

## **Intensive Toilet Training with Autistic Students**

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The Judge Rotenberg Educational Center ([www.judgerc.org](http://www.judgerc.org)) operates day and residential programs for children and adults with behavior problems, including conduct disorders, emotional problems, brain injury or psychosis, autism, and developmental disabilities. The fundamental approach taken at JRC is the use of behavioral psychology and its various technological applications, including behavioral education, programmed instruction, precision teaching, behavior modification, behavior therapy, behavioral counseling, self-management of behavior, and chart-sharing.

In this study, we examine the use of an entire room dedicated to toilet training. Participants using this room have various diagnoses to include mental retardation and autism. This room allows participants to be within 8 feet of a toilet from the hours of 9am to 7pm, while also having access to, and being given 1:1 instruction on, various academic tasks. Participants gradually decrease the amount of time spent on the toilet, while increasing the time spent off of the toilet throughout the day. This paper will address the various methods that were used to encourage voiding in the toilet, data collection methods, gradually transitioning students back to a regular classroom environment and how long it took to toilet train these participants using this room.

### **Method**

#### **Participants and Setting**

There were four participants in this study. They were all chosen because they were not toilet trained. Participant 1, B.W. was 16 years old, male, and diagnosed with autism, severe mental retardation, impulse control disorder and acquired brain injury. Participant 2, A.G. was 12 years old, male, and diagnosed with autism and severe mental retardation. Participant 3, A.G.\_2 was 14 years old, female, and diagnosed with autism and mental retardation. Participant 4, G.R., was 9 years old, female, and diagnosed with autism and disruptive behavior disorder. All four participants attended school at the Judge Rotenberg Center and lived in one of JRC's group homes. All four participants were non-verbal, with limited means of communication.

The toilet training room is located in one of JRC's school buildings. The room was comprised of 6 large bathroom stalls, a sink, refrigerator, long tables, a computer work station and a reward area with a television and comfortable chairs. Each participant was assigned a stall, and a seat at the long table. Their

seat was assigned so that they would be no more than 8 feet from their designated bathroom stall. When not sitting on the toilet, participants worked on daily living skills, such as buttoning, unbuttoning, zipping, unzipping, hand washing, brushing teeth, pointing to body parts, non-verbal imitation and computerized academic tasks.

## **Measures and Instruction**

The participants arrived to the Toilet Training Room at, approximately 9 AM each morning and departed at approximately 7 PM each evening. When a participant first started in the Toilet Training Room, he/she would spend five minutes either at the work table or in the reward area and the spend five minutes on the toilet. While on the toilet, the participant's 1-1 staff would verbally praise them for staying on the toilet, sing songs to/with them, or provide small toys for them to play with. If the participant voided on the toilet, the staff that was assigned to them and anyone else in the room would praise them and immediately provide them with a very rewarding item, such as a doll or an edible. In addition, whenever the participant entered the stall, he/she was verbally and/or physically prompted to sign bathroom.

All participants wore a urine sensor, which clipped to their underwear. If the participant began to urinate while not seated on the toilet, the sensor beeped loudly. Depending on the participants' behavioral program, the staff either said loudly and sternly, "No" and "You go to the bathroom in the toilet" or the participant received a GED application. The GED is an FDA approved device that delivers a 2 second skin shock. For the participant to receive a skin shock, a series of approvals must be granted, from the participants guardians, to the state court. The 2 male participants received a skin shock as a consequence for voiding anywhere but the toilet and the 2 female participants received a "No" for voiding anywhere but the toilet.

As participants went longer periods of time without voiding outside of the toilet, their time off of the toilet increased. Time off was increased in five minute increments, on a weekly basis, until the participant was able to reliably go 60 minutes without a toileting accident. Once a student was able to reliably stay off of the toilet for 30 minutes, he/she no longer wore a diaper. Once the participant was at 60 minutes off of the toilet, he/she would slowly transition back to their regular classroom for portions of the day.

Recorded data included time spent in the Toilet Training Room, time spent on the toilet, number of voids in the toilet and number of voids outside the toilet.

## **Results**

Baseline data was taken for 7 days prior to participant A.G. beginning the toilet training program. Between the hours of 9AM and 7PM, over the 7 days, he had a total of 9 voids outside of the toilet. He spent a total of 95 days in the toilet training program. He spent a total of 11,086 minutes on the toilet and 41,740 minutes in the Toilet Training Room. He voided on the toilet 1,237 times and voided outside of the toilet a total of 48 times, while in the Toilet Training Room. After going back to his classroom full time, he had a total of 0 voids outside of the toilet, during the hours of 9AM and 7PM over a 7 day period.

Baseline data was taken for 7 days prior to participant B.W. beginning the toilet training program. Between the hours of 9AM and 7PM, over the 7 days, he had a total of 16 voids outside of the toilet. He spent a total of 94 days in the toilet training program. He spent a total of 9,888 minutes on the toilet and 39,480 minutes in the Toilet Training Room. He voided on the toilet 1,190 times and voided outside of the toilet a total of 28 times, while in the Toilet Training Room. After going back to his classroom full time, he had a total of 0 voids outside of the toilet, during the hours of 9AM and 7PM over a 7 day period.

Baseline data was taken for 7 days prior to participant A.G.\_2 beginning the toilet training program. Between the hours of 9AM and 7PM, over the 7 days, she had a total of 5 voids outside of the toilet. She spent a total of 112 days in the toilet training program. She spent 28,621 minutes on the toilet and 54,733 minutes in the Toilet Training Room. She voided on the toilet 1,257 times and voided outside of the toilet a total of 36 times, while in the Toilet Training Room. After going back to her classroom full time, she had a total of 1 void outside of the toilet, during the hours of 9AM and 7PM over a 7 day period.

Baseline data was taken for 7 days prior to participant G.R. beginning the toilet training program. Between the hours of 9AM and 7PM, over the 7 days, she had a total of 8 voids outside of the toilet. She spent a total of 105 days in the toilet training program. She spent a total of 9,992 minutes on the toilet and 50,880 minutes in the Toilet Training Room. She voided on the toilet 1,130 times and voided outside of the toilet a total of 31 times, while in the Toilet Training Room. After going back to her classroom full time, she had a total of 0 voids outside of the toilet, during the hours of 9AM and 7PM over a 7 day period.

## **Discussion**

All participants were successfully toilet trained, while in the Toilet Training Room. All participants learned to initiate going into the stall and using the toilet or bathroom on his/her own. We are currently in the process of evaluating long-term, sustained generalization of these skills outside of the Toilet Training Room. We are also working on toilet training these participants during the overnight hours. Depending on the participants' level of behavioral involvement, they have

had great success while outside of the Toilet Training Room. We will continue to monitor these participants to determine if the toilet training program has had long-term success.

# DAILY CHART

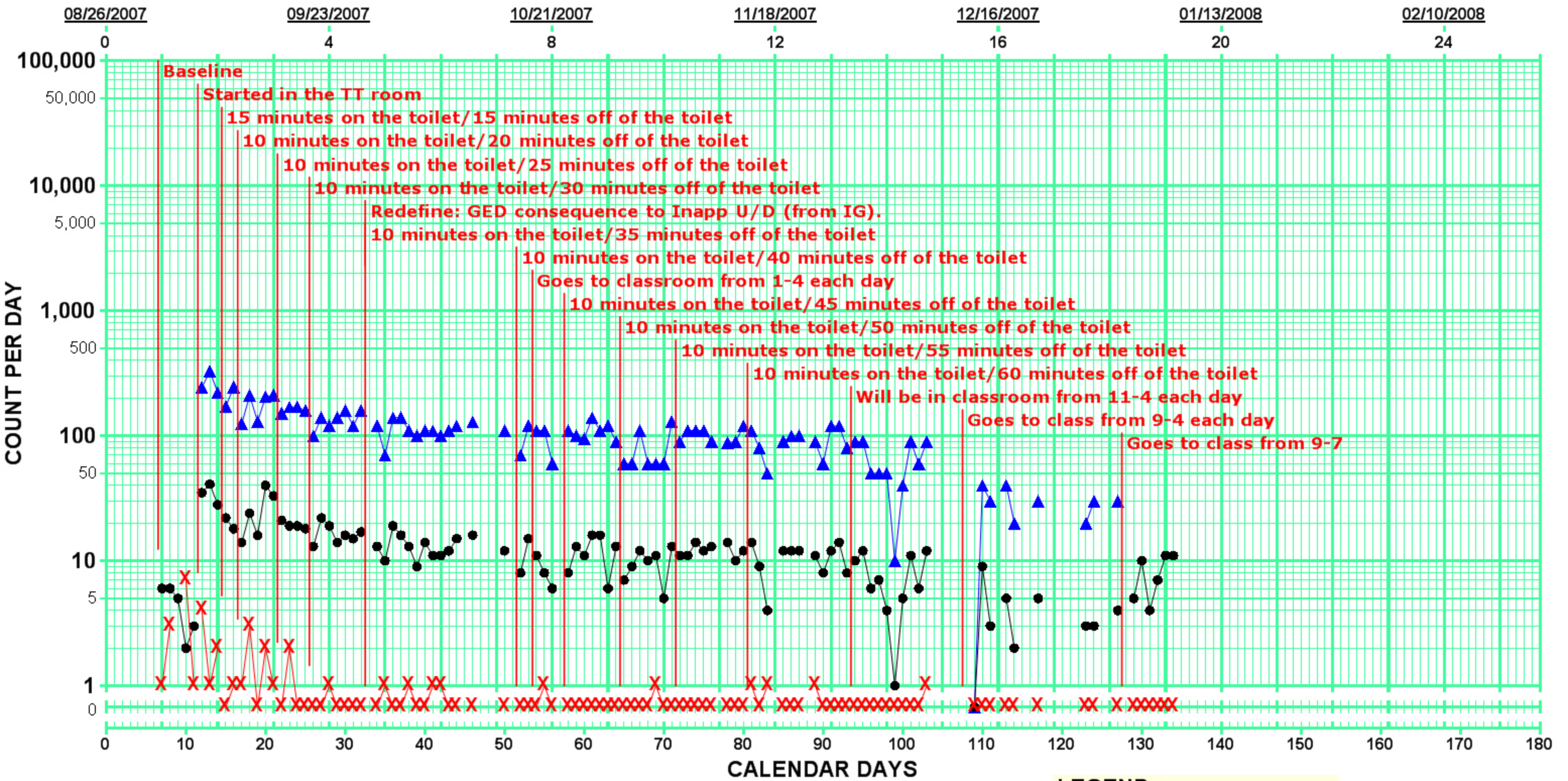


Figure 1

B.W.  
NAME

Toileting Skills  
ITEM MEASURED

**LEGEND:**

- [▲] Minutes on Toilet
- [●] Voids on Toilet
- [X] Voids outside of Toilet



# DAILY CHART

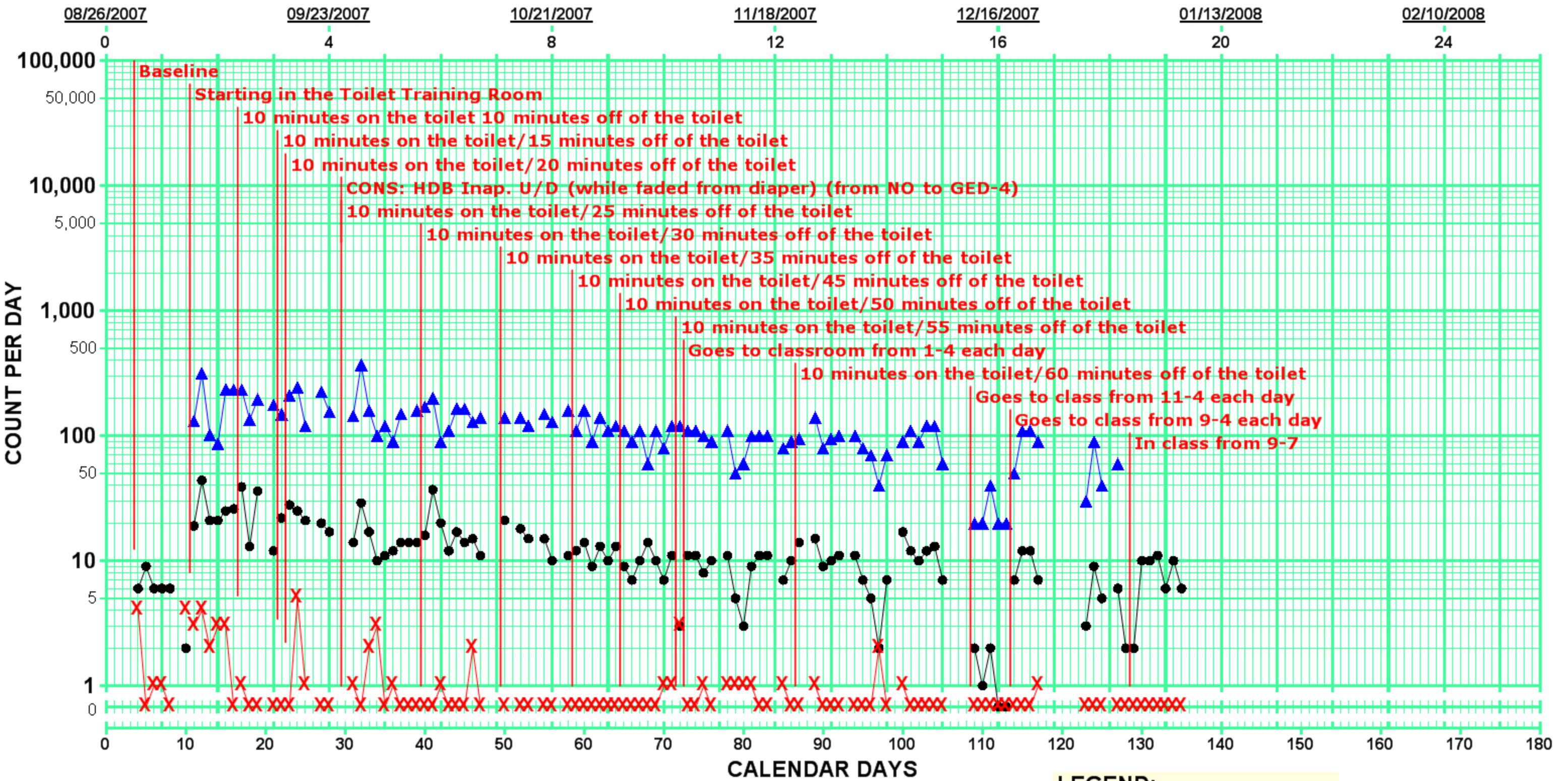


Figure 2

A.G.  
NAME

Toileting Skills  
ITEM MEASURED

**LEGEND:**

- [▲] Minutes on Toilet
- [●] Voids in Toilet
- [X] Voids outside of Toilet

# DAILY CHART

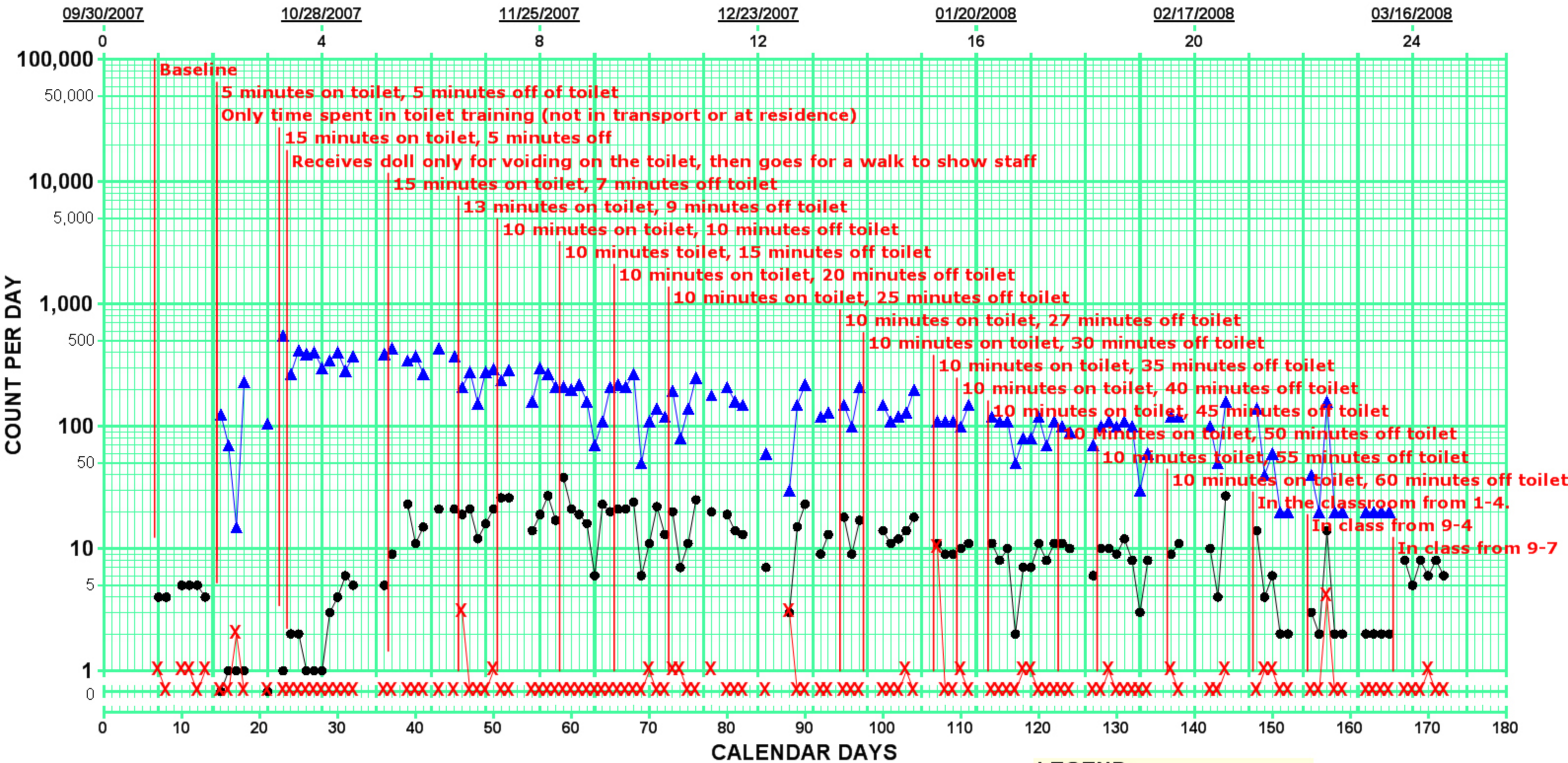


Figure 3

A.G.\_2  
 NAME

Toileting Skills  
 ITEM MEASURED



# DAILY CHART

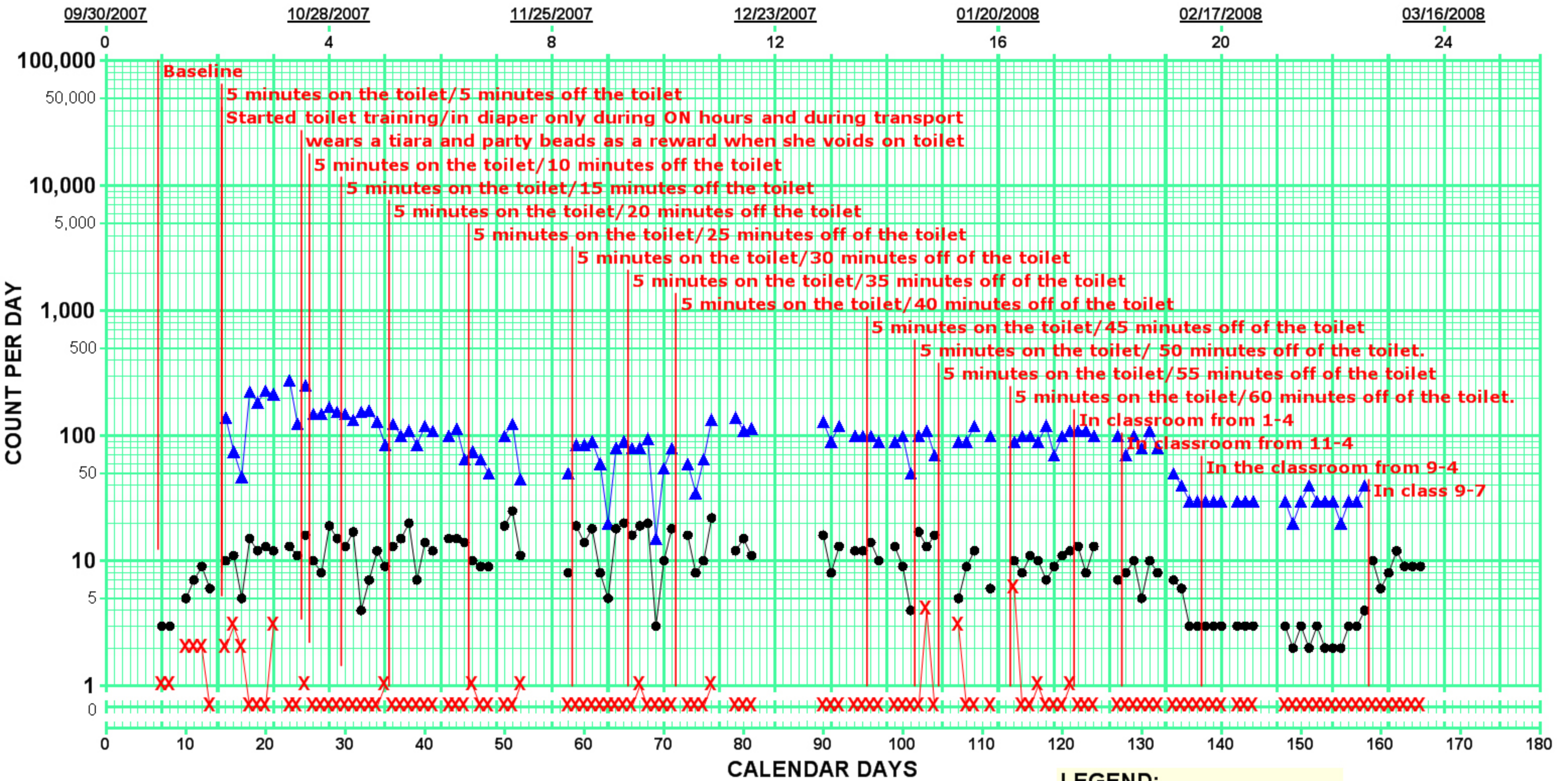


Figure 4

G.R.  
NAME

Toileting Skills  
ITEM MEASURED