

## OBSERVATIONAL CHECKLISTS FOR PROSOCIAL BEHAVIORS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLCHILDREN

### SUGGESTIONS FOR DESIGNS

The following two checklists may be used to compare the behavior of one or more classes of students participating in a prevention strategy/program with the behavior of one or more classes not participating in the program. The classrooms should be similar in other characteristics, such as:

- Students' demographics
- Students' ability levels
- Teacher experience level and teaching quality
- Similar school leadership/formats/policies

A simple design involves sampling one grade level at two or more schools. The grade level and student setting should be the same for each pair of contrasted classrooms. (For example, if the program class is observed as they work on task in groups of four, then the comparison class should be observed in this setting as well.)

Observers can choose from four types of student settings to observe:

1. four-person student group tasks
2. two-person student interaction
3. free play (including playground)
4. large class discussions

The goal is to observe prosocial classroom behavior, not to observe a classroom for the whole day. The observer should ignore or avoid the parts of the class day devoted entirely to individual student work (e.g., seatwork).

### RECORDING

Although one observer is sufficient, two are ideal to reduce the subjective bias of what is observed. To increase the reliability of the measure, the observers should meet before the first session to discuss the items on the checklist they will be using to record behaviors. *Observers should discuss definitions of each behavior, agreeing on what constitutes prosocial and negative behavior, and write it on the checklist itself.* The checklists provided here include behaviors to observe; your observers may find it necessary to redefine behaviors listed to suit their own needs. Observers should also practice scoring and compare notes. After they have agreed on 90 percent (or more) of the items, observers might decide to split up the two checklists. The process works best if one observer focuses on the prosocial behavior and the other observer focuses on negative behavior.

To begin the observation process, two observers might enter a classroom and be introduced by the teacher as adults interested in what happens in school. After a ten-minute period of adjustment, during which the students get used to the presence of the observers, the observers may begin a time trial of observation. Then both might observe one four-person group for 10 minutes and record all instances of the targeted events. At the end of this period, they may decide either that the trial was adequate and use the data collected, or that the trial was inadequate (perhaps the recording process broke down for some reason) and begin a new trial. Observers may sample several groups in a classroom, but observers could lose efficiency if they continue recording beyond one hour. The time trials and data collection should be done on a typical school day, during which usual activities/tasks for both the teachers and students take place.

*Note to reader: Please keep in mind that this checklist is in draft form. The checklist categories are very broad. You will most likely need to modify them to make them more specific to the needs of your evaluation process.*

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## SCORING

Observers should record each occurrence of a prosocial or negative event, using a check mark or hash mark. At the end of the observation period, observers should total the number of marks for prosocial behaviors and total the number of marks for negative behaviors. The totals can be made into a ratio, with the number of prosocial behaviors as the numerator and the number of negative behaviors as the denominator, for example.

Class averages can be compared in different ways. The averages of a class participating in a life skills program and the averages of a class not participating in a program can be compared. Or, the averages of one class before the program is implemented can be compared to the averages of that same class after the life skills program has been implemented (e.g., pretest in October compared to posttest in May or June). This tool can be used as an outcome measure of whether the program produces more prosocial behavior, and as an ongoing aid for teachers to target skills that need more reinforcement.



### SPONTANEOUS PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR (NOT TEACHER-DIRECTED)

The behaviors listed in parentheses are only examples. Please write your own definition, or specific examples observed, on the lines provided.

Children in this class demonstrated to their peers:	Times Seen (use hash marks)	Sums (Number)
1. helpfulness (gives help when asked, checks for understanding,...) _____	_____	_____
2. cooperation, getting along with others (listens and works with group,...) _____	_____	_____
3. concern for another child's needs/feelings (asks if someone wants a turn,...) _____	_____	_____
4. leadership (asks group to plan how to solve problems, keeps group focused,...) _____	_____	_____
5. verbal support/encouragements (offers praise to a peer,...) _____	_____	_____
6. listening to another's views (lets others speak, summarizes others' thoughts,...) _____	_____	_____
7. joint problem solving (encourages brainstorming, follows SOLVED principles...) _____	_____	_____
8. compromise/conflict resolution (compares views if there is a disagreement, states how to work out problems,...) _____	_____	_____
9. making decisions (plans how to solve problem, reviews pros and cons,...) _____	_____	_____
10. constructive group work/on-task behavior (attends to group and task, screens out distractions, makes good use of time,...) _____	_____	_____

TOTAL PROSOCIAL \_\_\_\_\_

### NEGATIVE SOCIAL BEHAVIORS

The behaviors listed in parentheses are only examples. Write your own definition, or specific examples observed, on the lines provided.

Children in this class demonstrated to their peers:

Times Seen  
(use hash marks)

Sums  
(Number)

1. selfishness/avoidance of compromise (refuses to share classroom tools,...)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. withdrawal/shyness/anxiousness (cries, does not respond to questions,...)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. unresponsiveness/physical coldness (ignores others,...)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. bossiness/bullying (tells others what to do, frightens others,...)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. rudeness/verbal coldness (talks back to teacher,...)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. verbal put-downs, belittling (calls others names, ridicules,...)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. fighting/arguing (initiates physical/verbal fights,...)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. creation of conflict/impeding any problem resolution

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. avoidance of work, responsibility, decisions

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. carelessness, distractedness (leaves supplies out, doesn't listen to directions)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL NEGATIVE \_\_\_\_\_

RATIO (PRO/NEG.) \_\_\_\_\_

**PROSOCIAL BEHAVIORS (Collapsed Version)**

*Write your own definition, or specific examples observed, on the lines provided.*

**How many times did you see this behavior?**

**Times Seen**  
(use hash marks)

**Sums**  
(Number)

1. Lending support and helping others

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Dealing with conflict positively

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Listening to others' views

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Cooperating with others

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Participating and contributing to the group

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL PROSOCIAL**

\_\_\_\_\_

Your estimate of the proportion of the class exhibiting all five positive behaviors (circle one):

a. 1/4

b. 1/3

c. 1/2

d. 2/3

e. 3/4

f. All

**NEGATIVE SOCIAL BEHAVIORS (Collapsed Version)**

*Write your own definition, or specific examples observed, on the lines provided.*

**How many times did you see this behavior?**

**Times Seen**  
(use hash marks)

**Sums**  
(Number)

1. Refusing to help others

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Dealing with conflict negatively

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Ignoring others' views

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Unwilling to cooperate with others

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Withdrawing from group participation

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL NEGATIVE**

\_\_\_\_\_

Your estimate of the proportion of the class exhibiting all five negative behaviors (circle one):

a. 1/4

b. 1/3

c. 1/2

d. 2/3

e. 3/4

f. All