

Use of Tactile and Auditory Stimuli to Control Undesirable Classroom Behavior

A Study by Jan Garritano, O.T.R.

Background: Undesirable classroom behavior targeted for this study was disruptive outbursts. Disruptive vocalizations that require the attention of the classroom teacher were monitored in this study. This type of behavior is usually done to get attention. It is generally loud and directed toward the teacher. Students that exhibit this behavior are difficult to manage in a large classroom. They take valuable learning time away from the other students and cause distraction and frustration to everyone in the classroom. Sending them out of the classroom is usually rewarding the behavior. This study was performed to explore ways to decrease the behavior and create a more productive learning environment.

Project Description

Does the presence of appropriate tactile and auditory stimuli help control undesirable classroom behavior? Participants will have a cuddly talking teddy bear, a tape recorder or a fidget type object available to them. Observations will take place during the school day, in the school environment. Behavior will be recorded by classroom staff. Benefits from this study will be the use of an appropriate stimuli to decrease classroom disruptions and improve the learning environment. Benefits to the student will be improved behavior and successes in the school environment.

Problem

Special Education students often have aggressive outburst that are disruptive in the classroom.

Goals

Students will have a decrease in the number of times that the teacher needs to attend to negative behaviors.

Stimuli

1. Spinoza Bear: a soft and cuddly teddy bear, with a cassette player and speaker inside that delivers spoken and song messages that focus on self-esteem.
2. A tape recorder with music tapes.
3. An object with texture to manipulate.

Results

The student observed in this study is functioning in the Educable Mentally Impaired range and is in a Severely Emotionally Impaired classroom. He is ten years old. He does not take any medication. Disruptive classroom behaviors we observed are: yelling, swearing, inappropriate laughing, banging on the walls, crying, and throwing books.

Positive behaviors observed after student was given Spinoza Bear: positive attitude, calm and in control, able to rejoin group after 15 minutes. Out of 20 exposures to Spinoza, 18 were positive. After the study, this student requested time with Spinoza, would position the bear close to him, and talk to the bear. The bear would immediately calm this student and did decrease disruptive classroom behavior.

Positive behaviors observed after student was given manipulated toy: calmed and rejoin group after 15 minutes. Out of 20 exposures, 3 were positive. This stimuli had no significant effect on behavior.

Positive behaviors observed after student was given tape player with soft music: calmed and rejoined group after 15 minutes. Out of 20 exposures, 4 were positive. This stimuli had no significant effect on behavior.

Discussion

The presence of tactile and auditory stimuli in the form of a cuddly talking teddy bear did help to control undesirable classroom behavior. Other students who were given Spinoza Bear also had positive results. A 10 year old child with autism would seek out Spinoza; being non-verbal, she would sign bear for Spinoza, decreased self-abusive behaviors when given Spinoza, increased interactions by other students approaching and being interested in Spinoza or giving it to her when she became upset. A blind, severely mentally impaired student, age 24 would calm when given Spinoza. His behavior when upset is to make very loud vocalizations, flail extremities and bite his hand. Given Spinoza he would quiet and settle into a beanbag. A sixteen year old, non-verbal student with autism would often get Spinoza out of the cupboard and carry it to a staff member and point to tape area. This increased his contact with staff and fostered communication from him.

In this study the rewards were many in using this kind of stimulation. There were no negative responses. The teachers were cooperative and would not give up Spinoza. Other than replacing batteries, there were no problems with this product. I would recommend other special education teachers use this product or one similar to decrease classroom disruptions.