

3-2017

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Recommended Citation

Vogel, T.L. (2017). *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: A preschool approach* (Master's thesis, Northwestern College, Orange City, IA). Retrieved from http://nwcommons.nwciowa.edu/education_masters/44/

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Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports:

A Preschool Approach

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March 2017

Abstract

In this action research study, the author examined the effect of using Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) language and rewards to positively motivate preschool students towards appropriate behavior choices. The study was conducted in the author's preschool special education classroom, in a rural Iowa public school district. The study was completed between the months of September 2016 through March 2017. This study had 18 participants, including 12 females, six males and two three-year-old special education students. At the beginning of the study, PBIS language was not being used. There was an average of 14 negative or unwanted behaviors happening throughout a school day. After PBIS language and rewards were introduced to the students in December 2016 the negative behaviors in the classroom decreased to 1-2 times per day. The findings conclude that using PBIS language and rewards positively affected the student's behaviors and increased teaching time in the classroom because there were not as many behaviors to address.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support: A Preschool Approach

Educators come into the classroom with an idea of behaviors management. Normally teachers will have all different styles and beliefs. Educators strive to provide a safe, caring, and loving environment for all children to thrive within. Currently, research has indicated that not only are traditional punishment-based discipline practices ineffective among high-risk students, but they actually increase, not decrease, rates of unwanted behaviors (Mayer, 1995, 2001).

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports instills in teachers to understand that not all students walk in with the same experiences. We cannot assume that all children have had the same learning history. Educators need to take the time to assess prior learning and this includes behavior. The Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports have some key features that all programs will need to execute. Expectations need to be positively stated and taught by staff in a consistent and clear way. Staff will need to become proficient in acknowledging the mastery of expectations for the students. A plan of response will need to be prepared by the staff in case of problem behaviors. Consistent consequences for problem behavior will need to be executed by teachers and administration. Research has shown that approximately 80% to 85% of students will respond to proactive supports, display the desired appropriate behavior, and the result will be fewer behavioral problems (Horner & Sugai, 2005; Lewis, Newcomer, Trussell, & Richter, 2006).

Identification of the Problem

Each year, the teacher researcher has observed students who are struggling with social behavior and continuing to engage in problem behaviors. Reviews of over 800 studies on how to reduce school discipline problems indicate that the least effective response to inappropriate behavior in school. These are identified as, counselling, psychotherapy, and punishment

(Gottfredson, 1997). The teacher researcher realized that her system of discipline focused heavily on punishment without reinforcing positive behavior. Research has also indicated that the most effective responses to inappropriate behavior: The effective responses are social skills training, academic restructuring, and, behavioral interventions. The teacher researcher had the opportunity to attend Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports training in May or 2016. With a team of seven colleagues, they went through at five-day training session. Through these training sessions, they learned how to develop, implement and collect data for school-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports. The teacher research became excited to potentially use these strategies within her own classroom the following year.

Review of Related Literature

Many look at behavior as a problem area in their classroom. How do we change negative behavior? How do we get parenteral support? How do we turn unwanted behavior into appropriate behavior? These are all questions professionals ask themselves and others throughout their career. Researchers Stormont, Lewis, Beckner and Johnson (2008) have developed a positive and preventive approach for working with challenging behaviors in young children. A typical response to challenging behaviors is punishment oriented. It can be concluded from research that this approach does not work for children that have challenging behaviors.

Researchers Stormont, Lewis, Beckner and Johnson (2008) have developed useful resources for professional implementing Positive Behaviors Interventions and Supports. When Positive Behaviors Interventions and Supports is implemented, “all children have the opportunity to receive explicit instruction in appropriate social behavior” (Stormont, Lewis, Beckner & Johnson, 2008). School staff should collectively determine what appropriate behaviors look like

in all areas of the school. Students need unambiguous instruction on desirable behaviors. All staff will need to provide positive and clear feedback to the students performing appropriate behaviors. “Appropriate behavior is not expected to emerge naturally in all students, when it does occur, we must support it” (Horner & Sugai, 2005, p. 69). Telling students how to behave is not enough anymore. Students must experience appropriate behavior in the school setting. Students also need the opportunity to teach each other appropriate behaviors. “Peer support strategies can also be used to encourage appropriate behavior choices in young children” (Skinner, Neddienriep, Robinson, Ervin, & Jones, 2003, p 76).

Implementing Positive Behaviors Interventions and Supports in your school or classroom be an overwhelming task to begin. Positive Behaviors Interventions and Supports requires a school-wide shift in approaching discipline. First, a leadership team will form and establish (a) visibility in the district and community; (b) a commitment statement; (c) funding; (d) goals and outcomes that align with district policy and mission; and (e) a one-year action plan. Second, the leadership team will need to gain staff buy-in. It is critical for all staff members to be onboard. Third, the leadership team will need to participate in the Positive Behaviors Interventions and Supports five day training session. The selected leadership team will need to determine priorities and periods that strategies and ideas will be implemented. They will also need to pick target areas to focus efforts, including but not limited to lunchroom, recess, hallways, bathroom etc.

Positive Behaviors Interventions and Supports typically takes three to five years to fully implement. Professional development will need to take place for all staff members. According to research, change occurs in four phases (Missouri Positive Behavior Support Initiative, 2002): First, Awareness will need to occur; Second, Initial implementation and skill building will need take place for all staff members; Third, Full implementation of Positive Behaviors

Interventions and Supports; Forth, Skills and practice institutionalization will take place for staff and students. Every staff and student involved with Positive Behaviors Interventions and Supports will need a different level of support to be successful.

The leadership team is responsible for developing structures for each implementation level. New practices take time and effort by all parties involved. Teachers will need to actively change their language from old to new. We can no longer rely on the fact that kids ‘should’ know how to act. Educators must teach students how to behave appropriately. Negative attention only builds negative feelings. Positive attention to appropriate behaviors has a lasting effect for students.

Methods

Qualitative Data Collection Measures

A blank sample of the student researchers Student Behavior Tracker (See Appendix A) was used to collect inappropriate behaviors of each student in the classroom. This was developed during the teacher researchers Positive Behaviors Intervention and Supports training. Each tally represents misbehaviors during school hours. The Student Behavior Tracker allowed the researcher to observe which students were struggling the most with behaviors in the classroom.

Data Collection

Prior to the seven-month period of observation, the teacher researcher developed the Student Behavior Tracking (See Appendix A). All participants were carefully watched throughout the seven-month period for problem behaviors. Problem behaviors watched for include hitting, kicking, biting, screaming, yelling, lying, cheating, not sharing, disrespecting

adults or peers, and not following directions. Quantitative data was used to determine the frequency of disruptive or problem behaviors throughout the school day. During the period from September – December, the teacher researcher had not implemented Positive Behavior Interventions and Strategies language into her classroom. From January – March, the teacher researcher implemented a language change in handling problem behaviors and acknowledging wanted behaviors. The teacher researcher used several different techniques while implementing Positive Behaviors Interventions and Supports within her own classroom. Some teaching strategies used during the three month language and activity change were a) Adult Modeling; b) Flannel Board feelings; c) Role Play; d) Prompts; e) Incidental Teaching; f) Reinforcement, and g) Social Stories.

The teacher researcher promoted expectations within her room through the students and families. Classroom behavior books were developed with the current class to show appropriate behavior versus inappropriate behaviors. Family newsletters were utilized to get parents involved in encouraging Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports in the home and in public settings. While promoting Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports the teacher researcher created an Expectation versus Rules chart seen in Figure 1.

Expectations	VS	Rules
Go up the ladder		Don't go down the Ladder
Be a good friend		Don't be mean
Walking feet		NO Running
Go down the slide		Don't go up the slide
Stay with your class		Don't go anywhere I cant see you

Figure 1 represents the type of language change that happened throughout her classroom with her four-year-old students.

The overall goal for the teacher researcher was to determine the effects Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports had in the teacher researcher’s classroom once they were implemented. Before Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports was implemented, the teacher researcher was noting an average of 53.25 negative behaviors per month. After Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, the teacher researcher averaged 23 negative behaviors per month. The number of negative behaviors in the teacher researcher’s classroom fell by 43%. This was encouraging results for only implementing Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports for a short three month.

Results of the Study

In terms of appropriate behaviors Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports has great tools to use inside a preschool setting. The teacher researcher was able to use the strategies suggested by PBIS to positively impact and decrease her preschool classroom behaviors. When PBIS was implemented the number of negative or unwanted behaviors dropped by 43%. Individual students decreased their personal amount of negative behaviors. Students became

more mindful of their behaviors and were more honest when telling the teacher researcher what happened during difficult situations that arose. Social stories and role-playing helped the students become mindful of how they can potential make someone feel. Their language also changed between each other. Words like; no, stop, and do not have become outdated. The students and teacher researcher have shifted their vocabulary to positive remarks towards one another.

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POSTIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS – A PRESCHOOL APPROACH

Appendix A

Behavior Tracker September 2016

Date 09	6	7	8	9	12	13	14	15	16	19	20	21	22	23	26	27	28	29	30
S1	F	/	/		/			/			/			/					
S2	I	/	//			//			/			///						/	
S3	R																		
S4	S															/			
S5	T																		
S6																			
S7	D	//	/		//	///			/	/				//		/	/	/	
S8	A																		
S9	Y	/		/	/														
S10																			
S11	S																		
S12	C																		
S13	H																		
S14	O	/			/	/			/	/									
S15	O	/	/	/	/														
S16	L																		
S17		/	/			//								//					
S18																			
Total		8	6	2	6	8	0	1	3	2	1	5	0	3	1	2	1	2	0

POSTIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS – A PRESCHOOL APPROACH

Appendix B

Behavior Tracker October 2016

Date	3	4	5	6	7	10	11	12	13	14	17	18	19	20	21	24	25	26	27	28	
S1		/			F																H
S2	//	//	/	/	I	////				/	/	//	/			/					A
S3					E																L
S4					L										/						L
S5					D																O
S6																					W
S7	//	/	/	/	T	//	///	/	/			//						/	/		E
S8					R																E
S9	//	/			I	/	/	//					//								N
S10					P																
S11				/																	P
S12																					A
S13										/											R
S14																					T
S15																					Y
S16																					
S17	/	/	/	/					//	/	//	/						/			
S18																					
Total	7	6	3	4		7	4	3	3	3	3	5	3	0	1	1	0	1	1		

POSTIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS – A PRESCHOOL APPROACH

Appendix C

Behavior Tracker November 2016

Date	1	2	3	4	7	8	9	10	14	15	16	17	18	21	22	23	28	29	30
S1	/									/			/		T	P	//		
S2			/	/		//			///			//	/	/	H	R	////	//	//
S3															A	E			
S4															N	S			
S5															K	C	/		
S6															S	H	/		
S7	/	/	/	//	//	//								/	G	O	///		
S8															I	O			
S9			//		//				///	/			///		V	L	//		
S10															I				
S11															N	P	/		
S12											/				G	R			
S13																O			
S14															P	G	/		
S15				/											A	R			
S16															R	A			
S17	/	/								/					T	M	/	/	
S18															Y				
Total	3	1	4	3	4	4	0	0	6	2	1	2	5	2			16	3	2

POSTIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS – A PRESCHOOL APPROACH

Appendix D

Behavior Tracker December 2016

Date	1	2	5	6	7	8	9	12	13	14	15	16	19	20	21
S1	/	/									F			H	S
S2	///			//				/	/	///	I	/	/	O	C
S3											E			L	H
S4											L			I	O
S5											D	/		D	O
S6														A	L
S7	/	/			/		/			/	T	//	/	Y	
S8											R				B
S9			//	/	///	/				/	I	///		P	R
S10											P			A	E
S11									/			/		R	A
S12						/								T	K
S13														Y	
S14												/			B
S15					/										E
S16															G
S17	//	/					/	/	/	/		//			I
S18															N
Total	8	3	2	3	5	2	2	2	3	6		11	2		S

POSTIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS – A PRESCHOOL APPROACH

Appendix E

Behavior Tracker January 2017
Positive Behavior Supports Intervention Language Change

Date	3	4	5	6	9	10	11	12	13	16	17	18	19	20	23	24	25	26	27	30
S1			/				/				/			/		//				
S2		/	//	/					/										/	
S3																				
S4																				
S5			/					/												
S6																				
S7		/			/		/				//			/					/	
S8																				
S9	/											/		/			/			
S10																				
S11									/											
S12																				
S13																				
S14																				
S15								/												
S16								/												
S17	/	/										/		/		//				/
S18																				
Total	2	3	4	1	1	0	2	3	2	0	3	2	0	4	0	4	1	0	2	0

POSTIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS – A PRESCHOOL APPROACH

Appendix F

Behavior Tracker February 2017

Date	1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28
S1			/		/			F	/	V								/		
S2					/			I	//	A								/		
S3								E		L					/					
S4								L		E	/									
S5								D		N										
S6										T										
S7			/					T	/	I									//	
S8								R		N										
S9			/					I	/	E										
S10								P		S							/			
S11																				
S12										D										
S13										A										
S14										Y					/					
S15																				
S16					/															
S17			/						/										//	
S18																				
Total	0	0	4	0	3	0	0		6		1	0	0	0	2	0	1	2	4	0

POSTIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS – A PRESCHOOL APPROACH

Appendix G

Behavior Tracker March 2017

Date 03	1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30	31
S1								A	/				F	/				
S2								C					I	/				
S3								T					E					
S4				/				I					L					
S5								V					D					
S6								I										
S7								T	/				T	//				
S8								I					R					
S9								E	/				I	//				
S10								S					P					
S11																		
S12								D										
S13								A										
S14								Y										
S15																		
S16																		
S17									/						/			
S18																		
Total	0	0	0	1	0	0	0		4	0	0	0		6	1	0	0	0

Appendix H

Total Behavior Tracker Data

Month	September	October	November	December	January	February	March
Total Behaviors	51	55	58	49	34	23	12