Case Example

Student: Maria
Grade: First
Presenting Problems: Out of Seat, Interruptions
Intervention: Token Economy

Background: Maria is constantly interrupting the classroom when she shouts out during whole group instruction and when she leaves her seat. Her behavior has become stressful to the teacher, and it is also impacting the other students. The teacher decides to implement a Token Economy with Maria.

Getting Started

Decide between a reward system or a response-cost system
Maria's teacher has decided to implement a reward system because she would like to focus on the positive. She also worries that Maria would have a meltdown if she were to lose a token, disrupting the classroom with her meltdown.

Identify target behaviors
Problem Behavior: Shouting out during instruction
Desired Behavior: The teacher would like Maria to raise her hand to speak

Problem Behavior: Leaving her seat without permission
Desired Behavior: The teacher would like Maria to stay seated during instruction

Decide how you will measure target behaviors
The teacher has decided that she is going to measure target behaviors by using frequency counts (each time Maria raises her hand) and duration (an amount of time Maria stays in her seat).

Set an initial goal for each behavior
Maria will earn 1 token each time she raises her hand to speak during whole group instruction.
Maria will earn 1 token for each 5-minute period that she stays in her seat during whole group instruction.

Chose a currency
Maria's teacher decides to use beads as the tokens because she already has some in her classroom. She also decides that she will use a jar to collect the beads and it will sit behind her desk.

Introduce the system to the student and collaboratively develop a reward list

Beacon

Sample Script:

Teacher: Hi Maria! How are you doing today?

Maria: Good!

Teacher: I've noticed that sometimes you like to shout out when I am teaching. I want to help you be successful in the classroom. So, each time you are sitting nicely in your seat, raise your hand, and wait to be called on, you get to earn some of these beads!

Maria: Cool!

Teacher: Can you show me how to raise your hand nicely?

Maria: *Raises hand*

Teacher: Nice! I like how you waited patiently. So, each time you raise your hand rather than shouting out, I will put one of these beads in the jar behind my desk. Also, I have this timer and it is going to buzz every 5 minutes. If you have been in your seat during that 5 minutes, I will also put another bead in the jar. Does that make sense?

Maria: Yes.

Teacher: Now, it's the fun part. You can earn really cool things when you get enough beads. (The teacher shares with Maria the reward menu) Which of the items on this list do you think you would like to earn with your beads?

Maria: I like candy!

Teacher: Ok! I can see if I can find some candy that you could earn. What about a Jolly Rancher?

Maria: Only if it's the grape flavor.

Teacher: I can make that happen. What else would you like to earn from this list?

Maria: I think I would like to be first in the lunch line! Also, I think I would like to have lunch with you!

Teacher: Ok great! Each of these items will cost a certain amount of beads. You can either spend your beads on the items that cost less or save them and spend them

on the items that cost more. Each time you earn a bead, I will put it in this jar on my desk. Do you remember how you can earn a bead?

Teacher: I need to raise my hand and wait to be called on and I need to stay in my seat.

Teacher: That is right! We will start this tomorrow. I will remind you. At the end of the day, we will review the number of beads you earned and talk about how you want to spend them.

Develop the economy/exchange rates

The teacher calculates that because she has whole group instruction for about 3 hours a day and Maria is able to earn a bead every 5 minutes, Maria has the potential to earn 36 beads each day. Maria can also earn beads when she raises her hand, so the teacher estimates that she will raise her hand about 5 times. So, Maria can potentially earn about 40 beads. The teacher decides on the following exchange rates

First in the lunch line will cost 10 beads

A piece of candy will cost 20 beads

Lunch with the teacher will cost 50 beads

Implementation

First Day of Implementation: Remind the student of their goals and how they will earn rewards

Since today is the first day of implementation, the teacher has set aside some time in the morning to review the intervention with Maria. The teacher reminds Maria of her goals, the two ways she can earn beads, and how many tokens each reward would cost. The teacher also shows Maria the visual reminder chart she made for her desk (see below). She lets Maria know that she will remind her of her goals each day.

Respond appropriately to desired behaviors

Throughout the day, the teacher praises Maria each time she earns a bead, making sure to show Maria that she was putting it into the jar. Additionally, every time Maria speaks without raising her hand, the teacher reminds Maria that she needs to raise her hand before speaking out and that she missed out on an opportunity to earn a bead.

Meet with the student at predetermined times to review their progress toward a reward

Before lunch, the teacher meets with Maria and lets her know she has done a great job so far. She has earned 12 beads! The teacher asks Maria if she would like to use her beads so that she can be first in the lunch line or if she would like to save them so she can use them toward one of the other rewards. Maria decides she would like to save them. She really wants to earn a Jolly Rancher!

End of the Day Review
Sample Script:

Teacher: Hi Maria. Today, you earned 25 beads. Nice job! I could tell you were working really hard to remember to raise your hand and you did a great job staying in your seat. I know you were really hoping to get a Jolly Rancher, do you want to use your beads for the Jolly Rancher? If so, you will have 5 beads left, or you can save them all.

Maria: I want a Jolly Rancher!

Mrs. T: Here you go. You earned it. You have 5 beads left the in jar. Keep up the good work tomorrow!

Intervention Review: Modify the intervention based on the student's progress
The teacher has been conducting progress monitoring in Beacon weekly. She has noticed that Maria has received a score of either "slight problem" or "not a problem" for the last three weeks. Maria has really improved in the classroom by continuing to raise her hand instead of shouting out and staying in her seat during instruction. She is earning roughly 30 beads per day. The teacher decides to make the prizes a little harder to earn each day. To continue to push Maria to improve and not run out of candy too fast, the teacher decides to modify the reward system.

Sample Script

Teacher: Hi Maria. You have been doing such a nice job with earning so many beads. The prices in the shop have changed. Now, to be first in the lunch line is going to cost 20 beads, a piece of candy is worth 30 beads, and lunch with me will be 60 beads! With the way you've been earning beads, this should be no problem!

Maria's Visual for Her Desk

Earn Tokens	Rewards
Raising Hand — For raising my hand, I will earn *1 token*	**First in Lunch Line** in exchange for *10 tokens*
Sitting in Seat — For staying in my seat, I will earn *1 token*	**Candy** in exchange for *20 tokens*
	Lunch with Teacher in exchange for *50 tokens*