starting out

Start small with one or two of your high-needs students. Get to know what *Meaningful Work* requires in your setting. Build your own stories—like those of Devon, Christopher, Rashad, and Jeremy—before expanding to a schoolwide program.

The procedures involved in a *Meaningful Work* program follow the outline below. The information for each procedure provides insights—both cautions and suggestions—as well as basic how-to information that can be used as needed with a highly challenging student. Many of the procedures will be done concurrently.

1. Identify the student.
2. Review data and set goals.
3. Match the student to a job.
4. Collect data to monitor progress.
5. Consider designing a system for rewards and consequences.
6. Identify a supervisor.
7. Introduce the job.
8. Provide job training.
9. Maintain success on the job. Review data and modify plans as needed.
10. Celebrate accomplishments large and small.

> ## *Parent Involvement*
>
> Throughout the planning and implementation of a *Meaningful Work* intervention, maintain parent contact and communication.

1 IDENTIFY THE STUDENT.

Select a student or students whose behaviors have raised frequent concerns or resulted in office referrals, suspensions, and/or referral to your Behavioral Support Team (e.g., Response-to-Intervention Team, Student Support Team).

Christopher, our first *Meaningful Work* student, was quickly referred to our Student Support Team. As we had been warned, his behavior was extremely difficult. This small child pushed other students down, pulled chairs out from under them, and took things by force. During independent work, Christopher tried to get others to play with him. When rebuffed, he hurt them. When punished, he escalated his misbehavior. By his third day, parents of other students were calling to complain about Christopher.

student story

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2 REVIEW DATA AND SET GOALS.

When working with a student who has been referred to a Behavioral Support Team, you are likely to have pre-referral data that can help your team define positively stated goals. Data sources may include office referrals, incident reports, anecdotal records, grades, attendance, and on-time records.

student story

In Christopher's case, we had the teacher's anecdotal records of Christopher's outbursts, minor incidences of hurtful behaviors, and office referrals for more serious misbehavior (e.g., pulling a chair out from under another student, punching another child, shoving another child). During our Student Support Team meeting, Christopher's teacher helped us identify three goals:

- Respect others' right to safety (i.e., avoid hurting others).
- Stay on task.
- Follow directions.

3 MATCH THE STUDENT TO A JOB.

Find the right job. Matching a student to a job requires more common sense than careful analysis. However, the following variables provide some guidance. Consider the following factors:

- **Talents, interests, and personality.** Select jobs with a high probability of success for the student worker. A student who is good at math might enjoy being the Juice Stand Operator. A student who is outgoing may be a perfect Kindergarten Bus Greeter.

- **Behavioral concerns.** Select jobs that help meet the needs of students.

Christopher had a high need for attention and recognition, so we decided to try a job with high visibility and many opportunities for positive interactions with adults. Christopher also needed a job that was done daily and could begin immediately.

student story

Christopher was given the job of Lunch Ticket Distributor. His job would be to distribute lunch tickets to all the classrooms. The job originated in the office, where he could have positive contacts with the office personnel. Additionally, he would visit each classroom and interact positively with each teacher in the building.

• **Time of day and location.** Time of day and the location of the job may influence job assignments. Students who have difficulty behaving appropriately throughout the afternoon may benefit from early-afternoon jobs. Young students and students who need close supervision may need jobs that are located close to their classrooms.

student story

Christopher's job took place early in the morning. The positive interactions to start his day, in combination with the entire staff "catching" and commenting on his responsible behavior throughout the day, met Christopher's needs. For Christopher, success begot success. He was often caught being a responsible citizen.

• **Ability.** Assess each student's ability to perform tasks. Avoid assigning a job that is too difficult. An older student who reads poorly might make an excellent tutor for younger students just learning to read.

4 COLLECT DATA TO MONITOR PROGRESS.

Data collection will allow you to determine over time whether any intervention, including *Meaningful Work*, is having a positive effect on the student. Data collection allows you to:

• Recognize progress over time.
• Share progress with the student, family, and staff members.
• Evaluate and make decisions.

If the student's behavior does not improve, you may need to add or adjust behavioral contracting, adjust the job schedule, and/or change jobs or supervisors. If your data show behavior improving over time, the intervention is working. If data do not show behavior improving, adjustments should be made.

# 5 CONSIDER DESIGNING A SYSTEM FOR REWARDS AND CONSEQUENCES.

Over time, we agreed that *Meaningful Work* should be noncontingent—not based on student behavior. Jobs helped students fill a void in their lives. Jobs became a highly effective tool for changing behavior by:

- Fostering a sense of competence and purpose.
- Providing recognition, attention, and acknowledgment.
- Building belonging and school connectedness.
- Allowing staff to help nurture.

For highly challenging students, you may wish to design a system that also includes consequences and rewards to shape behavioral improvements in the classroom. If so, we recommend having students earn something other than the job itself.

NOTE: If a job in and of itself is likely to meet a student's needs, keep it simple! Give the student a job. Then keep data to determine whether the job itself is changing behavior.

When designing a system of rewards and consequences, specify the desired behavior in positive terms. Structure the system so the student gets high rates of teacher reinforcement and ongoing instruction in the appropriate behaviors. Examples of rewards are job promotions, certificates of goal completion, positive notes home, a special one-time job with high visibility, a treat for your class, and having a friend assist with the job.

student example
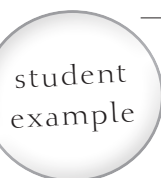
Christopher's behavioral issues were multifaceted, so we developed a Behavior Management Form that would allow Christopher's teacher to track his progress. (See Figure 2.1 on the next page.) We also used the form to determine whether he would earn rewards or consequences. The form broke the day into subject areas and recess, allowing us to:

- Track on-task behavior, following directions, and respecting the safety of others.
- Determine whether Christopher had more difficulty in one subject than another.

Figure 2.1 Behavior Management Form

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT FORM

Name ___Christopher___   Date ___10/18___

Directions: For each behavior, stay under the limit to earn a point.

	Warnings		Over the Limit (no points)
Reading			
Remained on task	①	② /	3
Followed directions	①	2 /	3
Avoided hurting others		/	①
			I earned 1 ② 3 points.
Math			
Remained on task	①	2 /	3
Followed directions	1	2 /	3
Avoided hurting others		/	1
			I earned 1 2 ③ points.
Recess			
Remained on task	1	2 /	3
Followed directions	1	2 /	3
Avoided hurting others		/	1
			I earned 1 2 ③ points.
Science/Social Studies			
Remained on task	①	2 /	3
Followed directions	①	② /	③
Avoided hurting others		/	1
			I earned 1 ② 3 points.
Spelling/Handwriting			
Remained on task	1	2 /	3
Followed directions	①	② /	3
Avoided hurting others		/	1
			I earned 1 2 ③ points.

My goal is to earn 12 points. Today I earned __13__ points.

Great Job!! ☺

Meaningful *work*
JOBS FOR STUDENTS

Reproducible Materials
Blank copies of forms are provided on the CD.

- Encourage Christopher to monitor his own behavior and make more conscious decisions to behave or misbehave.
- Reward appropriate behavior and provide consequences for inappropriate behavior.

If Christopher earned 12 of 15 points possible (80%), he would earn a special privilege. Timeout would be used as an immediate consequence for hurting others. Two or more warnings for being off task or not following directions in any given period would also result in a timeout.

6 IDENTIFY A SUPERVISOR.

Supervisors can be any staff member—a school principal, counselor, secretary, specialist (librarian, PE or music teacher), custodian, or assistant. Supervisors need to:

- Know the job and provide training.
- Be available consistently to monitor and provide feedback and reinforcement.
- Be willing to develop a supportive relationship with the student.

The importance of having a consistent and reliable supervisor cannot be overstated. The most important job of a supervisor is to be a mentor—someone who can provide unconditional regard in the context of a worthwhile job. Supervisors not only supervise but also:

- Greet the student warmly.
- Show an interest in the student's day.
- Provide positive descriptive feedback.
- Acknowledge work and other accomplishments.
- Recognize birthdays and other important events.

student story

Initially, Christopher's job supervisor was the principal. She provided training and accompanied Christopher on his lunch ticket rounds. Once Christopher learned the routine, he checked in with the principal, made his rounds independently, and then checked back in with the principal. The principal continued in her role as a mentor, regularly visiting with Christopher and acknowledging his contributions to the school. The principal also introduced Christopher to any visitors in the office as a school VIP and office assistant—a prestigious person indeed.