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Will a Self-Monitoring Intervention Decrease Off-Task Behavior in Three Special Education Students?

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to determine the effects of self-monitoring as an intervention to decrease off-task behavior in three special education students and to increase on-task replacement behavior. The study took place over a two-month period in a mixed sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade special education self-contained life skills classroom in the state of Washington. Three special education students were the focal subjects for an analysis of documents, observations, and interviews. Secondary subjects included three special education paraprofessionals and a general education dance teacher. Data suggested that self-monitoring decreased off-task behavior while increasing on-task behavior in one highly motivated special education student, that self-monitoring minimally intervened in off-task behavior of an unmotivated special education student, and self-monitoring intervention was not successful in decreasing off-task behavior for a high anxiety special education student.

Introduction

As a first year special education teacher of a middle school self-contained life skills classroom, I became acutely aware that special education students have off-task behaviors due to a variety of reasons. I was interested in using self-monitoring as an intervention to decrease off-task behavior in my classroom where three students frequently upset the entire class with their off-task behaviors. These off-task negative behaviors increased the noise level in my classroom and frequently distracted the entire class from academic tasks.

The operational definition of self-monitoring is “self-observing one’s own behavior and self-recording whether or not he or she is engaging in the target behavior” (Rafferty, 2010, p. 51). According to Richardson, Kline, and Huber (1996, p. 281), self monitoring is recording and rating one’s own behavior. For example, a student attending to his or her own behavior makes judgments about its acceptability by asking, “Is this what I

ought to be doing?" I began to wonder whether self-monitoring could help three of my focal students.

Defining the Problem

David, Pat, and Brook (pseudonyms) spent up to 61% of their school day in my self-contained special education classroom and 39% of the day in general education, defined as dance or PE, recess, and passing in hallways. Frequently each day, David would interrupt instruction by growling, shrieking, or physically charging another student whose noises he did not like. When corrected, David would often throw himself to the floor, at which time learning ceased while students watched his antics.

Brook, who required frequent drinks of flavored water due to a health impairment, interrupted the classroom by getting up from her seat to mix flavored drinks at inappropriate times, turning on the water faucet, and opening a cupboard door, often while talking to herself. Brook tried to forestall redirection by stating, "I'm going to tell my mommy you are being mean to me!"

Often agitated by thoughts of what was going to occur next, Pat would be more concerned with the future than the present, anxiously asking, "What are we going to do during the third period?" He would also interrupt instruction by stating, "I will do nothing!" while crossing his arms over his chest or threatening to run out of the building. Instruction took a back seat to these interruptions.

Stahr and colleagues' (2006) operational definition for off-task behavior is "exhibiting any behaviors or audible vocalizations that are disruptive, interfering with learning or impeding instructional delivery" (p. 203). Off-task behavior prevents the student from attending to academic work and may present in a variety of ways, demonstrated uniquely by David, Brook, and Pat. These authors' operational definition for on-task behavior is attending to or participating in instructional activities as requested by classroom staff, for example, looking at the teacher during instruction, attempting to or actually doing assigned work, requesting assistance, and following directions. I wanted positive on-task behavior to replace the instructionally damaging behaviors of David, Brook, and Pat. Typically, students who are off-task are trying to gain attention or to avoid work, and "without effective intervention, these behavior patterns can impede a student's development of adaptive teacher and peer relationships" (Stahr et al., 2006, p. 201).

Encouraged by research literature, I felt my three students were cognitively able to learn and use self-monitoring to alter their off-task behavior. I hoped that teaching and reinforcing self-monitoring for David, Pat, and Brook would decrease "exhibited behaviors or audible vocalizations that were disruptive, interfering with learning or impeding instructional delivery" (p. 203). If self-monitoring enabled them to decrease off-task behavior, I hoped the number of daily interruptions in the classroom would correspondingly decrease and be replaced by more instruction and increased learning. I was aware that few teachers teach self-monitoring, although it has been shown to be successful in replacing off-task behavior (Argan et al, 2005, p. 4). I asked the question:

Will a self-monitoring intervention decrease off-task behavior in three special education students?

Literature Review

For students who exhibit off-task behaviors, self-monitoring may be a useful tool (Agran, Sinclair, Alper, Cavin, Wehmeyer, & Hughes, 2005; Harris, Friedlander, Saddler, Frizzelle, & Graham, 2005; Peterson, Young, Salzberg, West, & Hill, 2006; Smith & Sugai, 2000; & Stahr, Cushing, Lane, & Fox, 2006). Self-monitoring has been shown to encourage positive on-task replacement behaviors, according to Peterson and colleagues (2006) who found that self-monitoring improved critical social skills in special education students through modeling, role-playing, and performance feedback (p. 2): “The improvements in general education settings occur only after self-management began” (p. 18). Rafferty (2010) considered self-management “an overarching goal in education to enable students to become independent and self-sufficient individuals who are able to manage their behaviors without the assistance of others” (p. 51).

Determining the Target Off-Task Behavior

“Students who engage in low rates of pro-social behavior and high rates of inappropriate behaviors are significantly at risk of academic failure, social failure, and placement in restrictive academic settings” (Smith & Sugai, 2000, p. 216). Typically, students who are off-task are trying to gain attention or to avoid work such that “without effective intervention, these behavior patterns can impede a student’s educational experience by limiting the acquisition of new skills and preventing the development of adaptive teacher and peer relationships” (Stahr et al., 2006, p. 201). A functional behavior assessment (FBA) sometimes is used to determine the cause for off-task behavior (see Appendix A for my school district’s FBA-like assessment). Smith and Sugai (2000) identified the purpose of an FBA as an assessment which “enables informed decision making through the systematic collection of data concerning reestablished relationships between student behavior and context” (p. 208). Shumate and Wills (2010) reported that an FBA involves a range of procedures which utilize the following methods of data collection: interviews, questionnaires, descriptive data analysis, direct behavioral observations, and experimental functional analysis (p. 24). These procedures assist in identifying the origins of off-task behavior and the resulting consequences, the off-task behavior itself.

Self-Monitoring as an Intervention

As a student directed learning strategy, self-monitoring enhances student motivation by transferring ownership of data collection from teacher to student and, by doing so, permits the student to assess and evaluate his or her own performance. (Argan et al., 2005, p. 11)

In self-monitoring, students who are receiving special education services are taught to record their own behavior when using self-monitoring as an intervention.

One method to record behavior suggested by Smith and Sugai (2000) involves tally marks on a recording sheet. Self-recording (which facilitates data collection) engages the student in recording observations about behavior management. In learning how to self-record with tally marks, the special education student learns a new on-task replacement behavior. Self-recording behavior by students can be as simple as making a + mark in a box on a self-tallying sheet when the appropriate behavior is demonstrated. Appropriate “statements” (Agran et al., 2005, p. 7) printed on a self-monitoring sheet may assist special education students to know what is and what is not an appropriate behavior. The main goal of replacing off-task behavior is to increase productive academic learning and knowledge. Social skills related to on-task behavior are reflected in attending to the teacher, getting along with others, participating in activities, and behaving appropriately (Gresham, Cook, Collins, Dart, Rasetshwane, Truelson, & Grant, 2010).

Break-Down Self-Monitoring Steps: Procedures

Training students to self-monitor may consist of the following: describing the on-task target behavior, explaining why the skills of the target behavior are important, modeling the target behavior, prompting the target behavior, and providing feedback and praise contingent upon the student performance (Peterson et al., 2006, p. 7). Rafferty (2010) notes this procedural process enables the collection of baseline data by the teacher regarding frequency counting or time sampling (p. 53). When teaching the student how to self-monitor, Rafferty considers it a critical step to ascertain whether the student possess skills needed for the target behavior. Then, it must be determined whether the student is to engage in the target behavior more than twice a week, whether the target behavior is developmentally and cognitively appropriate for the student, and whether the student fails to engage in the behavior for cultural reasons. (By following this checklist, I was able to determine that self-monitoring was an appropriate intervention for the focus students.) Although self-monitoring is a useful strategy in general, it is not a useful strategy for all students, as noted by Harris et al. (2005):

Teachers should carefully consider students’ abilities, needs, and goals, when deciding to use a particular self-monitoring procedure. They may need to try different self-monitoring procedures with different tasks and situations to help determine what works best for an individual or a class. (p. 155)

Methods

Qualitative methods were used in an action research project to see whether self-monitoring would decrease off-task behavior in three special education students and to increase on-task replacement behavior. The methods of document analysis, subject interviews, and pre- and post-observations provided triangulation.

Making use of parent written descriptions in document analysis was intentional to determine whether I viewed the students in the same way as their parents. School documents confirmed parent statements. I could also triangulate school documents with classroom observations of student behavior. These observations were validated by adults who were present at the time and who also participated in interviews.

By understanding the purpose of the school district's FBA (see Appendix A), I was able to determine one behavior to address with self-monitoring. Upon understanding the purpose of the off-task behavior, I was then prepared to teach the intervention of self-monitoring independently to the primary subjects. It was vastly important for the primary subjects to feel positive about the intervention, to buy in to better learning by controlling target behavior, and to participate with enthusiasm when possible. The month it took to interview the subjects, determine the off-task behavior, and then teach the intervention enabled me to know the participating individuals intimately and to develop authentic and reciprocal relationships with both the students and the staff, allowing the research project to proceed with trust and respect. From understanding who the students were, how they behaved in self-contained and general education classrooms, and what knowledge the secondary subjects could provide through the interview process, clear pictures of the students and their behaviors emerged.

Subjects

The research involved both primary and secondary subjects. My self-contained life skills classroom enrolled 14 students served by three special education paraprofessionals and me. The primary subjects were three special education students who were frequently off-task and who were disrupting instruction. They were selected because of their agreement to participate in the research project.

Secondary subjects were three special education paraprofessionals (referred to as the dance assistant, classroom assistant, and math assistant) as well as the general education dance teacher. I interviewed them to provide information on the three primary subjects. The secondary subjects were selected to provide insight into the behavior of special education students. Of the secondary subjects, the dance assistant was in her twelfth year as a special education paraprofessional and in her eighth year working with the general education dance teacher and the math assistant. The classroom paraprofessional worked with the three special education students while simultaneously supervising a loud and disruptive non-verbal student whom David found especially annoying.

Data Collection

The data collection methods used in the study were documents, observations, and interviews.

Document analysis. I collected and analyzed documents which included written parent descriptions of the personality and character traits of their children selected to reveal parent concerns about student behavior. The documents highlighted student

strengths and parental love, district Individual Education Plans (IEP) with cumulative files, and student tracking sheets. The student tracking sheets were a simple way for the students to record tally marks or comments during the intervention, with visual happy or unhappy faces eliciting recognition for on-task or off-task behavior (see Appendices B and C). Cumulative files provided information on cognitive ability levels from assessments, informing me about the reasoning ability of the focal subjects. IEP documents highlighted areas of concern for behaviors which impeded their learning and the learning of other students, as well as adaptive and social goals. I found the documents valuable for understanding student history, disability, and current goals.

Observations. On six separate occasions (three pre- and three post-intervention), I formally observed students participating in special education, dance, or physical education. Each observation was the length of one standard class period, 43-48 minutes. My observations occurred during the third trimester of the 2011-2012 school year between March 27, and June 22. I observed the primary students pre- and post-intervention to gain information about individual behavior triggers and to gather data regarding behavior concerns. As the students were observed in first, second, and third periods, I noted how each student interacted with classmates and others. After formal observations, I recorded what I had seen in part by completing the district assessment to determine what David, Brook, and Pat were avoiding or gaining through off-task negative behaviors. Targeting one off-task behavior each was necessary for me to proceed with the self-monitoring intervention.

My observations were also recorded with hand-written notes which were typed within a week of each observation. The typed observation narratives were validated by the secondary subjects who had been present, the paraprofessionals. As I observed in my own classroom, I focused not only on the focal students but also on noise, smells, and distractions as they occurred. Listening carefully, I was able to hear growling, humming, sighing, and the back-and-forth of conversations and comments among the entire class. I was looking for off-task behavior and the purpose behind it. Since I knew noise bothered David, I listened for noise. Since I knew Brook would be roaming or turning on a water faucet, I observed how that behavior affected others.

I found it difficult to make observations as the teacher because students wanted my help at the same time I was making observation notes. When possible, I redirected students to the paraprofessionals for assistance. I observed natural teenage behavior during my observations. For example, David was involved in a three-way tug-of-war over a female student's attention. I observed a power struggle between two of three female students in the classroom for male recognition. I noticed when students appeared to intentionally try to attract attention. Through observations, I was able to access relationships between students and behaviors and to predict off-task behavior. I was also able to observe the social effects of overall classroom behaviors of each student.

I was alert for better behaviors in general education as well as when the focus students were in my self-contained classroom. The students generally enjoyed

socializing with friends they were not stuck with all day long and getting to move around in larger and less restrictive environments.

Interviews. I interviewed a total of seven subjects individually in semi-structured, face-to-face, conversational, pre-and post-intervention audio-taped interviews during quiet breaks in the classroom, which lasted from ten to thirty-five minutes each. Field-testing the primary and secondary interview questions enabled me to alter those which were too challenging for the special education students, to drop leading questions, and to clarify the information I needed to collect. By interviewing the primary subjects, I gained information about their motivation, preferences, and individual interest in participating in the research project. As I interviewed the secondary subjects, they informed me about each primary subject and his or her response to the intervention. From understanding who the students were, how they behaved in the self-contained and general education classrooms, and what knowledge the secondary subjects could provide through the interview process, I was able to develop clear pictures of the students and their behaviors.

The primary subjects were asked questions from field-tested protocols (see Appendix D) about their preferences among school subjects and whether each wanted to participate in the study. David was fascinated by the interview process, the use of the tape recorder, and appeared to be somewhat distracted by the recording device at times. Being the most outgoing of the focal students, his interview lasted the longest, and he most easily understood the interview questions. Disliking being told to “shush,” David explained how he tried to use interventions to stop screaming. David validated the interview write-up and asked if he, too, could use the tape recorder to interview someone.

Cognitively, Brook was the lowest functioning of the three focal students, and she had some difficulty understanding interview questions. Consequently, I revised and simplified the majority of the questions asked of her. Her interview lasted only ten minutes during which she often responded “aha” and “hmm” except when we talked about dance, Brook’s preferred subject. Having heard from parents and staff about concentrating and focusing, Brook was able to self-identify those as desirable targets. Since her mother wanted her to participate in the study, Brook said she would try to cooperate.

Pat’s twenty-two minute interview was filled with anxiety; he tried to take a water break three times. He had refused to be interviewed on a number of occasions, and I had decided to persist. As often when talking face-to-face, Pat’s eyes were closed. Because of his autism, I often needed to reword my questions until he made a mental connection. Pat’s initial responses, often, were to repeat routine responses he found comfortable. He had some difficulty grasping the concept of a target behavior. Although he knew it was not acceptable to say, “I will do nothing,” he did not realize that statement constituted a negative behavior.

The staff provided information about the three focal students' academic and social behaviors in inclusive and self-contained classroom settings. The general education

dance teacher's interview, using a field-tested protocol (see Appendix E), lasted twenty-two minutes. The dance paraprofessional's forty-minute interview, also using a field-tested protocol (see Appendix F), was clear and concise in describing what an off-task special education student looks and sounds like. The twelve-minute interview with the classroom paraprofessional was short and to the point, providing information I was later able to triangulate. A thirty-five minute interview with the math paraprofessional was valuable to enrich details about David, a student the professional had worked with the previous year. After the interviews, I was able to ascertain the degree of agreement among the three paraprofessionals about off-task behaviors, how noises in the class room were annoying, and how students behaved in different settings. All interviews were validated by these secondary subjects.

Data Analysis

Data collected by each method were analyzed subject-by-subject, with heavy reliance on student behavior recording sheets. As the primary subjects participated in the self-monitoring intervention, behavior changes were observed and noted, then triangulated with the secondary subjects' post-intervention interviews. Observation data was supported by adult interviews.

Documents were analyzed first: personal parent descriptions of their children, individual IEPs providing academic and behavior indicators of classroom performance, and cumulative student files. The documents provided a snapshot of each primary subject as viewed by parents and previous educators. The data shed light on prior student behavior, showing that each focal student had previously exhibited off-task behaviors.

Analyzing the interviews, I was able to ascertain how the three paraprofessionals agreed upon on- and off-task behaviors, how noises in the class room were annoying, and how students behaved in different settings.

Ethical Considerations

The Washington State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved my research application. All participation in the research was voluntary and followed formal consent (see Appendix G), with signed consent forms collected from interview participants. I gained school district approval to conduct the research to examine student IEPs and files. At all times, information regarding the study was stored in locked cabinets, and participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations to the study. Some students who were not given permission to participate might have been better candidates for a self-monitoring intervention. The physical education teacher was unavailable for an interview, although he might have been able to provide insight into Pat's behavior in physical education.

The study was also limited by the length of time available for monitoring the intervention; more time might have resulted in more on-task behaviors.

Intervention

Working with each focal student individually, I described the off-task behavior targeted and the on-task behavior intended as a replacement. David's off-task behavior, a disrespectful and inappropriate tone of voice, was to be replaced by a more respectful and appropriate tone of voice. Brook's off-task behavior, defined as being out of her seat, was to be replaced by paying attention to time and by focusing on instruction and lessons. Pat's off-task behavior of stating "I will do nothing" and using inappropriately rude and defiant language with teachers was to be replaced with beginning work within one minute of instructional direction.

David, Brook, and Pat each understood that their targeted replacement behaviors were socially important and could have a positive academic affect. I modeled the targeted behavior, modeled the use of a timer, and then gave feedback and praise contingent upon student performance when the intervention began (Peterson et al., 2006). David, Brook, and Pat demonstrated they could use the tracking sheets. Despite not wanting to participate, Pat did want to copy what the others were doing. I hoped this project would not only increase on-task behavior (Stahr et al., 2006, p. 12) but also inform my practice for the upcoming school year

Data Presentation and Discussion

Student Profiles

In analyzing data related to the focus students, a profile was created for each. This facilitated creating a holistic view of each student, highlighting individual motivations and targeted behaviors addressed in the self-monitoring intervention. Data, when triangulated, enabled me to view each student's accomplishments during the self-monitoring intervention.

Student Motivation

Data revealed that David was highly motivated to learn, and he proved to be the most able to monitor himself independently and follow through with self-talk about his off-task behaviors. Brook was documented as being very strong-willed and highly motivated by her preferences. I made a mental note that she proved to be a questionable candidate for self-monitoring non-preferred activities. Pat had been violent in elementary school, had high anxiety about natural disasters, and had acted out when agitated. His desire to be good suggested he would benefit from self-monitoring.

David. David, "honest and affectionate" (mother, personal communication, September, 21, 2011), was an eighth-grader diagnosed with autism who was in his second year in the self-contained classroom. Proud of his abilities to think, write, and

joke, it was evident through observations that David became frustrated with what he viewed as immature behavior in other special education students (see Table 1).

Table 1
David's Targeted Behaviors

David's Off-Task Behavior	Decrease disrespectful and inappropriate tone of voice throughout the school day
On-Task Replacement Behavior	Increase amount of respectful and appropriate tone of voice throughout the school day

David appeared strongly motivated to learn but frequently distracted by excessive noise and the unexpected screaming and shrill vocalizations in the classroom. According to Stahr (2006), David's behavior fit the definition of off-task behavior. During a first-period observation of David during spelling, for example, I noted the following:

David was arguing with the dance paraprofessional, wanting to type his spelling sentences before printing them. The dance paraprofessional asked me, "Shouldn't David hand write these sentences before writing them?" David looked at me with pleading brown eyes, plucking his eyebrows and eating a few hairs.

"Yes, you need to hand write those sentences before typing them," I replied. David, screwing up his face in a scowl, sat down to hand-write his sentences. Upon completing the task, David stomped to the computer, sitting down between two other non-verbal students, who had frequently and greatly frustrated David in the past.

Zach (pseudonym), one hand clamped over his ear, was humming as he finger-pecked, typing out his spelling list. Two computers over from Zach sat another student, a shrieker who often frustrated David. Sitting between them, David began growling, "Grrrr," obviously unhappy at the slow-loading computer. His neighbor began shrieking, and David fell to the floor from his chair, laying face down, kicking his feet, and screaming, "Be quiet! You guys need to be quiet!" Disrupting the entire class, David's off-task behavioral outburst upset everyone. (observation, April 11, 2012)

Such off-task negative behavior impeded David's relationships with me, the staff, and his peers, who would try to quiet him. Having worked with David for two years, the

special education dance paraprofessional, a veteran of twelve years, described David in this way:

This year, mostly when he got frustrated with the other kids, he got off-task and screamed and yelled and threw a fit. His frustration, I think, gets him off task pretty easily. He likes to see everyone [working] at his level. (dance paraprofessional, personal communication, March 28, 2012)

Another special education paraprofessional confirmed: “He is on-task most of the time unless some noise distracts him and then he is frustrated” (classroom paraprofessional, personal communication, March 29, 2012). Additionally, the math paraprofessional, who knew David best having worked with him individually for more than a year, elaborated:

We have some behaviors that we didn’t have last year, like yelling, humming, banging, and growling, so I think those are all things he is sensitive to. (math paraprofessional, personal communication, May 7, 2012)

Separately, each paraprofessional identified the cause of David’s frustration to be noises in the classroom, and each defined inappropriate vocalizations as his off-task behavior. My observations triangulated their reports, so I felt confident that decreasing David’s disrespectful and inappropriate tone of voice was the appropriate behavior to target through self-monitoring. David himself disclosed that his negative vocalization

causes me stress. These kids out there, they try to shush at me. It is very frustrating. *Yeah*, it helps me (to scream and shriek). It really helps me. When the kids interrupt me I, I, I feel frustrated, you know – what I should do? [David pretended to blow on a pinwheel]. (personal communication, March 28, 2012)

David expressed a desire to feel calm but acknowledged that, “Fidgets calm me down when I have a blood pressure heart attack moment like this” [blowing in and out]. (personal communication, March 28, 2012)

According to David’s general education dance teacher:

Music is really important to him. He recognizes songs rather quickly, and he says he wants to be a DJ. I think that is interesting. He pretty much participates like a regular student. Sometimes, he makes comments that are not, maybe, in context – but, to him, they are, because he will mention something about the music. That might not be what we are focusing on but, for him, that is his connection. (general education dance teacher, personal communication, May 18, 2012)

She also noted that she did not have to redirect David or correct his tone of voice.

David’s intervention. Focus on his work and his voice, I hoped, could enable David to ignore others, reducing the likelihood of inappropriate verbal response. The intervention for David was to make him aware of his voice and to replace his offending

tone of voice with an appropriate one. David was highly motivated to be mature, friendly, and included socially. David shared the following about wanting to participate in the intervention:

If you want to help me, I would say you could help me with those kids shushing at me. That's how you can help me because its upsets me. If they are shushing me, you know, what I would do? I would yell so hard, I would say to those kids, "How would it make you feel if I shush at you?" (personal communication, March 28, 2012).

David was clearly willing to participate and motivated to change his behavior.

Brook. Brook was described by her mother as "a very loving, caring, and passionate young lady who can also be difficult, disruptive, and combative" (personal communication, September, 20, 2011). The paraprofessional for Brook's dance class and small reading group illustrated the difficult and disruptive behavior exhibited at school:

Brook often avoids work by just leaving reading group walking away – going to the bathroom, getting a drink, talking – or, when she finds things too difficult, Brook puts her head down. I try to have conversations with her about what we are doing and try to keep her focused on that. But a lot of times, like I said, she just gets up and walks away. (personal communication, March 28, 2012)

My observations of Brook showed that she was motivated by her needs and preferences. If Brook wanted to make her special drink, she would. If Brook wanted to talk to another student, she would – even if she or the student should have been attending to academic work. Brook liked the attention of others, and her feelings were easily hurt if she perceived someone did not want to spend time with her. She often reacted with jealousy to attention given to other students. Brook was motivated to be social, to participate in preferred activities, and to avoid un-preferred work (see Table 2).

Table 2
Brook's Targeted Behaviors

Brook's Off-Task Behavior	Decrease off-task time management and being out of seat
On-Task Replacement Behavior	Increase paying attention to time and instruction

Brook's preferred class was dance, and the dance paraprofessional described minimal difficulty:

Brook's behavior in dance is actually pretty perfect. She does not hang around our students. Occasionally, I have to talk with her about bubble space, because she will get right into their areas, and I need to back her off. She does her best at dancing. She socializes very well. She is occasionally off-task, because she wants to talk to her friends, but it is not a problem. We just ask her to focus, and she does! She is a totally different person in dance. I have absolutely no issues with her. Most of the time I forget she is there. (personal communication, March 30, 2012)

The dance teacher affirmed Brook's on-task behavior in dance with enthusiasm: "Brook participates fully with great enthusiasm. She is excited to be there, and I think she participates just like a regular ed student. I really can't think of a time when I have had to redirect her behavior" (personal communication, May 18, 2012).

When I observed Brook during first-period spelling, she would make her juice, put on chapstick, or try to assist another student rather than complete her own work. In third-period math, she was appropriately focused when working on multiplication, her preferred math activity, but she would growl when unhappy in math. During an observation of Brook entering the self-contained classroom after dance, for example, I observed the following:

The classroom is filled with students working on math. Frequently humming, Zach leaves with the dance paraprofessional to complete his math elsewhere. The classroom paraprofessional walks a frequently shrieking student out to the hallway to complete his math. The math paraprofessional working with David says, "Yes, that's right. The division problem has a remainder."

Returning from dance, Brook fills out her self-tally performance sheet and puts her name on her math multiplication work. She concentrates on her multiplication.

Pat, one seat behind Brook, asks, "Is this right?" He is struggling to determine which operation to use to solve a story problem.

"Read the problem to me," I respond. Pat reads the problem aloud, pausing in thought. "Subtraction, right?"

"Yes! Great job figuring that out!" I exclaim. Brook growls in the seat ahead of us, "Grrr." (observation, April 13, 2012)

Brook's motivation for growling clearly exhibited one off-task behavior that interrupted paying attention to her work. In a post-intervention interview, the math paraprofessional disclosed, "First period for Brook has a lot of mismanaged time because she wants to make her juice, go to the bathroom, and other things – other than write. That is what I have seen" (personal communication, May 7, 2012). Observation

confirmed this on an occasion when Brook was entering the classroom after the first-period bell:

I am teaching the calendar and reviewing the days in the month when Brook arrives late from the bus, slowly walks to her desk, locates her locker key, and strolls toward the door. Along the way, Brook smiles at a few male students, waves at a female student, and announces, "Hello."

As classmates recite the days of the week and count the number of days passing this month, they chimeingly count aloud from 1-25. Afterward, as I hand out spelling papers, Brook enters the classroom, explores juice packets, and selects one. Quietly, I redirect her: "Brook, sit down and look over your spelling words."

Pointedly ignoring me, Brook turns on the faucet and proceeds to mix her drink. Swinging around, she announces, "Cold out. Spelling? Good weekend?"

The class adjusts into various individual tasks: David types on the computer, another student walks to the printer, and a third student types sentences alongside the classroom paraprofessional. As the dance paraprofessional returns from delivering coffee, she requests, "Brook, please sit down. I need the sink, and you should be spelling. What is taking you so long?" Brook shrugs her shoulders, picks up her drink, and leaves the powdered drink wrapper on the counter. "Brook, please throw away your trash," the dance paraprofessional requests.

"You told me sit down!" Brook complains, glaring at the paraprofessional, but moves to the garbage. The dance paraprofessional and Brook both look at each other, estimating the next move by the other.

Another student interrupts the stalemate, admonishing, "Brook, just be quiet. I'm trying to think!" (observation, April 25, 2012)

Brook's Intervention. Brook's off-task behavior of inattention kept her from being well-behaved and on-task, which were primary concerns for her academic success. I hoped Brook, being strong-willed, could benefit from self-monitoring her awareness of what she was to do at specific times. Her motivation was key to the success of the intervention. Brook was willing to self-monitor, liking the smiley faces on the recording sheets, but she appeared to be confused about the outcome that would signal whether the intervention was successful.

Pat. Pat frequently appeared frustrated in class for a variety of reasons, and one of my goals was to have him express his frustrations without "ridiculous phrases or [by] threatening violence" (mother, personal communication, September, 2011). As observed in the self-contained classroom and in physical education, Pat was often frustrated by noise and anxiety due to the disability of autism. Pat would frequently state, "I will do nothing" (see Table 3).

Table 2
Pat Targeted Behaviors

Pat's Off-Task Behavior	Decrease rude and defiant language with teacher when asked to perform
On-Task Replacement Behavior	Increase performance by beginning work within one minute of task direction

An observation of Pat revealed that he was inappropriately rude and defiant as well as frequently agitated. For example, at the start of the day:

Sitting in the front of the class in his newly assigned seat, Pat asks, "What are we doing during third-period? I will do nothing!"

Sitting next to him, the classroom paraprofessional pats his arm and reminds Pat, "Start spelling, first-period," as she turns back to a student typing into an iPad announcing the day's weather report: "Hi 65, low 43, sunny."

Pat, still anxious, quizzes the paraprofessional: "What are we doing during third-period? Clock math? Restaurant math?" When a nearby student begins banging his head against his desk, Pat crosses his hands over his chest and squeezes his eyes shut. Dropping his chin, he firmly states, "I will do nothing!"

"You are starting your spelling," I reply, putting a paper on Pat's desk. "Here it is. If you open your eyes, you will see it." (observation, May 2, 2012)

Pat's primary off-task behavior was inappropriate interaction, using rude and defiant language when asked to perform. "I will do nothing," he would say as often as once per period, which he accompanied with a refusal to pay attention or to be on-task. This interrupted not only his academic work but that of other students. Pat's placement in a restrictive self-contained classroom had resulted from such poor social behavior.

My observations of Pat in first-period physical education and in third-period repeatedly revealed his anxiety and need for reassurance. Still, his behavior improved during the school year, according to an adult who worked with him:

There [were] several times during the first part of the year [when] Pat would come up and get right in my face and make me uncomfortable. I wouldn't back down, but I was uncomfortable. I wondered if I was going to get hit, [but] that never happened. I think that I am comfortable saying to him, "You can't do that. You need to do this," or "I'll help," or [to] see if he needs help. He does not

seem to get angry – growling, you know, the way he was the first part of the year. (math paraprofessional, personal communication, May 7, 2012)

Most observations of Pat revealed that he was not only anxious but also a hard worker who disliked noise. For example, when warming up in the gym for fifteen minutes:

Pat walks around and around the gym during walk-and-talk warm-ups. He stays near the wall, avoids contact with other students who talk with friends, race laughingly, or enjoy the music blaring over the loud-speaker. Pat closes his eyes to slits, shaking his Dutch boy haircut, ignoring everyone. As he walks past me, he says, “Before, people called me a mean name in physical education. It was in second grade.” I smile at him, saying nothing as he continues around the room.

By the bleachers, the math paraprofessional is sitting and talking to the classroom paraprofessional, both monitoring students' circumnavigation of the gym. The classroom paraprofessional gets up, catches up with a student cutting through the center of the gym and steers him back to the wall to continue walking. Pat circles again, not walking with or talking to anyone.

Peers from the self-contained classroom race, laugh, or walk with their general education peers, bouncing along to the beat of the music while David scowls, his hands over his ears. Brook keeps up the pace with a dance peer until the music stops, and the dancers exit. Pat lines up, looking at the ground and dropping to the floor for exercises, eyes closed.

When Pat returns to the self-contained classroom, he asks immediately while opening the door, “What are we doing in math today?” He then sits, crosses his arms, and tells the air, “I will do nothing.” (observation, May 2, 2012)

IEP records revealed that Pat had had prior difficulty with independence and needed reassurance he was doing the correct thing and that he was on track. These documents confirmed the difficulty I had observed with independence when reviewing classroom rules, assisting Pat with spelling definitions, demonstrating how to use spelling words in a sentence, and in identifying the correct math operations to use with story problems. Also, I had tried to interview Pat on numerous occasions over three weeks, but he had refused. Ultimately, he requested an interview but, during it, he requested water breaks three times in 22 minutes.

The math paraprofessional who accompanied him to physical education described Pat's behavior thoughtfully:

With the kids in physical education he socializes, he says "Hi" to them; he is nice. Pat is fine on Mondays, but on Tuesdays, when he has to write sentences, he is not on task because he wants somebody else to tell him what the sentences are. I think he can do it. I have sat with him, and he can do it. But I think, for him, it's easier for somebody else to do it for him. (personal communication, May, 7, 2012)

Pat seemed unwilling to try self-monitoring when I introduced it to him. His response when I asked if he could use the recording sheets was “No.” His response to letting me teach him the intervention was “No.” When asked if he was willing to try the intervention, Pat replied, “I’ll try” and scrambled out of the classroom to get a drink of water. I had ruled Pat out as a candidate for this project, but when he did show interest, I included him in the self-monitoring. Pat paid attention to the other two students during their interventions, ultimately requesting to participate.

Pat's intervention. Due to Pat’s autism and difficulty with anxiety, he often refused to participate in class academic and social activities. The purpose of Pat’s off-task behavior appeared to be performance reassurance. He ultimately participated in the research.

Individual Off-Task Behaviors

The purposes of the off-task behavior in David, Brook, and Pat were revealed and confirmed through documents, observations, and interviews with the dance, math, and classroom paraprofessionals, and with the dance teacher. It became clear to me that David wanted his vocalization behavior and the behavior of those asking him to be quiet to change. His motivation was positive, and self-monitoring appeared to be a tool he could use and wanted to use. As an eighth-grader who considered himself mature, David did not enjoy his heart attack moments or blowing on an imaginary pinwheel.

For Brook, wanting to do what her mother wanted served as motivation to participate in self-monitoring, as did being included. Being “a very loving, caring, and passionate young lady who can also be difficult, disruptive, and combative” (mother, personal communication, September, 20, 2011), her own motivation to self-monitor stemmed from her desire to concentrate and focus. Her on-task behavior in dance made me hopeful Brook would be able to transfer this to academic activity in the self-contained classroom.

In Pat, the personal anxiety that caused him to seek staff reassurance appeared to contradict his embrace of self-monitoring. Similarly, Pat’s refusals to work appeared to refute his desire to be independent. Knowing that he liked to please and his supportive mother by not using “ridiculous phrases or [by] threatening violence” (mother, personal communication, September, 2011) and seeing his improved behavior since the beginning of the year made me cautiously optimistic. I moved him to a preferred seat in the front of the class, next to the classroom paraprofessional, putting him in close proximity to adult support.

Clear understanding of the unique purpose of each student’s target off-task behavior facilitated identifying naturally occurring on-task replacement behavior. For David, this was simplified into paying attention to his tone of voice. In Brook’s case, she was to use time efficiently by paying attention to instruction and lessons rather than to her social and personal needs. By beginning work within one minute of task direction, Pat could focus on performance rather than rude and defiant language – there would be no need to refuse if he was already engaged in a task. Observations and interviews revealed all

three students were frequently on-task in dance or physical education. The question was: Could they be more on-task with the self-monitoring intervention in the self-contained classroom as well?

Self-recording for self-monitoring. Awareness of off-task behavior and its negative effects was my personal concern for three students, but their motivations were individual. David said he wanted assistance to decrease his off-task vocalizations because he was proud of his maturity level and because of his desire to be on-task for high school the following fall. David and I agreed that the rationale for him to self-monitor his voice was the following: sounding kind and tolerant (David's motto was love and tolerance), making more friends, being a gentleman, and being in control of voice and tone for high school. Having introduced the skill and rationale for self-monitoring, I suggested David think about his nice voice, use his nice voice, listen for the timer when monitoring himself, and self-tally on his recording sheet only when the timer sounded without noting his behavior before or after the sounding of the timer.

David started the intervention with an audible timer, then requested a silent timer that marked the passage of time with a color code. He later switched back to the audible timer as it was small and he preferred not having to glance frequently at the other timer. David appeared to transform self-monitoring into a game, focusing on his work and the timer and appearing to tune out noises. Understanding that only when the timer went off was he marking his targeted behavior seemed to make his focus very sharp. At times, it was obvious to me that using the timer, the recording sheet, and attending to academic work were a challenge, as David appeared nervous. Yet, only once during the intervention did he make inappropriate vocalizations just as the timer went off. He did not like having to record what he considered a negative remark (see Table 4).

Table 4
David's Recording Sheet Data During Intervention: Accuracy

<u>Class</u>	Day 1 5/8	Day 2 5/9	Day 3 5/10	Day 4 5/11	Day 5 5/14	Day 6 5/15	Day 7 5/17	Day 8 5/18	Day 9 5/21
Spelling	90%	100%	100%	NA	100%	83%	100%	100%	100%
Math	100%	100%	NA	NA	NA	NA	100%	100%	100%

David self-monitored his behavior for a total of nine days. He completed a self-evaluation of his class participation form after dance class (see Table 5).

Table 5
David's Recording Sheet Data During Intervention: Self-Evaluation

<u>Class</u>	Day 1 5/8	Day 2 5/9	Day 3 5/10	Day 4 5/11	Day 5 5/14	Day 6 5/15	Day 7 5/17	Day 8 5/18	Day 9 5/21
Dance									
How I Felt?	Happy	Happy	NA	Happy	Happy	OK	Happy	Happy	Happy
Liked Most?	Dance	Dance	NA	Dance	Dance	Dance	Dance	Dance	NA
Liked Least?	None	None	NA	None	None	None	None	None	None
Change?	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None

When observed in dance, Brook did concentrate, stay on task, and follow directions, and she self-monitored her behavior well when engaged. However, if she was determined to accomplish an off-task goal, she did not self-monitor well. To determine whether Brook understood the recording sheets, I asked, "Do you think using these tracking sheets will help you with your behavior?" Brook responded uncertainly, "I don't know." On the first day of self-monitoring, Brook arrived to school late and had a difficult time paying attention to the timer and to her on-task behavior (see Table 6).

Table 6
Brook's Recording Sheet Data During Intervention: Accuracy

<u>Class</u>	Day 1 5/8	Day 2 5/9	Day 3 5/11	Day 4 5/14	Day 5 5/15	Day 6 5/17	Day 7 5/29	Day 8 5/30	Day 9 6/5
Spelling	absent	100%	86%	100%	100%	83%	100%	75%	100%
Math	55%	71%	100%	NA	NA	100%	100%	100%	NA

As she continued with self-monitoring, she appeared to understand what to do and became more attentive to self-monitoring and on-task behavior. Daily, Brook filled out the self-evaluation for dance class (see Table 7), typically including specific comments to share her thoughts and feelings about monitoring her behavior, such as: "didn't want to sit down," "fun group," and "make you beautiful" (monitoring sheets, May and June, 2012).

Table 7
Brook's Recording Sheet Data During Intervention: Self-Evaluation

Class	Day 1 5/8	Day 2 5/29	Day 3 5/11	Day 4 5/14	Day 5 5/15	Day 6 5/17	Day 7 5/29	Day 5/30	Day 9 6/5
Dance									
How I Felt?	Happy	NA	Happy	NA	Happy	Happy	Happy	Happy	Happy
Liked Most?	NA	Dance	Friends	Song	Practice	Got It	Song	Dancing	Fun
Liked Least?	NA	Sound	Song	Sitting	Thinking	Song	Song	Song	Group
Change?	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Pat wanted to be successful in school, and his anxiety and disability created a need for reassurance. He was not interested in the study initially because it increased his anxiety. He asked to participate in using the recording sheets and the timer, but he was inconsistent in self-monitoring and rarely fully completed the recording sheet for behavior in physical education (see Tables 8 and 9). Pat self-monitored for a total of five days.

Table 8
Pat's Recording Sheet Data During Intervention: Accuracy

Class	Day 1 5/22	Day 2 5/25	Day 3 5/29	Day 4 5/30	Day 5 6/5
Spelling	100%	NA	100%	67%	40%
Math	NA	NA	75%	100%	NA

Table 9
Pat's Recording Sheet Data During Intervention: Self-Evaluation

Class	Day 1 5/22	Day 2 5/25	Day 3 5/29	Day 4 5/30	Day 5 6/5
Physical Education					

How I Felt?	OK	NA	OK	OK	NA
Liked Most?	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Liked Least?	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Change?	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Self-monitoring procedures. David monitored himself every 15 minutes during first, second, third, and seventh periods for 9 days, and he became more aware of himself and his behavior. David was so focused on the timer while engaged in his work that he tuned out other students, and thus became quieter. David spontaneously filled in a recording performance sheet when he returned to the self-contained classroom from dance. Of the three students, David was the most engaged in following the procedures for the intervention.

Brook also monitored herself every 15 minutes during first, second, third, and seventh period for 9 days. However, it was difficult for Brook to focus in the afternoon, especially when she left the classroom for speech or occupational therapy services. Still, Brook engaged in the procedures for the intervention once they became routine to her.

Pat monitored himself only sporadically during first, second, and seventh periods and after physical education for 5 days. He vacillated between voluntary participation and total refusal.

Individual Progress

David

David and Pat had been in a previous setting together the year before and had not gotten along, according to written data from parents, but when both were on-task, they left each other alone. David was quieter and used a respectful tone of voice, and Pat was quieter when engaged in work rather than when refusing to do so. David successfully monitored his off-task behavior and replaced it with an on-task behavior. During and after the intervention, David became quieter, got along better with classmates, and received authentic praise from the staff. David viewed himself as being more tolerant after the intervention and exercising his own initiative, and he continued to monitor his tone of voice and how he spoke whether he was self-tallying or not. When the intervention formally ceased, David occasionally used an inappropriate voice, and a non-verbal reminder was sufficient to return him to on-task behavior. In analyzing the data from staff interviews and observations, it was obvious that David's self-monitoring improved his on-task behavior.

The dance paraeducator stated that David had decreased his off-task behavior and increased-on task behavior, specifying his particular improvements:

Absolutely! Words used. Tone of voice. Volume! He has not had as many blow-ups as he's had in the past. He struggled a little in his small group in dance, but no 911 moments. He spoke to them in a calm voice and told them what he was thinking and how he was feeling. (personal communication, June 20, 2012)

The increased on-task behavior in dance was verified by the classroom paraprofessional, summarizing David's new on-task behavior: "Oh, yeah. David is using a nicer voice. Less angry – usually he was very angry. He is much better, calmer. He used to blow the pinwheel and have a red face" (personal communication, June 12, 2012). The math paraprofessional confirmed: "David is more aware overall of when he says something. He is more aware than before. He will share if he is not in a good mood when he gets off the bus" (math paraprofessional, personal communication, June 13, 2012).

David appeared to enjoy his free-choice time, lunchtime, and his peers more as well. He reported feeling better about himself during and after self-monitoring:

Well, I think it does help me . . . I think I'm ready for high school. It helped me be [a] more intelligent person, probably even more mature person. Like, my voice did sound better because I can just have a better voice. I am a more of a better person – a guy! . . . It helped me to realize that I should grow up, so I did. I feel like I have a whole bunch of friends. I think I'm a better person, so it is probably good. I would suggest that I am a better [classmate]. I notice people stopped shushing me. And Nat [pseudonym] has said, "I'm sorry." It's hard [using the timer] and it's annoying. That is the worst thing . . . Trying to use the timer while I try to do my work [is] weird, but I did well with it." (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

David's motivation was present at the beginning of the intervention and enabled him to focus on his academic work. While he was focused on his academic work, the classroom was quieter. Feeling more accepted and liked by his peers encouraged David to pay attention to his voice, and appeared to encourage others to speak in an appropriate tone, too. Excited to leave middle school and participate in the high school newspaper in ninth grade, David was gratified that he had been successful in increasing appropriate tone of voice for his new setting the following year.

Brook

Brook also decreased her off-task behavior, being well-behaved and academically engaged during self-monitoring. After the intervention ceased, however, frequent absences and her strong will appeared to undermine the success of her self-monitoring intervention. Unfortunately, Brook immediately returned to making juice and engaging inappropriately with other students. Once again, she often came in late from the bus, dallied at her locker, missed the class opening, and attempted to make juice or go to the restroom during instruction. As three paraprofessionals noted, Brook's off-task behavior, which had decreased during the intervention, returned afterward: "Since her last trip to Oregon, she is more off-task, not being engaged possibly because she is not going to

be here in the fall” (math paraprofessional, personal communication, June 13, 2012). A second paraprofessional observed, “Not much progress. She is back to her behavior before. It did not work for Brook” (classroom paraprofessional, personal communication, June 12, 2012). Even Brook’s paraprofessional in dance and in small group reading, observed a lack of sustained success, asserting:

I think she was more on task, and she was more aware of being on task. But, after it ended, it stopped. She has always been perfect in dance [but] nothing ever changed in reading group because, when she is not interested, she’s not interested. (personal communication, June 20, 2012)

When I spoke with Brook about self-monitoring, she shared, “It helps me when I am doing it. I like dance. It fun. Our group dance fun. I don’t like doing my school math. Monitoring let me be on task, not be late” (personal communication, June 12, 2012).

Despite the return of her off-task behavior after the intervention ceased, Brook did made strides in paying more attention to the purpose of her academic day. Her awareness that she should come in immediately from the school bus, go directly to her locker, and then make juice before the school day began was noticeable in her silence and faster pace while self-monitoring.

At the end of the study, as Brook prepared to move to a new school in another state, her mind was on many events. Yet, she sustained some behavioral improvements. When she concentrated on math she was successful, worked quietly, and enjoyed authentic praise. Both she and David were quieter, growling less between themselves and with other students. Brook also ceased stating, when redirected, that she would tell her mother.

Pat

Pat's main objective had been to stop saying he would do nothing, which he agreed was a problem as he commented on his progress:

Yeah, it was so hard. Um, the math was hard to do with the timer. Yup, I’m glad [for the intervention] because it is bad to say "I will do nothing." I’m doing fine – reading group, just trying to do my work. Physical education is extremely bad. Someone calls me bad names [agitated hand flapping]. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Pat’s autism, need for breaks, need for re-assurance and difficulty staying on task without it had ultimately prevented a decrease in off-task behavior or in the use of inappropriately defiant language when asked to perform. When engaged in math, Pat had not self-monitored every 15 minutes. Preferential seating in the front of the classroom and next to a staff member, as he had requested, proved to be of limited effectiveness.

The three paraprofessionals shared their perspectives on the success or failure of self-monitoring as an intervention for Pat, based upon their observations throughout the

study. The dance paraprofessional pointed out that, although he had not completely stopped stating he would not do his work, he had become more aware of what he was doing and his reactions: “He rarely [says] ‘I will do nothing’ in reading group” (personal communication, June 20, 2012). The classroom paraprofessional, who sat next to Pat during and after the intervention, amended: “He says it a couple times but less than before. It used to be every period. He just needs more monitoring” (personal communication, June 12, 2012). The math paraprofessional, uncomfortable with Pat early in the school year, said self-monitoring had been worthwhile for each student, Pat especially: “It worked for Pat not to say ‘I will do nothing’, and he became aware of how often he said it” (personal communication, June 13, 2012).

Although Pat did not completely cease his off-task behavior, there was a positive result of the intervention for him. While trying to address his frequent calls for reassurance in third-period math, I discovered Pat had been given an IEP goal of independence with identifying the operations needed to solve math story problems. According to Pat’s mother (personal communication, May 22, 2012), the conceptualization required to solve a story problem is fairly difficult for a student with autism. After an IEP meeting, I altered his math goal to include multiplication, addition, and subtraction and, thereafter, Pat ceased worrying about what we would do in math.

Overall

Of the three special education students, the effects of self-monitoring were most successful for David. Even as a self-monitoring candidate, I knew Brook’s strong will might be challenging. For Pat, ultimately, even providing him with adult proximity, seating preference, and extra time to adjust to the self-monitoring schedule did not lead to success. Successful use of self-monitoring as an intervention to decrease off-task behavior for these special education students was contingent on their self-motivation, co-operation, and personal goals.

A positive consequence of this project was that *the entire classroom was quieter and all students were more on-task during the study*, although no other students were participating in the intervention. My other students were able to listen for or view the timers and, on their own, appeared to be more aware of David, Brook, and Pat’s efforts to be on-task. Self-monitoring, then, exerted a positive influence on all students in the classroom, some of whom appeared to make it a game to check individual behaviors. All students also appeared to appreciate and respond to authentic praise for being-on task, for which most expectantly awaited. Classroom-wide, self-monitoring exerted a positive influence on-task behavior.

A better understanding of the effects of classes involving physical movement was another positive consequence of this research. The dance teacher who, in her 18 years of experience, had noticed that special education students often preferred dance for over physical education, shared these thoughts:

For regular ed, physical education [dance] is not a competitive thing. [Students] are all working together as a team rather than competing against each other.

Students are really welcoming [to the special education students who] don't feel like, "I'm not really good enough to be on a team," or "I'm holding back a competitive team." I think that maybe that helps them feel more welcome. Also the music, I think, is a huge draw. Maybe the performing part? Maybe because I have lots of girls, and girls are more patient? I think that everybody can dance. Everybody can't run and jump over a hurdle or make a basket; I know I can't. But, if you are moving with the music, you are dancing, and they feel successful. I'm very proud of them; they are very brave. (personal communication, May 18, 2012)

This information was of value to my student's future placement in general education classes. For Brook, dance was indeed her preferred class of the school day, according to observation and interviews. For David, being removed from physical education for the second semester, and enrolling him in a dance classroom with 97% females, was fundamental to his being on-task and feeling socially accepted.

The effect was not uniform across the three focal students, however. Pat was not enrolled in dance because the noise of the music exacerbated his anxieties, but he was on-task when outside for physical education, the preferred setting for him, as shared by him and the math paraprofessional (personal communications, June 20, 2012).

Conclusion

Teaching special education students requires me to continue to address their off-task behaviors which impede learning, relationship building, and IEP goal progress. The project of using a self-monitoring intervention with three special education students was a positive learning experience for me as a first year special education teacher. In seeing and hearing the classroom-wide effect of a self-monitoring intervention, I am encouraged that the use of timers, a quiet learning environment, and authentic praise are areas to address. When considering use of self-monitoring with future special education students, my research has taught me to use self-tallying, which I found to be successful for some students. I would strongly consider teaching self-monitoring in October of the school year, allowing identification of off-task behaviors and allowing on-task behaviors to begin to develop early in the school year.

I would also consider other self-management strategies, considered best practices in the literature I reviewed: goal setting, self-evaluation, self-instruction, strategy instruction, self-observation, or self-recording. As established by Harris et al. (2005), "Special education students may need to try different self-monitoring procedures with different tasks and situations to help determine what works best for an individual or a class" (p. 155). I am aware of the sensitivities of special education students, learning to teach individually how to better manage individual behaviors. Making continued use of documents, interviews, and observations makes me a better teacher by allowing me to view the whole student, understand previous experiences, and determine how to positively motivate each. Additional research will be of value to me in my special education classroom in assisting special education students to generalize on-task learned behavior to all settings.

As my school district moves toward full inclusion of special education students into general education classrooms, a new professional development goal is to collaborate with staff as well as share accommodations, modifications, and positive behavior supports. I see the value in working with staff over working in isolation to understand and engage students in positive on-task behavior. Since dance may be an acceptable and preferred activity for some special education students, I have learned more about their possible placement in these general education classes. I believe self-monitoring can be fun, as demonstrated by my students who treated it like a game, and can be useful in both the special education and general education settings.

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Appendix A

Teacher Observation Form: Student Behaviors and Areas of Concern

Name: _____ Class: _____

Student: _____

(Use the back to continue explanations, as needed.)

STRENGTHS: List the student's strengths:




1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

BEHAVIOR: Describe the behavior(s) of concern.

1. Describe the following:
 - A. Frequency of the behavior (how often):
 - B. Intensity of the behavior (how severe):
 - C. Duration of the behavior (how long):
2. Student exhibits behavior problems that are having a negative impact on the student's learning:
Yes _____ No _____ If "Yes" describe:
3. Have daily adjustments been implemented in educational activities to help correct the problem? (e.g., changing seating, providing individual assistance, visiting with the student regarding expectations for appropriate performance, etc.)
Yes _____ No _____ If "Yes," describe and tell how long strategy implemented:
What were the outcomes of the adjustments?
4. Is behavior a concern in Specials (PE, Music, Art, Dance, Choir, Band)?
Yes _____ No _____ If "Yes," describe:
6. Is behavior a concern in unstructured settings (passing periods, lunch, assemblies)?
Yes _____ No _____ If "Yes," describe:
7. Does the student exhibit any avoidance behaviors?
Yes _____ No _____ If "Yes," describe:
8. Describe the student's social skills (does the student get along with peers, age appropriate skills, etc.):

Describe any additional areas of concern.

Appendix B
Self-Recording Sheet for Self-Monitoring

Name: Date:	Off-Task Behavior:	Target Behavior:	Best Target Behavior:
Time			
9 to 9:15			
9:15 to 9:30			
9:30 to 9:45			
9:45 to 10:00			
Out of Classroom			
Out of Classroom			
10:30 to 10:45			
10:45 to 11:00			
11:00 to 11:15			
11:15 to 11:30			

Appendix C
Self-Evaluation Sheet for Second Period

Self-Evaluation: Class Participation

Period: _____ Name: _____

Date: _____

How I felt about my participation:



Extremely
Unhappy

Very Unhappy

Unhappy

OK

Happy

Very Happy

What I liked **most** about my participation?

What I liked **least** about my participation?

Appendix D
Student Interview Protocol

1. What is your favorite part of the school day?
2. How is your school year going so far?
3. Do you have a favorite subject in school?
4. Who do you think is a good student in our class?
5. Why do you think he/she is a good student?
6. Tell me how you pay attention in class?
7. What distracts you in class?
8. Do you need help to stay focused in class?
9. Which behavior do you need help with?
10. Which behavior do you feel better about?
11. Do you like the recording sheet?
12. Do you want to work with me on improving your behavior in class?

Appendix E
General Education Teacher Interview Protocol

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. How long have you been teaching special education students in your general education classroom?
3. Do you notice particular off-task behaviors in the special education students? What are they?
4. What are some on-task behaviors you notice in special education students? What do students enjoy the most about your class/program?
5. If you compare the behavior of the general education student to that of the special education student, what might you share?
6. When a special education student is off-task, what happens in this classroom?
7. How do you get special education students back on track if they are off-task?
8. When _____ is off-task, is your response the same or different that it is for general education students?
9. What behaviors would you like to see changed in _____?
10. Would you be willing to track _____'s behavior on specific days so that I can compare your data to what the student is tracking for me?

Appendix F
Paraprofessional Interview Protocol

1. How long have you worked as a paraprofessional?
2. How long have you worked with special education students?
3. Do special education students have particular off-task behaviors?
4. What are some of the off-task behaviors you see the most frequently?
5. What are the off-task behaviors you see in _____?
6. Do you see differences in _____'s behavior when comparing this year to last year?
7. Can you describe _____'s behavior in reading/math/dance/PE?
8. What do you notice that affects _____'s behavior in _____?
9. Which off-task behaviors would you like to see improved upon for success in school?

