

# Research proposal: self-monitoring to reduce inappropriate off-task behavior



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## Literature Review

The focus of potential interventions are to work on reducing off-task disruptive behavioral outbursts from a student during small group instruction and remediation. There are a few interventions that may be beneficial to utilize with this particular student. Some of which include pre-task sequencing, the use of a token economy, and teaching a replacement behavior, such as self-monitoring with a visual that would indicate the need for assistance and/or frustration. Pedersen (2018) defines self-monitoring as “ the act of observing and regulating one’s own behavior in a social context” (para. 1).

According to Harrower and Dunlap, “ by preceding a difficult task with a series of short and easy tasks that have a high probability of being followed, a child will achieve repeated success and build momentum for improved responding through obtaining repeated reinforcement” (2001, p. 776). As this particular student can have a melt down any time a demand is placed on her that she doesn’t initially view as easy or of interest, this may be a potentially beneficial practice for her to obtain more frequent success. The demands that set her off can vary from class work to transitioning or simply something that she finds boring. If she is presented with a choice for which part of the task she wants to complete first and it is broken down into more simple segments, then there may start to be a decrease in the frequency of her outbursts and an increase in her productivity.

As Hayden’s current school is implementing a school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system, it has been observed

that she responds well to receiving “ points”, such as a token economy could provide, but it is not yet a consistent positive response. There may be a possibility that it would improve her willingness to rethink her outbursts if she has something more visual and personally motivating, making it more individualized. An example of this may include a task chart that indicates what chosen reward she will have access to after she completes the given amount of tasks. As noted by Ruef, et. al., “ positive reinforcement teaches a person to act in a certain way by rewarding that person for correct behavior” (1998, p. 29).

As the expectations for a student’s ability to self-monitor increases in third grade and beyond, this would be an extremely important skill for her to acquire sooner rather than later. She is able to state her lack of desire to put forth effort in challenging tasks, but needs a more appropriate means of communicating the need for assistance before her level of frustration is at its peak. In a review of completed studies, Bruhn, McDaniel and Kreigh (2015) shared that self-monitoring was noted to improve productivity and time on task. Another study from Mammolenti, Vollmer, and Smith (2002) also produced findings that “ the implementation of self-monitoring increased on-task behavior” and that “ reinforcement for on-task behavior may be necessary”. While positive rewards and pre-task sequencing are both separate interventions from self-monitoring, they can be incorporated simultaneously without skewing the data. It would offer a well-rounded plan to help her achieve success and be motivated to spend more time focusing on monitoring behavior rather than the challenge of the task being presented.

## Research Question

What impact will self-monitoring have on the inappropriate off-task behavior of an 8 year old diagnosed with an intellectual disability?

## Participants

Hayden attends a public elementary school that meets the requirements for Title I status, with approximately 60% of the students receiving free or reduced lunch. They currently have 11% of their enrolled population qualifying for special education services. Hayden is an 8-year-old female in the third grade and is currently served in an inclusion classroom with same age typical peers. She receives co-teaching instruction for reading and math, and then is supported by a paraprofessional during the remainder of the school day. There are a total of seven students out of 21 with disabilities in her class of that receive the support from the special education co-teacher and the paraprofessional.

This is her first school year being fully mainstreamed with her same-grade peers. She was previously in a self-contained classroom setting, and had the support of a one-on-one paraprofessional for her inclusion segments in the general education classroom. Although Hayden displays tendencies that can be categorized under Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Autism Spectrum Disorder, she does not have any formal diagnoses. At her last evaluation to re-determine eligibility, her mother opted to only pursue a private evaluation, which did not include any rating scales being sent to her teachers. She was identified to qualify for services under the eligibility of a mild intellectual disability.

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Hayden currently has a secondary eligibility of a speech and language impairment. She presents with difficulty in the areas of articulation, identifying personal information, answering wh- questions, and understanding general concepts. Hayden continues to work on sight word recognition and letter-sound correspondence when reading. Her lack of fluency has a big impact on her independent reading and writing abilities, which then carries across all academic areas. Hayden prefers to speak in fragments and phrases rather than complete sentences which causes difficulty with social interactions, especially with peers. There have been a couple of classmates that have started providing some social-based peer support with teacher modeling and prompting. Hayden is able to independently navigate the school in familiar areas, but she is not able to find a designation when just given the hall letter and room number.

Hayden enjoys drawing and playing on the iPad, which are currently her preferred reinforcers. She requires frequent redirection from teachers and the paraprofessional to remain on task, follow directions, communicate her needs calmly, and to complete given tasks. Due to her difficulties with communication, especially when she becomes frustrated, she requires a visual means of communication to indicate when she requires assistance.

#### Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for Hayden is that she displays inappropriate off-task behavior. It is operationally defined as disruptive behavioral outbursts that may include yelling, crying, fleeing the area or falling to the ground, and pounding her fists on the table/desks. The behavior most often occurs when

demands are placed on her or she is redirected from a preferred task before she feels she's done. It also occurs when she doesn't get her way, such as being the first one off the bus in the morning. It may happen at any location including on the bus, in the hallway, in a classroom, or outside. The behavior often lasts for 10-15 minutes, and may intensify when an adult tries to intervene.

### Intervention

The independent variable that will be utilized is a plan for student self-monitoring. Initially, the teacher will model appropriate versus inappropriate behavior for Hayden and a couple of her peers. This will continue until they can consistently identify if the modeled behavior is considered appropriate or inappropriate. She will also be able to demonstrate independent examples upon request prior to the intervention beginning. The modeling will include the utilization of administering the checkmarks on the paper grid as well. Hayden begins her school day with pull-out resource that her teacher provides direct instruction for reading in a small group, which is where the implementation will begin. The intervention will be initiated the day immediately following her demonstrating the understanding of the plan and expectations.

Hayden will be given a square grid paper in which she will be asked to record checkmarks for each time segment that she displays only appropriate behavior. The time segments will begin with one-minute increments and will increase up to 30-minute segments. It will be laminated so that it can be

reused and then secured to her desk by Velcro to allow her to transport it if necessary.

### Data Collection

The objective of data collection is to see if the implementation of the intervention leads to a decrease and eventual extinction of the inappropriate off-task behavior. The student will be provided with a pre-set timer, beginning with one minute increments, and will be verbally directed to give herself a checkmark if she displays only appropriate behavior during the time segment. In the beginning phase, the teacher will record the check marks along with Hayden to allow for initial modeling. When 10 check marks are achieved, she will be able to select an item from her desired choice board to utilize during a one-minute break. Initially, her peers that have been included with the training will assist in providing feedback regarding the earning of the checkmarks. Once she is demonstrating mastery, the length of time on the pre-set timer will increase. There will also be adjustments to the amount of checkmarks she must receive to obtain her reward and when the reward will be available. While quick progression may allow for some intervals to be skipped, the following intervals indicate the hypothesized plan of implementation:

Length of time to get mark	Required # of marks	When reward can be used
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reward

10  
 1 As soon  
 marks as 10  
 minute = 1  
 marks  
 interval min  
 are met  
 earned

4  
 5 As soon  
 marks as the 4  
 minute = 2  
 marks  
 interval min  
 are met  
 earned

3  
 10 As soon  
 marks as the 3  
 minute = 3  
 marks  
 interval min  
 are met  
 earned

3 Right  
 15 marks before  
 minute = 4 lunch or  
 interval min dismiss  
 earned al

20 3 Right



marks before  
 minute = 5 lunch or  
 interval min dismiss  
 Is earned al

During  
 3  
 25 morning  
 marks work  
 minute = 7  
 interval the  
 min followin  
 Is earned g day

1 min  
 for  
 every During  
 30 morning  
 mark work  
 minute (\*must the  
 interval earn at followin  
 Is least 5; g day  
 up to  
 10)

In an effort to establish interobserver agreement, there will be two individuals, including myself and a paraprofessional, that will collect data during the baseline phase. Hayden and I will be the ones to collect the data once the intervention is implemented. Baseline data will be collected for 5

consecutive days or until a stable baseline is achieved. Data will initially be taken during two 30 minute segments when she is in pull-out resource, which is a small group setting. It will then be extended to the length of her school day.

Both the teacher and Hayden will collect data during the intervention phase. The teacher will also track the frequency in which objectives are met at each interval. Interobserver reliability will be established using Hayden's data, as well as mine. The intervention will be withdrawn when there is a consistently positive change in observable behavior, and baseline conditions will resume. After the baseline data is taken over 5 consecutive days, a second intervention phase will be implemented. This would also allow for additional validation of the potential effect of the intervention. To visually see the changes in the frequency of appropriate behavior, the results of the data will be displayed using a line graph.

### Experimental Design

When looking at determining the effectiveness of using a self-monitoring intervention to increase appropriate behavior with task completion, I have decided to utilize an ABAB design. This design includes four phases of treatment occurring as baseline, intervention, baseline, and intervention. One reason for selecting this method is to obtain data quickly on the effectiveness of the intervention. Another advantage for using this design is that this particular student would be overwhelmed with too many interventions being used simultaneously. It allows for more flexibility with

being able to make changes as frequent as necessary, and it would be difficult to determine which intervention was working.

Currently, Hayden's display of inappropriate behavioral outbursts are not easy to anticipate and it impedes the learning of the surrounding students when it extends beyond a couple of minutes. Recently, she has had some episodes in which it has taken her over an hour to be able to calm down enough to return to her task and/or designated area. She only calmed down when the triggering antecedent was no longer what she would be returning to for completion. If we were able to extinguish the inappropriate behavior, this would have a positive impact on the learning for all students and allow the adults the opportunity to teach.

## References

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