

# The Good Behavior Game

## *Special points of interest:*

- The Good Behavior Game in elementary school has lowered early adolescent smoking.
- The Game is just as effective as positive reinforcement.
- The Game has a positive affect on inner-city youth.
- The Game does not take away instructional time.
- The little research that has been done with children who have disabilities is promising.



## Emma

Emma is an intelligent, out-going 7th grader who looks forward to attending her classes. Lately, Emma has been unwilling to attend her classes. She is frustrated with all of the disruptions that a few of her classmates are causing. She is now arguing with her mother on a daily basis about attending school.

“Mom, I don’t understand why I have to go. We don’t learn anything anymore. The teacher spends most of her time yelling at Bobby and his friends.”

“Bobby and his friends are always yelling out or talking. I can never hear what is going on. It is too hard to concentrate with all of the distractions.”

Emma tries to listen when there are lectures but now spends most of her time daydreaming and writing notes to her friends. She knows that the lecture will not last long because it will soon be disrupted by one of her peers. Emma thinks that if no one else cares about what the teacher is saying then why should she?



## What:

No doubt you have had some students who were always trying to distract you and the other students. This can cause many problems, especially if other students “follow the leader” and join in to help cause more distractions. The students who are not causing disruptions can get frustrated and not be engaged in school anymore. They may be less motivated to engage in classroom activities as a result of the distractions.

The Good Behavior Game (GBG) can reduce classroom disruption without distracting the teacher from instructional time (Tingstrom, Sterlin-Turner, Wilczynski, 2006). The GBG can be implemented in a classroom and is a type of interdependent group strategy. An interdependent group strategy is one where the

entire group is working toward the same goal but everyone in the group has to show individual effort (Tingstrom et al., 2006).



The Good Behavior Game is aimed at students' positive behavior instead of punishing negative behavior (Van Lier, Van Der Sar, & Crijen, 2004). The goal of the game is to decrease disruptive behaviors such as talking, out of seat behavior, aggression, and name-calling (Tingstrom et al., 2006). The students are divided into teams for the game and each team includes disruptive and non-disruptive students (Van Lier et al., 2004). The teams then earn a mark on the score board for disruptive behaviors that were discussed beforehand and the team with the fewest marks wins the game when time is up (Tingstrom et al., 2006).

The Good Behavior Game is an easy intervention to implement and can benefit every student in the classroom. Cutting down on classroom disruption benefits everyone and can help to create a positive and comfortable learning environment.

## So What:

The Good Behavior Game is generally accepted among teachers (Tingstrom, 1994). Teachers accepted the game at all grade levels. The game was also found to be as accepted as using positive reinforcement by teachers who utilize positive reinforcement (Tingstrom, 1994). The Good Behavior Game has been found to be effective in other countries and cultures as well (Tingstrom, 1994).

The GBG emphasizes group cohesiveness and cooperation. The game also increases social skills within group members. Peers work to increase good behavior and decrease bad behavior. The peers ignore bad behavior during the game instead of encouraging disruptive behavior (Tingstrom et al., 2006). Peer attention in any form, such as laughing or turning around and simply paying attention to the student causing the disruption could be reinforcing for the disruptive student (Embry, 2002). The Good Behavior Game focuses on rewarding good behavior.

Another advantage is that kids get to pick out the rules and behaviors with the teacher. They are just as important to the process as the teacher is (Tingstrom et al., 2006). Students get to decide what is important to them and then agree on what exactly that behavior means (Embry, 2002). Including students in this capacity will help them to accept the game and not try to undermine its goals (Embry, 2002).

The studies that have been included so far have not dealt with populations such as students with disabilities or students that attend inner city schools. These types of populations would benefit greatly from an intervention such as the GBG. There are few studies out there that identify these types of students and their specific needs.

Lannie and McCurdy (2007) focused on the use of the Good Behavior Game with inner city students. The Good Behavior Game was found to be effective with the inner city youths. The results of the study showed on-task behavior rose after utilizing the game except for one session. Disruptive behavior decreased during the experimental session (Lannie & McCurdy, 2007). The Good Behavior Game is also good for implementation in urban schools with high teacher turnover, newly hired teachers, and have poor management approaches (Lannie & McCurdy, 2007).



Another interesting long term outcome associated with the Good Behavior Game is that boys who participated in the Good Behavior Game in grade school were not as likely to start smoking in early adolescence (Embry, 2002). Boys who were not part of the Good Behavior Game intervention in the first and second grades were at more of a risk to start smoking in early adolescence. (Embry, 2002). Another important long term impact was boys who were identified as more aggressive in the first and second grades showed a decrease in aggression in the sixth grade (Blueprints for Violence Prevention, 1999). As you can see not only does the Good Behavior Game improve classrooms as soon as it is implemented but it also has positive long term effects for the students who participate in it.

While there has not been a lot of research done with children who have disabilities, the few studies that utilized the Good Behavior Game with children who have disabilities have been promising. The Good Behavior Game can be adapted for children who have IEP's, as well. The Good Behavior Game has been adapted for children with disabilities in a few studies.

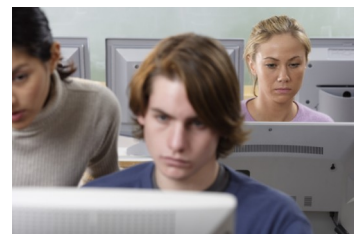
The Good Behavior Game was tested with children who are diagnosed with ADHD and ODD. Van Lier et al. (2004) studied the effect the Good Behavior Game had on children with these diagnosis. This study broke students up by the severity of their conditions. The three conditions were high, intermediate, and low. Van Lier et al. (2004) found that students in the intermediate level got the most out of the Good Behavior Game. Another major finding that Van Lier et al. (2004) discovered was that students who were diagnosed with these disorders were not likely to misbehave more when the

## Now What:

The Game can be implemented into any classroom. Here are some steps to follow when implementing the Game:

1. The first step is to collect the materials needed, such as a timer, rewards, and data forms (The Good Behavior Game Manual, n.d.) These can be found online. (See Bibliography)
2. The Teacher then asks the students what they think would make a great classroom. The teacher then asks about what the students think is poor behavior for the classroom. These poor behaviors are called "fouls" (Embry, 2002).
3. The teacher and the students make and define rules and behavior for the game.
4. The classroom is then split into teams by the instructor (Embry, 2002). The teacher should be careful to include disruptive and non-disruptive students on each team (The Good Behavior Game Manual, n.d.). The instructor can go back and change team members if there are too many disruptive or non-disruptive students on a team (The Good Behavior Game Manual, n.d.).
5. Next, take a little data to establish baseline scores (The Good Behavior Game Manual, n.d.).
6. The Game is played in intervals, such as in a core classroom (Embry, 2002). Review the rules before each time the Good Behavior Game is played (The Good Behavior Game Manual, n.d.).
7. Place a check by the team name if someone breaks the rules. The team with the fewest checks wins the game (The Good Behavior Game Manual, n.d.). The students know the score at all times because it should always be

*After implementation of the Good Behavior Game, a teacher involved in the Lannie and McCurdy study (2007) commented "It was actually quiet in here for a couple of minutes" (p. 93).*



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Prominently displayed (Embry, 2002).

The best reinforcers are those found in the school setting. The most common ones found in the literature are more free time and activity time. Also, there are some unusual reinforcers that work just as well. Some of these are visits from the principal, ending lectures early, parties, and publicly announcing winners to the entire school (Tingstrom et al., 2006). The Good Behavior Game is an intervention that can have many different kinds of reinforcers for the student.

Here are some tips from the Special Connections Website (1999) to help implement the Good Behavior Game into your classroom:

- The teacher is in charge. The teacher implements the game and picks out the target behaviors to be worked on.
- Teachers should not debate the scoring with students.
- Make sure reinforcers are something the students will work for.
- In the beginning all students should be able to attain the goals.
- As the game is played, goals should be more difficult to attain.

## Bibliography

Blueprints for violence prevention. (1999). Retrieved March 11, 2008, from [www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/promising/programs/BPP06.html](http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/promising/programs/BPP06.html)

This site gives a great overview of the Good Behavior Game. It supplies a nice summary for quick overview of the concept of the game.

Embry, D.D. (2002). The good behavior game: A best practice candidate as a universal behavioral vaccine. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 5 (4), 273-297.

This author wants to implement the Good Behavior Game as a behavioral vaccine in schools to prevent school disruptions, tobacco use, and aggression in adolescence. The article discusses research and literature that has shown that using the Good Behavior Game in early elementary school has lowered the incidents of kids using tobacco and has also shown to lower aggression in the teenage years.

Lannie, A., McCurdy, B.L. (2007). Preventing disruptive behavior in the urban classroom: Effects of the good behavior game on student and teacher behavior. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 30 (1), 85-98.

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The main point of this article was to see if the good behavior game could be effective in urban classroom. The author wanted to see if it was as effective in this setting as it had been in all of the other settings it had been implemented in. The game was effective with young, inner city youths. Classroom disruptions decreased and on task behavior increased.

Special connections. (1999). Retrieved March 11, 2008, from [www.specialconnections.ku.edu/cgi-bin/Cgiwrap/speconn/main.php?cat=behavior&section=main&subsection=classroom/peer](http://www.specialconnections.ku.edu/cgi-bin/Cgiwrap/speconn/main.php?cat=behavior&section=main&subsection=classroom/peer)

This website comes from the University of Kansas where the Good Behavior Game was invented. This site lists helpful tips to get started. Also, the site gives the basics for the game.

The good behavior game manual. (n.d.). Retrieved March 11, 2008, from <http://www.excelgov.org/Admin/FormManager/filesuploading/GBGManual.pdf>

This is the manual for the Good Behavior Game. This will help teachers to set up and implement the game. It is a good source for all of the details of the game.

Tingstrom, D.H. (1994). The good behavior game: An investigation of teachers' acceptance. *Psychology in the Schools, 31* (1), 57-65.

In this article teachers were asked to rate case descriptions on how severe the problems were and the effectiveness of the interventions used. The results of this showed that teachers rated the Good Behavior Game was just as effective as positive reinforcement as behavioral interventions.

Tingstrom, D. H., Sterling-Tuner, H. E., Wilczynski, S. M. (2006), The Good Behavior Game: 1969-2002. *Behavior Modification, 30* (2), 225-253.

The authors review literature on the Good Behavior Game. There is a lot of information about what the game is, how to set it up, how to modify it, and some unique reinforcers to use with the students.

Van Lier, A. C., Van Der Sar, R. M., Muthen, B. O., Crijen, A. M. (2004). Preventing disruptive Behavior in elementary schoolchildren: Impact of a universal classroom-based intervention. *Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology*, 72 (3), 467-478.

The Good Behavior Game was used to identify the impact of a classroom based intervention on children with high, intermediate, and low problem behaviors. Children with ADHD, ODD, and conduct problems were included in the study. The children with the highest level of problems such as conduct disorder showed Improvement after the Good Behavior Game was implemented. Children at the intermediate level also showed improvements in behavior after the intervention.