

Research Highlights

Topic: Self-Determination

Hughes, C., Copeland, S. R., Agran, M., Wehmeyer, M. L., Rodi, M. S., & Presley, J. A. (2002). Using self-monitoring to improve performance in general education high school classes. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities*, 37, 262- 271.

BOTTOM LINE

Four students with mental retardation were taught self-monitoring skills to enhance their social and academic behavior in the general education curriculum. Self-monitoring strategies are ways for students to manage their own behavior rather than relying on others, such as teachers, to manage their behavior for them. After training in these strategies all four students demonstrated improvement in the behaviors targeted for the training, which included a student holding up her head when talking to her peers, getting a certain percentage correct on class worksheets, initiating interactions with general education peers, and responding appropriately to customers when selling cookies.

TIPS

- Think about one or two activities that your students could do that they are not presently doing.
- Talk with the students about it and set up a checklist or system of recording that is fun and easy for all. What might happen? Who knows, your students may learn a new skill and become more self-sufficient!

KEY FINDINGS

- Self-management strategies that enable students to manage their own behavior, rather than relying on others (i.e., teachers, parents) to manage it for them, can assist students in learning and modifying their behavior.

KEY FINDINGS

cont.

- Four students with mental retardation and other disabilities who required support to participate in the general education curriculum were taught self-monitoring skills, such as observing and recording when a behavior occurred. Few students with disabilities are taught self-management skills.
 - The self-monitoring strategies were used to try to increase behaviors and target behaviors that the students and teachers selected as important for the student's success, as based on the students IEP goals and input from the student, his or her family, and teachers.
 - The target behaviors that were selected were unique to each student and included holding his or her head up when interacting with general education peers, responding in a socially correct manner (i.e., saying "Thank you") when interacting with customers while selling cookies, increasing the number of correct written responses on class worksheets, and initiating interactions with general education peers.
 - All students were initially performing the target behaviors at very low levels. When training was implemented, the targeted behavior of all students increased. After the training, the increases in the targeted behavior were maintained. Responses from the students, teachers, and the student's peers confirmed that there were noticeable improvements after training.
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METHOD

- Four students, three boys and one girl, ages 16-19, who required support to participate in the general education curriculum participated in this study.
- Targeted behaviors were selected based on IEP goals, observations of student's behavior, and input from the student, parents, and teachers.
- The study had three phases. First students' targeted behaviors were observed to determine the frequency with which they occurred. Next, training in self-monitoring skills was initiated. The frequency of targeted behaviors was recorded during training with high inter-observer agreement recorded. After training was completed the frequency of the students' behaviors was observed to see if the changes were still present.
- The training was implemented at different times for the four students to ensure that some other factor, such as a change in the classroom, was not leading to the changes in the students' behaviors. The students, their teachers, and their peers were asked for their perspective on the impact of the training process.

RELATED
PUBLICATIONS

- Agran, M. (Ed.). (1997) *Student directed learning: Teaching self-determination skills*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Gilberts, G.H. Agran, M., Hughes, C., & Wehmeyer, M. (2001). The effects of peer-delivered self-monitoring strategies on the participation of students with severe disabilities in general education classrooms. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 26, 25-36.
- King-Sears, M. E. (1999). Teacher and researcher co-design self-management content for an inclusive setting: Research training, intervention, and generalization effects on student performance. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities*, 34, 134-156.
- Wehmeyer, M. L., Agran, M., & Hughes, C. (1998). *Teaching self-determination to students with disabilities: Basic skills for successful transition*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

This research was funded by grant number H023D990001 from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education. For more information, contact the Beach Center on Disability at 1200 Sunnyside Avenue, 3111 Haworth Hall, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-7534. Phone: 785-864-7600. Email: Beachcenter@ku.edu. Website: www.beachcenter.org.

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