Self-Monitoring to Increase Academic Engagement

Mykell Beaucham & Clayton R. Cook
University of Washington

Introduction

One common concern that teachers face in their classroom is figuring out how to respond effectively to students who continue to act out and disrupt the learning process, despite repeated reminders to stay on task. Not only do these students take time away from the overall instruction time that the teacher can provide to the class as a whole, but continual disapproval of problem behaviors can negatively impact the relationship between the student and the teacher. Also, when students engage in disruptive behavior, they are not able to stay engaged in their learning and often struggle or fall behind.

One way teachers can decrease the amount of time they spend addressing challenging behaviors and create a positive outlook on behavior management for individual students, is through the implementation of a *self-monitoring* intervention. The basic idea behind self-monitoring is putting the student in charge of keeping track of his own behavior, which gives him ownership over his behavior and helps him become more aware of his actions and the consequences associated with them. Self-monitoring interventions are also matched to the deficits of many students who exhibit off-task, disruptive behaviors, as they often have deficits in self-management and self-regulation.

Self-monitoring has been used successfully with individuals with a variety of behavior problems and disabilities. Studies have demonstrated effectiveness with children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, cognitive impairments, emotional and behavioral disorders, and learning disabilities. This strategy can be used to address both academic and social behaviors and is easily and effectively implemented in a classroom setting.

Overall, self-monitoring is a relatively easy intervention to implement and is found to be rewarding for both teachers and students. In fact, teachers rate self-monitoring interventions as one of the most acceptable and feasible interventions for use within their classrooms. Self-monitoring interventions take little planning and organization prior to implementation. For example, simple data collection sheets are be for the student to track his behavior. However after it has been established, the student who self-monitors his behavior requires less monitoring from the teacher. Students often agree to participate in a self-monitoring intervention because they can see the value of participating and are excited to earn concrete reinforcement for positive behaviors. Finally, it is a cost effective strategy for implementation in the classroom, because there are no special programs or materials to purchase.

Self-monitoring is a two-stage process that involves self-observation and –self-recording of specific target behaviors. First, the student needs to determine whether the target behaviors did or did not occur during a predetermined amount of time. Then, the student self-records the results on a chart. At the end of the day or instructional period,

the results of the self-monitoring intervention are summarized by the student and the student either corrective feedback if he did not meet his goal or a designated reinforcer or reward for meeting his goal. Sometimes the simple act of self-recording behavior is enough to raise the student's awareness of his behavior, improve his performance, and serve as a reinforcing activity. However, in other cases, the addition of a reinforcer for goal attainment is critical in increasing the occurrence of a desired behavior. The specific steps to implementing a self-monitoring intervention are listed below.

Steps to Implement Self-Monitoring

Step 1: Identify and Operationally Define the Target Behavior(s): The teacher must first clearly describe the desired behavior. It should be described in simple language and also be easily observed by both the teacher and the student. The behavior can be related to a wide range of academic skills, social skills, or attention, but should always be framed positively. The teacher also decides how to measure the behavior (e.g. number of on-topic comments made during a 30 minute class period, percentage of math problems completed correctly on weekly tests)

Step 2: Gather Data about Behavior: The teacher then takes baseline data on the chosen behavior, and begins to graph the behavior. Baseline data should include at least three sessions or until the gathered data demonstrates a clear and stable pattern. This is valuable data to compare to student behavior after implementation of self-monitoring.

Step 2: Determine Appropriate Method of Self-Monitoring: It is important to keep the student's age and ability level in mind when developing the self-monitoring tracking system. Higher functioning and older students can use paper-based systems, such as coloring in boxes on a graph or checking boxes, but younger students may require a hands-on system, such as using tokens or stickers or stacking blocks.

Step 3: Talk with the Student and Teach Procedures: The teacher should set aside time to talk with the student about the advantages of self-monitoring. These advantages include improvements other students have made as a result, benefits the student may gain from the system (e.g., better grades), and reinforcement the student may receive as a result of improved behavior. The student should also have input regarding what items he or she wants to earn to increase motivation to increase the target behavior. Finally, the teacher should also spend time role-playing and modeling examples and non-examples of the behavior. While modeling and role-playing, the teacher should practice the self-monitoring system with the student until he or she can do so independently.
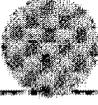
Step 4: Teacher and Student Begin Self-Monitoring: At the beginning of the intervention, both the teacher and student should track the student's behavior using the designated system. At the end of a designated time period, the teacher and student should compare their results for accuracy. This procedure should continue until the teacher and student believe that student is able to accurately record the target behavior independently.

Random accuracy checks should also be implemented by the teacher throughout the intervention.

Step 5: Monitor Student Progress: Data gathered by the student can be compared with baseline and other previous data points to assess progress. It is important to have the student track his or her own progress, because of the visual stimulus self-graphing provides. It also promotes intrinsic reinforcement when the student can see concrete evidence of his or her own improvement.

Step 6: Maintenance and Follow-Up: Once the student has successfully and consistently used self-monitoring and it has resulted in improved academic engagement, self-monitoring should be gradually faded. The goal is for the student to maintain the desired behavior independently. The fading can occur in a variety of different ways. For example, the intervals can be lengthened or the number of checkpoints throughout the day can be reduced. This should continue until self-monitoring is not occurring and the behavior is maintained. Intermittent and specific verbal praise should still be used when the student performs the behavior appropriately.

Examples

Monday	
I wrote down each assignment	●
I put the correct books in my backpack	
I put my homework folder in my backpack	

Tuesday	
I wrote down each assignment	●
I put the correct books in my backpack	
I put my homework folder in my backpack	

Wednesday	
I wrote down each assignment	●
I put the correct books in my backpack	
I put my homework folder in my backpack	

Thursday	
I wrote down each assignment	●
I put the correct books in my backpack	
I put my homework folder in my backpack	●

Friday	
I wrote down each assignment	●
I put the correct books in my backpack	
I put my homework folder in my backpack	●

	Number of context-appropriate questions asked						
	5						
	4						
	3						
	2						
	1						
		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
		Day					

Helpful References and Resources

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