BEHAVIOR CHARTS: A TOOL TO ENFORCE WHITE EXPECTATIONS AND RE-PRODUCE SYSTEMIC RACISM

Resource Binder by Madeline McVay
1st Grade

Where can I show growth? When the guardian receives this, what messages are sent? What is the impact?

Are these skills dependent on growing up in a white household with deep values in individualism and independence?

What does this behavior add to the classroom learning? Does this signal engagement?

Re-Write: Student J is ready to dive-in to today's activities.

How can he maintain excitement while keeping a clean classroom for everyone?

Student Support Tool-Kit
Cycle of Liberation

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Overwhelmingly Black boys are disadvantaged in our school systems, they receive more severe punishments than their White boy counterparts enacting the same behavior (Michael, Moore, Penick-Parks, & Smith, 2018). During my time student teaching, I began to see this process and even participated in it. After a course on unlearning and centering racism in my MAT program, I began to uncover the mechanisms that started and perpetuated the disadvantages that Black boys face in our school systems. I discovered that my white expectations were the driving force of how I viewed and valued behavior (Irving, 2018). In this process, I interrogated my own white expectations and how they were influencing my perspective and actions when interacting and educating Black boys. The way I forced my white expectations onto Black boys was through a myriad of ways, but I focused on the use of a behavior chart system. This is outlined in my project and you can see how my white expectations skewed my perspective of a Black boys’ behavior. Because of this, this Black boy did not receive the education he needed; for his strengths to be recognized and celebrated in the classroom. Instead, he was taught that no matter how well academically he is doing, if the behavior does not match my white expectations, he has failed. This is just one of the injustices that Black boys are facing, but it has everlasting and harmful repercussions.

After I began to interrogate my white expectations and the use of behavior charts, I had to think about what was next. What I found was how we need to focus on rewriting the narrative of Black boys (Williamson, 2018). It is crucial that Black boys start to feel valued in the classroom and have their strengths supported. Therefore, my next steps were to create a tool that will help me to rethink behavior that I find troubling and to rewrite it as a strength. This tool is also a way to unearth how my white expectations are influencing my perspective and value system. As I start this year teaching 2nd grade, I will use this tool when I begin to find a student ‘troublesome’ in my class and find that I need a behavior system. Although this tool can support many students, it is crucial that I use this when working with Black boys so that I can support them and find their strengths and support their needs.

My project’s cover is The Cycle of Socialization (Harro, 2000), which is representative of the way behavior charts function in education and society at large. I highlight how behavior charts are ways to socialize students into the culture of power at varying points of the cycle. I then go on to interrogate the behavior chart I used to manage a Black boy in my classroom. Questioning the behavior chart is a way for me to isolate certain aspects while also providing a framework for what I should be thinking about when I am considering behavior management. Following this questioning I have a table of my white expectations in the form of the behavior chart. In these pages, I begin to interrogate my personal expectations and what role they play in the cycle of socialization and systemic racism.

In the back of the binder I provide a Student Support Tool-Kit, which is representative of the action step I will take to be an anti-racist teacher. On the cover it has The Cycle of Liberation (Harro, 2000), which represents how this tool kit will help break the cycle of socialization and liberate me from my white expectations as well as liberating my students of color to support their strengths and needs. My hope is that readers will not see this project as simply re-thinking behavior management, but a way to uncover the mechanisms that puts Black boys at a disadvantage in our education system.

References


