Using Self Monitoring to Increase Time Spent On Task in the Classroom

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Using Self Monitoring to Increase
Time Spent On Task in the Classroom

by
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A thesis submitted to the
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Using Self Monitoring to Increase Time Spent On Task in the Classroom

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Abstract

In the classroom, attending to what is being taught and staying on task are essential in reaching a student's full academic potential. Many students, however, struggle to independently focus and stay on task in the classroom. This results in students who are not learning to their full capabilities, with the possibility of falling behind academically. Teachers need a solution in order to help these students spend more of their time on task. This study examines the process of self monitoring as a solution to this problem. Two first grade students were taught to use self monitoring procedures during literacy center time for five weeks. Students understood that they would be responsible for rating their behavior every fifteen minutes. Students rated their behavior for each time interval by circling a smiling face (yes, I was on task) or a straight across face (no, I was not on task). Results showed that self monitoring helped each student to increase their on task time and amount of work completed. In addition, both students were less disruptive to themselves and their classmates during the intervention period. An exit interview given at the conclusion of the study found that both students enjoyed using self monitoring and would like to continue using it to stay on task during future literacy center work periods.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Ken was a student in my third grade special education class last year. He was a happy-go-lucky boy with a smile that could light up a room. He was also constantly out of his seat. Throughout the school day, he would tip in his chair, stand on the seat, and fall out on to the floor. This was distracting not only to Ken, but to his classmates as well. When he was not out of his seat, Ken was usually staring out the window. He also had extreme difficulty paying attention in class. He consistently received poor grades on his classwork because he was unable to focus and pay attention to what was being taught. There were days when Ken was simply unable to write anything other than his name on the paper that he turned in for a grade. It was not a question of motivation. Ken was highly motivated by receiving good grades and positive feedback from his parents and me. Sadly, these good grades and completed assignments were few and far between. It was simply too difficult for him to stay on task consistently in the classroom to receive good grades. I realized that there must be something else going on that was preventing Ken from being able to keep himself on task. I tried numerous behavioral management systems without success. I appealed to my friends and colleagues for ideas that might help Ken to focus and spend more time actively doing his work. It seemed that everything I tried failed to help Ken to stay on task.

Problem Statement

Ken is by no means alone in this struggle. Educators everywhere have experienced these kinds of off task behaviors that negatively affect the learning process. And it is not just in the special education classroom setting in which these problems exist. Off task behaviors...
behavior can be seen at almost any time in any classroom in America. This off task behavior has a profound negative effect on the learning of every student in the classroom. Students who are not on task during instructional time do not learn the material being taught. Students who are off task while the teacher is giving directions do not know what is expected of them in the classroom. Students who are off task during work periods are not able to display their knowledge on paper for their teachers. The reality is that off task behavior can prevent even the most capable student from doing his/her best in the classroom.

Significance of the Problem

It goes without saying that attending to the task at hand is crucial for optimal learning to occur. Certainly, there are attentional issues such as ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) that can be the cause of the student’s inability to focus as well as s/he could. Medication is a practical and, in some cases, extremely beneficial solution for some of these children. I have worked with many students, however, who have no identified attentional issues, yet continue to struggle to attend. Medication would certainly never be considered for students who have no identified attentional concerns. Behavior management plans can be effective for some, but what about the students who continue to struggle? Self monitoring can be the answer for these students. In addition, self-monitoring can be combined with other methods of managing attention to increase the time spent on task.
Purpose

The purpose of this research is to study the effects of using self monitoring procedures in the classroom. It is my hope that these self monitoring procedures will help my students to increase the amount of time they spend on task in the classroom. Students who are on task for a greater amount of time are able to get more out of the academic school day. While there are various methods of altering student on task behavior in use in schools today, these methods can be complicated, expensive, or effective only for limited amounts of time. Self monitoring is easy and inexpensive to implement in the classroom. There are no rewards or punishments for student behavior. It has also been shown to be effective in various types of classrooms with students of many ages. Self monitoring encourages students to become more aware of their behavior in the classroom. Students become less reliant on teacher intervention to correct off task behavior and learn to observe and modify their own behavior. Self monitoring can help students to become more actively involved in their own education by teaching them how to effectively manage their own behavior.

Rationale

If we, as educators, plan to provide the best possible learning environments for our students, we must start by ensuring that all students are on task as much as possible. Self monitoring has been shown to be a valuable tool to help students increase the amount of time spent on task in the classroom. In addition, self monitoring is appropriate for reducing a wide range of off task behaviors, including being out of seat, talking to a classmate, looking around the classroom, and playing with objects (Ardoin & Martens,
While these behaviors may seem harmless when exhibited for short periods of time, many students frequently display these off task behaviors for much longer periods of time (Harris et al., 2005). These behaviors not only take away from the learning of the student who is off task, but frequently serve to distract other students around him/her. In addition, the teacher uses valuable instructional time as s/he seeks to remedy the off task behavior. Further research is needed in order to examine the effects of self monitoring when used in a variety of classroom situations. Different age groups, classroom settings, and curriculum areas need to be researched in order to fully understand how to best implement self monitoring in the classroom. Staying on task is vital to the growth of students, and we must do everything that we can in order to provide them with that opportunity.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, self monitoring is defined as

“Identifying and monitoring one’s own behaviors. It is designed in a way that establishes the individual who displays the target behavior problems as the agent of change, potentially creating a context for more effective maintenance and generalization of targeted behavioral improvements” (Freeman & Dexter-Mazza 2004, p. 403).

Additionally for this study, an attentional issue is defined as any condition that may exist that prevents a student from maintaining his/her attention for a prolonged period of time, sustaining effort, organizing tasks, and completing tasks (Reid, Trout, & Schartz, 2005). This condition may be medically identified, such as ADHD or ADD, or it may be unidentified.
Summary

I have chosen to explore the effects of using self-monitoring techniques to increase student on-task behavior because of my work with children whose education has been negatively affected by their ability to stay on task. I believe that every educator has a responsibility to help students to succeed in the classroom. A child who cannot attend to classroom tasks and instruction cannot possibly experience academic success. Because of this, it is crucial to further explore the benefits and practices of using self-monitoring in the classroom.

My study will be driven by my research questions: can self-monitoring be used in the classroom to increase the amount of time students spend on task? Is self-monitoring effective for various types of students? By designing a system that allows for my students to monitor their classroom behavior, I hope to increase the amount of time that they spend on task. I plan to measure on-task behavior in time intervals. Every 15 minutes, students will be responsible for recording their behavior on a chart (see Appendix A). I will monitor the students' behaviors through a daily journal and weekly assessments of their work completion. It is my hope that these self-monitoring procedures will help to increase the amount of time spent actively on task during the school day, as well as allow my students to complete more of their classwork. Through this increased amount of time spent on task, I hope to enhance the learning experience of my students.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Research has been done in exploration of self monitoring and its effects in the classroom setting. The following research articles have been invaluable in my own research on self monitoring procedures and effects.

**ADHD and Emotional/Behavioral Disorders**

In their research article, Ardoin and Martens (2004) examined how self-evaluation training and practice could help to decrease disruptive behavior in the classroom. The study focused on four participants, ages nine through eleven. All participants were male, and all boys exhibited behaviors associated with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Researchers observed the subjects during reading and seatwork time. Both these tasks required the students to sustain attention individually. The following terms were operationally defined to increase the researchers’ accuracy: Looking around, playing with objects, peer interaction, and out of seat. Researchers recorded looking around whenever they observed a student gazing around the classroom. Playing with objects was recorded anytime a student manipulated an object or body part that was not connected with the task at hand. Peer interaction was recorded whenever a student either initiated or responded to another student without teacher permission. Out of seat was recorded anytime a student’s weight was not being supported by his chair.

After the reading/seatwork time was over, students were asked to complete a self-evaluation list. The list asked the students questions relating to the four operationally defined terms (How many times did you leave your seat?). The data collected from the researchers and students were combined into baseline data.
After collecting baseline data, researchers met individually with each of the students. All four monitored behaviors were described to the boys. The subjects were asked to give examples of these behaviors. Researchers also described to the students instances of themselves exhibiting these behaviors in class. Most importantly, the students were taught how to monitor for these behaviors. The study was then broken up into three separate phases. In phase one, the students were told by the teacher to pay attention to each observed behavior in order to be able to complete a self-evaluation form at the end of the work period. In phase two, subjects were given the same directions as in phase one, but an incentive was added. Researchers told the students that they would receive money for every time their evaluations matched the teacher’s evaluation of their behavior. This money was exchangeable for prizes. In phase three, the conditions from phases one and two were repeated, but an accuracy incentive was added. Subjects were told that they could earn additional money by answering questions correctly on their assigned work during individual work time.

Results showed that self-evaluation alone (phase one) decreased the disruptive behavior for only one of the four students. Self-evaluation and accuracy training combined (phase three) showed decreases in disruptive behavior for three of the four subjects. This study indicated that students with ADHD could be trained to monitor their own classroom behaviors accurately. In addition, it suggested that self-evaluation training may be more effective if it is combined with a reinforcement plan.

In a similar study, Gureasko-Moore, Dupaul, and White (2006) addressed the effects of self-management on the organizational skills of children diagnosed with
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Three boys participated in the study, all of whom were 12 years of age and in general education classrooms. In addition, all three boys took methylphenidate daily. Despite regular medication, the subjects’ teachers reported that the boys had difficulty preparing for class. A self monitoring system was devised for the subjects using teacher and student-completed checklists. In addition, subjects filled out a daily log to further assist them in classroom preparation. The checklists addressed six separate aspects of preparedness: arriving on time for class, being ready and prepared to begin class, having paper or a notebook ready, having a pen or pencil ready, handing in homework on time, and completing homework. All aspects were operationally defined by the researchers. Arriving on time for class was defined as being in seat when the class bell rings. Being ready and prepared to begin class was defined as having eye contact with the teacher and terminating other activities such as talking when the teacher initiates class instruction. Handing in homework was defined as turning in homework as requested by the teacher. Finally, completing homework was defined as responding (correctly or incorrectly) to each item in homework assignment.

Baseline data was collected. All three subjects displayed inconsistent classroom preparation behaviors. Preparedness ranged from 0% to 70%. After baseline data was collected, subjects met individually with the researcher. This was identified as the training portion of the study. Self-management rationales and procedures were explained in depth. The researcher also taught subjects how to use the self management checklist and daily log. The boys were asked to make the first entry into their data logs, explaining
what they felt their own shortcomings were when it came to preparing for class. Based on these identified issues, students set goals to improve their classroom preparedness.

After the training portion, the study was divided up into three more portions: monitoring, fading, and maintenance. During the monitoring portion of the study, subjects met with the researcher daily so that assessments could be made of their self-monitoring progress. During these one-on-one sessions, subjects were asked to critique their checklists and write in their daily log. During the fading portion of the study, subjects met with the researcher every other day. The researcher continued to give feedback and encourage the boys to write in their daily logs. Finally, during the maintenance portion, students met with the researcher only one time per week.

Results showed that the self-monitoring checklists and daily logs helped all three subjects to improve their class preparation skills. Although the subjects all progressed at different rates, all three were prepared 100% of the time during the entire maintenance phase. Researchers concluded that self-management procedures were effective in promoting classroom preparation behaviors.

A similar study by Reid, Trout, and Schartz (2005) focused on four types of self-regulation interventions and their effectiveness upon improving the behavior of subjects with ADHD. The four types of self-regulations were self monitoring, self monitoring plus reinforcement, self reinforcement, and self management. Self monitoring involved two steps. First, the subject needed to determine the targeted behavior. Next, the subject must self-record some dimension of this targeted behavior. Self monitoring plus reinforcement (SM+R) is identical to self monitoring, except that the student is given some form of
external reinforcement for producing a change in the targeted behavior. Self reinforcement occurs when the subject performs a behavior to satisfy some predetermined performance standard. Just as in self monitoring, the subject self records her performance. Unlike self monitoring, the subject then self rewards herself when the target behavior goal has been reached. Finally, self management requires that the subject rate her behavior against some external standard. In addition, the subject’s evaluations are matched up to an outside observer’s. The subject is rewarded when her evaluations closely match the observer’s.

Researchers reviewed studies that analyzed these four methods of self regulating. To be used in the review, studies had to meet four established criteria. Researchers only selected articles that used one of the four self regulation methods, reported observational data that included an academic or behavioral outcome, employed a quantitative research design, and included participants who were 18 years of age or younger. These participants also had to be identified as having ADHD. Sixteen studies met the researchers’ criteria and were used in the review. Included in these 16 studies were 51 participants. The participants ranged in age from six to fifteen. All studies were conducted in an educational setting, except for two studies, which took place in hospitals. Of the studies used, three focused on self monitoring strategies, eight used self monitoring plus reinforcement, two used self management procedures, and three used self reinforcement strategies.

Results of this study showed that all four self regulation interventions produced meaningful improvements in student on task behavior, academic productivity and
accuracy, and reduction of inappropriate classroom behaviors (Reid et al., 2005). Self monitoring and self monitoring plus reinforcement were shown to be highly effective in improving all three aspects of classroom performance. Self management studies were shown to be effective in improving only on task and inappropriate behaviors.

The effect of self monitoring on students with ADHD was also researched by Harris, Friedlander, Saddler, Frizzelle, and Graham (2005). More specifically, this research article examined the effects of self monitoring on both the attention and academic performance of subjects with ADHD. Both self monitoring of attention (SMA) and self monitoring of performance (SMP) were examined daily during spelling activities. There were six subjects in the third, fourth, and fifth grades. All subjects were receiving medication for their ADHD, although teachers observed that the subjects continued to have difficulty sustaining attention in the classroom setting. All subjects were also receiving low grades in spelling. The researchers taught each subject how to use the SMA and SMP interventions prior to beginning the study.

After baseline data collection, researchers introduced the subjects to a taped tone. Upon hearing the tone, students were instructed to ask themselves if they were on task (SMA condition). Harris et al. defined on task as occurring when a student focused his or her eyes on the spelling words, used any step in the spelling study procedure, or asked a teacher for help. Students made a mark under the yes or no column of a tally sheet to keep track of their on task behavior. The two teachers in the room also recorded whether students were on task or off task upon hearing the tone. Having two researchers
collecting data allowed for interobserver agreement checks. These checks showed the interobserver agreement at 95% or better throughout the experiment.

The SMP condition was examined by instructing students to practice writing their spelling words. At the end of each spelling session, students were asked to count the number of times each spelling word was practiced correctly. The students recorded this data on a graph that was kept in their desks. In both the SMA and SMP conditions, no measure of student accuracy was kept by either classroom teacher. They did, however, inspect student work to ensure that the spelling procedures were being followed correctly.

Results of this study showed that both the SMA and SMP procedures helped students to increase their on task behavior. Baseline data showed that the students spent an average 55% of their time on task. During the SMP phase of this study, the average time spent on task increased to 92%. During the SMA phase, the average time spent on task was 94%.

The subjects were also shown to have increased their academic performance in spelling over the duration of this study. Baseline data showed that the average number of correct spelling words written by the subjects was 38. The SMP phase of the study showed an increased average of 83. The SMA phase also showed an increased number of correct spelling words written, with an average of 114.

Subjects also participated in an exit interview. Four of the students reported that they preferred the SMP condition of the study. One student preferred the SMA condition. One student reported that he liked both conditions because they helped him learn.
Subjects were more negative about the SMA condition, with five of the six reporting that it was boring, distracting, and ineffective.

This study showed that both self monitoring of performance and self monitoring of attention can help students with ADHD to increase the amount of time spent on task. It also showed that while both SMP and SMA help increase the number of correctly spelled words, SMA was more effective in doing so. It is important to note that both of these results were obtained using no form of external reinforcement system.

In their research article, Freeman and Dexter-Mazza (2004) explored the effects of combining self monitoring procedures with adult feedback. The participant was a 13-year-old boy named Steve. Steve had been previously diagnosed with ADHD and exhibited numerous behavior problems in the classroom setting. He was referred for this study because of these behavior issues, as well as his below grade level math performance.

Researchers designed a self management program to be used by Steve during the daily 30 minute math period to decrease his off task and disruptive behavior. Researchers defined off task behavior as looking away from the teacher when he or she was providing instruction and/or looking away from the task materials for more than five seconds, or working on something other than what had been assigned. Disruptive behavior was defined as talking without permission, being out of seat without permission, cursing, yelling, tearing up or throwing materials, and tapping loudly on the desk. The study was divided into three separate phases: baseline, self monitoring, and self monitoring plus matching.
During baseline conditions, the researchers observed the regular classroom operations. No changes were made to the daily routines of the teacher or students. Baseline data was collected for three weeks.

During the self monitoring phase, Steve met with the teacher to discuss his disruptive classroom behavior. The teacher introduced Steve to the concept of self monitoring and taught him how to use it. Steve was given a self monitoring sheet as well as a tape recorder. The tape recorder emitted a prerecorded beep that played every two minutes. At the sound of the beep, Steve was taught to evaluate his on task and disruptive behaviors on the self monitoring sheet. The teacher made it clear to Steve that there were no negative consequences for reporting off task behavior. Self monitoring of behavior data was collected for an additional three weeks.

During the self monitoring plus matching phase, researchers taught the teacher's aide how to evaluate Steve's classroom behaviors in exactly the same way as Steve. The aide would start her audiotape at the same time as Steve every day and use an identical recording sheet. At the end of 16 minutes, Steve and the aide would compare their monitoring sheets. If the agreement between data sheets was at least 80%, Steve was rewarded with a small piece of candy.

Results of this study showed that Steve displayed off task and disruptive behaviors during baseline conditions an average of 21.26% of the time. During self monitoring conditions, Steve continued this pattern of behavior, with off task and disruptive behaviors occurring an average of 20.89% of the time.
monitoring plus matching phase, Steve’s disruptive and off task behavior decreased to an average of 12.06% of the time.

This study showed that self monitoring by itself was not effective in reducing off task and disruptive behavior. Combining self monitoring with adult feedback, however, was shown to have positive effects on classroom behavior. Both off task and disruptive behavior were reduced during math activities by combining self monitoring with adult feedback.

The effects of self monitoring on students with emotional disorders were further researched by Mammolenti, Vollmer, and Smith (2002). This study used a combination of self recording and self evaluation to promote on task behavior in students with learning disabilities, mild mental handicaps, and emotional disorders. There were 12 students who participated in this study, all of whom had been diagnosed with a learning disability, a mild mental handicap, an emotional disorder, or some combination of these disabilities. Students ranged in age from 10 to 12 years of age and were in fourth and fifth grade classrooms.

The researchers used a tape recorder, self monitoring checklists, and response sheets for the collection of data. The tape recorders were designed to emit a tone every four, five, seven, or ten minutes. The checklists had columns for on task and off task behavior. In addition to checking the columns, students were instructed to rate their behavior using a numerical scale. A one was recorded when great improvement was needed, a two was recorded when some improvement was needed, a three was used when little improvement was needed, and a four was used when no improvement was needed.
At the end of each week, students were asked to reflect on their behavior and answer the following two questions: What behaviors did I have a problem controlling this week? What can I do to improve my behavior?

All students met with the researchers and were trained in self monitoring and on task behavior. They were also taught how to use the tape recorder and checklist. Both on task and off task behaviors were modeled for the students, as well as how to record and write about each behavior. For the purposes of this study, off task behavior was defined as lack of eye contact when the teacher was instructing or another student was answering or asking a question, making noises with mouth, hands, or feet, talking out, talking to peers, playing with objects, being out-of-seat without permission, or arguing with teachers or peers.

Baseline data was collected the first week, when tones for self monitoring sounded every four minutes. Data collection continued at the four minute interval period for an additional two weeks. During week four, the tones sounded every five minutes. During week five, the tones sounded every seven minutes. Finally, during week six, the tones sounded every ten minutes.

Results of this study showed that the mean time spent on task during baseline was 90.35% of the time. During week two, it was 90.76%. Week three had an average of 97.71% of time spent on task, and week four was 95%. Week five showed an average of 93.45%, and week six was 96.52%.

The results for this study showed that on task behaviors were consistently high throughout the study. This may be because the baseline condition included self
monitoring techniques. While weeks two and three showed increases in on task behavior, weeks four and five showed decreases. In either case, the increases and decreases were marginal. The last week of the study showed another increase in on task behavior.

Mooney, Ryan, Uhing, and Epstein's (2005) study further examined the effectiveness of self management procedures on students with behavioral and emotional disorders. Researchers reviewed 22 published studies involving 78 different subjects. The subjects ranged in age, from five to twelve years old. The five commonly used self-management interventions (self monitoring, self evaluation, self instruction, goal setting, and strategy instruction) were examined.

After collecting the published studies from reputable sources, researchers operationally defined several terms in order to improve the accuracy of the study. Participant characteristics referred to any descriptions made of the subjects' age, grade, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, intelligence, or any other identified descriptors. Intervention type referred to the type of self management intervention used in the study. Academic focus referred to the target of the intervention. These targets were divided into 11 categories: basic reading skills, reading comprehension, reading not otherwise specified, written expression, math calculation, math reasoning, math not otherwise specified, other language, history/social studies, and an other category.

Results of this study showed that students who accurately apply self management strategies “achieve more and are more satisfied with their work” (Mooney et al., 2005). Students with emotional and behavioral disorders were shown to have positive effects on their academic performances when using self monitoring. This study also showed that
self monitoring has had the most success in math computation activities. Researchers recognized that more work is needed in the other academic areas to further assess the benefits of using self management with emotional and behavioral disorders.

*Self Monitoring and Various Influential Factors*

In their research article, Johnston and Lee (2005) examined the self versus other response format in children. Researchers manipulated the response format for the subjects, asking them to respond either as themselves or as a hypothetical child their own age. Researchers then examined how changing the point of view of the respondent influenced the responses themselves. The subjects of this study consisted of 58 boys ages five through seven and 68 boys ages eight through eleven. In addition, 45 of the subjects had also been diagnosed with ADHD. Researchers further studied any differences in responses between subjects with ADHD and subjects who had no known disorders. Subjects were asked to respond to a variety of situations, both positive and negative. Researchers created four distinct groups of subjects: boys younger than eight years old who responded thinking as themselves (younger-self); boys eight years or older who responded thinking as themselves (older-self); boys younger than eight years old responding as another child (younger-other); and boys eight years old or older responding as another child (older-other).

Each participant was given four scenarios to consider. Two of the scenarios described a prosocial behavior (e.g. putting toys away without being told). The other two behaviors described a noncompliant behavior (e.g. not picking up when told to do so by
mom). Each boy was asked to respond either as himself or as another child. The subjects were asked to rate the behavior in each scenario based on a five-point scale. A rating of one was given if the behavior was believed to be a result of something about me/the boy. A rating of two was given if the behavior was believed to be kind of something about me/the boy. A rating of three was used when it was partly something about me/the boy, partly something outside of me/the boy. A rating of four was given when the behavior was attributed to kind of something outside me/the boy. Finally, a rating of five was used when it was something outside me/the boy.

Participants were then given a second set of scenarios to consider. Responses were kept in the same point of view as in the previous set of scenarios. Each subject was given four brief positive situations and four brief negative situations. Participants were asked to pick one of two choices explaining the motivation behind each scenario. One choice option reflected a more internal cause for the behavior (because I wanted to). The other option reflected a more external cause for the behavior (because she made me). A score of 1 was recorded for each internal choice made by the subject.

Results showed that the participants rated prosocial behaviors as being more controllable than noncompliant behaviors. In other words, it was not as easy to control behaviors that went against the wishes of the person in charge. Also, subjects older than eight years of age were more likely to make internal attributions than subjects younger than eight. The study also found that subjects with ADHD felt like they had less control over situations than subjects with no identified disorders. Those who responded as the other child were more likely to attribute negative behaviors to internal attributions, while
those responding as themselves attributed those same events to more external causes. This is consistent with the self-serving bias.

To further examine the influential factors influencing self monitoring, Lan (2005) investigated self monitoring practices and task importance in various school settings. Researchers designed a questionnaire to determine how individual students used self monitoring, and on what assignments they were most likely to use it. 510 students from grades four through twelfth participated in this study. Of the 510 students, 134 were in elementary school, 111 were in middle school, and 133 were in high school. Furthermore, 276 participants were female and 233 were male.

The questionnaire used by researchers consisted of three questions. Each question was designed to represent using self monitoring for a different level of task importance. The first question involved reviewing for the next day's class (lower level of importance). The second question involved studying for a quiz the following day (moderate level of importance). The third question involved studying for a final exam for a week (high level of importance). All participants were asked to write down how they knew that they had reviewed or studied enough for the class/quiz/exam.

Students completed the questionnaire in their own classrooms with their teachers. Teachers read the questions aloud to the students, then asked the students if they had any questions about what they were being asked to do. There was no time limit for completing the questionnaire. Of the 510 students, only four did not complete the questionnaire.
For the purpose of evaluation, self monitoring was defined as reflecting a deliberate attention to some aspect of one’s behavior. Based on this definition, 13 separate classifications were developed to organized data. Seven of the classifications (doing nothing, physical signs, time or repetition, feeling of confidence, being told by others, doing as required, and sense of memorizing) reflected little or no self monitoring. The other six classifications (self-testing, being tested by others, overt presentation, elaboration, systematic rehearsal, and reviewing previous performance) reflected active self monitoring on the part of the student.

Results of this study showed that students reported a low involvement of self monitoring at all levels of education. 22% of students reported using self monitoring when reviewing for a class. 36% of students reported using self monitoring when studying for a quiz, and 31% used self monitoring when studying for a final exam.

Despite overwhelming research of the positive effects of using self monitoring to enhance academic performance, a majority of our students of all ages fail to use these strategies. Of those who did utilize self monitoring, the importance of the task made little difference in applying those strategies. This study shows that educators need to stress the importance of self monitoring when studying on one’s own. Teachers also need to show students and parents how to best use these strategies at home to further learning.

Moore, Prebble, Robertson, Waetford, and Anderson (2001) continued to evaluate the effects of self management by examining the combination of self management with goal setting procedures in a fourth grade classroom. Three subjects participated in the study, all of whom were eight-year-old males. The classroom teacher selected these three
students to participate in this study because they frequently displayed off task behavior and seldom completed all of their independent written work. For the purposes of this study, on task behavior was defined as any activity that could reasonably be viewed as following the instructions given by the teacher for that lesson. Examples of these behaviors included writing, looking at one’s work or at the blackboard, checking work with a neighbor or the teacher, and looking up words in the dictionary.

Baseline data collection used a time-sampling design. Researchers recorded all on task and off task behaviors exhibited by the three students every 30 seconds. Data collection procedures continued for 30 minutes or until the teacher stopped the writing activity. Baseline data was collected for five writing activity sessions.

After collecting baseline data, researchers held individual conferences with each student. The researchers defined on task behaviors for the students and introduced each boy to the tape recorder and data collection sheets. At the beginning of each writing session, students were instructed to set a goal for themselves at the top of their data sheet. Students were given the written prompt, “What does the teacher want me to do?” at the top of each data sheet to assist them in goal setting. Each subject was also given his own tape recorder that emitted a low-volume signal every 30-90 seconds. Upon hearing the tone, students were told to ask themselves the question: Was I on task? Researchers instructed the students to record a tally under the appropriate column on their data sheets to reflect their on task behavior (Yes or No). At the end of each writing session, the boys counted their total tally marks and recorded the information on a bar graph. This bar
graph contained the data for every writing session. The boys set a new goal for themselves at the beginning of each writing period.

During the fading portion of this study, subjects continued to use the tape recorder to monitor their on task behavior. The tape recorder continued to emit a tone every 30-90 seconds. The data sheets and cumulative graphs, however, were removed from the study.

Results for this study showed that all three students increased their on task behavior during writing sessions. During baseline conditions, subjects were on task an average of 45% of the time. During the intervention phase, the amount of on-task behavior increased to an average 90% of the time. Finally, during the fading portion of the study, on-task behavior occurred an average 90% of the time.

Self Monitoring and Social Constructivism

In their research article, Bloom, Perlmutter, and Burrell (1999) explored the uses of social constructivism in inclusive classroom settings. The authors suggested that using social constructivism to organize a classroom can have exceptional results for students with special needs. By focusing on the social behaviors and contexts of the classroom, teachers can help their students to increase their positive behaviors, social skills, and self-esteem.

The authors explained that social constructivism urges teachers to view learning as a creative and interactive process. Students construct new meaning within the context of their current knowledge, previous experiences, and social environments (Bloom et al., 1999). Teachers should capitalize on this knowledge by maintaining classrooms with a
strong sense of community. The article stressed the fact that each student needs to feel a sense of belonging in the classroom. The classroom should be structured with many opportunities for problem solving, conflict resolution, and self management of behavior. These elements lead to students who have better feelings of self worth and self esteem.

The authors explained that teaching children how to self manage in a constructivist classroom should start with a strong sense of community. Students should view their own appropriate behavior as vital to the success of the group as a whole. Teachers and students should create classroom rules and expectations together. Students should be aware what appropriate behaviors look and sound like. Students with special needs may require additional explanations about these behaviors. It is important to never assume that students are aware of the behaviors that are expected of them in school.

In one classroom, a third grader named Stephen required additional support in maintaining appropriate behaviors in the classroom. The teacher set up a self monitoring system in which Stephen recorded his daily behaviors on a chart. At the end of each day, Stephen would rate his behavior. This process allowed Stephen to reduce his inappropriate behaviors, as well as support him with continuous teacher feedback in a positive environment.

Lastly, this article stressed the importance of maintaining a positive classroom environment. Many students, especially those with special needs, assume that they simply can’t do things. This mentality allows for no risks to be taken or mistakes to be made. Learning often comes from trial and error. It is crucial for teachers to instill a more positive, can-do attitude on students. The social environment of the classroom should
encourage risk-taking and afford mistakes. All students need to feel safe enough in their classroom environment to risk broadening their ways of thinking regardless of the outcome.

Dudley-Marling’s (2004) research further explored the theory of social constructivism and its function in classrooms for students with learning disabilities. The author used the theory of social constructivism to explain that learning disabilities do not exist within the student, but are a result of the activities and cultural practices that take place in the social environment of the classroom itself. The classroom, therefore, creates learning disabilities.

The author asserted that student success or failure is often incorrectly attributed to individual effort and motivation. We, as Americans, value individualism. The theories behind learning disabilities were based on ideas of individual psychology, and not on group sociology. Schools frequently use tracking and ability grouping. Children change teachers every school year and are mainly evaluated on their individual performance. It is no wonder that so many students struggle in today’s schools with these individualistic ideas underlying our beliefs. The author of this article suggested that in order to help our struggling students, we must change the social aspects of our classrooms.

Social constructivism is the key to helping these struggling students. Teachers need to become more aware of the complex interactions between people, places, and activities that occur in students’ lives. Just as it is not possible to be shy without a social context to define that shyness, it is not possible to be learning disabled without a classroom to suggest it.
The article examined a situation that took place in a learning-disabled classroom setting. A student named Regis, identified as being learning disabled, was working with his teacher. Regis was asked to name all the pictures on a page that began with the letter M. Regis was able to name all the pictures except one (match). His teacher tried several different strategies to help Regis say the word match. She talked about making a fire, and then asked Regis to complete the sentence “Bring me a __.” Regis responded with the word wood. The dialogue showed that although Regis was familiar with the steps involved in making a fire, he had never been exposed to matches. The school and teacher used this interaction to support Regis’ classification as learning disabled. In reality, the social context of this activity was the cause of Regis’ inability to say the word match. A match had never been a part of Regis’ social experiences. He was, therefore, unable to recognize a picture of one. In addition, the teacher was expecting Regis to read her mind when she asked him to complete her sentence. The only answer that the teacher would have considered to be correct was the exact word that she was thinking of. The learning disability is a result of the social context, and certainly not due to any disability on Regis’ part.
Chapter 3: Applications and Evaluations

Objective of Study

The goal of this study was to examine the effects of using self monitoring procedures in the classroom. Previous studies have shown that self monitoring can help to increase the amount of time that students spend on task. It was the intention of this research to determine if self monitoring could have the same results in my own classroom during daily literacy center time. It was expected that an increase in work completion and quality would occur as a result of this increased time spent on task.

Participants of Study

Two six year old first graders, Kim and John (pseudonyms), participated in this study. Both Kim and John attended a suburban public elementary school housing both kindergarten and first grade. Kim, a Caucasian female, had average academic abilities in reading. She tested as reading slightly above grade level, yet did not consistently apply those skills to her daily reading and writing activities. In addition, Kim’s behavior would often affect her ability to work in the classroom. She had extreme difficulty getting along with her peers. Kim also struggled to manage her reactions to situations that she deemed unfair. Kim would go from quietly working to bursting out in tears when things did not go the way that she wanted them to. These emotional outbursts not only affected Kim’s ability to perform her best academically, but affected her classmates’ abilities as well. Kim’s work during literacy center time was often incomplete and not to the best of her abilities.
John, a Caucasian male, had below average academic abilities in reading. He tested as reading below grade level and qualified for academic intervention services (AIS). His writing capabilities were slightly higher than reading, yet still below grade level. He was often well behaved in the classroom and would do what was asked of him until he felt that the work was too challenging. When presented with tasks where he had to work to the best of his abilities, John would give up and display off task behaviors. These behaviors included giving up and doing nothing, chatting with friends, and drawing on his incomplete papers. These off task behaviors greatly affected both the quality and completion of his work during literacy center time.

The researcher in this study was a Caucasian female with one year of previous substitute teaching experience, including one long term substitute position for five months. She had earned a bachelors degree in education and held state teaching certificates in elementary education and special education. In addition, she was three credits away from earning her masters degree as a curriculum specialist.

Procedures of Study

After obtaining all necessary permission and consent forms, Kim and John were taught how to use the self monitoring forms. Any questions that they had about the forms were answered, and the researcher was confident that both students understood how to use the forms. The forms were taped to each student’s desk so that they could be easily accessed.

Literacy center time was scheduled every morning for one hour. This hour was divided into four 15 minute centers with different literacy activities for the students to
complete. While most center activities required the students to complete a written assignment, some did not. The two centers that did not have written products were the games center and the computer center. At the end of each 15 minute block, the teacher would verbally remind Kim and John to circle a face on their self monitoring forms to represent their behavior for the center they had just completed.

At the end of the day, the teacher collected the self monitoring sheets. In addition, the teacher would collect and grade all written literacy center activities at the end of each week. The computer center was monitored by the teacher by generating an electronic report. All written work was graded with a + or a --. A + indicated that the student had completed all or most of the activity. A-- indicated that the written work did not represent the best abilities of the student.

*Instruments for Study*  

This study utilized a self monitoring sheet containing six time intervals (see Appendix A). This self monitoring sheet was designed by the researcher. Although only four time intervals were needed each day, six were provided in case there was ever a situation where extra intervals were needed (additional literacy center activities that required more time). The researcher also kept a journal to record additional information or personal reflections throughout the study. Lastly, an interview form was used at the conclusion of the study (see Appendix B). This interview form was designed by the researcher to gauge the students' opinions on the effectiveness of using self monitoring during the school day.
Chapter 4: Results

Baseline Data

Baseline data was calculated by utilizing the classroom teacher’s assessment records. Each week, the total number of center time assignments was calculated. The researcher also used the records to determine how many assignments were completed each week by John and Kim. The researcher divided the number of centers completed by each student by the total number of center assignments for each week, and multiplied this number by 100. The baseline data show this calculation, the percentage of work completed each week during center time for both John and Kim.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>John</th>
<th>Kim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>88.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>77.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>88.8%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 shows that John’s work completion varied from week to week. On weeks one, nine, and thirteen, John showed that he was capable of getting all of his center work completed. John also had relatively high percentages of work completion on weeks two, ten, fourteen, and fifteen. The teacher used this data to determine that John was capable of completing all or most of the work during center time. Knowing this, the teacher was concerned to see low percentages of work completion for weeks three, eight, and twelve. John was having difficulty working to his ability consistently during center time.

This table shows that Kim’s work completion also varied from week to week. It is important to note that Kim’s work completion percentage during week two was due to a five day absence. This data was not calculated into analysis. Kim was able to complete all of her center work on week one and week fourteen. She also completed a high percentage of center work on week nine and week thirteen. For several of the weeks, however, Kim was completing low percentages of center work. She completed half of less of her center work on weeks three, six, seven, eight, and eleven. The teacher was concerned to see Kim unable to work to her ability.

**Intervention Data**

The intervention data was calculated in the same manner as the baseline data. The researcher divided the number of centers completed weekly by each student by the total number of center assignments for each week, and then multiplied by 100. Each number represents the percentage of work completed by both John and Kim for the five intervention weeks.
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>John</th>
<th>Kim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that during the intervention period, John was able to complete all of his center work during weeks two, three, four, and five. During week one of intervention, John was able to complete most of his work (85.7%). Kim was also able to complete all of her center work during week four of intervention. During weeks one, two, and three, Kim completed a high percentage of center work (87.5%). During week five, Kim completed 90% of her center work.

Work Completion

Baseline work completion was calculated by taking the percentages of work completed by John and Kim during the baseline period and averaging them. John’s mean percentage of work completion during the baseline period was 77.6%. Kim’s mean percentage of work completion during the baseline period was 66.4%.

The mean percentage of work completion for the intervention phase was also calculated by averaging the percentage of work completed by John and Kim during the
intervention phase. During the intervention phase, John completed an average of 97.1% of his center time work. Kim completed an average of 89.8% of her center time work during the intervention phase.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Period</th>
<th>John</th>
<th>Kim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
<td>66.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>97.1%</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows that self monitoring was effective in increasing the amount of work completed by both participants. John was able to increase his average percentage of completed work by 19.5%. Kim was able to increase her average percentage of completed work by 23.4%. These results show that self monitoring can be used to increase the amount of work completed by students.

Self Monitoring Sheets and Researcher Journal

The self monitoring sheets used by Kim and John were highly reflective of their actual on task behavior. The journal kept by the researcher noted that on the majority of the days during intervention, both Kim and John were on task and doing the activities that were expected of them. This was accurately reflected in John and Kim’s self monitoring sheets. There were some days when Kim had an emotional outburst that affected her ability to stay on task. This was acknowledged by Kim each time and accurately recorded on her self monitoring sheet. The self monitoring sheets, in combination with the
researcher journal, suggest that self monitoring was effective in increasing the amount of time spent on task by these two students.

Exit Interview

The results of the exit interview provided additional information into John and Kim’s feelings about using self monitoring. In response to question one, John replied that he liked using self monitoring because it helped him to know if he was doing the right thing during center time. Kim also replied that she liked using self monitoring, noting that it helped her to keep track of her center time work. In response to question two, both John and Kim replied that self monitoring helped them to stay on task during center time. Kim added that it helped her to keep focused on the work that she knew she had to do. In response to question three, John and Kim did not wish to change anything about the way they were asked to use self monitoring. Both John and Kim replied that they would like to continue to use self monitoring to help stay on task in response to question four. Finally, in response to question five, John and Kim replied that although they liked using self monitoring during center time, there were no other areas of their school day that they would like to use self monitoring.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Discussion

Results of this study had several implications for classroom instruction. Both participants, John and Kim, were able to significantly increase the amount of time they were spending on task in the classroom. This directly resulted in the participants being able to complete more of their center time work. Because both participants were spending more class time actively engaged in learning, their work quality was better and their ability to retain the material being taught was increased. An added benefit to the increased on task behavior of John and Kim was a decrease in distractions in the classroom as a whole. Other students were better able to focus without fewer emotional outbursts from Kim and off task behavior in general.

Baseline data for John showed that he was completing an average of 77.6% of his center time work. While this percentage suggests that John was completing the majority of his work, it was obvious that he was not working to his potential. Intervention data showed John completing an average of 97.1% of his center work. This percentage showed that John learned how to monitor his own behavior during center time and keep himself on task for a much greater portion of the time. This increased amount of time spent on task allowed John to dramatically increase the amount of work he was able to get done independently.

Baseline data for Kim showed that she was completing an average of 66.4% of her center time work. This percentage also showed that Kim was not working to her full potential during center time. Intervention data showed that Kim was able to increase her average completed center work percentage to 89.8%. This percentage showed that Kim
also learned to self monitor her ability to stay on task independently to greatly increase the amount of work she was able to produce. Both Kim’s intervention percentage and John’s intervention percentage are much more representative of their academic capabilities. Self monitoring played a role in allowing John and Kim to be able to achieve these extraordinary results.

The self monitoring sheets were used accurately by both John and Kim. The teacher journal supported the accuracy of both participants’ self monitoring sheets. Both students were able to record their self monitoring data quickly and easily without being distracted from their work. The self monitoring sheets helped John and Kim to reflect on their own work habits and become more aware of their on and off task behaviors throughout center time. John and Kim successfully used the self monitoring sheets to help increase their on task time and increase the overall quantity and quality of their work. Both John and Kim were able to get more out of their academic school day as a result of self monitoring.

The exit interview provided additional insight into John and Kim’s feelings about using the self monitoring procedures. Both participants’ responses indicated that they enjoyed using self monitoring during center time. Both participants also felt that self monitoring was able to help them stay on task during center time and do more of the things that the teacher was expecting. In perhaps the most encouraging section of the exit interview, both participants indicated that they would like to continue to use self monitoring to help them stay on task during the school day. The exit interview showed
that John and Kim enjoyed their experiences with self monitoring and understood the academic benefits it can continue to provide to them.

Action Plan

The results of this study are extremely encouraging to me as an educator. I have already taken the opportunity to share this success with many colleagues as a possible intervention idea in their own classrooms. I have shown other teachers how to implement the self monitoring system and provided them with the resources to do so. I look forward to continuing to share the benefits of self monitoring with colleagues for years to come. I have found that it is a simple, effective way to help students who are struggling to attend. Collaboration is key to educational success, and I intend to include my knowledge of the possible benefits of self monitoring with other educators for the span of my career.

Recommendations for Future Research

The study of self monitoring can benefit from additional research. This study has shown that self monitoring procedures can be effective in a first grade classroom during literacy center time. More research, however, is needed to determine additional specific conditions in which self monitoring can be effective. Self monitoring needs to be studied in a variety of different settings. This includes studying different age levels, class sizes, class make ups, and school settings. Self monitoring also needs to be studied during additional areas of curriculum, including, but not limited to, math, science, social studies, art, music, writing, etc. It is crucial to determine where and when self monitoring can be used to increase the on task behavior of students. When applied appropriately, it can
become an extremely valuable tool in helping students reach the academic success they are capable of.

Conclusions

Overall, this study determined that self monitoring procedures were indeed effective in increasing the amount of time spent on task by two first grade, general education students. In addition to these results, the two participants reported that they enjoyed using self monitoring and would use these skills again in order to help them stay on task during the school day. Self monitoring was deemed an effective tool in helping students increase their amount of time spent on task, as well as their quality and quantity of work produced.

Based on these results, it was determined that self monitoring procedures can be used successfully in a first grade classroom during literacy center time. In the future, self monitoring will be one tool used to help any students in my classroom who are struggling to attend or stay on task during the school day. In addition, I look forward to recommending and assisting any colleagues in implementing a self monitoring program in their own classrooms. Self monitoring can be an important and successful tool in the classroom to help all children find academic success.
References


Appendix A

Self-Monitoring Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Interval</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I was on-task</td>
<td>I was not on-task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>☺️</td>
<td>☺️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>☺️</td>
<td>☺️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>☺️</td>
<td>☺️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>☺️</td>
<td>☺️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>☺️</td>
<td>☺️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>☺️</td>
<td>☺️</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Exit Interview Form

Student: ___________________________ Date: ________________

1. Did you like using self-monitoring? Why or why not?

2. Did self-monitoring help you to stay on task during class? Remember, being on task is doing the things that the teacher has asked you to do and trying your best. Why or why not?

3. What, if anything, would you change about the way you were asked to use self-monitoring?

4. Now that the study is over, do you think you will continue to use self-monitoring to help you stay on task?

5. Are there any other areas of school where you would like to use self-monitoring? If so, what are they?