

Education Experience: Positive Tools for Change

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Abstract. Classroom management and discipline strategies are critical to the student learning environment. This study uses the following methods: Effective School Discipline (ESD) and CHAMPS (Proactive Approach to Classroom Management) These strategies were both implemented during the core reading instruction period, roughly the first three hours of the school day. Both methods involved parent surveys, observation logs, student reflections and office referral data to compare strategy success. The sample of participants included challenging documented behaviors, including attention disorders and hyperactivity. Results have revealed that the above-mentioned strategies decreased the number of negative behaviors during reading instruction. Time samplings of time on content were taken before implementation and after to determine the effect of decreased negative behaviors on positive academic learning.

1. Introduction

This research stemmed from an overwhelming amount of growing frustration on my part during the first three months of the 2010-2011 school year. The group of students had carried a reputation since kindergarten as being the “*worst class in a long time*” and continued to be as such. As the first semester progressed, I noticed that my strategies of discipline and classroom management were failing miserably, thus taking up all of my efforts to deal with negative behaviors. Through self reflection and helpful support from those around me, I began to look for research-based strategies that might make a change in my classroom climate. ESD (Thompson, 2010) was a new school-wide method of dealing with unwanted behaviors in a positive way. The school staff had recently been trained in how to utilize this strategy with all students, especially those with challenging behaviors. The CHAMPS (Sprick, 2009) strategy had also been presented to our school staff through district in-services, and offered visual tools to use for classroom management purposes. Like any new idea to graze my desk, I wondered if the two strategies would work hand-in-hand to change the way my students were acting during reading instruction. I was hopeful that the methods would work in my favor; I was looking for a miracle!

2. Experiment, Results, Discussion, and Significance

If the goal of education today is to decrease the amount of negative behaviors, and increase the academic performance, educators must look at various aspects of the classroom environment. In Wong and Wong’s book titled, *How to be an Effective Teacher: The First Days of School* (2001), the authors affirm that, “effective teachers know that the more time on task, spent by the student, the more the student learns” (p. 168). To find the answer to handling challenging students, or challenging classes, educators need to look at the areas in which they are experiencing frustration as well as student struggles. In this study, the effectiveness of positive discipline with students who struggled with attention, while simultaneously using organizational visual tools served as the research focal point. Can the positive discipline strategy ESD and research based classroom procedures (CHAMPS) have a constructive impact on behavior in a third grade classroom?

In the highly recognized behavior analysis text, Cooper, Heron, & Heward (2007) indicate that, “effective instruction, or training, should be designed to promote socially significant behavior changes.” Students need to know, from day one, how to do simple tasks such as *when to sharpen a pencil*, or *how to answer a question*. Teachers must think through how they want their room to run on a daily basis. Without set procedures in place, students will make up their own set of routines that may not fall in line with an effective learning environment. Teachers cannot control each student’s home environment, or the previously learned behaviors with which they enter school, but they can control the classroom environment and the behaviors used in that atmosphere.

Positive Approach Discipline is based on teachers' respect for students, instilling a sense of responsibility. The positive discipline approach focuses on relationship building with students. It requires teachers and administrators to connect with where students are coming from, finding what motivates them, and building on common ground. Once a relationship is built dramatic behavior change is more likely to occur (Thompson, 2010).

Can blending positive discipline and research-based classroom procedures meet the needs of the teacher and student interactions to obtain quality learning experiences? To accomplish that task, this research focused on the teacher maintaining specific expectations for how the classroom was run, while building connective relationships with students. The student slowly becomes involved as a member of the classroom community, while learning responsibility for behavioral actions.

Throughout the course of this action research study, the effectiveness of the ESD positive behavior strategy alongside the CHAMPS management tool was monitored and analyzed. The results from pre-/post tests, observation data, parent surveys, office referral data, and student reflections indicated that the number of negative behaviors decreased during the study implementation. For example: the incidents of blurting during a reading lesson decreased by approximately 84% over a three-month time frame, thus increasing the amount of instructional reading time.

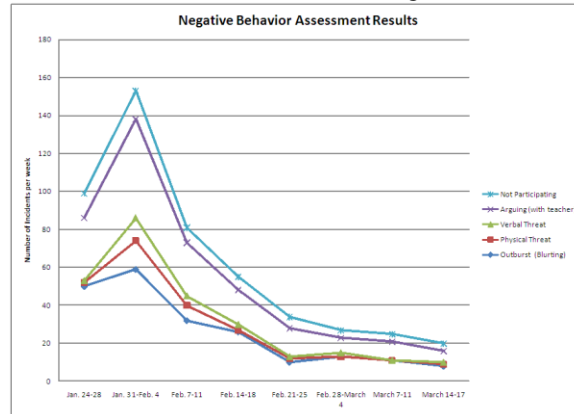


Fig. 1 Negative behavior assessment results.

3. Conclusions

At the closing of this action research, both strategies have shown effectiveness in reducing the number of negative behaviors within a third grade classroom. Although some of the behaviors continue to occur, they are fewer and far between, often times simply requiring teacher proximity or a quiet reminder. Academic instructional time has increased thus changing the classroom environment and student interactions.

4. Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge Kathy Stybr and Maggie Spratt for their guidance and support with classroom data, and ESD background information. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Jeri Carroll and Jennifer Kern for their academic assistance in the design of the action research for this presentation.

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