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Exploratory Application of a Sensory Activity Schedule in Head Start Preschool

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Background

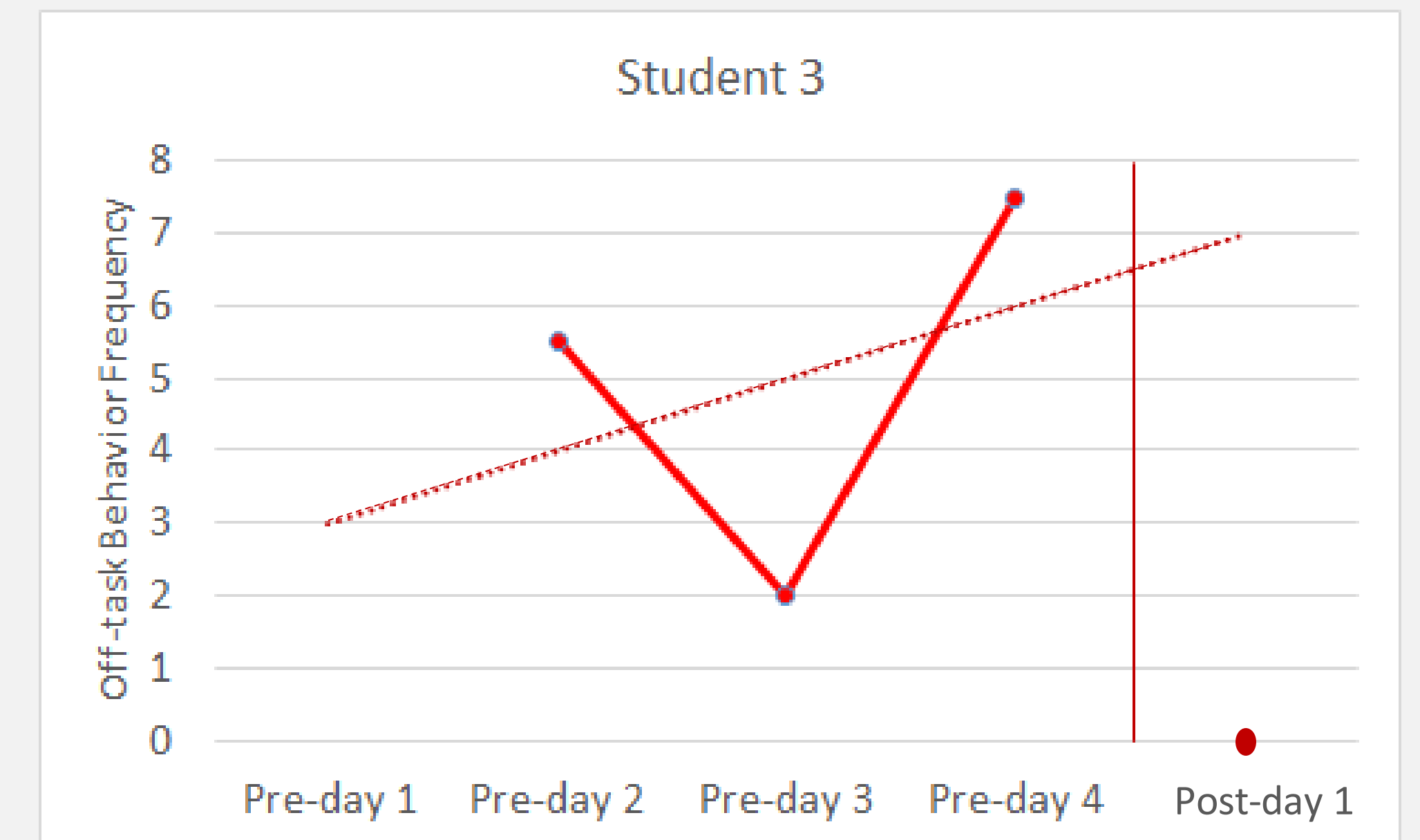
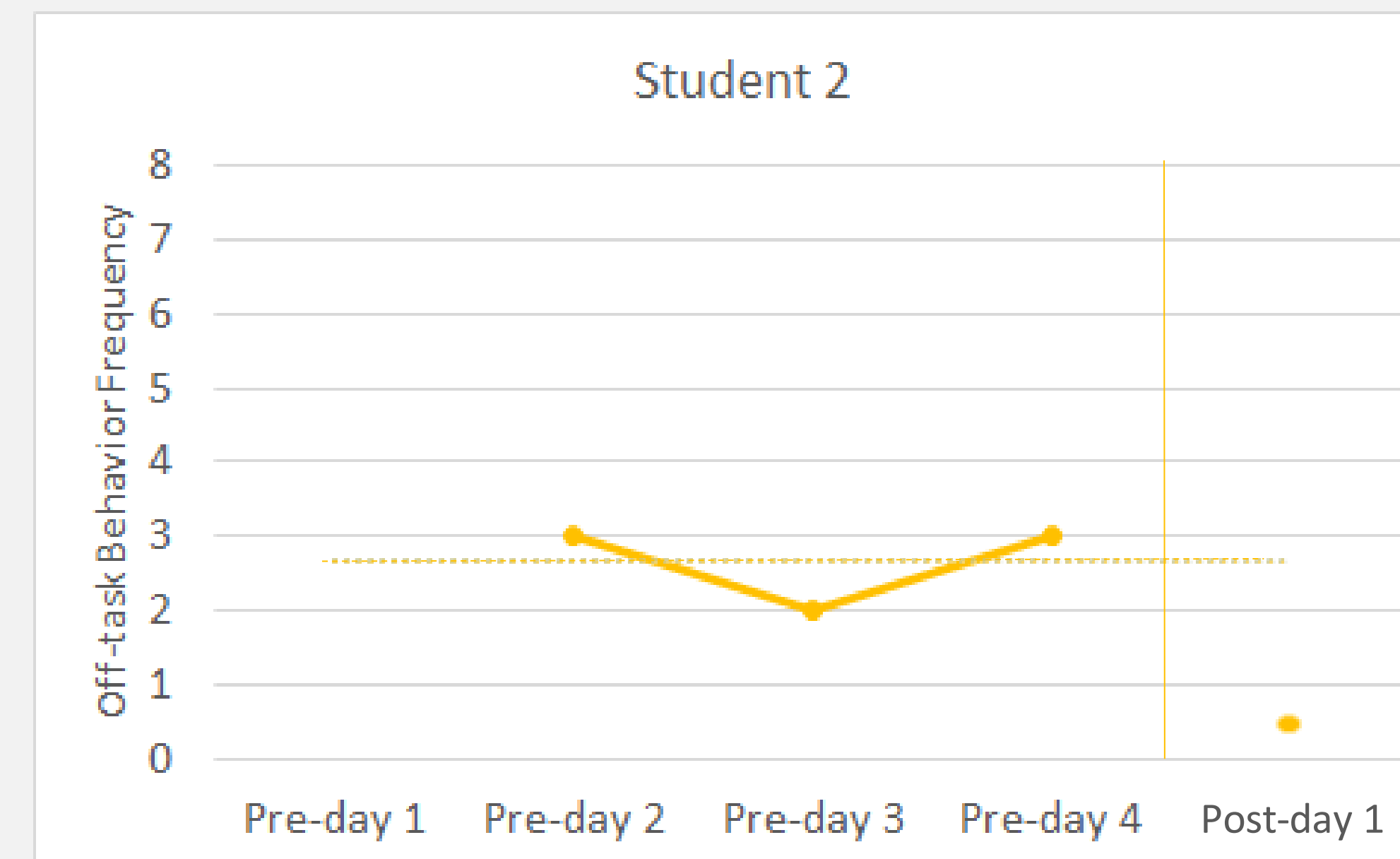
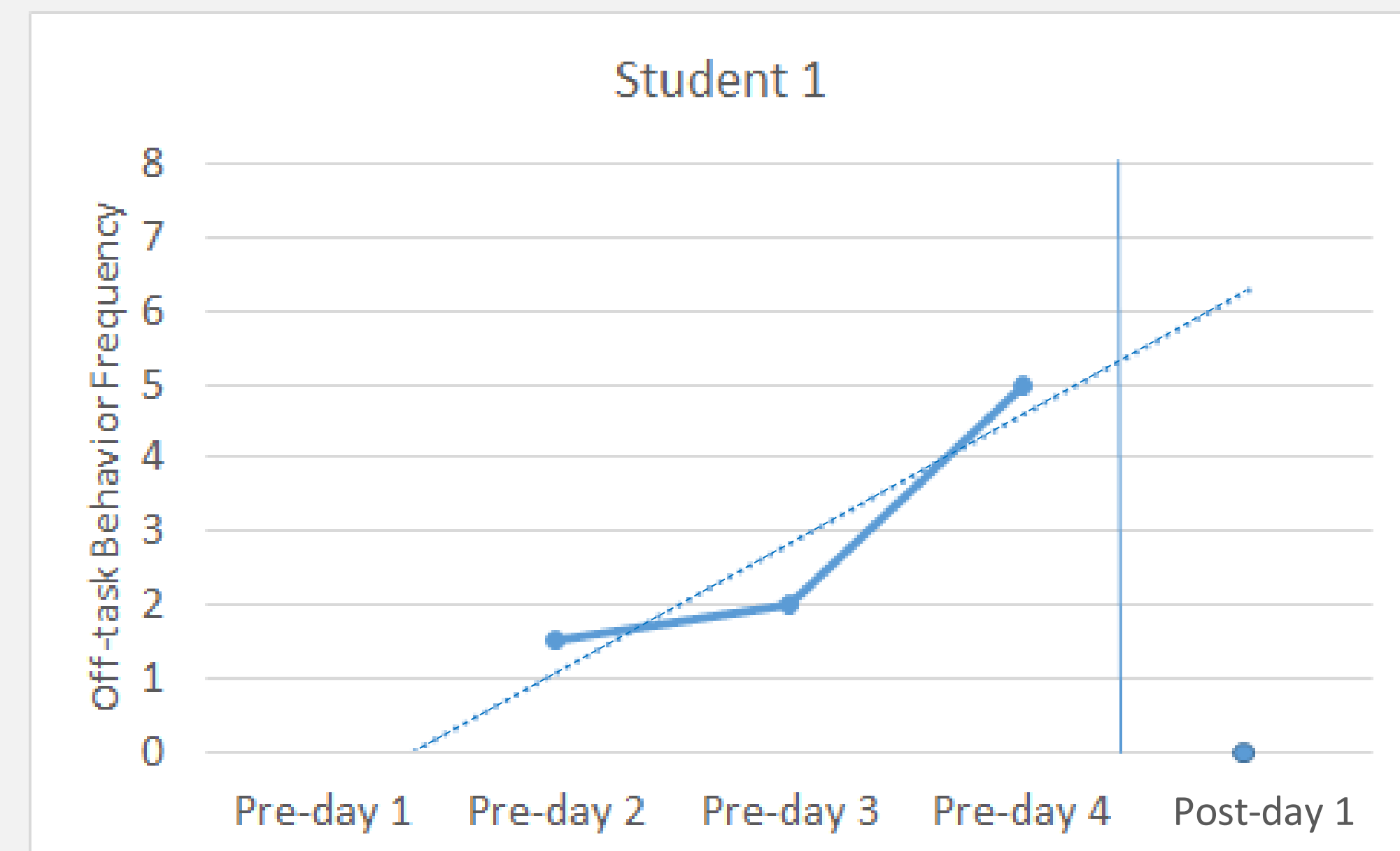
Low income children are at high risk to develop sensory integration dysfunction (SID) (Ben-Sasson, Carter & Briggs-Gowan, 2009). SID is a term used to describe an atypical response to sensory input that affects participation in occupation (Ayes, 2005). Sensory diets are prescribed sensory rich activities incorporated into daily routines in order to improve performance in people with SID (Wilbarger, 1995).

Sensory activity schedules (SAS) are based on the sensory diet concept adapted to fit in the classroom (Mills, Chapparo, & Hinitt, 2016). Mills, Chapparo and Hinitt (2016) report SAS to be effective in improving on-task behavior of children with ASD and ID.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a SAS will increase the on-task behaviors of Head Start preschool students.

Hypothesis: SAS will increase on-task behavior of three Head Start preschool children.

Off-Task Behavior Frequency Time Sampling Data



Data Collection: Frequency of off-task behaviors pre and post-implementation of SAS.

*Pre-day 1 data point was excluded due to high frequency of off-task behavior attributed to researchers' novel presence.

Themes from Follow-Up Interview with Head Teacher

Program Timing

Scheduling conflicts between Head Start and researchers resulted in decreased training and implementation phase time.

Culture

Cultural disconnect and language barrier between teaching staff and research students weakened rapport.

Classroom Dynamics

Lack of positive classroom dynamics between the head teacher and teacher aides resulted in inconsistent implementation of SAS.

"It would have been beneficial if you would had started last semester and came into the classroom, be around the parents to build that rapport, and be a part of the classroom culture before beginning your study."

Methods

Design: Exploratory quantitative multiple single subject design with a qualitative follow-up interview.

Teacher Training: Instructions on utilization of visual sensory activity board and demonstration of sensory activities.

Intervention: Researcher-led sensorimotor activities performed by the students prior to circle time.

Follow-up interview with Head Start

Teacher: Identify themes related to success and barriers of the SAS implementation.

Results

Quantitative Results: Decrease of off-task behavior from pre-implementation to post-implementation phase indicates improvement in on-task behavior supporting the efficacy of SAS.

Off-task behavior decreased from the baseline to intervention phase for all 3 children. The SAS did appear to decrease off-task behavior. However, only one intervention point was observed.

Implications

SAS may be a useful tool for children at risk for SID for improving school participation.

More research is needed on effectiveness of SAS in a classroom including: a larger sample size, longer implementation period, and creation of an implementation training protocol.

Conducting a needs assessment before finalizing site selection is essential to understanding potential assets and barriers to successful SAS implementation in the classroom.

Acknowledgements

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