

Strategy Research Paper: Self-Monitoring

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Abstract

Self-monitoring is an effective and straightforward strategy aimed at increasing the internal motivation and on-task behavior of the individual who is being trained in it. The student is required to be aware and willing to track his or her own behavior and must have the ability to be honest in the process. A major advantage of the self-monitoring method is its effectiveness in a wide variety of settings and its ability to be used with individuals of any age and ability. One downfall is that the strategy in its most unobtrusive state requires some sort of device, which may be cost-prohibitive to the school or individual who wishes to participate in this strategy.

Introduction

Self-monitoring is a well-studied strategy with overall excellent outcomes in practice. Because it can be used in so many different settings and has high social validity, this strategy is ideal for the classroom. Self-monitoring is a necessary life skill that will be used throughout the lives of the individuals who learn to use it, which makes it a valuable addition to the educational atmosphere. There are two main methods of formal self-monitoring, the first is Class Wide Self-Monitoring and the second is a more individualized approach. This paper will discuss the definition, advantages, disadvantages, and the ways self-monitoring is used in the classroom.

What is Self-Monitoring?

Self-monitoring is one of many strategies that help students with various special needs and attention issues to spend more time engaging in on-task behavior and less time displaying off-task behavior. Research has shown no matter what age or ability level, self-monitoring training can be effective (Ennis, Lane, & Oakes, 2018). Self-monitoring is something that typically developing individuals develop naturally as they grow. It is an internal regulation of one's own behavior and the training or retraining of individuals to be more aware of their own off-task behaviors (Kanani, Adibsereshki, & Haghgoo, 2017). The ability to monitor one's own behaviors and improve on-task behavior is also linked to increased motivation and academic performance (Kanani, Adibsereshki, & Haghgoo, 2017). The research suggests that self-monitoring is an effective intervention that improved attention in a wide variety of settings (Finn, Ramasamy, Dukes, & Scott, 2015). There are several common tools used to implement this method, a few of which are teacher/researcher training on the self-monitoring strategy, a teacher checklist for data collection, a student checklist for monitoring behavior, and either a manual or automatic method of creating a reminder to check behavior (Ennis, Lane, & Oakes,

2018; Finn, Ramasamy, Dukes, & Scott, 2015; Sheehey, Wells, & Rowe, 2016; Kanani, Adibsereshki, Haghgoo, 2017; Kartal & Ozkan, 2015; Xin, Sheppard, & Brown, 2017).

In practice, it is a two-step process in which the student becomes aware of their own off-task behaviors and then records whether they were on or off-task during a specified period of time. Following training on teaching students to learn the method, the teachers will explain and demonstrate the steps of the program and it is then implemented for a specific period of time. Some of those methods include having teachers stop instruction at certain intervals to enforce the students checking of their own behaviors or items like watch-type technology (Finn, Ramasamy, Dukes, & Scott, 2015) and other devices that can be set to vibrate or make a noise at certain intervals in order to create a reminder.

In the inclusive classroom, it may look like a student wearing a watch that vibrates every five minutes. When that watch vibrates, the student immediately marks on his student checklist whether they were on-task or off-task, and what specific behaviors they were displaying. This only takes a few seconds, and once the student has evaluated their own behavior then the student can go back to what they were doing. In a whole class, this may look like the entire class going through the sheet with teacher guidance (Kartal & Ozkan, 2015). It is important after this pattern has been established and the student's behavior has improved that the prompts and program is faded (Intervention Central, n.d.). This important fading and maintenance portion of this method is the most under-researched step.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Self-Monitoring

Advantages

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There are several advantages to teaching students with special needs the concept and strategy of self-monitoring. The first is that it is a necessary life skill that will serve them well as they transition to adult life and the community. Because it can be adapted for use in many different types of classroom settings, it follows that someone who learns to use self-monitoring can carry those skills to the real world. The second reason is that this strategy can be very unobtrusive and has been shown to have significant social validity in a wide variety of research (Kartal & Ozkan, 2015). A third advantage is this strategy's ability to not only increase on-task behavior, but also to increase sustained work and work completion (Sheehey, Wells, & Rowe, 2016).

The fourth reason this strategy is beneficial is that is pointed out by Kartal & Ozkan (2018) which is that it is not possible for educators to constantly prompt and reinforce the on-task behavior of every student in their classrooms. When self-monitoring is internalized in an individual, external stimuli is not needed in order to maintain the skill, which is a major advantage to the self-monitoring method.

Arguably the most important advantage is that this strategy has been shown to be effective among many varied ages and abilities. Students with autism, dyslexia, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, and ADHD have all benefited from learning the self-monitoring strategies (Ennis, Lane, & Oakes, 2018; Finn, Ramasamy, Dukes, & Scott, 2015; Sheehey, Wells, & Rowe, 2016; Kanani, Adibsereshki, Haghgoo, 2017). This is good news for the teachers and parents who are concerned about their children's lack of focus. It is very possible any student can grow in their ability to regulate their internal motivation to behave in an on-task manner by developing their self-monitoring skills.

Disadvantages

There are a couple of disadvantages to using self-monitoring in the classroom. First, there is a lack of extended research on this strategy regarding the longevity of the effectiveness of this strategy (Finn, Ramasamy, Dukes, & Scott, 2015). It is agreed among the researchers studied that there is a need for generalization and maintenance of skill data to be collected and studied (Finn, Ramasamy, Dukes, & Scott, 2015; (Kartal & Ozkan, 2015; Ennis, Lane, & Oakes, 2018; Sheehey, Wells, & Rowe, 2016). Many of the case studies and research projects are based off a one-time training and implementation; very few of them include follow-up or refresher programs to validate the success of this strategy.

The second disadvantage to the self-monitoring strategy is that it does taking training and time to plan (Ennis, Lane, & Oakes, 2018). The classroom routine and specific target behaviors or times of instruction must be analyzed in order to implement the most effective form of self-monitoring training. Additionally, if an automatic method, such as a watch device, is not used or is not available, then the teacher is required to be more heavily involved in the timing and behavior checking process. However, once taught and practiced, the steps become more natural and are easily assimilated into the classroom routine.

The final disadvantage this paper will discuss is that the most unobtrusive and most socially valid version of this strategy requires a specific type of device (a device that vibrates, a watch-type technology, etc.) that may prove to be cost-prohibitive to the student or school district interested in pursuing this method.

Types of Self-Monitoring

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Class Wide Self-Monitoring

Class Wide Self-Monitoring (CWSM) is a method in which an entire class uses the selected self-monitoring strategy as a group to increase the on-task behavior of all students while simultaneously allowing the students who need it most to blend in with the rest of their peers. One study of CWSM was shown to be effective in a preschool classroom, in a mixture of special needs and typically developing students (Kartal & Ozkan, 2015). During the study, it took several adults in the room to make it achievable, but there were noticeable, positive differences in the amount of on-task behaviors the students engaged in (Kartal & Ozkan, 2015). The entire class, under the guidance of the teacher, fills out their age-graded behavior checklist at a specific interval and all together before moving on to the next academic task.

Individualized

This version of self-monitoring is implemented in general education classrooms for a select number of students or in a resource room for a short period of time. Each student's goal can be different, and each student is able to have an individualized time interval for checking and recording behavior. One benefit to this method is that the type of monitoring device can be individualized for whose disabilities may have specific, unique challenges that must be met in order for a strategy to be successful, such as a student with cerebral palsy- a condition which does not present itself the same twice (Sheehey, Wells, & Rowe, 2017)- or a student on the autism spectrum (Finn, Ramasamy, Dukes, & Scott, 2015), which also affects individuals uniquely. In this type of self-monitoring, the student can independently use the checklist to monitor behavior at specific intervals.

Further Research Suggested

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As mentioned earlier in the disadvantages, there is much more research needed in the area of refresher programs and more data collection needed regarding the sustainability of the self-monitoring skills. Additionally, one study suggested that other handheld, electronic devices be studied for use in self-monitoring training, such as smartphones and tablets (Sheehey, Wells, & Rowe, 2017).

Conclusion

Self-monitoring is a simple strategy that is easily adaptable for all types of settings and experiences. Though there are some disadvantages to using this method, the advantages may outweigh those challenges. The ability to internally regulate and self-monitor comes naturally for some, and others need help making it part of their cognitive processes. School is a place that has been proven to work in introducing this concept using the self-monitoring strategy, whether with a whole class or an inclusion setting, making it ideal for the classroom environment. However, it is important to note that the longevity and maintenance of this strategy require much more future research to be reliable.

References

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