

Good Behavior Game

Intervention Brief | Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Interventions

WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE™

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Teachers can use a variety of classroom management practices to help foster a classroom environment in which all students can learn. *Good Behavior Game* is a specific classroom management strategy that aims to improve social skills, minimize disruptive behaviors, and create a positive learning environment. Teachers place students into teams and reward them for demonstrating appropriate behaviors and following classroom rules.

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) reviews existing research on educational interventions to identify evidence-based programs and practices. This WWC intervention report summarizes the available evidence on the effects of *Good Behavior Game* on student and teacher outcomes.

Goal: *Good Behavior Game* aims to help teachers create a positive learning environment by decreasing student disruptive behavior and improving student academic engagement and prosocial behaviors.



Target population: *Good Behavior Game* can be used with students in prekindergarten through grade 12 and is often used with students or classrooms that are demonstrating high levels of disruptive behaviors.

Did Good Behavior Game improve student and teacher outcomes?

Sixteen studies of *Good Behavior Game* meet WWC standards and contribute to the effectiveness ratings in this report. Findings from the 16 studies are summarized in Table 1. The table includes rows for each outcome domain—a group of related outcome measures—that was studied in the research. The effects of *Good Behavior Game* on other student and teacher outcomes are unknown. Table 1 indicates whether the evidence satisfies the WWC’s requirements for strong, moderate, or promising tiers of evidence. Based on the 16 studies, there is strong evidence that *Good Behavior Game* positively impacted student behavior and promising evidence that *Good Behavior Game* positively impacted teacher practice, student writing conventions, and student writing productivity.

The WWC effectiveness rating indicates whether *Good Behavior Game* resulted in improved outcomes by: (1) comparing students and teachers who participated in the program to students and teachers who did not participate in the program and (2) comparing student and teacher outcomes during periods of program participation to periods when they were not participating in the program. More information about these ratings is provided on the next page. Findings and conclusions could change as new research becomes available.

Table 1. Summary of findings on *Good Behavior Game* from 16 studies that meet WWC standards

Outcome domain	Effectiveness rating	Sample size	Evidence tier	Summary
Student behavior	Positive effects	3,901 students		The research provides strong evidence that <i>Good Behavior Game</i> improved student behavior. This assessment is based on 10 studies that meet WWC standards.
Teacher practice	Positive effects	8 teachers		The research provides promising evidence that <i>Good Behavior Game</i> improved teacher practice related to improving student behavior. This assessment is based on two studies that meet WWC standards.

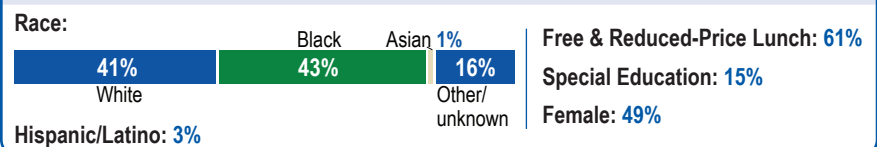
¹In October 2024, the WWC modified this report to correct errors in the findings reported from Humphrey et al. (2018) in the student behavior, teacher practice, and literacy achievement outcome domains. The WWC determined that the findings for three student behavior outcomes do not meet WWC standards because the equivalence of the clusters in the analytic intervention and comparison groups is necessary but the requirement was not satisfied. The WWC also determined that one of the teacher practice outcome measures in the original report is not eligible for review because it does not fall within one of the outcome domains in the Study Review Protocol. The WWC therefore removed the findings for these outcome measures from Table 4a and Table 4b. The WWC also removed the means and standard deviations for one literacy achievement outcome in Table 4c as they do not represent the analytic sample; the WWC also corrected the standard error for this finding. As a consequence of making these changes, the WWC also made corresponding revisions to the effect sizes and p-values in the summary rows in all three tables. However, the revisions did not result in changes to the effectiveness ratings or evidence tiers in Table 1. This revised report replaces the original May 2023 report.

Outcome domain	Effectiveness rating	Sample size	Evidence tier	Summary
Writing conventions	Potentially positive effects	6 students	TIER 3 PROMISING	The research provides promising evidence that <i>Good Behavior Game</i> improved student writing conventions. This assessment is based on one study that meets WWC standards.
Writing productivity	Potentially positive effects	6 students	TIER 3 PROMISING	The research provides promising evidence that <i>Good Behavior Game</i> improved student writing productivity. This assessment is based on one study that meets WWC standards.
Literacy achievement	Uncertain effects	3,453 students	NO TIER ASSIGNED	The research does not support claims that <i>Good Behavior Game</i> improved student literacy achievement. This assessment is based on two studies that meet WWC standards.
Mathematics achievement	Uncertain effects	703 students	NO TIER ASSIGNED	The research does not support claims that <i>Good Behavior Game</i> improved student mathematics achievement. This assessment is based on one study that meets WWC standards.
Intrapersonal competencies	Uncertain effects	3,857 students	NO TIER ASSIGNED	The research does not support claims that <i>Good Behavior Game</i> improved student intrapersonal competencies. This assessment is based on two studies that meet WWC standards.
School climate	Uncertain effects	73 after-school programs	NO TIER ASSIGNED	The research does not support claims that <i>Good Behavior Game</i> improved school climate. This assessment is based on one study that meets WWC standards.

FINDINGS FROM 16 STUDIES

8,387 students in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Texas, and other unknown states; Northern Ireland; and the United Kingdom.

STUDENTS IN GRADES K–11






HOW THE WWC REVIEWS AND DESCRIBES EVIDENCE

The WWC conducted a systematic review of interventions designed to improve students' social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes and selected and prioritized studies for review using the version 4.1 [Systematic Review Protocol for Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Interventions](#). The WWC evaluated the quality and results of the selected studies using the criteria outlined in the version 4.1 [Procedures and Standards Handbooks](#) and the accompanying [Study Review Protocol](#).

The WWC considers each study's research design, whether findings were statistically significant and positive, and the number of studies contributing to this report. The WWC synthesizes evidence across studies—using a weighted average—to determine the effectiveness rating for each outcome domain. The WWC defines outcome domains in the [Study Review Protocol](#) to group related outcome measures.

Effectiveness rating	Description of the evidence
Positive (or negative) effects	The evidence base primarily includes the strongest research designs, and the average effect across all high-quality research is statistically significant and positive (or negative).
Potentially positive (or negative) effects	The evidence base primarily includes research with some limitations, and the average effect across all high-quality research is statistically significant and positive (or negative).
Uncertain effects	The average effect across all high-quality research is not statistically significant, so the WWC does not classify it as a positive or a negative effect.

The WWC considers the effectiveness rating, the sample size, and the number of educational sites (states, districts, local education agencies, schools, postsecondary campuses) across studies to determine the evidence tier for each outcome domain. When the effectiveness rating is *uncertain*, *potentially negative*, or *negative effects*, there is no evidence tier.

Evidence tier	Criteria based on evidence synthesis
Strong evidence of effectiveness	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receives an effectiveness rating of positive effects, and • Includes at least 350 students in at least two educational sites
Moderate evidence of effectiveness	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receives an effectiveness rating of potentially positive effects, and • Includes at least 350 students in at least two educational sites
Promising evidence of effectiveness	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receives an effectiveness rating of potentially positive effects or positive effects • Includes fewer than 350 students or two educational sites

How was *Good Behavior Game* implemented?

This section provides details of how school districts and schools implemented *Good Behavior Game* in the 16 studies that contribute to this intervention report. This information can help educators identify the requirements for implementing *Good Behavior Game* and determine whether implementing this program would be feasible in their districts or schools.

Educators can implement the *PAX Good Behavior Game*[®], the American Institutes for Research (AIR) version of *Good Behavior Game*, or their own adaptation of *Good Behavior Game* to encourage students to demonstrate appropriate behavior and to create a positive learning environment. In the 16 studies summarized in this intervention report, four studies reported using the *PAX Good Behavior Game*[®], one study reported using the AIR version, and 11 studies did not report which approach was used. The WWC could not determine which version was used in these 11 studies because each version of *Good Behavior Game* has similar implementation components.

Good Behavior Game was implemented in classrooms during the school day in 15 studies and in an after-school program in one study. Teachers identified rules of behavior for *Good*

Comparison condition: In the six group design studies that contribute to this intervention report, students in the comparison group did not participate in *Good Behavior Game*. The students received business-as-usual programming, except in one study (Long et al., 2018) where students received mindfulness skills training.

There is no comparison group in single-case design studies. In the 10 single-case design studies that contribute to this report, teachers instructed class as they normally would and enforced existing classroom rules during the baseline and reversal-withdrawal phases.

Behavior Game sessions, such as students remaining seated or on task and refraining from disruptive behaviors. Teachers divided their students into teams and reviewed the expected behaviors and rules of the game. Teachers monitored student behavior during the game and scored the teams based on how well they followed the rules. At the end of the session, winning teams received a reward. Teachers played the game once per day in 10 studies, several times a day in five studies, and twice per week in one study. Table 2 summarizes the components and implementation of *Good Behavior Game* across the studies, and [the appendix](#) provides additional information about study-specific implementation in the single-case design studies.

WWC standards assess the quality of the research, not the quality of the implementation. Studies that meet WWC standards vary in quality of implementation. However, a study must describe the relevant components of the program and how each was implemented with adequate detail to be included in an intervention report.

Table 2. Implementation of components of *Good Behavior Game*

Component	Description of the component	How it was implemented
<p>Team-based games</p>	<p>Before starting the game, teachers divide their students into teams, usually based on seating arrangements or student behavior. Teachers then explain that teams can earn points and rewards for following <i>Good Behavior Game</i> rules. Teachers monitor student behavior during the game and score teams based on how well they follow the rules.</p> <p>Teachers develop <i>Good Behavior Game</i> rules for student behavior, which often include staying seated and on task, following directions, being polite to others, and ignoring distractions. Before playing the game, teachers describe these rules and display them on a poster in the classroom. When playing the game, teachers remind students of the rules and provide examples and modeling of desired behaviors, as needed.</p> <p>Teachers decide how many points are needed to win, either selecting a constant goal across all sessions or a variable goal based on students' performance in previous sessions of the game. Teachers decide how to score the game, such as adding points when students follow the rules or subtracting points when students break the rules. At the end of the game, teachers announce which team(s) won and give winning students a reward. Teachers choose the type of reward and when to give the reward to winning teams, for example, immediately after the game, at the end of the school day, or at the end of the week.</p>	<p>Three studies modified the usual team approach. In one study, all students in the class were on the same team. In two studies, individual students could be placed on their own team if they were having significant challenges following the game rules.</p> <p>In all 16 studies, teachers described and then reminded students of the game rules and criteria for winning before starting the game.</p> <p>In all 16 studies, teachers provided students on the winning team(s) a reward. In six studies, teachers offered winning students small prizes, such as snacks, school supplies, stickers, or lip balm. In three studies, teachers offered classroom privileges, such as free time or time to play with toys or an iPad. In one study, teachers offered a combination of prizes and classroom privileges. In six studies, authors did not report the types of rewards teachers provided to students.</p>
<p>Training for teachers</p>	<p>Before leading the game, teachers receive training from a <i>Good Behavior Game</i> developer or researcher. The <i>PAX Good Behavior Game</i>® provides an initial 2-day training, which may be online, in person, or self-paced. AIR's version provides an initial 2-day in-person training. The <i>PAX Good Behavior Game</i>® and AIR trainings require purchase of teacher training kits that include instructions and classroom materials for teachers to implement <i>Good Behavior Game</i>. These kits do not include rewards for students.</p> <p>Training covers how to create game rules, monitor student behavior, and award points and might also include role-playing exercises for teachers to practice leading the game and receive feedback. The <i>PAX Good Behavior Game</i>® offers several options for 2-day online follow-up trainings for teachers. AIR's version suggests a 1-day in-person booster training for teachers.</p>	<p>In 14 studies, teachers received training prior to leading the game. In four studies, teachers received the initial <i>PAX Good Behavior Game</i>® training: in one study the training was delivered over 2 days; in two studies, the training was delivered in 1 day; and in one study, the training was delivered across four 3- to 4-hour sessions. In one study, teachers received the AIR version of <i>Good Behavior Game</i> training. In nine studies, teachers received an unspecified version of the training from the study authors, who were <i>Good Behavior Game</i> researchers. In these nine studies, the training length and timing varied, ranging from a 15-minute session just before the first game was played to a full-week training before the start of the school year. The full-week training included lectures explaining the theory behind <i>Good Behavior Game</i>, role-playing sessions, and direct observations of game sessions. In two studies, teachers did not receive formal training and instead learned to lead the game by observing the study authors.</p> <p>In two of the four studies using the <i>PAX Good Behavior Game</i>® and in the study using AIR's version of <i>Good Behavior Game</i>, teachers also received a half-day or 1-day follow-up training from the developer.</p>

Component	Description of the component	How it was implemented
Ongoing coaching support for teachers	<p>Teachers often receive ongoing coaching support from a developer-trained <i>Good Behavior Game</i> coach. Coaches may be district staff, school leaders, teachers, or <i>Good Behavior Game</i> researchers. Coaches observe teachers implementing <i>Good Behavior Game</i>, provide feedback, and answer questions.</p> <p>The <i>PAX Good Behavior Game</i>® offers an initial 2-day online training for coaches. AIR’s version of <i>Good Behavior Game</i> offers an initial 2-day in-person training for coaches, as well as at least one training site visit, where trainers co-observe classrooms with AIR trainers, and 90-minute, biweekly phone calls with AIR trainers during their first year of coaching</p>	In 13 studies, teachers received ongoing coaching support, including classroom observations and feedback. In all four studies using the <i>PAX Good Behavior Game</i> ®, teachers received coaching support: in three of these studies, teachers received support from a <i>PAX Good Behavior Game</i> ® trained coach, and the other study did not describe who provided coaching support. In the study using the AIR version of <i>Good Behavior Game</i> , teachers received support from AIR-trained coaches. In eight studies, the study authors served as coaches; these studies did not describe how coaches were trained. Three studies did not describe coaching for teachers.

Note: The descriptive information in this table comes from the 16 studies that meet WWC standards and have an effect size or design-comparable effect size; two developer websites, <https://www.paxis.org/> and <https://goodbehaviorgame.air.org/index.html>; and from correspondence with the developers. Information about implementation in the additional 15 single-case design studies for which the WWC was unable to calculate a design-comparable effect size is provided in [Appendix Table 2](#).

How much does *Good Behavior Game* cost?

This section provides educators with an overview of the resources needed to implement *Good Behavior Game*. Table 3 describes the major resources needed for implementation and approximate costs, based on information available as of February 2023. The total cost of purchasing training and required materials from the *PAX Good Behavior Game*® developer can range from \$405 per teacher for a group training with 30 teachers to \$580 per teacher for individual, self-paced training. The total cost of purchasing training and required materials from AIR is \$325 per teacher for a group training with 40 teachers, plus additional costs to cover the AIR trainers’ travel. These estimates do not include the cost of booster trainings and student rewards.

Table 3. Resources needed to implement *Good Behavior Game*

Resource	Description	Funding source
Teacher training costs	<p>The <i>PAX Good Behavior Game</i>® initial online training for up to 30 participants costs \$2,545, or individual teachers can complete a 2-day training with a live instructor for \$200 each or a self-paced training for \$240 each. In addition to training costs, all teachers participating in the <i>PAX Good Behavior Game</i>® training must purchase the <i>PAX Good Behavior Game</i>® Teacher Kit for \$320 to \$340 per teacher, depending on the training type. Follow-up trainings for teachers are also offered for \$200 or \$265 per teacher, depending on the training type.</p> <p>AIR’s <i>Good Behavior Game</i> initial in-person training for up to 40 participants costs \$5,000, plus the cost of travel for AIR trainers. In addition to training costs, all teachers participating in AIR’s <i>Good Behavior Game</i> training must purchase the AIR starter kit for teachers for \$200 per teacher, per class. The recommended booster session for up to 40 participants is offered for an additional \$2,500, plus the cost of travel for AIR trainers.</p>	In one study using the <i>PAX Good Behavior Game</i> ®, the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland supported teacher training costs. In another study using the <i>PAX Good Behavior Game</i> ®, an education nonprofit organization supported teacher training costs. In two studies, teachers did not receive formal training. The other 12 studies do not describe how teacher training was funded.
Coach training costs	<p>The <i>PAX Good Behavior Game</i>® online training for coaches costs \$900 per participant. Participants are also required to have completed the initial <i>PAX Good Behavior Game</i>® teacher training.</p> <p>AIR’s <i>Good Behavior Game</i> in-person training for up to 12 coaches costs \$3,500, plus the cost of travel for AIR trainers. Coaches are also required to participate in at least one training site visit for \$2,500 per day, and ten 90-minute phone calls with AIR trainers for \$4,000. Participants are also required to have completed the initial AIR <i>Good Behavior Game</i> teacher training.</p>	In one study using the <i>PAX Good Behavior Game</i> ®, the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland supported coach training costs. In another study using the <i>PAX Good Behavior Game</i> ®, an education nonprofit organization supported coach training costs. In three studies, coaching for teachers was not provided. The other 11 studies do not describe how coach training was funded.
Facilities and technology	<i>Good Behavior Game</i> is typically played in a classroom setting but can also be played in other school spaces, including a lunchroom, a hallway, or outside during recess. A physical space within the school is required for trainings hosted at the school building. Internet access and computers are required for online trainings.	School districts or schools provide the necessary facilities and technology.
Other materials	Teachers may need a timer and a whiteboard or poster to record and display game rules and team scores. Teachers determine the rewards for students who win <i>Good Behavior Game</i> . These rewards can include small prizes, such as snacks or school supplies, which the teacher or school typically provides, or non-material rewards, such as classroom privileges.	In four studies, the study authors provided the rewards for winning students, and in one study, teachers used rewards from another classroom program. In three studies, rewards were described as non-material. The other eight studies do not describe how rewards for students were funded.

For more information about the cost of *Good Behavior Game*:

About the *PAX Good Behavior Game*®

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To request more information about the *PAX Good Behavior Game*® trainings, including training and material costs:

Web: <https://www.paxis.org/contact-us/>

About the American Institutes for Research (AIR) approach to *Good Behavior Game*

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LEARN MORE



Read the full [intervention report](#) to learn more about *Good Behavior Game*, how it was implemented in the studies that meet standards, and what the studies found. Visit the [WWC website](#) for summaries of evidence on other interventions and to learn more about the research the WWC has reviewed.