

The Effects of Visual and Verbal Prompts and Behavioral Economics to Increase On-Task Behaviors in Physical Education Class

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A treatment package was developed targeting physical education sessions for individuals diagnosed with emotional behavior disorders, in an effort to increase on-task behaviors and decrease challenging behaviors. The setting was a residential facility for individuals with intellectual disabilities and emotional behavior disorders, and the treatment package was developed in collaboration with the APE Teachers and Clinicians. The initial challenge expressed was that students would have excessive latency getting changed during a 30 minute session, and would impede both their personal and classroom performances in PE class, as it would prevent the staff from running the class. The treatment package included establishing rules for the classroom, including verbal cues, visual cues, and ultimately running the contingency twice (once at the beginning of class and once at the end). This was done additionally as a generalization of a behavioral economic system that was currently in place within the classroom. The conditions to pass the contingency were established at the individual level. Data will be provided for the individual as well as overall classroom performance. Although in the initial phase of service delivery implementation, the initial results appear positive and the APE Teachers are reporting an increase in overall performance across.

METHOD

Subject:

82 Participants that were attending the Day program. The individuals were all aged between 13 – 22 years old, and borderline or cognitively typical individuals.

Experimental Design:

Pre and Post Test

Setting:

- Conducted at the Day program that the participants attend.
- All sessions took place in the gymnasium and weight lifting room.

Materials:

- Data sheet with individuals labeled per their classroom.
- Tickets
- Timer (mounted to wall)
- Pen

Independent Variable:

Ticket system introduced following the initial baseline.

Dedependent Variables:

- Number of tickets obtained during the gym class
- Changed and prepared for gym within 5 minutes of class start time

PROCEDURE

Baseline:

Prior to beginning of the intervention of the ticket system, data were collected via a whole interval measure on whether or not the participant was ready for gym. Ready was defined as changed, and in the correct location within 5 minutes of the start of class.

Intervention:

Stage 1: A timer was mounted in the changing area

Stage 2: Tickets were introduced if the participant was ready within 5 minutes

Stage 3: Tickets were introduced if the participant was changed back at the end of the gym class within 5 minutes of class ending.

DISCUSSION

Results of the intervention suggest that a token system (i.e., tickets and academic money) can be generalized from the academic classroom to an adaptive physical education classroom. The tickets were delivered immediately by the APE teacher when the timer counted down to zero, or when the participant was ready by the criterion set by the APE teacher. The APE teachers have reported an overall increase in students being ready and engaged during the gym class. The class teachers have not reported any challenges with the participants earning extra tickets in gym. There was no noticeable impact on their performance in the classrooms. Overall improvement were noticed for all participants following the implementation of the ticket system. This supports the potential to generalize token systems from an academic into a gym setting, with middle school to high school aged students.

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