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We're all in this together now: Group performance feedback to increase classroom team data collection

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ABSTRACT

This study's primary goal was to evaluate the use of performance feedback procedures delivered to a classroom team to increase daily data collection. Performance feedback (PFB) was delivered to four classroom teams responsible for the daily collection of data representing student performance during prescribed instructional activities. Using a multiple-baseline design, the effects of the team performance-feedback were evaluated for the target student, and for generalization to data collection for all classroom students. A secondary question evaluated if student on-task behavior correlated with increased data collection. Finally, social validity was investigated to evaluate team satisfaction with the PFB intervention. The results demonstrate improved data collection across all four classroom teams for the target student in each classroom and generalization within classrooms to all remaining students. Slight increases in student on-task behavior were observed in three of the four classrooms, and teacher satisfaction ratings were high.

1. Introduction

Federal legislation, including the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004), mandates data-based decision making for special education

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students. Within this legislation, ongoing progress monitoring is recommended for three main reasons: (a) to relate directly to daily classroom practices and to evaluate the appropriateness of instructional practices, (b) to monitor students' progress on goals and objectives, and (c) to identify and qualify students for special education services (IDEIA, 2004). In addition to the requirements set forth in special education regulations, Alberto and Troutman (2003) outline three advantages to collecting ongoing data in special education settings. First, observation and measurement make it possible to accurately determine the effects of a particular intervention or strategy. Second, data collection allows for ongoing evaluation of each student's performance and facilitates immediate modifications to the student's program as needed. Third, collecting and reporting outcome data are the ultimate tools of accountability for educators. A number of studies have empirically verified the above advantages by demonstrating that teachers' use of student performance data leads to improved student outcomes (Foegen et al. 2007; Fuchs et al. 1984; Wesson et al. 1984). Stecker and Fuchs (2000) found that students whose instruction was modified based on continuous progress monitoring data performed significantly better than peers for whom instruction was not adjusted based on performance data. In a review of existing research evaluating the effects of curriculum-based measurement on student achievement, Stecker et al. (2005) found that significant gains in student achievement were enhanced by teachers' systematic data-based decision making. Similarly, Fuchs and Fuchs (1986) conducted a meta-analysis evaluating the effects of systematic formative evaluation on student achievement, with results indicating that the use of systematic formative evaluation procedures significantly increased students' school achievement.

1.1. Data collection within educational settings

Unfortunately, special education teachers often neglect progress monitoring and daily data collection (Walton, 1985). In a survey investigating teachers' familiarity with and use of direct measurement techniques by Wesson et al. (1984), 82% of the respondents indicated that they were familiar with the techniques, but only 44% used direct and frequent measurement to evaluate student performance. A similar survey of special educators by Walton (1985) revealed that 78% of teachers reported having had previous training in collecting and analyzing student data; however, only 15% reported regularly collecting data. The survey by Wesson et al. (1984) found that the reasons most often cited for not collecting data included its time-consuming nature and teachers' lack of knowledge of how to collect frequent and ongoing data. Other potential reasons were identified by Sandall et al. (2004) who evaluated early intervention teachers' perspectives regarding the use of data collection in their classrooms. These authors found that most teachers relied on their memory of events as a substitute for data collection and reported inconsistencies in the amount of data collected across students and objectives. Consistent with previous research, problems with data management and lack of time were reported as barriers to frequent data collection. Therefore, it appears that both lack of knowledge regarding data collection techniques, as well as lack of time required to collect frequent data are the most commonly cited barriers to data collection within classrooms.

A paucity of research has prospectively investigated the effects of training and consultation on teachers' data collection. Farmer et al. (1988) found that in-service (didactic instruction) training alone failed to increase data collection among classroom staff, whereas individualized instruction plus staff feedback increased data collection. Unfortunately, the beneficial results of the individualized instruction and feedback to the staff failed to result in generalized data collection for all classroom students. In addition, data collection did not maintain at high levels once the intervention was discontinued.

1.2. Performance feedback

Although limited research has evaluated the effectiveness of consultation to increase teachers' data collection, a plethora of research has examined the effects of consultation to increase a variety of other teacher behaviors (Fuchs et al., 1990; Galloway & Sheridan, 1994; Jones et al., 1997; Sheridan et al. 1996). Furthermore, performance feedback (PFB) consultation, derived from organization and behavioral management (Balcazar et al., 1985), has been extensively researched as a process for changing staff behavior in employment and institutional settings (Alvero et al., 2001; Martens et al., 1997; Mortenson & Witt, 1998; Noell et al., 1997). Performance feedback is the most proven-effective method to improve intervention implementation in education (Burns et al., 2008; Hagermoser-Sanetti & Kratochwill, 2009).