# Integrating Evidence-Based Practices & ABA Principles in the Early Childhood Classroom: Reinforcement and Reactive Strategies

AUTISM PROGRAMS
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO
CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT AND DISABILITY

# A Message from NMPED

"*Evidence-based interventions for individuals with ASD are not universal. Although these are evidenced based interventions, they should be individualized for that particular student. In the education setting, the IEP team will develop the plan for that student. The IEP team shall review an IEP at least on an annual basis.*"

# Want More Info?

Visit the CDD Autism Portal

https://cdd.health.unm.edu/autismportal/

Visit the Region 9 Education Cooperative

https://www.rec9nm.org/New-Mexico-Autism-Project-Through-PED

# Objectives

Participants will:

1. Become familiar with the concepts of positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement.
2. Understand the importance of pairing with students.
3. Become familiar with assessing a student's reinforcer preferences.
4. Become familiar with various reactive strategies for classroom use.

# What is Reinforcement?

Reinforcement is the act of adding to or removing something from the environment after a specific desired behavior occurs, and as a result, will increase the likelihood that the specific desired behavior will continue to occur more often in the future.

# Positive Reinforcement

The presentation of a desirable stimulus immediately following a specific behavior, thus increasing the probability that the behavior will occur again.

Example: Joanna is asked to put her backpack in her cubby upon entering the classroom and is given a goldfish cracker. The next time Joanna enters the classroom, she puts her backpack in her cubby without being asked.

# Negative Reinforcement

The removal of an aversive stimulus immediately following a specific behavior, thus increasing the probability that the behavior will happen again.

Example: At snack time, Joanna would swipe the milk carton off the table. Joanna is learning to say "no" when offered milk at snack time. When she says "no" the teacher removes the milk carton.

# Pairing

Pairing is the process of building and maintaining rapport with a student.
- Should be intentionally planned.
- Try to limit task demands at first, and provide more reinforcement.

Tips for pairing:
- Follow the student's motivation
- Schedule time for pairing
- Control the amount and/or duration of access to special items

# How to Determine Potential Reinforcers

Preference assessments can be used to great effect to help determine potential reinforcers. They are various procedures used to identify items, activities, and events that a student prefers more among others.

Preference assessments can be direct or indirect.

# Benefits of Preference Assessments

Once a preference assessment has been conducted, a hierarchy of preferred items, activities, and events can typically be determined.

This hierarchy can then be utilized as an array of choices that can be presented to a student. The student can then choose something in the array that they can work for while at school.

Note: Preference assessments do not determine reinforcers on their own. Only after an increase in a desired behavior (for example: task completion) has been observed after a student has earned a preferred item can it be identified as a reinforcer.

# Types of Preference Assessments

Direct Methods:
- Single Stimulus
- Paired Stimulus
- Multiple Stimulus
- Free Operant

Indirect Methods:
- Interviewing primary caregivers
- Potential Reinforcer Preference Profile Survey

# Potential Reinforcers in the Learning Environment

| Social Reinforcers | Classroom-based Reinforcers | Activity Reinforcers | Tangible Reinforcers | Edible Reinforcers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| verbal praise | choice time | outside play time | stickers | animal crackers |
| high fives | computer time | art or sensory activities | comics/magazines | small candies |
| smiles/ laughter | special job, such as feed class pet | tv or video game | toys | fruits |
| hand shake | peer play time | stereotypy | pillows/blankets | ice pops |
| thumbs up | one-on-one time with adult/teacher | listen to story on CD | music on headphones | chips |
| pat on the back | alone time | twirl on spinning chair | items related to restricted interests | rice cakes |

# Reinforcer Effectiveness

It is important to consider the following variables that affect the value of a specific reinforcer at a specific time:

1. Deprivation
2. Satiation
3. Immediacy
4. Size/amount

# 1. Deprivation

Having limited or no access to something that is preferred or highly desirable.

Example: Mario likes animal videos but is not given access to a smart device very often. The lack of access to a smart device makes animal videos more desirable to Mario, and thus more effective at reinforcing the desired behavior.

# 2. Satiation

The quality of being given too much of something too frequently, resulting in being less preferred.

Example: Sydney likes animal videos and watches them whenever she wants on her smart phone. Since she has unlimited access, this is less likely to reinforce a specific desired behavior for her.

# 3. Immediacy

The amount of time between a behavior and reinforcement should be as short as possible. The longer it takes to provide reinforcement, the higher the likelihood that the reinforcer will not be effective for a specific desired behavior.

Example: Teacher says "point to blue." The student points to the blue card. The teacher then quickly gives the student a token and provides behavior specific positive praise.

# 4. Size/Amount

The amount or frequency of reinforcement.

Example: Mary finishes cleaning up blocks in the self-selection area of the classroom, and earns 10 goldfish crackers as a brief snack break.
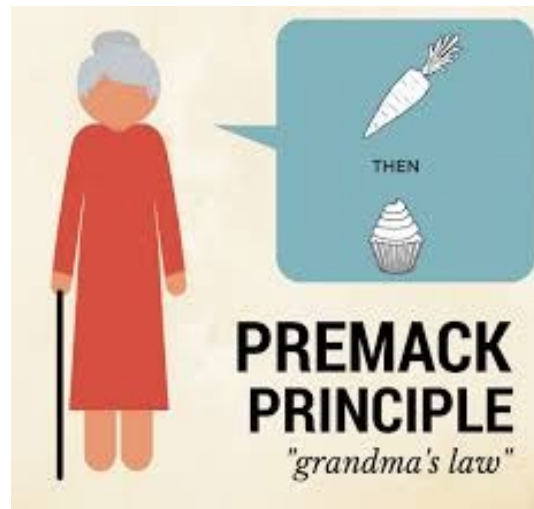
# Reactive Strategies

Lets now take a look at various strategies in which reinforcers would be utilized:

1. Premack Principle
2. Differential Reinforcement
3. Token Economy
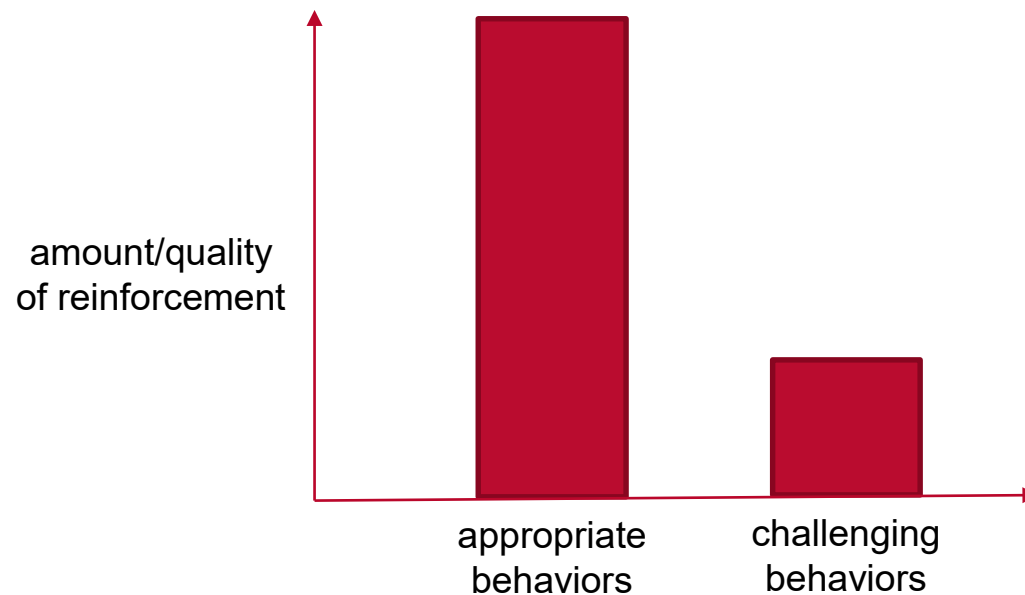4. Behavior Specific Positive Praise

# 1. Premack Principle

The act of using a reinforcer to help motivate the completion of a task demand of some kind.

# 2. Differential Reinforcement

We want to provide more reinforcement to the behaviors we want to promote, and less/none to behaviors we don't want to promote.

amount/quality
of reinforcement

appropriate
behaviors

challenging
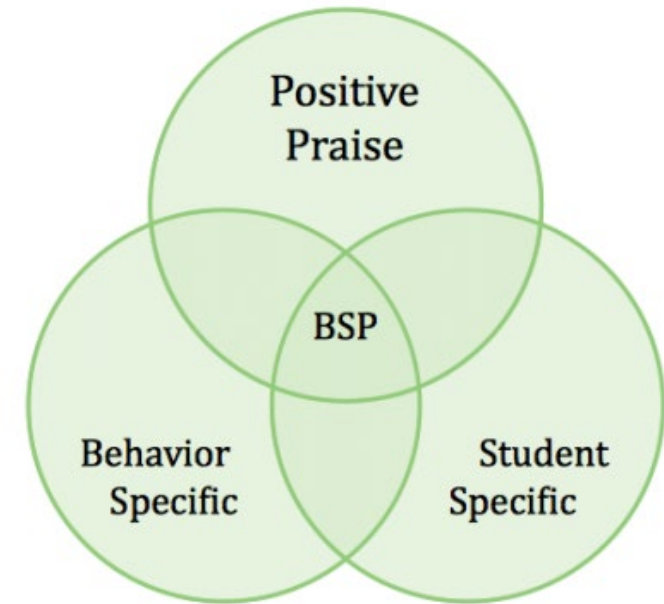behaviors

# 3. Token Economy

1. <u>Identify</u>:
   - Desired behavior(s)
   - Number of tokens needed to earn reinforcement
   - Reinforcer to be earned

2. Give tokens for desired behavior(s).
3. Exchange tokens for chosen reinforcer.

# 4. Behavior Specific Positive Praise

4:1 Rule
- Provide positive attention or praise at least four times more frequently than you reprimand.
- Give students attention as often as possible when they engage in desired behaviors.

# Resources

- UNM CDD Online Training Resources
  - https://cdd.health.unm.edu/autismportal/online-training/
- Tools for Challenging Behavior
  - https://cdd.health.unm.edu/autismportal/2021/03/04/tools-for-challenging-behavior/
- Evidence-Based Practices in Classrooms
  - https://cdd.health.unm.edu/autismportal/2021/04/14/evidenced-based-practices-in-classrooms/
- PBIS World
  - https://www.pbisworld.com/tier-1/teach-social-skills/
- Autism Classroom
  - www.autismclassroomresources.com

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