The Effects of Increasing Teacher Praise on Student Behavior Maintained by Attention
Darlene Anderson, Jana Lindberg, K. Richard Young, Michelle Marchant & Adam Fisher
Brigham Young University, Provo, UT

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of using teacher praise to reduce the physical and verbal aggression of two elementary school students enrolled in general education classrooms. In both cases, a class-wide DRA procedure successfully reduced the attention-maintained problem behavior exhibited during teacher interactions. In Victor’s case, two additional intervention phases were implemented. For Victor, increases in teacher praise across the intervention phases resulted in marked decreases in physical and verbal aggression and increases in on-task behavior. The interventions with both students were preceded by functional behavioral assessments. Classroom teachers were instructed to deliver specific contingent praise in lieu of verbal reprimands. They were also encouraged to use an electronic device providing a timed prompt. The study extends previous research supporting the use of differential reinforcement to improve the quality of student-teacher interactions.

RESULTS

Data Collection

- On-task behavior: 10-s whole interval recording
- Physical and verbal aggression: teacher praise - event recording

- The rate of teacher praise and the rate of student problem behavior were calculated by dividing the total number of responses by session time. The percentage of intervals in which the participant was on-task was calculated by dividing the number of intervals he was on-task by the total number of intervals in the session, and multiplying the quotient by 100.

- Interbehavior Agreement: An independent observer recorded data in 30% (Victor) and 13% (Irwin) of the sessions.

- Average Percentage Agreement:
  - Victor: 87% (range, 67% - 100%)
  - Irwin: 80% (range, 52% - 100%)

- Pre- and post-intervention data showed
  - Increases in on-task behavior
  - Decreases in physical and verbal aggression

- The rate of teacher praise and the rate of student problem behaviors increased

- During the implementation of a class-wide DRA (in which the teacher delivered praise contingently to the entire class), while the teacher delivered praise contingently to the entire class), while the teacher delivered praise contingently to the entire class, while

- Victor began to gradually improve. The fact that two different teachers implemented the two interventions in different settings might help to account for the contrasting results. Nevertheless, Irwin’s data strongly suggest a functional relationship between the consistent delivery of teacher praise and decreased problem behavior in the classroom.

- The results support previous findings indicating that teacher praise can effectively influence student behavior (Sutherland, 2000). Findings have suggested that providing praise and other forms of positive attention produces a decrease in problem behavior (Andrews & Komis, 1991). Relationships between teacher verbal and physical aggression occurred during the implementation of a class-wide DRA (in which the teacher delivered praise contingently to the entire class), while Victor required higher rates of individual praise before his behavior began to gradually improve. The fact that two different teachers implemented the two interventions in different settings might help to account for the contrasting results. Nevertheless, Irwin’s data strongly suggest a functional relationship between the consistent delivery of teacher praise and decreased problem behavior in the classroom.

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REFERENCES


DEPENDENT VARIABLES

- On-task
  - Sitting on the rug, facing the teacher (Victor), completing assigned work on task, and remaining calm (Victor)
  - Physical Aggression
    - Kicking, hitting, poking, punching, biting someone else or attempting to do so
  - Verbal aggression
    - Name calling, criticizing someone while in their presence, taunting, making threats
  - Call Outs
    - Talking or yelling without raising hand
  - Tattling
    - Criticizing another student while talking to the teacher or the aide
  - Teacher Praise
    - Verbal or nonverbal commendation to individual student

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

- On-task
- Physical Aggression
- Verbal Aggression
- Call Outs
- Tattling
- Teacher Praise

SINGLE SUBJECT DESIGN

- Irwin: An ABA Design was used to demonstrate a functional (cause/effect) relationship between dependent and independent variables.

DISCUSSION

The results support previous findings indicating that teacher praise can effectively influence student behavior (Sutherland, 2000). Findings have suggested that providing praise and other forms of positive attention produces a decrease in problem behavior (Andrews & Komis, 1991). Relationships between teacher verbal and physical aggression occurred during the implementation of a class-wide DRA (in which the teacher delivered praise contingently to the entire class), while Victor required higher rates of individual praise before his behavior began to gradually improve. The fact that two different teachers implemented the two interventions in different settings might help to account for the contrasting results. Nevertheless, Irwin’s data strongly suggest a functional relationship between the consistent delivery of teacher praise and decreased problem behavior in the classroom.

Future investigations would do well to continue to examine the effects of teacher praise on students’ problem behavior and academic achievement (Sutherland, 2000).

**Image Description**

The image contains several graphs and tables related to the study, including data collection methods and results. The graphs depict changes in on-task behavior, teacher praise, and student problem behaviors across different phases of intervention. The tables provide specific data for Victor and Irwin, including percentages of intervals in which the students were on-task and the rates of physical and verbal aggression.

The peaceable world logo is also present, indicating a partnership project between Brigham Young University and Peaceable Schools International.