the cons. They are systems that could be used, for the most part, in a general ed classroom or in a special ed classroom or in a combination going back and forth. There's at least one that will match the needs of all of those classrooms. So let's get started.

#### I. The Marble Jar Behavior Management System

I'm going to start out with one I spoke a little about in our last podcast of the marble jar and. The marble jar's just always been kind of a favorite of mine. I'm not quite sure why. I like its visual aspects where you can see the marbles building up. But what is the marble to our system? The marble jar system is essentially a group contingency in which the teacher develops a jar



of marbles or a graph of behavior, or it's some sort of visual way. I like the marbles. You could also use Velcroed marbles on a picture of a gumball machine or something like that. But the whole idea behind it is that when the teacher observes appropriate behavior, she puts a marble in the jar, and when the jar hits a specific criteria, maybe it's that it's full, maybe it's that there's a line drawn on it for where they have to get for their first prize and then their second prize. When it reaches that criteria, the whole class gets a prize.


The prize can be something small. It could be five minutes of free time at the end of the day. It could be having a popcorn party while you're doing your silent reading or something like that. It doesn't have to be a big, "Let's go out on a field trip," kind of reinforcer. It just has to be something different that gets the students engaged, and hopefully something that all the students will want to do. Of course, this is a group contingency because the level of the marbles in the jar is dependent on the behavior of the whole class.

Now, one of the things that I like about it is you get a little bit of ability to individualize it, because you can pay more attention to the appropriate behaviors and some students than others. You can call out the negative behavior less of some students who regularly have a hard time. I also like the fact that the students, one student, usually you can prevent them from crashing the whole system.

## Advantages

Now, one of the things that I like about it is you get a little bit of ability to individualize it, because you can pay more attention to the appropriate behaviors and some students than others. You can call out the negative behavior less of some students who regularly have a hard time. I also like the fact that the students, one student, usually you can prevent them from crashing the whole system.

It has some advantages as well that I think are worth looking at. A, it's a very simple system, so you start out with specific behaviors and have a discussion with the classroom about what behaviors you're looking for. You're going to hear that as a common thread, because that makes a good classroom management system. You want to make sure that the students



are clear about the behavior that is going to be expected and reinforced, or the behavior that is not going to be reinforced. You want to make sure they understand both sides of that coin. I like its focus on the positive is another thing I like about it. I like that it's a catch you being good plan, and I'll talk about that in a little bit, so it's holding up that model of positive behavior rather than holding up the model of the negative behavior by tallying and or marking off that.

Now, I'll talk a little bit about research that shows it really doesn't make a difference, it just makes a difference to me sometimes in what I see promoted to the classroom, and it makes a difference for a lot of our programmatic requirements in terms of using positive systems instead of negative systems. You set the threshold for earnings, so you set it at what you think they can achieve, and then you can move to another one and another one by just moving up the bowl or emptying it out and starting it over, depending on how long large your jar is. I like the fact that it doesn't ... Again, you are in control of it. You are in control of how often those marbles get in there.

## Variation

There is a variation of it that I have used in the past that I also really enjoy, which is if you ever have a student who is a tattletale, so the student who has to come and tell you everything bad that everyone else does. Now, this is something that obviously I see in general ed classes. It's also something I see in some of our special ed classes, and some of my students with disabilities sometimes are the ones who, they're looking for that rule oriented behavior, so they're picking up on when people aren't following the rules.

One of the things that I've done with the marble jar is I've put that student in charge of letting me know when I can put a marble in the jar. Because I'm focused on putting a marble in the jar for seeing positive behaviors, they have to come and tell me positive things that they see the students do. When they see somebody following the rules, they need to come report that. It turns that need for attention that often is the function of the tattletale behavior into come and tell me something positive. Then we can also work on getting attention appropriately, but I'd much rather talk to you about the things that are going well.



## Disadvantage

I think those are all advantages to it that have made it something I really have liked. Again, I think it's very easy to implement. The one disadvantage that I can think of for it is that you might end up reinforcing students who really are not contributing to it. You might have students who aren't following the rules at all, but the other students are, and you're deciding to go ahead and reinforce, but that student is getting in on the reinforcement, because it's a group contingency. Because it's coming across to everyone in the class, he's getting reinforced even though he isn't following the rules. That could be one drawback to it.


## 2. The Good Behavior Game Classroom Management System

The second classroom management strategy that I want to focus on is called the good behavior game. Sometimes it's called the caught being good behavior game, and it is one that has been around since the early 1970s, late 1960s. There's a ton of research to support it, and I'll talk a little bit about that in a minute, but it is focused on teamwork within the classroom at monitoring behavior.

### How it Works

The way that it works is, like with all of the systems that I talk about, first the adult talks about the definitions of what would make a good environment for the students to learn. What are the positive qualities that we want to see in people in the classroom? Very similar to what should our rules be and things like that. Next, they are talking with them about what are the behaviors that would interfere with that? So they're defining the negative behaviors that get in the way of a positive classroom experience. Then they come up with examples of both, so they kind of walk through that.

There's a lot of discussion about the good behavior and the bad behavior, and then the adult explains. The way that the good behavior game is run is essentially it's a group contingency, where the students are divided up into teams, and the teacher is tracking inappropriate behaviors and tallying them.



Teams can win reinforcement prizes by keeping their number of infractions down below a certain level, or someone can also win a bigger prize for getting the fewest negative behaviors that were called attention to. Traditionally, it is a noticing the problem and identifying it and then reinforcing it at a lower level than it is currently occurring. It relies on the group working together to stay under the limit and to win out by staying low.


## Advantages

One of the things that's good about it is that the research shows that this is a game that can be played for a few times during the day for like 10 minutes during a regular activity. It isn't something that has to be ongoing through the day, and that's one of the things that makes it really good for general ed classrooms. It isn't something where the teacher has to track behavior all day long. The research shows that having two or three opportunities or innings that the students engage with this for 10 to 15 minutes is sufficient.

The research also shows something that we don't have a lot of research about in terms of behavior management. There are longterm effects of using this game in the younger grades in elementary school. They have tracked its influence on reducing antisocial behavior, drug abuse and other negative types of outcomes for individuals. The good behavior game, Embry refers to it as a behavioral vaccine. It's something we can do that seems to inoculate individuals to negative behaviors later in life, and that's a huge thing. That's a really important thing. We actually have a ton of research on it. It's a very research, evidence-based practice.

## Variations

We do have some research that looked at turning it around, and that's the Caught Being Good Game instead of the Good Behavior Game. The idea behind that is that they have to get high levels of positive behaviors, so high levels of following the rules as a team. You're identifying the positive behaviors that you want to see, and you're pointing those out on calling attention out to those. I like that better, personally. The research actually, the one research study that I've seen doesn't show a difference, and it actually did not show that teachers were more likely to notice the appropriate behavior than the negative behavior when they were focused on reinforcing or tallying the



positive behavior. It's not as if that's going to turn a classroom around in terms of everybody focusing on negative behavior. We probably need more research on that as well.


But one of the advantages is that every team can win if they keep it to a certain level. It appears that one of the elements of it that is successful is that the students have to work as a team, so there is a peer feedback, peer monitoring kind of peer pressure that is influencing their behavior. It's kind of like I'm on this team, and they're counting on me, so I can't misbehave, which I think is a really good thing. Sometimes I do think that backfires for some of our students with a more significant challenging behavior, because they really struggle with being called out, so when a team fails, you don't want it to be because one person was the one who caused it to fail. He's the one who had all the negative behavior. I think that may actually set some students up for bullying and other kinds of things. We don't have any research that really shows that at this point, however.

It's really important in this approach that the scoreboard be very visual, that the scoreboard focuses on the wins rather than the losses, but you're tracking it visually. In that way, it's kind of like Classroom Dojo that does that. There are lots of different variations that you can use with it. It isn't clear how big your teams need to be or how many there need to be. There's research that shows different ones, and there's different variations.

### Disadvantage

The disadvantage to me is if you're not using it with a positive spin, I do think that it runs the risk of having some students be singled out for their negative behavior. I do think that, and there is actually one research study that shows there are some students who do not do well with this system, because of problems at home or other types of disabilities. There are some students that it isn't necessarily effective for, but on a whole, on average it's extremely effective, and it seems to have very durable a result with very little time focus, which I think is really important in a general ed classroom. I think that there are definite advantages to looking at that one as well.

Now for all of these, if you go to [autismclassroomresources.com/episode29](http://autismclassroomresources.com/episode29), you will find a blog post on the brand new, really newly redesigned blog. You'll



Find the podcast where you can download the transcript, and you'll also find I'll put some links to outside resources about some of these things, so you can read a little bit more about them if you want to try them, because in a podcast I'm just not going to be able to give you a whole tutorial. But if you're looking for tutorials, we have a number of them in the [Special Educator Academy](#), and you can find out more about that at [specialeducatoracademy.com](http://specialeducatoracademy.com), and I'll put that link there as well.


### 3. Token Economies as Behavior Management Strategies

The third classroom management strategy that I want to talk about today are token economies or token stores. In this case, I'm going to talk about them as each student has individualized criteria. No, every student may not need individualized criteria, and that may be a lot to manage in a gen ed class. In a special ed class, it might be a lot easier and a lot more important, but you may also have most of the students are on one set of criteria, and a couple have more individualized criteria of how many tokens they have to earn.

Now, most of you have probably heard of token systems. Most of you have probably used them in some form. In this case, you could use, depending on the age of your student and their skills, it could be tokens that they have to count. It could be punch cards. It could also be money system, which I really love doing with older students.

#### Important Components

But again, it's going to have that same component. We're going to first decide on what our classroom rules are. We're going to teach them so that it's clear that the students understand what behavior is following the rules and what behavior is not following the rules. Having those clear expectations continues to be a really important component. Now, the way that I use a token economy across the day for behavior, because we do use them for lots of different things. We use token boards for direct instruction with some of our special ed students. We use them for specific situations. I'm talking about a system that goes across the full day as a classroom management system. The way that it works is, the way I've used it, at the



end of every activity or at specified break times during the day, I would have the classroom stop and whoever's with that group of children or adults go over whether or not the students followed the rules.

Now, obviously for younger students, for some students it's going to be much more, "Did you follow this rule? Did you follow this rule?" For others that may be, "I saw these behaviors. I saw those behaviors. Was that following the rules?" Then you determine whether or not they've earned a token or money or whatever it is that you're using for the token system. Then you can do it a couple of ways. When they earn enough tokens, they can go and turn them in for their reinforcer. If you're using a true token economy, where the students are using money and they are able to save them for a bigger reinforcer.


I have a picture of a token store that I'll put in the blog post that you can see. It's very simple, but you can have it where they have to earn this many tokens to get this level of prize, and this many tokens to get this level of prize. That's also a good way to make sure that everybody wins a little bit but doesn't get the big thing.

### Carry Over of Tokens

You can set it up so that they can carry it over, so they can carry their points or their tokens or their money over to tomorrow, or they could save it until tomorrow, so that when they finish, when they wipe out early in the day, you don't lose the whole rest of the day with that student. I think that's a really important thing for us to have in our back pocket, because for a lot of our students, once they figure out they aren't going to get to the reinforcer because they've screwed up so badly, then they just become divested of the system and the rest of the day is a wash for them.

I think that's a really key element as well, but you've got an identified set of reinforcers that cost a certain amount of tokens or money, and you can decide whether or not you want the money to carry over, whether you want them to save, whether all those kinds of things. There's tons of things you can do with them. Or you could have it at the end of the day, they turn in their tokens, and that's when they get the reinforcer. It all depends on your students. I've also had classes where we did at noon and at the end of the





day, or at lunchtime and the end of the day, because they really couldn't wait for the whole full day.

## Advantages

The advantages of this kind of system are that you can individualize, so if you've got students who the behavior is super simple and they have no problem following the rules, then those are the kids that have to earn more tokens. If you've got a kid who every time he looks at somebody, he breaks the rules, then you're going to want to let him go a little bit lower, because of course the key to a token system is that everybody has to win more than they lose.

One of the things I like is that it allows for that individualization. It also allows for changing that criterion as the students progress, so as they are regularly winning, you can up the ante for individual students when you're using this individual system.

## Disadvantage

The disadvantage is that you're not getting that peer pressure piece that does maybe maintain that behavior more effectively. The good news about that is that that may not be such a positive for some of your students. There's tons of things that you can do with that. I'd gone so far with some of the high school students, we set up a catalogs for each one of them. Each one of them had a catalog of things that they could buy, and they would have money in their bank, and they would have to write a check, so you can build a lot of money skills into token systems as students get more able to do that kind of thing as well.

But you can start with something simple, and I'll put a simple example up on the blog post for you to see with the token store for preschoolers. They were just already earning plastic coins, and if they had one, they could get this kind of reinforcer. If they had two, they could get this kind of reinforcer. I think they went up to four. They were just working on some basic simple counting. You can make it as complex or as easy as you want it to be.



## Summary of Behavior Management Systems

Those are three classroom management systems that will work in a variety of environments. I hope that they kind of gave you an idea of the elements that are important to have in any kind of classroom management system as well, and maybe gave you some examples of what I talked about in episode 28. I would love to hear more about your classroom management system, so please hop on over to our free Facebook group at [specialeducatorsconnection.com](https://www.facebook.com/specialeducatorsconnection) and share it there, as well as if you are looking for more ideas on how to manage and address behavior, we have an entire course on that in the Special Educator Academy.

We're actually in the middle of doing a study group, which we do periodically where we walk through it together and do different challenges, and it allows the participants to go through and actually take some data, analyze it, talk with the group, that kind of stuff. We've got a whole course on that. We've also got a lot of Quick Wins. We've got a whole Quick Win on token boards, token economies, all sorts of stuff. If you'd like more information about that, you can find it at [specialeducatoracademy.com](https://www.specialeducatoracademy.com). Thanks so much for joining me today. I really appreciate your time. I hope that this has been helpful. If you have ideas about what you'd like to be in the podcast, definitely message me as well. Hopefully I'll see you again in the next episode.