5-2013

The Relationship Between Positive Behavior Support and Task Completion in the Elementary School Setting

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https://doi.org/10.33015/dominican.edu/2013.edu.06

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

School of Education and Counseling Psychology

Dominican University of California

San Rafael, CA

April 2013

Acknowledgements

 I would like to thank all of those who have helped me discover new research interests. First, are the faculty and staff at Dominican University of California: Dr. Billye Brown, Dr. Rande Webster, Dr. Elizabeth Truesdell, and most of all Dr. Madalienne Peters. All of these amazing women have helped mold me into the educator I am today and spent countless hours helping me develop a research topic and final paper. Next, are the many personal supports I have had during this last year. The friends and family members who have helped in every other aspect of my life helped me get me to where I am today. Finally, and most importantly are the students and staff I have worked with over the years. The master teachers and mentors, the colleagues who have helped motivate me to become the best possible teacher. I am so thankful for the kiddos who have needed additional support and motivation which inspired me to do this work, and which will continue to help me find better ways to reach them. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart. Without you, this would not have been possible.

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Abstract

In many elementary schools in low-income neighborhoods, students face many everyday challenges that prevent them from developing habits of successful achievement. Children often exhibit a lack of motivation regarding task completion. Positive behavior support enhances task completion in the elementary school setting. The purpose of this study is to find successful tools teachers can use to promote academic task completion. Students in an elementary school classroom received instruction on task completion and specific interventions to use. They were then evaluated in the math subject area for the number of tasks completed during a one month time period. Different groups of students were given various motivational tools to help develop self-efficacy. One successful tool was created and studied. Results indicated that providing students with positive behavior support can influence the completion of a variety of tasks in the academic setting.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Working in an impoverished community with parents who have limited exposure to education, provides one with a glimpse into the various problems that can arise for students and their hinder motivation to complete assignments. In one particular neighborhood school in Northern California, the percentage of students' parents who have completed seventh grade or higher is approximately 30%. The percentage drops to around 10% for parents with higher education. These statistics dramatically correlate to the learning that is achieved for the students. With a lack of motivation, students do not continue to achieve at a level that prepares them for their own future education.

Students, who live in these urban settings, typically have other familial obligations that take precedence over their academics. As students begin to develop, the typical behavior support strategies taught in the teacher credentialing process no longer work. Students and teachers must instead work together and be creative to find motivational tools that enhance learning.

Statement of Problem

By the time students enter the upper grades, they have already heard negative messages about their academic performance. For many of these students, their own parents have dropped out of school. They do not have the positive role models in their families to encourage them to make an effort in school. It may be more effective for teachers to examine past tools and strategies that have worked to motivate and encourage students to complete their work. Identifying the strategies that can help students become more successful may enhance the longevity of a student's academic career.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to find successful and practical positive behavior supports both

students and teachers can use in the upper elementary school grades to maximize a child's

educational benefit in the academic setting. Most teachers who teach multiple subjects do not

have the time and effort available to continually create individualized behavior support plans.

Research Questions

The research questions are: What tools currently exist that will help students with task

completion? Which of these tools will work most effectively in an urban setting with high level

of poverty?

Theoretical Rationale

The motivation to complete a task is learned through experience. Many young students learn

from their parents the importance of completing assignments in a timely manner. However,

students without parental support do not always have the role models necessary to show them the

way.

Bandura (Davidson, 2003) studied social learning theory. According to social learning

theory, we learn to behave through our environment and our behavior. Bandura's theory states

that there is a level of fortuity, making one's own good fortune that people may bring about in

their own life. Students may become motivated to bring about better opportunities for

themselves based upon their own interests and motivation to be successful.

Another portion of Bandura's theory is observational learning. Bandura describes four parts to his theory: attention; symbolic representation; transformation to action; and motivational incentive (Davidson, 2003). Our students may see from their own experiences that there is no instant reward for the completion of high school nor the tasks necessary to earn a high school diploma. For instance, Bandura mentions in the film that, "televised modeling is becoming an influential vehicle" (Davidson, 2003). Television programs for students rarely show students enjoying school and completing assignments. Young children do not have the positive modeling necessary to motivate themselves to complete in-class assignments and homework.

Self-efficacy is a major contributing factor for students wanting to shape their own future via their own actions. Bandura's theory also includes mastery; social modeling; social persuasion; and physical and emotional states to build self-efficacy in all humans (Davidson, 2003). Mastery of certain skills and behaviors may be rewarded by a student's environment. Yet, when students do not learn that in order to master something they must work hard and practice, they do not build their own self-efficacy.

Of the students who live in the focus neighborhood, it is challenging for most to become successful in school. Many are rarely successful or do not have the time in class necessary to master skills. Many students play parental roles at home, and since a huge contributing factor to practice is independent practice through homework, the students are not able to complete homework and thus are not successful in their academics. They quickly lose the motivation to continue advancing academically. In addition, social modeling does not play an influential role in the students' lives. Since their relatives were rarely successful in school, it is not positively reinforced that they, too, need to be successful in school.

Bandura's theory that social persuasion can influence a person's self-efficacy is almost never present in today's low-income schools. Due to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), many teachers are given only a short window of time to help students reach the mastery of a skill. Pacing guides have been implemented to ensure that all teachers are being held accountable for teaching the state's content standards. Thus, students who struggle in school are quickly left behind without the necessary building blocks to develop future skills and build a foundation of knowledge.

Finally, Bandura mentions that stress, fatigue, and depression lower self-efficacy and with it academic achievement (Davidson, 2003). The home environment for many families living at or below the poverty level provides unnecessary stress for children. Students who see their relatives join gangs become depressed. Students who do not have enough food to eat or do not have beds to sleep in become fatigued. This yields high stress.

Efficacy influences the way students regulate their own cognitive, motivational, emotional, and decision making functioning (Davidson, 2003). It influences how they feel about themselves, motivate themselves to complete difficult challenges, and set goals for their future.

Assumptions

Assumptions regarding the area of motivation and task completion, bring up the ideas that students who are of a lower socio economic status may be less motivated due to their parents' lack of education or employment. Often times, however, very often parents who grew up in poverty wish to break the cycle of poverty for their children and do everything they can to motivate their children. In addition, various non-profit groups move into low-income neighborhoods and provide support for these students to ensure their success in school.

Reaching all of the students and ensuring that all students become successful completing assignments now, does not necessarily mean that they will continue their future education through high school, nor does it mean that these students will be any more likely to break the cycle of poverty in their family.

Background and Need

Researchers and psychologists have spent their lives studying behavior and what it takes to change behaviors. B. F. Skinner and Albert Bandura both studied ways in which human behavior can be changed and fostered. Skinner developed the theory that students will complete tasks in order to receive positive reinforcement. During school, the positive reinforcement is the completion of the assignment either because students feel the sense of accomplishment, earn the reward or points, or get to choose the following activity or behavior after completing an assignment. Students know that if they choose to not complete an assignment there will be a negative consequence that should be avoided (Fudge, 2001).

This theory has been studied many times over to determine exactly what helps students receive the positive reinforcement they desire during academic activities. Ault and Griffen (2013) also provide examples of the ways in which students and teachers can work together to limit the amount of reinforcement over time.

In addition, Bandura studied what motivates students internally to complete assignments. His theory of observational learning provides support regarding students who see the positive reinforcement; that they will want to continue to receiving the rewards thus completing their work. There are many factors that have since been studied to help provide insight into the ways in which students begin to develop their own self-efficacy thus influencing their motivation to

complete tasks in school. Not only are there supports that need to be provided at the school level, but also there are also significant factors that need to be implemented in the home. Research by Axelrod, Zhe, Haugen and Klein (2009) examines the supports that can be supported with limited monitoring by guardians in the home.

Summary

Behavior is learned. Students watch those around them and replicate the learned behavior. They also track their own behavior, and learn how to manipulate their environment for their own benefit. Students who do not have family role models that were successful in school may follow that path in their own school setting.

Classroom teachers are asked to provide a model, beyond a teacher model, but also a parent model for behavior with only five hours a day to work with everyone in their class. Using positive behavior support strategies maximizes teacher's time in actually teaching.

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

Review of Academic Research

In review of all academic research in the areas regarding motivation, task completion, and on-task behavior, a couple common threads emerge. Since much research points toward a direct relationship between task-completion and on-task behavior, all must be considered as part of this study.

On-Task Behavior

On-task behavior can be defined as, "expected behavior at that moment on that particular task" (NH Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities, 2008). In a classroom, students spend time working, or on-task, and time looking around, socializing, and participating in various off-task, or choice, behaviors. As such, teachers work to ensure that students have all of the necessary tools and strategies to maximize their time-on-task.

The longer students are on-task, the more likely they are to want to engage in off-task behaviors. Authors Cates and Erkfritz (2007) examined the effect of Skinner's discrete task completion hypothesis as a way to continue to motivate students to complete longer tasks. The study identified a problem when students prefer assignments that include interspersed easier problems to those that are full of harder problems. When assignments are interspersed with easier problems, the accuracy of problems solved is equal when comparing only difficult problems or difficult problems with interspersing of easier problems.

The purpose of the study was to determine if interspersing improves math task completion in eighth grade students. The sample group included 70 middle school students in

sixth, seventh, or eighth grade math courses at a mid-west school. The instruments used in the study were nine page packets of math computation problems. Each student was given directions verbally to complete each worksheet within a given time and then bubble whether they would prefer similar homework assignments.

Quantitative information was collected via assessments and student responses to favorability of work. The information was organized into charts of student responses. The key findings are that students prefer work that is interspersed with easier problems on a worksheet with the same number of more challenging problems. This information is important to consider because the preference of work directly determines whether or not students will complete the task. The psychology of the assessment influences their own perception of their abilities when completing assignments.

In addition, Kraemer, Davies, Arndt, and Hunley (2012) examined two different positive behavior supports including "Get 'Em On Task" computerized system and Mystery Motivator. "Get 'Em On Task" is a computerized system that generates a "beep" that signals the teacher to give points to on-task students earning a reward they establish as a class. The mystery motivator is a reward chart that students can earn points towards as a whole class for targeted positive behaviors. As the teacher noticed the behaviors, students would be able to color in a mystery chart. If an "M" showed up, they would get a whole class reward for the behavior. The purpose of the study was to determine the success of these two positive behavior supports in general education classrooms. The sample group was two fifth grade classrooms in a suburban school district. The sample size is fifty students, twenty-five in each class. The instruments used in the study were the two support systems and data collection. The information was collected via fifteen-minute time samples over a two-week period. The information was organized

quantitative data measuring the effectiveness of the two different programs. This study determined both systems to be successful in decreasing off-task behavior while "Get 'Em On Task" was significantly more successful with these fifth grade students. Both of these positive behavior rewards systems are important to consider when attempting to motivate students to be on-task more often to ensure they are able to complete a task.

A final look at on-task behavior was reviewed by Umbreit, Lane, and Dejud (2004). They examined the effect of challenging students with more difficult tasks in order to increase on-task behavior. The identified problem was students receive assignments that are too difficult or too easy and quickly engage in off-task behaviors and do not complete work. Or, they do thoroughly and accurately complete an assignment and spend the rest of the allotted time not working, and, instead, engaging in choice behaviors.

The purpose of the study was to determine if increasing the difficulty of the assignment would have a positive relationship between the time on-task. The sample student was a ten-year-old boy who exhibited disruptive behaviors in the classroom. The instruments used in the study were interviews and one student study. In interviews with the teachers and the student, the student agreed that the function of the off-task behaviors was the reward he received for getting free time from completing assignments quickly. The quantitative data was organized and displayed in a chart indicating that there is an increase in on-task behavior when the more challenging tasks were presented to this student. The key findings are that increasing the difficulty of some tasks will in fact increase the amount on-task, yet according to the first two authors, the challenging assignments should include some interspersed easier problems.

Self-Management Techniques

Self-management techniques are the various strategies humans use to monitor their own behaviors. For children, these include the various systems put in place by the teacher such as behavior checklists, lists of assignments, and behavior charts. Many of these tools take a lot of teacher preparation and monitoring throughout the school day. This can take away from a student's instructional time. Since keeping students on-task is the primary reason for self-monitoring techniques, it is beneficial for there to be minimal teacher support necessary for students to use these tools.

Supporting this theory are Ramdass and Zimmerman, (2011), who examined the importance of homework to develop self-regulation skills in the early grades. The authors identified the lack of research in the area of developing self-regulation in order to complete homework and learn the important skills necessary to increase the success of homework in high school. The purpose of the study was to determine the benefits of homework by grade level compared to the psychological development of children's self-regulation skills. The sample group included seventeen classrooms including third through fifth grades. The strategy used in the study were professional development training for nine of the teachers in developing self-regulation strategies in the elementary grades and data collection.

Information was collected via student survey, teacher survey, and homework completion. The information was organized qualitative information to assist teachers in planning homework assignments to best benefit their student population. Key findings are that elementary teachers should assign easy tasks to students as homework, primarily teaching self-regulation skills at this level. In addition, teachers should help students by providing them a checklist including, "(a) the

time students started and completed homework, (b) how they motivated themselves during homework completion, and (c) how they avoided distractions," (Ramdass et al, 2011, p. 213). Developing self-regulation strategies early will also help students develop self-efficacy necessary to help students remain motivated in school.

Stornes, Bru and Idsoe (2008) also examined self-monitoring through the relationship between motivational climate and social structure of schools. They identified the lack of evidence of the effect of motivational climate and social structure in the classroom. This study was developed to test whether students had a higher motivational climate if the teacher was more autonomous and involved in their learning, compared to a teacher who was less autonomous. The sample group included eighth grade Norwegian students. The study gathered information on the students' perceptions of their teachers' involvement, autonomy, and regulation in their classroom and how it influenced their own motivational climate in the classroom.

The information was collected via a forty-five minute survey completed with 87% success by all eighth grade students. The information was organized quantitative data. The key findings are that students feel that a teacher's involvement in the classroom and the content leads better to mastery and less to performance. In addition, students feel more inclined to attribute teacher involvement more to regulation than autonomy support to regulation. This study connects to this thesis because it is important to find out how and why students will want to perform in a classroom. Without the understanding of what motivates students to complete assignments outside of intrinsic motivation, it is hard to develop the most useful strategies to increase task completion.

Task Completion

Task completion is the goal of all instructional exercises for students. It is the completion of a task given by a teacher. Teachers create various assignments to increase the student's understanding of a various topic. The completion of this assignment provides evidence that the student has either mastered the topic or needs additional review. If these tasks do not get completed, the student may not have the practice he or she needs to have mastered the concept being taught.

Ault and Griffen (2013) examined the use of System with Least Prompts (SLP) to teach a task. They identified the problem to be teacher's use of SLP and the amount of time it takes to graph and use the data in the current SLP model. The article explains another way to graph the teaching of a task while also getting useful information from SLP. The information was organized qualitative information. The new SLP model that provides students with more points for completing tasks with limited prompting and less points for more involved prompting from the teacher. The teacher can then graph the data to see the progress a student is making at learning the task (or completing the task) with limited prompting. This article provides another tool to help students complete tasks. The students must first know how to complete the task and then be rewarded for practicing the task prior to being held accountable for the information gathered from the completed task.

In addition to the Cates and Erkfritz (2007) study, authors Fudge et. al. (2011) examined the theory of positive reinforcement and Skinner's interspersing to enhance task completion. The author identified the problem to be that past studies did not show "applied value" due to the nature of the studies occurring outside the classroom on irrelevant assignments. The purpose of this study was to see if using interspersing would aid in task completion on fourth grade math

assignments. One student, Susan, a 9-year-old referred to the psychologist for off-task behavior was studied. The instruments used were current curriculum workbook pages. The control group received the workbook page unaltered, while the experimental group received half of the normal problems interspersed with "easier" problems. A researcher in the classroom, who monitored Susan's on and off-task behavior, collected the information. The information was organized quantitative data that showed that Susan was more on-task when receiving the experimental worksheets rather than the control worksheets. The key findings are that interspersal benefits both the students and the teachers. Students feel immediate positive reinforcement when completing assignments, thus teachers do not need to provide additional reinforcement nor disperse consequences for student behaviors.

This study connects to this thesis because interspersal does not require considerable teacher prep or work time in order to increase on-task behaviors in the classroom. It is important to find key behavior support strategies that have a maximized benefit compared to the teacher preparation needed for implementation.

Axelrod et. al, (2009) examined the use of current self-management techniques on homework task completion for students with attention deficient hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and emotional or behavior disorders (EBD). This area of study is currently "unexplored". The study was to determine if using self-management techniques would work for students with ADHD to increase the completion of homework assignments. The sample group consisted of five adolescent students (ages 13-16) at a residential facility due to their at-home behavioral needs. All of the students all had two or more diagnoses including ADHD or behavior disorders. Three of the students took psychotropic medications to control their attention problems. The study tracked homework assignments that were deemed complete or incomplete and those results

were recorded.   The information was collected via participant records and observer records of

on-task time during a 1-hour homework block at the home of the residential facility. A tape

recorder played a beep every three or ten minutes to prompt the student and observer to record

whether or not the student was on-task during that time block. The information was organized

quantitative data recording student's on-task behavior using a three or ten minute cue to record

behavior. The key findings show that when students are monitoring their own progress and on-

task behavior during homework time, more homework is completed. Although the study was not

prepared to determine the amount of homework turned in, this study connects to this thesis

because I am attempting to find successful ways to encourage task-completion.

Similarly, Ramsey, Jolivette, Patterson, and Kennedy, (2010) also focused their attention on

students with EBD and replicated a former study using choice as an intervention to increase task-

completion. They also identified the problem to be a lack of research around the area of task-

completion for students with EBD living in a residential setting. The purpose of the study was to

determine whether or not using student choice as an intervention would increase time on task and

task completion. The sample group was five students living in a residential facility with

diagnosed EBD who were also at least two grade levels below in academic performance in

school due to their maladaptive behaviors. The instruments used in the study were time

comparable independent worksheets based upon the current language arts and math curriculum

being taught. The teachers used a Choice and No Choice option to collect data. The information

was collected via teacher and student survey, data collection regarding time on task, and task

completion. The information was organized quantitative data reporting the exact amount of time

on task and percentage of tasks completed and accuracy of those assignments. The key findings

are that there is an increase in task completion and time on task for students with EBD in a

residential facility when they are given choice. More importantly, students prefer to be able to make the choice about which assignments they complete in which order. This helps prepare students for their future of making choices.

Finally, authors Fearrington, McCallum and Skinner (2011) examined the positive effects of Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) when completing math assignments. The problem the author identified was a need for students to become more involved in their work when they have the tools and skills to complete assignments, yet they fail to complete said assignments. The purpose of the study was to determine if SFBC works as a motivator for completing homework assignments in a fifth grade classroom. Students needing interventions due to their lack of task completion were included in this study. These students are identified on the RTI scale as being Tier 2 students needing individualized support to make academic gain.

The students were six inner city fifth grade African American students. The students were deemed by teachers to have the ability to complete the assignments, yet did not. Counseling by a trained SFBC therapist, and reports of individual counseling sessions were compiled for this study. The information was organized as quantitative data of the total percentage of homework completion over the course of eleven weeks. The key findings are that SFBC can be used to help not only emotional and social problems, but can also work to help improve self-efficacy in elementary students. This theory of SFBC was the main concept behind the motivational intervention strategy used in this PBS study.

Statistical Information

There is limited statistical data regarding the task completion of students in low-income schools. This study was conducted with 90% of the students from a Hispanic background.

Beginning at an early age, students from a Hispanic background tend to be at a disadvantage. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2003), which administers the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), in 1999 only 26% of students, age three, were attending preschool, while 47% of their white peers attended preschool. As illustrated by Bandura's social learning theory, young children need to be exposed to the behaviors they need to exhibit in school early in order to learn these most effectively. Additionally, Hispanic students go on to high school and, of those who are reported as dropping out, 28% drop out without the courses necessary to receive a GED compared to 7% of their Caucasian peers.

When focusing on the mathematics subject area, Hispanic students are significantly behind their Caucasian peers. According to NAEP, when comparing scaled scores nine-year-old White students achieve a score of 239 while their Hispanic peers receive a score of 213. This is a twenty-six-point achievement gap in mathematics.

There are, however, positive statistics regarding the level of growth within the Hispanic subgroup in the area of mathematics. Nine-year-old Hispanic students have increased their NAEP scaled scores from 1973 to 1999 by eleven points. Even more growth is witnessed when looking at thirteen-year-old Hispanic students who increased their NAEP scaled scores from 1973 to 1999 by twenty points.

Summary

All students need positive behavior support strategies to encourage task completion. Additionally Hispanic students need more support to create a new path for themselves and their

future families. Today's teachers can utilize PBS strategies in the classroom to help their

students develop self-efficacy.

Chapter 3 Method

Introduction

The research approach of this study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The measurement of growth was gathered from a collection of student work and student surveys. The data for the study was collected over a three-week period at the beginning of a new term.

Ethical Standards

This paper adheres to ethical standards in the treatment of human subjects in research as articulated by the American Psychological Association (2010). Additionally, the research proposal was reviewed by the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), approved, and assigned number 10136.

Sample and Site

Research was conducted in a Northern California Title 1 public elementary school. Title 1 refers to the school receiving funding due to the high number of families who are deemed low-income and receive free and/or reduced school lunch. The school serves approximately 700 students from the local neighborhood. Additionally, a professional in the field of higher education agreed to be interviewed as an expert in this area.

Fifth Grade Math Intervention Class

Data were collected in a fifth grade math intervention class. Selection for this class was limited to students with learning disabilities who receive special educations services and students

deemed "at-risk" by their classroom teacher. This intervention class was taught by an education specialist. The curriculum used was the same curriculum materials as the general education population.

The sample group included 17 students, aged 10-11, each with a need for a tailored curriculum. Roughly 59% receive free or reduced lunch. Approximately 75% of the group has an IEP, with a documented learning disability or language disorder.

Access and Permissions

As a component of teacher action research, observations were conducted within the bounds of the students' daily class experience. As the instructor of record for the course, the research fell within the purview of reflection on personal practice.

Data Gathering Procedures

Data for this study were gathered during the normal class time. As students were assigned tasks during the math period, they were left to complete a predetermined number of problems independently. At the end of the allotted time, students were to turn in their assignment to the teacher. The data were then collected and assignments were assessed for completeness.

After one week of data collection, a new stimulus was introduced into the classroom to enhance task completion. After this new strategy was taught, students continued learning and data were collected for an additional two weeks.

Data Analysis Approach

Data were analyzed by the researcher by comparing the data before and after the introduction of the PBS strategy. The researcher looked for an increase in task completion following the introduction of the PBS strategy.

Chapter 4 Findings

Interview with an Expert in Behavioral Approaches

According to the behavior expert, all teachers should foster a community environment in which all kids feel welcome. Having regular class meetings where students can bring up their own concerns and feelings about school and their lives makes all children feel a bond with their teacher and classmates. It encourages students to take the time to listen to one another and learn from the mistakes of others. After being heard, students also begin to build up confidence within themselves and treat themselves with respect. These meetings are also a perfect time to remind students of the expectations in the classroom. Students will then have a supportive environment in which to process.

Getting to know your students and understanding their home situations and backgrounds was also reinforced by the expert. Once teachers understand where their students are coming from and what tools they are bringing into the classroom, it is much easier to set up assignments and activities that will bring them success. Along this idea is giving students the opportunity to respond (OTR). Ensuring that OTR is equitable and at their level, it will eliminate any off-task behavior since students are engaged in the learning. Finally, learning what students want to learn about will provide valuable information on how to teach various concepts to engage all students in their learning.

Interview with Teachers

When interviewing experts in behavior, it is important to consider the variety of people in the education field with experience dealing with positive behavior support systems. In order to get a good idea of the various supports, interviews from classroom teachers, vice-principals, psychologists, and behavior experts are included in this study.

How did you decide to become a teacher? What is your arrival story?

All of the participants interviewed chose to become teachers to help students grow and develop into good citizens. For two participants, education was in the family with mothers, fathers, and all extended relatives being teachers. From an early age, these experts were molded into the teachers they have become by helping in the classroom over summer breaks and on days off.

What is your background in regards to positive behavior supports in the classroom?

Although the participants do not all come from the same geographical area, or school district, they all agreed that all positive behavior supports were learned through experience. Since many schools have been negatively impacted to budget cuts, these valuable trainings have been cut out over the past twenty years.

The psychologist did not have a lot of training in behavior until recently with positive behavior support (PBS). Much of the experience gained by both psychologists was gained on the job and through their own cases in schools. Through a variety of interactions, including therapy, intellectual assessment, and family meetings, the psychologist came to the conclusion that if the

basic needs of students are not met, there is almost nothing that can be done by the classroom teacher to motivate and support the students. It is important for teachers to realize this and work to help fill in the gaps the students need prior to teaching content.

Classroom teachers have more hands-on trainings available to them through outside resources. For example, PlayWorks, a non-profit company in Northern California focusing on play, provides training for teachers. Their training involves teaching educators about the role of play on students' psychological well-being. They teach inclusion in games and positive phrasing to help students feel part of a team. In addition, during beginning teacher support and assessment (BTSA) in California, teachers are required to observe master teachers in their own classroom. There, teachers can learn about classroom control and what it takes to develop a happy classroom with a safe environment.

In your experience, what are the five best practices for positive behavior supports in the elementary classroom?

Common threads in positive behavior support come out from all participants in this study. The first foundational best practice is that students must have their basic needs met and feel welcome in the classroom and school. Without students feeling as if they are welcome and special in any environment, they will begin to act out and bring any sort of attention upon them.

Secondly, all teachers brought up the need for "living rules." By this they mean always refer back to rules and praise students who are living the rules. It is important to explain to students what you want to see and then constantly refer back to the students who are modeling that behavior. Even just quick reminders such as, "thank you for being ready…" or having students utilize a positive behavior chart to encourage other students to monitor their own behavior prior to the teacher needing to intervene. The general educator who serves thirty-two

students in her classroom mentioned that all of her positive behavior reminders are more effective than any negative discipline action she could take.

Finally, every participant mentioned that the most successful tool to encourage students is to love and accept them. Loving students for who they are every day and for every thing they do will continue to push them and motivate them to make a difference in their own life and education. If teachers can keep students engaged in their own learning by showing them that they care, it will foster a love of learning that will take them far in their life. This looks different in every classroom. Some students will need to be taken aside and spoken to privately. Some may need that kind of one-on-one attention to support them through school, while some may just want to know that you are monitoring their progress and informing them of their accomplishments.

What have you seen to be the most effective across special and general education teachers and classrooms?

There are many PBS strategies that should be used across all classrooms. All students benefit from:

- Consistent language across the entire school

- Support in academics as well as their personal lives

- "Peace and quiet"

- Visual schedules to set up basic routines

- Organization of their academic work and their classroom environment

If time and energy were disregarded, what is the most effective method of motivating students and developing self-efficacy?

This "million dollar" question had many answers, yet all answers seemed to require less than a million dollars to implement. Every participant mentioned that if students are given time to do what they enjoy even if it does not help their future, it will help their brain functioning and learning. They need to play. If you let kids learn what brings them pleasure, they will be able to excel in that area and choose if they want to become experts in it. We are creating a society that is all the same without experts in the arts and trades.

Along the same lines, we need to give students exposure to interesting topics and lessons and let them learn what they are interested in through interest surveys. Find what drives them and what their passions are. Use this to connect back to their goals and monitor their progress. That will motivate them and help them become successful in their academic careers. Even if it is a small step in their academic abilities, it will be more meaningful to their development if they feel success and appreciation.

How can classroom teachers help students work on self-monitoring to increase task completion across subject areas?

Self-monitoring strategies need to be individualized. It is also beneficial for it to be consistent throughout the day; in order to help them analyze their behaviors and feelings. Once students begin self-monitoring, teachers need to praise them and appreciate their hard work.

It is also important to note that each child will be motivated through different means and each child's plan must reflect this. Since the students are self-monitoring, the reward that they work towards should be interesting to the student. Also, since there are many monitoring tools out there, choosing one that meets the ability level of the child will help them monitoring their learning and/or behavior independently.

Themes

In summary, teachers need to be kind and positive towards all students. In addition, teachers need to get to know their students and support their interests and academic abilities in any field. Finally, any intervention plan needs to be simple; the simpler the better.

Description of Site and Individuals

The study was conducted in a fifth grade math classroom with both special and general education students. The teacher had experience teaching both general and special education students.

Student Pre-Survey

The pre-survey was conducted with all of the students in the sample. Students were asked many questions about their own learning. The survey consisted of ten questions that required a single-choice response. Responses were collected using an online survey website to ensure students' responses were kept anonymous and confidential.

Students were asked to choose their favorite subject area. Students were given the choices: reading, math, social studies, science, computers, drama, art, and P.E. as these are the subjects offered by the school. 28% of students chose P.E., which may, in part, be due to the high percentage of young boys in the class. 28% also chose science, which is a specialty class that is taught only during a ten-week period during the school year. The third most popular subject is math with 22% of students choosing math as their favorite. The math subject area was chosen for the study, due to the lack of subjectivity in grading assignments, and student preference.

With a lot of research being conducted in the area of homework completion to influence self-efficacy, the researcher asked, "How much of your homework do you try your best on?" Students answered honestly: 44% chose "All of it", 28% chose "Most of it", 17% chose "Some of it", and 11% honestly stated, "My grown-up does my homework". It is alarming that only 44% try their best on their homework, yet this continues to illustrate the connection between Hispanic students and the many roles they take on in the home. Many of the students are not treated as children in their homes and homework is not a priority for many families in the community. Various agencies have come in to help families, yet only so many families can be reached with these services. Only 11% of the students in the study receive "homework club" support.

Next, the survey asked students, "How much of your class work do you do?" 50% selected "All of it", 44% chose "Some of it", and only 5% selected "None of it". Not included in this study is a review of literature regarding the area of learned helplessness in Hispanic and special education populations. Many students use their observational learning to manipulate their learning environment. They have learned that if they do not complete their work, the teacher will eventually go over the answers with the class, thus they will not have to complete the assignment.

In addition, the students were asked to choose why they like completing their work. 39% of students selected "I get free time" as their response. This reinforces B.F. Skinner's theory that students will complete work to receive the positive reinforcement of engaging in a preferred behavior after they have completed their assignment. It must also be noted that students may not complete an assignment correctly, but instead hurry through an assignment to receive the reward. Additionally, students' first choice response to "What rewards do you like best?" was to receive

a "homework pass" or a free pass to avoid working, while 0% chose "Notes home to your grownup".

Complete survey results can be found in Appendix A.

Data Collection

All data were collected during the first period, during the normally scheduled block, to ensure that students' routines were maintained and subject matter was not an area of primary disability. Students began with a task completion rate of 79% over the course of the first week of this study. The math assignments were not outside the ability level of the students nor were there an unattainable number of problems to complete. Students were required to complete between two and five problems independently within a fifteen to twenty minute period.

After the first week of data collection, students in the sample group were taught how to use a PBS intervention implemented similar to the SFBC mentioned by Ferrington (2011). While teaching a whole-class math lesson, teachers do not have the time to meet with students individually to conduct this type of counseling. However, by utilizing a post-it note, students were taught how to generate this positive thinking themselves and circle how they hope to feel after the assignment is complete. When they complete the task, they check next to the positive word they feeling after completing the assignment.
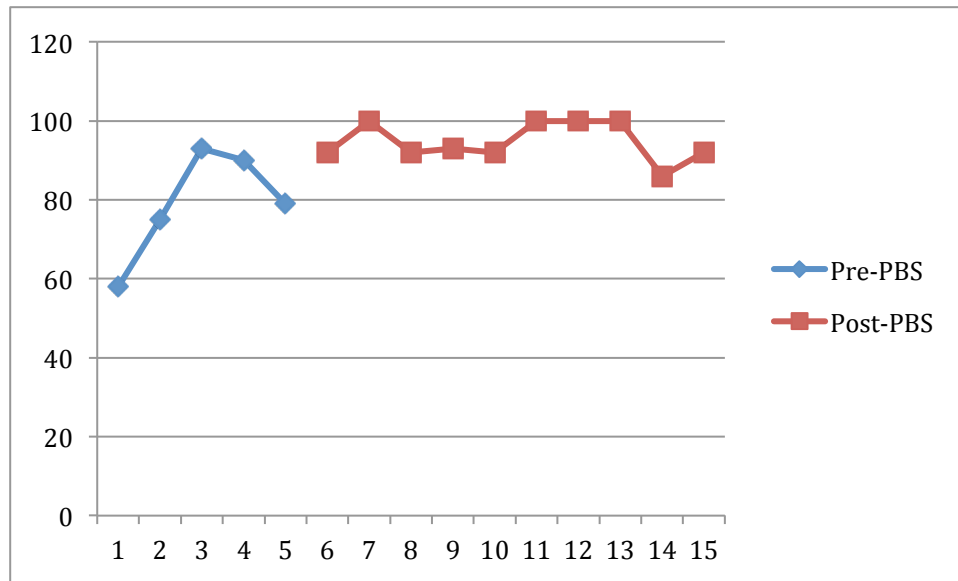
When I finish this assignment, I will feel:
__ awesome __ I need help.
__ proud __ I'm frustrated
__ excited
__ happy
__ accomplished
__ on top of the world

Appendix C

Students used this PBS strategy for two weeks with successful results. Following the implementation of the PBS strategy, task completion increased by 16% overall, up to 95%. Students seemed more excited to use the strategy as the study continued. The teacher noticed that several students began to generalize this strategy throughout other subject areas. Positive messages were written on the "Name" line next to the student's name.

Data Table

All results can be found in Appendix B.

Student Post-Survey

All students included in the pre-survey and data sample were included in the post-survey. The post-survey included five questions. The students surveyed responded in favor of using the PBS strategy. 55.6% of students said that, "Yes" it helped them finish their work and the other 44.4% agreed that it helped them "A little." Thus, this PBS strategy helped 100% of students in the sample group to complete their assignments. This illustrates how well the positivity influences their learning.

Overall this survey provides evidence that students feel better when they hear more positive phrases regarding school and work. If teachers can continue to positively motivate students, it will benefit their education long-term. They will feel more successful and proud of

their accomplishments hopefully yielding a high school diploma or GED, and increasing their

likelihood of attaining a high-power job, thus breaking the cycle of poverty in their family.

Complete survey results can be found in Appendix A.

Chapter 5 Discussion /Analysis

Summary of Major Findings

The post-it PBS strategy, adapted from SFBC, proved to be successful in increasing task completion in the math subject area. The positive thinking increases a students' perception of their own abilities thus making them feel more successful prior to completing an assignment. All students found this strategy to be useful and some have even generalized this strategy throughout their subject areas.

The study also focused on student responses to a survey. The overall findings were that students enjoy completing their work, as Skinner put it, to increase their time engaging in a preferred activity. They enjoy free time as a means to process the work they have completed and prepare for their next learning challenge. Thus, it is suggested that implementing more positive behavior support strategies, as found in this study, can increase student motivation yielding an increase in time on-task, task completion, and learning.

Comparison of Findings to the Literature

The literature surveyed for this study pointed toward the success of PBS. These strategies and the involvement of the teacher, all play a role in student achievement. When comparing the findings of the literature to the findings of this study, PBS strategies are successful in improving task completion. Previous research has found that there are contributing factors to a student's education including: parental involvement, safety, basic needs, access to education, access to background knowledge, motivation, self-efficacy, and learning environment. Additionally, when

students are on-task, they are more likely to complete a task in order to successfully master a mathematical concept.

Limitations/Gaps in the Research

The number of participants in this study was limited. The surveys and data were blind so it is unknown exactly what disabilities played a role in the survey choices and completion of tasks. A larger pool of participants across the state would provide a more generalized analysis of this PBS strategy in increasing task completion. Increasing the age range of students in the study would provide more information to teachers in regards to the grade levels this strategy could support.

Implications for Future Research

All of the participants in the interviews mentioned a need for an increased focus on student interest prior to educating a child. Student-focused learning increases their understanding of a concept thus creating a mastery of the concept over time. While this was considered, it was not included in this study. More research should be done regarding task-completion in an area of student interest.

Overall Significance of the Study

It is important for educators to consider various strategies as a means of increasing authentic student learning. With NCLB, teachers have become data analysts working out ways to best enhance student learning to increase test scores, yet there are key elements of education that must be acknowledged prior to interpreting test data.

Teachers need to continue to be taught PBS strategies to increase their student achievement. Schools need to implement PBS to create an environment in which learning can take place. School districts need to provide trainings to help teachers and staff implement PBS. Parents need to be taught by teachers how to implement PBS strategies in the home to help increase the completion of homework and independent practice of academic material. This will also help students develop self-regulation skills (Ramdass et. al, 2011).

About the Author

Kristin Freiberger is a Special Education Teacher in Northern California. She holds two teaching credentials: Multiple Subject and Education Specialist. She hopes to continue her research in special education and motivation in the future.

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Appendix A: Student Survey Results

Pre-Survey

1. What do you like to learn about most?
Reading	5.6%
Math	22.2%
Social Studies	0%
Science	27.8%
Computers	11.1%
Drama	0%
Art	5.6%
P.E.	27.8%

2. How much of your homework do you try your best on?
All of it.	44.4%
Most of it.	27.8%
Some of it.	16.7%
My grown-up does my homework	11.1%

3. Where do you do your homework?
On the couch.	16.7%
At the table.	66.7%
At a desk.	5.6%
At homework club.	11.1%
Other.	0%

4. What does it sound like when you do your homework?
The TV's on.	22.2%
Music is playing.	16.7%
It's loud.	16.7%
It's quiet.	44.4%

5. Do you like homework?
Yes.	27.8%
No.	33.3%
A little.	38.9%

6. When you learn at school, how much of your class work do you do?
All of it.	50%
Some of it.	44.4%
None of it.	5.6%

7. What kind of work do you like best?

      Math problems.   16.7%

      Writing.   5.6%

      Reading questions.   38.9%

      Drawing.   38.9%

8. What help you get your work done?

      Quiet time.   50%

      Quiet music.   44.4%

      Quiet talking.   5.6%

9. Why do you like getting your work done?

      Get prizes.   16.7 %

      Get free time.   38.9%

      Getting good grades. 22.2%

      Feels good.   27.8%

10. What reward do you like best?

      Toys.   22.2%

      School supplies.   5.6%

      Free time.   33.3%

      Homework pass.   38.9%

      Notes home.   0%

Post-Survey

1. How much of your work do you think you finish?
   All of it.   27.8%
   Most of it.   38.9%
   Some of it.   22.2%
   A little of it.   11.1%
   None of it.   0%

2. Did writing a positive word help you finish your work?
   Yes.   55.6%
   No.   0%
   A little.   44.4%

3. When you write a happy word on your paper, it makes you feel ____.
   Good.   22.2%
   Proud.   38.9%
   Happy.   33.3%
   Bad.   5.6%

4. Do you think it help you finish more of your work?
   Yes.   88.2%
   No.   11.8%

5. Writing happy words or checking it off on a post-it note made me ____.
   100% of responses to fill in were positive: HAPPY, on top of the world, proud, etc.

Appendix B: Data Collection

		Pre-PBS Implementation						Post-PBS Implementation Results										
	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5	Average	PBS	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5	Task 6	Task 7	Task 8	Task 9	Task 10	Average
% Complete	58%	75%	93%	90%	79%	79%		92%	100%	92%	93%	92%	100%	100%	100%	86%	92%	95%

Appendix C: Sticky Note Template

When I finish this assignment, I will feel: __ awesome __ I need help. __ proud __ I'm frustrated __ excited __ happy __ accomplished __ on top of the world	When I finish this assignment, I will feel: __ awesome __ I need help. __ proud __ I'm frustrated __ excited __ happy __ accomplished __ on top of the world
When I finish this assignment, I will feel: __ awesome __ I need help. __ proud __ I'm frustrated __ excited __ happy __ accomplished __ on top of the world	When I finish this assignment, I will feel: __ awesome __ I need help. __ proud __ I'm frustrated __ excited __ happy __ accomplished __ on top of the world
When I finish this assignment, I will feel: __ awesome __ I need help. __ proud __ I'm frustrated __ excited __ happy __ accomplished __ on top of the world	When I finish this assignment, I will feel: __ awesome __ I need help. __ proud __ I'm frustrated __ excited __ happy __ accomplished __ on top of the world