

**Behavior Management Plan Analysis  
Schroon Lake Central School  
February 2007  
Mr. Jones**

Overview

Given my disappointment in a district-wide behavior management system, I resolved in February 2006 to establish my own. I began with a survey of law to establish the outer limits of my authority to impose consequences and the due process required. I informed the Superintendent of my system and applied it with his assent. From February through April of last year, I worked out the bugs in a point system for behavior (the current version of which appears at the end of this report). I gathered input from students during this time and in April 2006 devised a final version which remains largely unchanged today.

To summarize the system briefly: when students do not change an undesired behavior from prompts and reprimands, they are awarded "demerit" points. When students accumulate certain numbers of demerits, they are assigned consequences *by me* ranging from detention to suspension. I apply the consequences within 3-4 days. I manage all of the consequences myself and do not submit referrals to the office. The Administration is informed of the action I am taking with copies of correspondence to parents. Demerit points expire after 25 days and may also be compensated for by actions that earn merit points. Merit points are earned from apologizing, volunteer service work, serving detention, and the like. To keep track of the points, I keep a digital recorder in my pocket during class when I need it. I record arguments and conversations and reprimands as well. I also wrote a simple computer program to manage the system automatically (like adding up points and "expiring" them).

The system is actually rarely invoked. 57% of students have never received demerits during the period from September 2006 through January 2007 and, of the 36 students who received demerit points, 33 of them never accumulated enough for any consequences (although receiving demerit points is a consequence in itself for most students). From February through June 2006, I assigned 3 detentions. From September 2006 through January 2007, I assigned 5 detentions (stayed 3 days) and only one suspension. I have never had a student skip detention (although in all but one instance I went and collected them from their last period class).

## **Student Survey**

### ***Statistics***

Students are subject to the system, had input into its design, and are an important part of the equation. If they buy into it as fair, then there is a better likelihood they will follow its precepts. I conducted an anonymous survey before February vacation of 57 of my 82 students in grades 7-9 (there were many absences during this time and the schedule rotation was such that I did not see one class on the days I surveyed). The survey asked them to evaluate the behavior management system and the degree to which I apply it fairly and consistently.

*"To what degree do you feel Mr. Jones' behavior management system works to decrease misbehaviors?"*

28% "Highest Degree"  
53% "Better than Most"  
16% "Fair"  
3% "No better than any other system"  
0% "Does not work at all"

*"To what degree do you feel Mr. Jones applies his system fairly and consistently?"*

40% "Highest Degree"  
30% "Better than Most"  
26% "Fair"  
3% "No better than any other system"  
0% "Does not work at all"

### ***Reflection***

The 81% that feel that the system does work to reduce misbehavior go along with my gut feeling and data I will present later. I am pleased to see that no one checked the "Does not work at all" option that was available under each question. That I only scored 70% on the degree to which I apply it on a better than average basis also connects with my notion that it is something I will always work on, but it looks like I "passed" and that the majority of students feel I apply the system well.

Students had the opportunity to leave comments, but only 17 did. The comments were all positive.

*"I like the demerit system I know that sounds stupid but O well I think it keeps us in line. I gotten (sic) some because I forgot my book at home but after I got the demerit I didn't forget my book aging (sic --' again')."*

### **Demerit Scores for September 2006 through January 2007**

#### ***Statistics***

43% of my students received some sort of demerit points during this period. Only three students (4% of my 82) accumulated enough to be assigned detention. Of those three, one served three detentions and the other two each served one. I have only had to stay to supervise detentions on three occasions this academic year. In the past 12 months, only one student's behavior necessitated his suspension from my class (and the Superintendent had assigned OSS as well).

<b>Total Number Demerit Points</b>	<b>2-6</b>	<b>7-11</b>	<b>12-15</b>	<b>16-20</b>	<b>&gt; 18</b>
<b>Number of Students</b>	24	3	1	3	5
<b>Percentage of 82</b>	67%	8%	2%	8%	28%

Until the recent detention (23 January 2007), I always arranged to pick up students from their 9th period class and escort them to my room. On the 23rd, as an experiment, I waited to see if they would come on their own and they did.

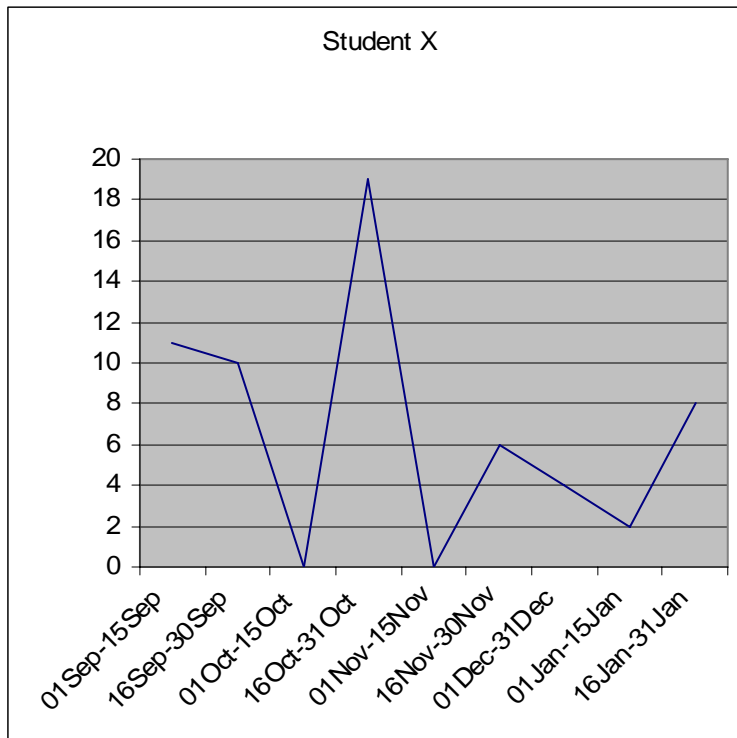
#### ***Reflection***

For starters, I assigned far fewer detentions than I did before applying this system, when misbehaviors resulted in a referral to the administrator. There are two reasons I can think of for this: I have personal commitments after school making staying late difficult, so I was more judicious in assigning detention; I now had a system that seemed to stop misbehaviors in class before they reached the level requiring detention. Students settle down when they are assigned demerits and they know detention will happen in a short time if they don't.

Taking on the task of behavior management myself has been effective (and when it was first suggested to me several years ago, I was very resistant, to put it mildly). Under this newer system, the student is held accountable to me and the consequences can be applied within a short period of time. It was perhaps too easy to send in a detention form to the Administrator and expect him to resolve problems for me. I support the notion of a strong administrative role in behavior management, but I am convinced now that the more I can do myself the better the results. The administrative role needs to come when I have exhausted my own efforts to no avail, when the seriousness of the infraction requires consequences I am not legally able to apply, or as a route of appeal for the student or his parents if they feel I have been unjust.

**Q: Does this system encourage misbehavior to diminish over time?**

**A:** I think so. For example, before this system, I had a problem with the student seats in my room breaking and getting loose because students habitually leaned in them. I believe this system has changed that behavior. This infraction results in 2 demerits. Only 2 students continue to have trouble not leaning in their seats (and I believe this could be corrected if I were more aggressive in applying demerits for this in recent months). Only 9 students (10% of all students, 25% of this cohort) have received demerits for leaning in the chair. In September, 28 demerits were assigned for leaning in the chair; in November, only 12 demerits were assigned.



One case in point is a student who has particularly severe behavior problems. "Student X" accumulated 66 demerit points from September through January 2007 and served 3 detentions. The following chart shows the number of "active demerits" (that is, those that still count against him because they had not expired or been cancelled out by merit points) X had accumulated during nine intervals from 01 September 2006 through 31 January 2007. He served detention on 25

September, 23 October, and 23 January. When students serve detention, they earn 7 "merit" points that erase demerits. This accounts for the drop around each of those intervals. There is a somewhat downward tendency in the graph that supports my observation and "gut feeling" that X is responsive to the system. The climb back toward detention is gradual after each event. In brief, when I assign him demerits for misbehavior, he stops that behavior for a time.

**Q: How long is there between assigning detention and serving?**

**A:** Three school days maximum.

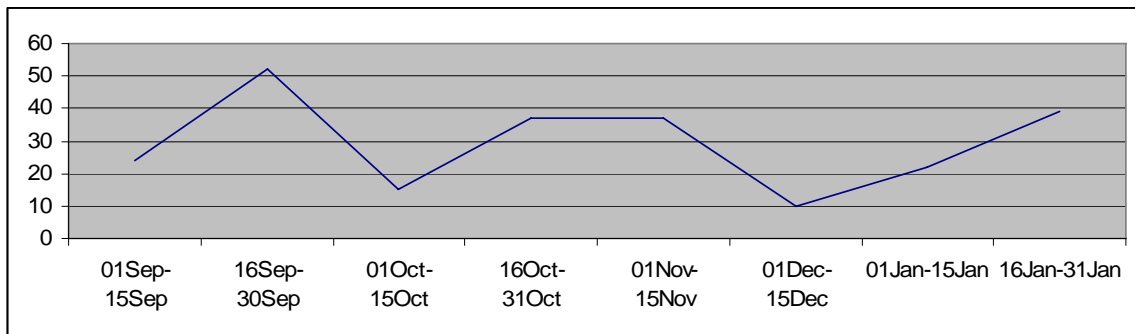
**Q: What is the nature of most demerits?**

**A:** 105 total demerit points were assigned to 36 students from September through January 2007. 39% were for lacking class materials or not having the textbook. Minor disruptions account for 20% and leaning in the chair accounts for 26%. Only 5% were in the category of disrespect to me or other students. 8% are attributed to problems with a substitute on the two days I was out during the time period.

Infraction	Leaning in Chair	Disrespect to me or students	Lack of class materials or forgetting textbook	Minor disruption; annoying to classmates	Problems with substitute
Total demerits earned by all 36 students	27	6	41	21	9

**Q: Does the number of demerits assigned change as the year progresses?**

**A:** On average, 25 demerit points are assigned each month. The second half of September saw the highest number with 52. thanksgiving and Christmas vacations are excluded. A downward trend is seen fro September through January, but then there is resurgence.



I cannot rule out some subjectivity here. My assignment of demerits is subject to my own human fallibility. However, if the student survey is a valid indicator of the degree to which I fairly and consistently apply the system, I think the data still points to a decrease in misbehavior for the 36 students over time.

## **Conclusion**

I think it is fair to say that the data supports the notion that this behavior management system diminishes the occurrence of student misbehavior over time both for the whole group and for individual students. The system and its application have the strong support of students in the class and based on student input I will continue to strive to apply it ever more fairly and consistently. Taking a greater portion of managing behavior in my classroom into my own hands has increased my own effectiveness and hugely reduced the need for administrative intervention.

## **APPENDIX: Classroom Behavior Management Plan**

**Mr. Jones**

April 2006

If a student misbehaves frequently and does not respond to minimal reprimands, s/he is put on a behavior management plan in which behavior is rated on a scale of "merit". Minor misbehaviors are worth a lower number of demerits than stronger misbehaviors.

"Demerits" need to be erased by "Merits". Erasing demerits provides consequences to help students change their behavior and a sense of compensation or "justice": a wrong made right and hopefully a return to positive relations with teacher and classmates. Demerit and merit points expire 25 days from the date of infraction.

There is no way to list all of the possible student behaviors. The chart on the next page illustrates the kind of typical behaviors that are associated with each rating. If misbehavior is assigned demerits by the teacher and that misbehavior is not on this list, the teacher will assign demerits based on the most similar misbehavior listed. Meritorious behavior can also be awarded based on teacher's judgment.

It is important to note that it will not be practical or necessary to record each and every small infraction of all of my 70+ students every day. Many small errors are easily corrected with a quick remark and these will not be recorded. Students get on this system when their conduct is frequently improper.

Most students tend not to even notice this system as they are never on it. It comes into effect for the most serious pattern of misbehavior and it allows students to improve, compensate for misbehavior, and then move on.

Demerits	Typical behaviors...	Merits
2	Leaning in chair; minor disruption; feet on furniture; annoying to classmates; excessive tardiness; lack of class materials; general mischief; leaving book in the classroom	<p>Students clear their demerits in several ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By serving detention (+7 merits awarded, exceptions noted below.)</li> <li>• By engaging in voluntary "merit" acts of compensation (believable apology to injured party, offering to clean desks, sweep floor, dust shelves, other voluntary service duty)</li> <li>• By going a long time without accumulating any demerits (After 25 days from date of points earned, merits / demerits are erased).</li> <li>• By showing especially positive behavior in class.</li> <li>• Merit points cannot be "banked" over 3.</li> </ul>
4	Disobedience, disrespect; talking back or arguing with a reprimand; poor attitude; stalling or balking at assigned work; excessive talking; failing to change behavior immediately after being reprimanded.	
6	Add this to score if severity or frequency of misbehavior required student to be sent to the office;	

**Students who earn 10 demerits are assigned detention with Mr. Jones, usually within 24 hours. In this event, a letter is sent home with a copy to the school administrator the next day.**

Scenario 1: Student refused to show for detention.	Scenario 2: Student refused to serve either of two additional detentions assigned for skipping first.
<p>Students who do not show up for detention for any reason except legal absence<sup>1</sup> will be assigned 2 additional detentions with Mr. Jones.</p> <p>At this point, the behavior point system ends for this student until scenario 2 has been played out.</p>	<p>Students who do not serve either of the two detentions in scenario 1 will be removed from the classroom during the next regular class meeting time(s) for 1-5 days. The student will be sent to the office during this time and alternative instruction will be provided by Mr. Jones from 3-3:55 on or around those days. The detention may include more than one teacher. This will be arranged according to the procedures set out in New York State Education Law (see below).</p>

<sup>1</sup> Parents or guardians have the right to appeal a disciplinary action, but cannot legally excuse students from school disciplinary actions. Quoted from Commissioner of Education's decision in the *Appeal of Auch*, dec. no. 12,984 (1993): "Pursuant to NYS Education Law §1709(2), a board of education is authorized to establish rules concerning order and discipline of the schools as it may deem necessary. Such rules are not subject to the consent of a parent."

	The number of days of removal from class will depend on the student's behavior record throughout the year so far. Upon return to the regular classroom, the student's behavior score will be set to -6.
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## Legal Procedures and References

Education law authorizes teachers to detain students after school as a penalty, as well as prohibit students from participating in such activities as recess, interscholastic athletics, and field trips<sup>2</sup>.

Education Law authorizes a teacher to remove a disruptive pupil from the classroom<sup>3</sup> for up to 5 days. It also provides that school districts must [a] ensure the same due process rights as would be provided in the case of suspension from school<sup>4</sup> and [b] continue the educational programming of students removed by their teacher from the classroom for disruptive behavior<sup>5</sup>.

Steps<sup>6</sup>:

1. Teacher informs student and principal of the reasons for removal.
2. Within 24 hours, the following occurs:
  - a. student is to have opportunity to present his/her version of relevant events;
  - b. students' parents are informed of the removal and, on request, a meeting with principal may be set up to discuss the reasons for removal.
    - i. Conforming with State Education Law pertaining to parent notification of removal from class, parents will be notified by express mail<sup>7</sup>
    - ii. Depending on the circumstances, the student may be permitted to attend the regular class meeting if it falls during the 24 hour period over which the due process requirements are fulfilled.
  - c. If parents object to the removal, an informal hearing is convened within 48 hours of the students' removal. The principal must make his/her finding at the close of business day on the day of the informal hearing.
    - i. The principal may only set aside the teacher's disciplinary action if s/he finds
      1. the charges are not supported by substantial evidence;
      2. the removal constitutes a violation of law
      3. the conduct warrants suspension from school and a suspension will be imposed.
3. Education law provides that students removed from the class will have alternative instruction that is substantially equivalent<sup>8</sup>; however this need not match in every

<sup>2</sup> *Matter of Kubinski*, 26 Educ. Dep't Rep. 348(1987)

<sup>3</sup> New York State Education Law §3214(3-a)

<sup>4</sup> *Appeal of Trombly* 26 Educ. Dep't Rep. 214 (1986)

<sup>5</sup> New York State Education Law §2801(2)(e)

<sup>6</sup> § 3214(3-A)(a); See also *Appeal of R.F.*, 43 Educ. Dep't Rep., decision no. 14,972(2003)).

<sup>7</sup> Notice by telephone was found to be insufficient even when followed by same day regular mail notification, *Appeal of RF*, 43 Educ. Dep't Rep. dec. no. 14972(2003)

respect the instructional program previously offered to the student. Mr. Jones will provide these lessons from 3-3:55pm on the days students are suspended from class.

Students will be allowed to return to the classroom when the suspensions and alternative instruction have been carried out.

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<sup>8</sup> *Turner v Kowalski*, 49 A.D.2d 943 (1975); *Appeal of McMahon*, 38 Educ. Dep't Rep. 22 (1998); *Appeal of Bridges*, 34 Educ. Dep't Rep. 232 (1994); *Appeal of Klug*, 20 Educ. Dep't Rep. 134 (1980))