

## INTERVENTION PROTOCOL INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR CONTRACT

### Rationale

The Learning Cultures® model is based on the logic that social norms underpin most forms of higher mental functioning. Within the Learning Cultures program, students are Keepers of the Culture®. They learn to appreciate their rights as students and to live uphold their responsibilities members of the classroom community. The social activities of the Formats specify rules or social norms that play an important role in every student's potential to self-regulate behavior and emotions, and thus to achieve academic success and personal well-being.

When a student's challenging or maladaptive behavior escalates to the extent that learning is compromised for the student and his or her peers, and when the student is not responsive to the classroom teacher, an Intervention to create an Individual Behavior Contract is sometimes warranted. For example, an Intervention might be justified when, in spite of repeated efforts by the classroom teacher, a student:

- Habitually fails to complete academic tasks
- Is persistently disrespectful or verbally rude
- Persists in exhibiting uncooperative or noncompliant behaviors
- Is disruptive to the point of interfering with others' learning
- Is habitually disobedient or oppositional toward teacher's authority or classroom rules
- Exhibits behaviors that are aggressive or potentially harmful or injurious

The Intervention involves a meeting between the student, the principal, his or her teacher(s), guidance counselor(s), and sometimes parents. It is conducted in an empathetic and compassionate manner to assist the student in better understanding his/her behavior from a personal standpoint, from the perspective of others, and in relation to the social norms of the classroom and school. The primary objective of the Intervention is to proactively address recurring non-compliant/uncooperative, disorderly or disruptive behaviors so that the student can begin to benefit from Tier I instructional opportunities.

**Participants** are typically the Principal, who, as arbiter of discipline in the school, acts as facilitator. In schools where the Keepers of the Culture® program has been established, peers can also facilitate the session. Assistant principal(s) and guidance counselor(s) are often invited to attend. The student's teachers sometimes participate in the Intervention, as well as parents, if there is a need.

Principals who normally rely on guidance counselors to conduct behavioral interventions should understand that the Learning Cultures Intervention protocol is premised on a social philosophy of mind as opposed to the specialized science of counseling therapy. Social norms and classroom- and school-wide rules are viewed as potentially powerful mechanisms to help students self-regulate attention and behavior to better support their own learning and social interdependence with others.

### **Facilitator's Role**

- Remain objective
- Refrain from blaming or accusing student
- Facilitate dialog by inviting input from student(s)
- Contain dialog to ensure a protected space for the student (i.e., adult participants are censured for emotional or accusatory comments)

### **Procedure**

Prior to the meeting, provide an opportunity for the child to reflect on the behavior challenge. The child will probably have already had a Behavior Learning Conference with his or her teacher, in which they collaboratively completed a Conference Record. Reference to the record might provide a suitable opening to the conversation.

#### **1. *Create a sense of rapport to let the student feel secure and comfortable in the situation.***

Explain the reason for the meeting is to help the student remove whatever barriers are interfering with learning and to help make school a more enjoyable experience. Use a base of rapport to open the dialog about the issue at hand.

**Example:** "Your teacher and I have noticed you've been having some trouble lately getting along with some of the kids in your class, and we are here to help you. We want to hear how you think you've been getting along, and see if we can find ways to help you get along better."

#### **2. *Establish a joint understanding of maladaptive/problematic behavior and why it is problematic in the context of the classroom or school norms.***

Make sure both the child and you have an opportunity to offer observations about the student's behaviors. Be explicit in describing the behaviors and explaining why or how they violate rules and expectations. Make sure your conversation is balanced and that you address both:

**a)** behaviors that seem to be causing difficulty in getting along with others or getting in the way of learning;

**b)** how the behaviors violate the Social Contract and/or rules of the Formats  
Involve the child in a process of cooperative reasoning to help reconcile their own behavior to the social norms of the classroom.

- Ask the child to help you create a “What” list of behaviors that get in the way of learning and which rule each behavior breaks. Invite him or her to write the list.

**3.** *Give the student a chance to identify the reason for problematic behavior.*

Begin by inviting the student to offer their insights, and make sure you have a chance to contribute what you believe to be accurate causes of the behavior. You may need to remind the student that they may never be able to control the things that cause the behavior, but they can control the behavior itself. Don't spend too much time on discussing root causes in order to save time for commitments to change.

**Example:** “I wonder what causes you to feel like that?”

- Invite the child to help you create a “Why” list of causes of the behavior.

**4.** *Make a commitment.*

Start by asking, *Is this something you want to change or fix?* If it is, you need to make a commitment or a promise to change your behavior.

- Invite the child to make a promise statement to change behavior.

**5.** *Make an action plan.*

Help child identify a course of action to take when she or he experiences a trigger to the problematic behavior and it begins to escalate.

Begin a conversation about ways to tackle the problematic behaviors identified in Step 4. Start by inviting the student to offer ideas about what he or she could do in future situations so that the problem doesn't escalate or occur at all. Offer your contributions to the conversation with strategies to help the student self-regulate (e.g., remove self from situation; find a quiet spot; count to three before I speak; talk to myself; shift attention by focusing on an object or new task).

- Invite the child to help you make a *Things I can Do* list.

**6. Develop a list of progressive responses or conditions if the promise is broken.**

Involve the student in a discussion of what it means to make a promise and the conditions for breaking the promise. The outcome of this segment of the conversation is a set of conditions that will be applied when the student violates the terms of the action plan.

- Invite the child to make a list of “If I break my promise” conditions and let him or her select the order of conditions. Make sure they understand that if they break their promise, they are obligated to terms of the plan.

**7. Make a contract (See Learning Cultures Behavior Contract template)**

Using the headings:

- Behaviors that get in the way of learning;
- Why the behaviors violate the Social Contract or Format rules
- The commitment: “I promise...”  
    Things I can do to follow through with my promise to change my behavior
- Conditions or consequences I agree to accept if I break my promise
- Signature line.

**8. Have student sign the contract.**

The student has made a promise. And it is the responsibility of the adults in the room to make sure that the promise is kept and the appropriate conditions are enforced if or when it is not. Some teachers may initially need assistance from the administrative or guidance staff to enforce conditions/consequences of the contract until the challenging behavior is brought to a level that is manageable for the teacher. So make sure someone is always on call to provide Intervention support to classroom teachers in the building as needed.

Keep a copy of the contract for your file, give a copy to the teacher to file, give a copy to the student, and provide a copy to the parent.