



Joseph E. Fisher School Program Overview

Joseph E. Fisher School is a therapeutic school program designed for students Kindergarten through Junior High whose social/emotional difficulties prevent participation in a traditional general education program. Students are educated in a small group setting with a full-time teacher and classroom assistant. Services include group therapy, individual and crisis counseling, behavior intervention, crisis intervention, speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and home and community supports.

The Program's mission is to provide an educational setting that ensures a student's academic progress by integrating therapeutic support into their environment. Parents of students placed in the program will be involved in home visits, parent groups, and home/school consultations.

Therapeutic Staff

Building Principal/Program Administrator
Certified Special Education Teachers
Paraprofessionals
School Social Workers/Behavior Interventionists
Speech Language Pathologist
Occupational and Physical Therapists
School Psychologist

Specific Entry Criteria

Eligibility for the program is based on a pattern of ongoing needs observed across multiple areas, including the following categories:

Social Functioning

- Difficulty establishing and maintaining personal friendships
- Impaired ability to function in cooperative group situations
- Atypical responsiveness and/or awareness to other people
- Preference for isolated activity
- Limited/delayed play skills
- Restricted range of interest
- Pragmatic language delays evidenced by poor social language/conversational skills
- Delayed and/or atypical communication development
- Marked impairment in ability to initiate or sustain an appropriate conversation with others despite adequate speech skills

Emotional Stability

- Pervasive impairment of mood (i.e., depression, anxiety, or anger)
- Abnormal seeking of comfort at times of stress



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- Atypical responses to stressors (i.e., withdrawal, refusal, crying, temper tantrums, etc.)
- Disproportionate responses to change in routine
- Psychosomatic complaints
- Extreme post-traumatic responses
- Disturbances in thought processes, hallucinations, or delusions

School Functioning

- Impaired attending to school activities
- Decreased schoolwork performance
- Impaired ability to demonstrate knowledge in academic skill areas
- Marked impulsivity impairs ability to participate in or profit from academic instruction
- Increased need for teacher attention/modification to sustain student performance
- Atypical responses to everyday classroom stressors, (i.e., transitions, unstructured activities, behavioral consequences, and turn taking)

The following types of students would not be appropriate for programming at Joseph Fisher School's Program:

- Students whose primary needs involve persistent patterns of significant antisocial behavior that do not respond to therapeutic supports or are not conducive to the structure and goals of the Joseph E. Fisher School's therapeutic program may require a different type of specialized placement to best support their growth
- Students with histories of severe physical aggression
- Students who require or are awaiting residential placement
- Students whose impairments are primarily related to sensory dysregulation, bilingual/cultural barriers, physically disabling conditions, or intellectual disability

Referral Process

Initial Admission Process

1. Referring district submits a request for consultation/observation with the SOWIC Fisher School Administrator
2. The administrator schedules and completes a classroom observation/consultation
3. The home school district determines whether an evaluation of the child's academic and emotional needs is warranted
4. Therapeutic team member attends multi-disciplinary conference

Educational Setting Change



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1. The school district submits a student file to the Fisher School Principal for review. The file should include: current IEP, psychological evaluation, social developmental study, current academic performance reports, outside evaluations (when available), speech and language assessments, and classroom teacher report of behavior.
2. Upon the intake screening committee's completion of a file review, an IEP review will be held at Joseph Fisher School to determine appropriateness of placement.

Final determination of appropriateness for admission to the Joseph Fisher School Program will be determined by the IEP team. Upon admission to the program the Intake Committee will conduct a performance review of student progress after 10, 30, 60 days of attendance.

A student may be considered "at-risk" during their placement at Joseph E. Fisher School if they demonstrate ongoing challenges that interfere with their ability to access the therapeutic supports, behavioral expectations, or academic instruction provided within the program.

At-risk status may include, but is not limited to:

- A persistent pattern of behaviors that significantly disrupt the learning environment, despite implementation of individualized supports and interventions.
- Demonstrated difficulty in engaging with or responding to therapeutic supports, including counseling, behavioral coaching, or self-regulation strategies.
- Escalating or sustained unsafe behaviors toward self or others that require frequent or intensive crisis intervention beyond what the program can safely and consistently provide.
- Inability to participate in academic instruction, small group settings, or therapeutic activities due to emotional dysregulation, aggression, or elopement.
- Limited progress on individualized goals related to social, emotional, and behavioral functioning, as indicated by performance reviews at 10, 30, and 60 days.
- Refusal to participate in programming in a manner that prevents meaningful progress, even with accommodations and staff support.

Being identified as "at-risk" is not punitive. It is part of a reflective process to ensure that the student's current educational setting remains the most appropriate and least restrictive environment. If a student is designated at-risk, the **home school district and parents/guardians will be notified promptly**, and collaborative problem-solving will be initiated to determine next steps in support planning.

Exit Criteria

Students may exit the program in a variety of ways, including: graduation, change in eligibility, or moving to a more or less restrictive environment. Plans for High School attendance are developed for all 8th graders in conjunction with parents, districts, and outside agencies.



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Independence Points and Level System

At Joseph E. Fisher School, our goal is to support students in developing academic and social-emotional skills based on their individual needs. We aim to foster growth in key areas such as self-advocacy, communication, emotional regulation, executive functioning, and academic perseverance.

To guide this development, we utilize an **Individual Point Sheet and Level System** that helps us assess student progress and determine readiness for transition to a less restrictive educational environment. At the conclusion of each class period, students receive feedback regarding the level of support they require, based on our Independence Rating Scale Rubric.

This data is tracked and compiled on a **weekly, bi-quarterly, and quarterly** basis and is shared at IEP meetings to visually demonstrate each student's progress toward their individualized goals. Weekly data sheets also help students monitor their own growth and progress toward desired outcomes. The data collected from daily charting is then tied into the program's level system, which serves as documentation of the success students achieve in acquiring and using the social/emotional skills and knowledge required for them to be successful in school. There are four (4) levels in Fisher's behavior management system. All incoming students begin on Level 1. Movement up or down the four (4) levels in the level system is based on earned points. Students earn points each class period for following The Fisher Flags Schoolwide Behavior Expectations Matrix. The criteria for earning points is taught to all new students upon their arrival into the program. The level system appears in Appendix A of this document.

Returning to Your Home School

Joseph E. Fisher School is committed to equipping every student with the skills necessary to successfully return to their home school.

Each student's transition timeline is unique and depends on several key factors: the student's ability to recognize and address challenges, make necessary behavioral and academic changes, accept staff support, and express a desire to return. In some cases, students have chosen to remain at Joseph E. Fisher School even after being offered the opportunity to transition back. The opportunity to participate in mainstreaming is not automatic. A consensus decision that this step is in the best interest of a student must be reached by the therapeutic staff, district staff, and the parents prior to mainstreaming. When a student demonstrates readiness to begin transitioning, the IEP team will convene to evaluate the student's progress and determine the appropriate next steps—whether that involves starting classes at their home school or moving to another less restrictive environment.



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Evaluating Mainstreaming Success

If a student attends mainstream classes in the morning, that student must meet the above criteria for the afternoon at Joseph E. Fisher School or transportation arrangements will be made for him/her to attend Fisher School the next morning. If a student is not able to maintain successful progress in either of the two settings, the team will reconvene to determine the appropriateness of continued mainstreaming.

Students are eligible for placement at Joseph Fisher School Program between Kindergarten and Junior High School.

Students are eligible for mainstreaming consideration once they have reached a level of daily functioning within the program that demonstrates the ability to participate in a regular education program for a portion of the school day. This consideration for mainstreaming in a regular education setting will be based on one or more of the following:

1. A change in student profile which includes significant improvement in the student's ability to:
 - a. develop or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers
 - b. to develop or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with school personnel.
 - c. display appropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances or in response to the learning environment
2. Progress with identified goals and objectives. (Typically, this would mean achieving individual targets independently at a 85% level or above on a consistent basis).
3. Percentages of positive behavior reports as determined by program management criteria
4. Academic achievement in subject areas being considered outside of the therapeutic classroom.

Mainstreaming provides the opportunity for a student to move towards his/her least restrictive environment in which they will continue to grow socially, emotionally, and academically.

Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is an integral part of the Joseph E. Fisher Program. The evaluation process may consist of many different methods of information collection, including but not limited to questionnaires, scales, observations, tasks, and interviews. All data collected is completely confidential and individual student data is not identified or analyzed. The information gathered is not used for planning for individual students but rather for information regarding general groups of students who attend the school. The data collected may be used in the following ways:

- To evaluate the effectiveness of the current program and practices



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- To understand student family, and staff characteristics and needs
- To further research knowledge of children and families with special needs
- To plan new program components in order to meet the identified needs of our students, families, and staff.

Behavior Management System

Our purpose is to teach the students in the program appropriate behaviors necessary for success within the program as well as for possible reintegration into a mainstream setting. To accomplish this, every classroom utilizes a behavior management system.

Within the behavioral system, we specify and define the kinds of appropriate behaviors in which we want the student to engage (for example: following classroom directions, handling feelings appropriately, task completion, being respectful, maintaining physical control, as well as goals identified on the child's IEP, and behaviors seen in the classroom setting). Periodically throughout the school day, we give students feedback in the form of praise, behavior Booster Bucks and bonus points. The bonus points are tallied on a daily basis and exchanged for various privileges and the ability to further advance on the level system.

Behavior Management System Structure

The Fisher School Behavior Management Program is academically, behaviorally, and emotionally focused. The behavioral/emotional management of the program is highly structured and utilizes a race car format. Reinforcers and consequences are predetermined and consistent.

Following each classroom activity, positive points are assigned to each child for their adherence to classroom expectations and target behaviors during that activity. Each child may earn one point across four different goal areas within each classroom subject or activity. Data is taken within the following categories: following directions, work completion, and two personal goals that are tied to specific interventions determined by therapeutic staff and/or the student's Behavior Intervention Plan. If a student needs more than a specified number of reminders appropriate to their respective grade-level within a class period and/or activity within any specific category, then they will not earn their points for that area.

In the event that a student engages in severe physical aggression, major elopement, or any other serious behavioral infraction noted within the level system, they will earn a **black flag**. Black flags result in a drop to Level 1, Day 1 on the behavior system.

Daily Assignment Sheets



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Ongoing communication between parents/guardians and school is an integral component of the program. A daily point sheet is provided daily through a digital folder for parents to review. Some guidelines for understanding and discussing your child's point sheet include:

- Reviewing the teacher comment section
- Looking at your student's overall daily flags to analyze progress towards their goals. Check for assignments marked as homework for your child to finish
- Look for certain time periods and/or subjects that your child experienced opportunities and successes.

While we encourage students to aim for all four points during each instructional period, we understand that it is developmentally appropriate for children to experience challenges. As such, it is expected that students may receive less than the maximum number of points (4) per class period. We use these moments as opportunities to help students develop coping strategies and build resilience, supporting them in responding to difficulties more effectively over time.

The purpose of the program is not to place the responsibility on parents to discipline students for not earning the required number of points to earn their day and/or a black flag. Rather, it is designed to reinforce positive behavior and support students in making appropriate choices. The program includes opportunities for students to earn positive experiences through active participation and growth. Our goal is to partner with families to celebrate student successes while collaboratively addressing any significant or ongoing challenges.

Fisher Program Positive Reinforcers

BOOSTER BUCKS

Earned for:

- Staying on task
- Helping others
- Using calming tools
- Being kind
- Working with a team

Rewards:

- Snacks, desk pets, break time rewards, prizes
- Pajama Day, movie afternoons
- Lunch with an adult, decorate a ceiling tile



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SUPER CHECKERED FLAG DAY

Students who have earned a checkered flag day (100% day) may:

- Pick an item or activity from the Fisher Store or classroom prize box

CHECKERED FLAG DAY

Students who have earned the appropriate percentage of points (70% for Level 1; 75% for Level 2; 80% for Level 3; and, 85% for Level 4) necessary based on the level system criteria and who have no black flags have earned a checkered flag day. This results in:

- 20 minutes of free time at the end of the day

WINNER'S CIRCLE WEEK

Students who have earned all their points for the previous school week. Students must be in attendance 4 out of 5 days and have no unexcused absences.

- Borrow a special chair from teacher or another adult
- Classwork pass good for 1 assignment
- 10 bonus points for an assignment
- Phone call home to tell parent of Winner's Circle Week
- Popcorn Party for class
- 10 extra minutes of free time in the classroom
- Morning announcements on Friday with the Principal
- Principal/office/classroom helper

GASOLINE ALLEY

Friday afternoon will be time to park your cars for a tune up and celebrate the victories of the week. Students will spend free time in the Social Room, Playground, and multi-purpose room starting at 2:00 p.m. based on the following behavior criteria:

- Students who have earned 80% of their day on $\frac{4}{5}$ days will earn 30 minutes
- Students who have earned 80% on $\frac{3}{5}$ days will earn 20 minutes
- Students who have earned 80% on $\frac{2}{5}$ days will earn 10 minutes
- Students who have earned 80% on $\frac{1}{5}$ days will earn 5 minutes

Students on Level 4 will be eligible to pick their activity and snack first

Students who have not earned any time at Gasoline Alley for the week may read, draw, color, or work on any missing work that they may have.

Consequences

Students who have had a problem with physical aggression during the day will not earn social interaction time. Students who have not earned due to physical aggression will process with the



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social worker, behavior interventionist, and/or principal. Once finished, they may participate in a structured activity in the break room, but will not be allowed to attend Gasoline Alley for the week.

Any incidents of physical aggression during will result in removal from the activity, a black flag, and a conference with either the behavior interventionist, therapist, or principal.

Additional Behavior Management Systems

Some students will not be successful within the daily behavioral management system. For these students an alternative program must be individualized to motivate them for success. Program individualization is accomplished at team meetings. At a team meeting, a student's program may be changed to help him/her become more successful. These changes may include, but are not limited to: contingency contracts, changes in student's target behaviors, change in reinforcement schedule and rewards, etc. As part of the process in evaluating the reason for lack of progress, the Fisher School Behavior Specialist will facilitate Functional Behavior Assessments for students which will include assessing learning environments through classroom observation. We will attempt to determine precipitating factors and causes to help determine appropriate interventions.

Crisis Intervention

At a point in time that a student is struggling to fully engage in classroom instruction due to emotional distress or unmanageable behavior concerns, additional intervention techniques ~~that~~ follow may be implemented may be implemented as outlined below:

- The interventionist may provide in-class support to help the student re-engage.
- The interventionist may meet with the student to collaboratively develop a plan for reintegration into classroom activities.
- Instruction may be temporarily provided in an alternative setting, under the supervision of the interventionist, to support student regulation.
- The interventionist may guide the student through calming strategies to support emotional regulation.
- The behavior interventionist or social worker may provide therapeutic support to help the student process the situation and regain emotional stability.

The interventionist will document interventions and student responses during escalated situations to support behavioral analysis. This data will be used by the therapeutic team to effectively plan for and respond to student needs.

Physical Management



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At Joseph E. Fisher School, we are committed to maintaining a safe, supportive, and respectful environment for all students and staff. In alignment with the Illinois State Board of Education and Nonviolent Crisis Intervention® principles from the Crisis Prevention Institute, physical intervention is used only **as a last resort**, when all other de-escalation strategies have been attempted and determined ineffective, and when safety is imminently at risk.

Physical restraint may be considered under the following circumstances:

- When a student's behavior presents an imminent risk of harm to self or others, and less restrictive interventions have been unsuccessful.
- When a student is physically aggressive or self-injurious, physical restraint may be used as a safety intervention to prevent injury, in accordance with ISBE rules and CPI training guidelines.

Documentation and Notification Procedures:

- Any time a student is physically managed or restrained, staff must complete an Incident/Physical Intervention Report and submit it to the office before the end of the workday.
- The student's parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified within 24 hours, and a copy of the incident report will be provided.
- The intervention and incident will be reviewed by the therapeutic team to ensure appropriate follow-up support and planning.

All physical interventions are carried out by trained staff in accordance with CPI-certified techniques, ensuring student dignity and safety are upheld at all times.

Physical Aggression

It is vital that the staff conceptualizes and communicates to the students that the consequences for an aggressive act are a way of ensuring safety for everyone in our school. By focusing on the value of safety rather than on the punishment, we will be better able to maintain a therapeutic attitude and environment. Consistency in implementing these procedures will hopefully result in students perceiving staff as fair and just, and ultimately help to develop a trusting relationship with students.

Types of Aggression

- Aggression towards a person
- Aggression against the environment

Both types of aggression will result in the loss of all daily earned social interaction time and a conference with the behavior interventionist, therapist, or principal.



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Severe Physical Aggression

Severe physical aggression is defined as a willful and deliberate act of violence with the intent to harm. In the case of severe physical aggression, the following actions may be taken:

- Immediate removal to the break room or safer area within the building
- Parent contact
- Suspension
 - Toward staff – Assault charges will be filed as appropriate to age of student
 - Toward student – Parents of the student will be notified, and given an option of filing assault charges
- If necessary, and all other options are exhausted, a 911 call for first responder intervention (Police/EMS)

Suspension Policy

An out-of-school suspension may occur at the discretion of the building administrator when any of the following occurs:

1. The student is in possession of any type of contraband (weapons, cigarettes, alcohol, or illegal drugs). Possession of any of these contraband items, with the exception of cigarettes, will automatically result in police contact.
2. The student strikes, kicks, pushes, or engages in an aggressive act against a staff member.
3. The student engages in severely aggressive or endangering behavior against another student.
4. The student engages in threatening language or gestures suggesting physical harm toward a staff member or another student.
5. The student engages in gross verbal assault of another student or staff member.
6. The student engages in behaviors dangerous to the safety of others
7. The student receives an in-school suspension but refuses to begin serving it or refuses to serve it appropriately.

Only the building principal/administrator, SOWIC Executive Director, and/or SOWIC Assistant Director may issue an out-of-school suspension. The number of suspension days will depend on the nature of the offense.

All out-of-school suspensions will be in accordance with the Southern Will County Cooperative for Special Education Policy for Suspension/Expulsion of Special Education Students.

I. The Local School District shall be responsible for ensuring that children who require special education services enjoy the same rights and privileges as all other children.



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A. A child determined eligible for a special education instructional or resource program or related service shall not be expelled for behavior resulting from an exceptional characteristic, as defined in Article 14 of the School Code.

B. A special education student may be suspended by the authorized administrator if exclusion from school is warranted due to the student posing a physical danger to themselves, other students, faculty, or school property. During the period of temporary exclusion, the resident school district is responsible for developing an appropriate educational program for the student.

C. A special education student may be suspended for only up to ten (10) school days regardless of whether it was a manifestation of a student's disability. For days 11+, a Manifestation Determination Review must be conducted.

III. Suspension Procedures

Prior to any action, the IEP team shall ascertain whether the student under consideration for suspension is a special education student eligible for services.

For students under consideration for suspension who do not pose an immediate threat, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. A pre-suspension conference will be held in which the authorized administrator shall confer with the student prior to any disciplinary action.
2. The student, parents, and home school district will be advised of the proposed suspension and the supporting evidence. The student will be given the opportunity to respond.
3. The authorized administrator shall make a written record of the conference.
4. The authorized administrator will consult with appropriate special education personnel familiar with the student to determine whether the behavior was a manifestation of the student's disability or related to the inappropriateness of the current placement.

If the conduct **was not** a manifestation of the student's disability, the student may be suspended in accordance with Section III, D. No educational service will be provided during this time; however, the student may make up finals, or the equivalent, if scheduled during the suspension.

If the conduct **was a** manifestation of the student's disability, the student may be suspended as outlined in Section III, D. During the suspension, the home school district shall provide alternative educational services, and the student will receive credit for completed work.

In cases where the authorized administrator believes the student poses an immediate threat to themselves, school personnel, other students, or property, the student may be summarily removed from school without a pre-suspension conference. However, the following procedures must be followed:



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1. Written notice shall be sent by registered mail, return receipt requested, to the parents informing them and the student of the opportunity to attend a post-suspension conference. Failure to attend constitutes a waiver of the conference.
2. The parents and home school district shall be notified in writing of any subsequent disciplinary decision, regardless of attendance at the post-suspension conference.

III. Suspension Notification

If a suspension is decided upon at a pre- or post-suspension conference, the parents and home school district shall be immediately informed by written notice sent via registered mail, return receipt requested.

The notice shall include:

1. A statement of the reasons for suspension, including the specific school rule(s) violated;
2. The dates and duration of the suspension;
3. A statement of the parents' rights to request a review hearing with the Board of Education or its designated hearing officer;
4. A statement indicating that failure to request a review within 5 days of receipt of the notice, or 8 days after the mailing date (whichever is earlier), will constitute a waiver of that right;
5. Notification of the right to be represented at the hearing by an attorney or other representative;
6. A copy of the suspension review hearing procedures.

A request to review the suspension may be made orally or in writing to the principal's office. Oral requests shall be confirmed in writing. If a request is made, written notice of the date, time, and location of the hearing will be provided at least one week in advance.

The authorized administrator shall forward a copy of the suspension notice to the superintendent or secretary of the Board of Education of the student's home district attendance center.



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APPENDIX A: FISHER PROGRAM LEVEL SYSTEM

Fisher Program Level System with Descriptions

LEVEL 1: GETTING ON TRACK (MINIMUM OF) 10 DAYS	LEVEL 2: BUILDING MOMENTUM (MINIMUM OF) 15 DAYS	LEVEL 3: GAINING INDEPENDENCE (MINIMUM OF) 20 DAYS	LEVEL 4: READY, SET, GO! (MINIMUM OF) 25 DAYS
RESPONSIBILITIES: • Average Daily Point Sheet score of 70% or higher • No major physical aggression incidents (Black Flags will result in a loss of the current day) PRIVILEGES: • Personal break time at desk • Can earn Fisher Booster Bucks for the school store. • Level 1 School Store Items • Free time at desk (after all academic work is completed) • Academic break (if work is completed) • Incentives if all work is completed *If your day is not earned, you may choose to read, color, write, draw, or work on any missing work during Free Time.	RESPONSIBILITIES: • Average Daily Point Sheet score of 75% or higher • Passing all core classes (C or better) • Participation in school or classroom job (e.g., peer helper) • No major physical aggression incidents (Black Flags will result in a drop to Level 2, Day 1) PRIVILEGES: • Ability to shop for Level 2 items at school store with staff supervision • Able to work with a partner with staff permission • Free time away from desk • May ask to assist with additional school/classroom jobs if all work is completed • May participate in morning announcements with the Principal or secretary *If your day is not earned, you may choose to read, color, write, draw, or work on any missing work during Free Time.	RESPONSIBILITIES: • No black flags and no major behavior referrals (major incidents of physical aggression result in a level drop to Level 1, Day 1) • Average Daily Point Sheet score of 80% or higher • Passing all core classes (C or better) • Positive peer and staff interactions; role modeling expected behaviors PRIVILEGES: • All Level 1 & 2 privileges • Ability to shop for Level 3 items at school store with staff supervision • Ability to choose free time/activity before students on Levels 1 & 2 • May choose preferred seat during group time • Invitation to participate in lunchtime leadership group or goal-setting check-ins • Able to use computer during free time • May participate in morning announcements with the Principal or secretary *If your day is not earned, you may choose to read, color, write, draw, or work on any missing work during Free Time.	RESPONSIBILITIES: • Write a letter to your home school with the principal, teacher, or social worker • Average Daily Point Sheet score of 85% or higher • No black flags or major disciplinary referrals • Demonstrate all behaviors of Level 3 • Demonstrates independence, regulation, and serves as a role model within the classroom • Possible transition planning meeting for reintegration or increased mainstreaming PRIVILEGES: • All Level 1–2–3 privileges • Ability to shop for Level 4 items at school store • Eligible to purchase monthly classroom activity • Possible discussion of mainstreaming • May participate in morning announcements with the Principal or secretary *If your day is not earned, you may choose to read, color, write, draw, or work on any missing work during Free Time.