

Behavior Monitoring

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Monitoring student behavior is essential in allowing school staff to quickly detect and correct inappropriate behavior. By monitoring student behavior, schools can guide students in setting behavioral goals, help them to understand their own behavior and its effect on others, and to ultimately equip them to recognize and practice the behaviors necessary for success in school. In addition, it allows for students to be “caught” being good, creating opportunities for the acknowledgement of appropriate behavior. Through staff supervision, behavior monitoring can be used to help students comply with the behavior expecta-

tions and culture of a school. Implementation of strategies and interventions that help schools monitor behavior can also play a vital role in dropout prevention by developing relationships, monitoring risky student behaviors, and providing positive support for students who are having behavioral problems. According to Kennelly and Monrad (2007), disengagement in the classroom, including behavioral problems, is a key indicator of individuals who are at risk to drop out. As such, the application of strategies that monitor and manage student behavior is crucial in detecting the warning signs of a student who is at risk of dropping out.

What is Behavior Monitoring?

Student behavior monitoring occurs when an adult regularly checks on a student’s behavior over a period of time. It can also occur when a student regularly monitors his/her own behavior in a systematic way (sometimes also called self-monitoring). There are a wide range of behaviors which can be monitored including academic behaviors (such as work or homework completion, quiz scores, time on task, grades, etc.), social behaviors (following directions, inappropriate language, specific social skill use, appropriate interaction, etc.) and participation behaviors (tardiness, absences, class contributions, etc.), as well as many more. Student behavior monitoring can take many forms and may be implemented with an individual student, or a selected group of students. In its simplest form, student behavior monitoring might be a teacher observing and recording a specific behavior of one or more students on a daily basis over a period of time, and using that data to create or modify a behavior change plan. It could also be a student recording their own behavior, or having teachers provide feedback on their behavior throughout the school day to assist the student in changing targeted behaviors.

A central goal in monitoring student behavior is to develop behavioral interventions, strategies, and programs that teach students how to replace inappropriate behavior with more acceptable alternatives. When monitoring behavior, the expectation is that the student will have input into establishing behavioral goals, and then with the data available through monitoring, be more likely to change. As a result he or she is more likely to be motivated to change behav-

ior than if those goals have been imposed by someone else (Intervention Central, 2011). Moreover many times individuals simply lack self-awareness about their behavior, and when provided that awareness through data are motivated to change on their own. For example, a person who wishes to loose weight may be motivated to do so by simply weighing themselves regularly and becoming more aware of their weight.

In the course of using strategies to monitor student behavior, an educator may be able to improve positive social interaction with students by acknowledging and reinforcing students who are engaging in positive behaviors (Michigan’s Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative, 2011). During implementation, the educator can use the data collected to assess progress and evaluate what parts of the plan are in need of modification (Menzies, Lane, & Lee, 2009).

Behavior Monitoring Strategies

There are many different ways to monitor student behavior. Although there has been limited research on the broad topic of student behavior monitoring, several strategies and intervention techniques have been found to be effective. Programs which include behavior monitoring range from specific scripted programs and which require careful fidelity to implementation by trained staff, to others which are much less formal procedures adapted and implemented by individual teachers or administrators to their and student needs.

Several of these more structured programs which include behavior monitoring have demonstrated positive effects on behavior. Three of these programs also have separate program briefs:

Check and Connect. Check and Connect is a structured behavior monitoring program designed to prevent dropout and other undesirable behaviors. According to Riccomini, Bost, Katsiyannis, and Zhang (2005), there are two major components of Check and Connect. In

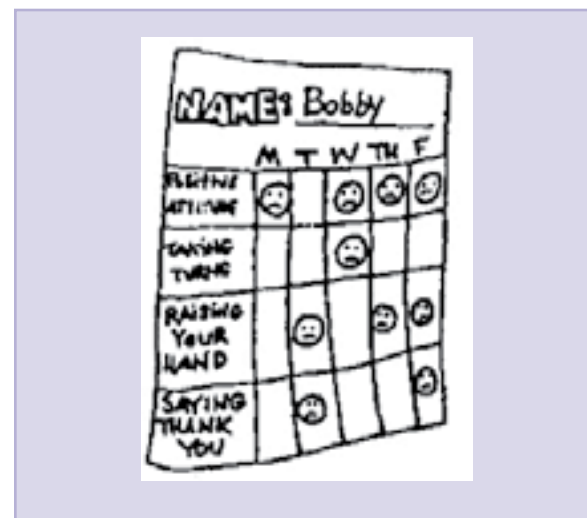
the “Check” component, an assigned individual monitors student levels of school engagement on a daily or weekly basis. Engagement involves positive student behaviors, such as attendance, paying attention, and participation in class. In addition, engagement may include the psychological experience of identification with school and feeling that one is cared for, respected, and part of the school environment (Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, & Lehr, 2004).

Using indicators from the “check” procedures, the monitor can then “connect” using a variety of strategies including building relationships, reinforcers, discussion or counseling, etc. According to Riccomini et al. (2005), at least monthly, students should receive instruction and practice in a five-step cognitive-behavioral problem-solving strategy to connect:

1. Stop and think about the problem.
2. What are some choices?
3. Choose one.
4. Do it.
5. How did it work?

For more information on Check and Connect, visit: <http://checkandconnect.org/default.html> and see the Program Brief on Check & Connect at <http://k12engagement.unl.edu/check-and-connect>.

Check-In/Check-out. The Check-in/Check-out (CICO) program has received empirical support as an effective secondary-level, targeted behavior intervention that reduces problem behaviors. The structural goals of the program are to (a) increase antecedent prompts for



appropriate behavior, (b) increase contingent adult feedback, (c) enhance the daily structure for students throughout their school day, and (d) improve feedback to families about student behavior (Filter et al., 2007). The CICO program is built on a daily cycle in which:

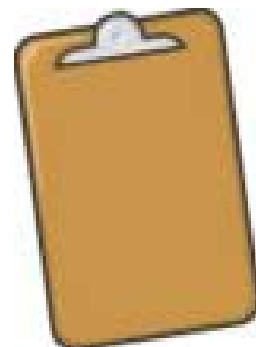
- A student checks in with a designated adult in the morning to develop behavioral goals
- Carries around a point card which provides numerous opportunities for adult behavioral feedback throughout the day- a way to monitor behavior.
- Reviews behavior relative to goals with designated adult at the end of the day
- Gives the point card to a parent at the end of the day, which the parent then signs and returns to the school.

Behavior contracts. The behavior contract is a simple positive reinforcement intervention that is widely used by teachers to monitor and change student behavior (Intervention Central, 2011). The specific behaviors selected for the behavior contract are decided by the teacher and student and should be defined in the form of positive, pro-academic, or pro-social behaviors. When the contracted behaviors are performed by the student, the adult reinforcement part of the contract is delivered. Behavior monitoring is crucial to determining progress related to the contract.

Daily behavior report cards. Daily behavior report cards are a general intervention strategy used to improve students' behavior contingent on feedback from the child's teacher. While sometimes called "report cards" they are usually separate from any official report card, and are a way of communicating with students and parents about behavior. Although similar to a Check in/Check out strategy, daily behavior report cards have proved particularly effective with children exhibiting externalizing and/or disruptive behavior problems (Volpe & Fabiano, 2013). Daily behavior report cards may come in a variety of forms, however there is usually a "list of behaviors that have been deemed appropriate targets for intervention" and a method

for rating the target behavior (Volpe & Fabiano, 2013, p. 3). Behaviors may be rated in terms of frequency, duration, or percentage complete. The most important component of daily behavior report cards involves the frequent feedback to the child from his or her teacher. These forms are then sent home with the child (or sent to the parent) for parent monitoring. The child often receives rewards for good performance at home as well as at school. Daily behavior report cards may exist in isolation or as part of a larger intervention and help maintain consistency between home and school. Volpe and Fabiano (2013) state that the most effective daily behavior report cards include the following elements: a) a rating form, b) feedback regarding progress towards goals, and c) home-based rewards contingent on the child's performance.

Recent evidence suggests that even electronic daily behavior report cards (i.e. emailing daily behavior report cards to parents) are also effective in reducing disruptive classroom behaviors, rated acceptable by classroom teachers, and may be a cost-effective means of increasing parent-teacher communication at school (Williams, Noell, Jones, & Gansle, 2012). Behavior monitoring may also be appropriate for students who have already been identified to receive special education services. For example, Owens et al. (2012) found that when implementing a daily report card behavior monitoring intervention for students with disruptive behaviors and/or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), 72% of students demonstrated improvements in target behaviors. The study also suggested that over three-fourths of the sample maintained these improvements into the fourth month of the study, another indicator of the sustainability of intervention effects over time.





Similarly, Fabiano et al. (2010) reported that implementing a daily report card intervention for students with ADHD aided in improving “academic productivity and disruptive behavior in the classroom” (p. 219). Particularly for students with attention and impulsivity problems, consistent behavior monitoring may be effective in making behavioral expectations and goals more salient. In a meta-analysis of daily behavior report card intervention effects across studies, Vannest, Davis, Davis, Mason, and Burke (2010) found a mean intervention effect size of .61, with interventions that incorporated parent involvement and broad use of the report card throughout the day associated with stronger outcomes. Thus, daily behavior report cards that include clear behavioral goals that are monitored and integrated throughout the day, coupled with parent involvement, are likely to improve persistent academic and behavior issues.

For more information please see “Daily Behavior Report Cards An evidence based system for assessment and intervention” at http://www.guilford.com/cgi-bin/cartscript.cgi?page=pr/volpe.htm&dir=edu/PIS_series

Other Methods of Behavior Monitoring

There are many other strategies that can be used in schools to monitor student behavior (<http://www.betterhighschools.org/pubs/>

[ews_guide.asp](#)). An additional strategy for individual students is self-monitoring, where students complete daily reports about their own behavior. For classroom level implementation, consider the “Good Behavior Game.” This is a game that can be played in the context of a classroom where the group attempts to win the game by demonstrating appropriate behavior consistently while engaged in learning activities. For more information on the Good Behavior Game, see: <http://www.interventioncentral.org/behavioral-interventions/schoolwide-classroomgmt/good-behavior-game>.

Monitoring Early Risk Indicators

Schools have also begun to use data that they may already be gathering for other purposes in the school data management system to identify students who may be experiencing signs of difficulty. These are often called “early warning systems”. The kinds of data that can be monitored might include grades, academic achievement test scores, office discipline referrals, attendance rates, tardiness, and many more. School personnel can set up criteria on these variables which might indicate that a student is beginning to have “trouble”. If the school has the capacity to analyze this data and create reports it can identify students who may be showing signs of difficulty in one or more of these areas and that can lead to earlier intervention before problems get severe.

Additionally some schools are using these types of data assembled into a large data base to identify students who may be at risk for a variety of negative outcomes at school. Some of these data can be balanced by positive resiliency behaviors such as engagement in student activities, improving grades or attendance, parent involvement, etc. These risk calculators then use all of this data to be able to identify students who are at increased risk of failure or dropout so that interventions can be designed to support those students and make the negative outcomes less likely. According to Kennelly and Monrad (2007), students with prior behavior problems are most likely to fail during transition years and eventually drop out. That study suggests that there may be a window of

opportunity for reaching middle-grade students who show signs of poor behavior, but who are not yet failing academic subjects. Poor behavior and course failure tend to converge by the time future dropouts get to high school, leading those students to eventually leave school. Additionally, Kennelly and Monrad (2007) advise that in order to build an early warning system, schools should establish a data system that includes engagement indicators, such as behavior marks, as early as fourth grade and that a vital factor in a prevention program includes behavior monitors. While typically behavior monitoring refers to frequent monitoring of individual behavior, these more systemic efforts also fall under the umbrella of behavior monitoring as well.

What Do We Know About Student Behavior Monitoring?

Students who have behavior problems or emotional and behavior disorders encounter difficulties in the classroom with their teachers, on the playground and lunch area with their peers, and at home with their parents and siblings (Menziez et al., 2009). Without the use of strategies and interventions that help them identify, monitor and manage their problem behaviors, success in school is difficult for these students. According to Menziez et al. (2009), evidence of this is seen in their low academic performance, low rates of academic engaged time during structured class activities, and high levels of negative social interactions with peers. Most of the research on behavior monitoring is specific to particular programs (e.g., Check and Connect, Daily Behavior Report Cards), and rarely examines the effects of general behavior monitoring. Several themes in the research have emerged, such as the sustainable effects of behavior monitoring, its application to a broad range of behaviors, and its acceptability by parents and teachers.

For example, Sinclair, Christenson, and Thurlow (2005) implemented a behavior monitoring intervention consisting of monitoring alterable indicators of engagement, relationship building, problem-solving, and encouraging attachment to school. The intervention was implemented with ninth graders in an urban high school. Participants were followed for four to five years and



showed favorable outcomes, such as lower rates of dropout, lower rates of mobility from school to school, and higher rates of attendance. The notion that outcomes remain promising after several years illustrates the utility and strength of even a small dosage of a behavior monitoring program.

One particular program, the Behavioral Monitoring and Reinforcement Program (BMRP; SAMHSA legacy program at: <http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewLegacy.aspx?id=89> & NDPC and at: http://www.dropoutprevention.org/modelprograms/show_program.php?pid=134) aims to reduce juvenile delinquency, substance use, and school dropout for at-risk adolescents. This two year intervention program includes monitoring attendance and tardiness, office referrals, and academic grades. Consistent communication with students' parents is also encouraged through phone calls and home visits. Students meet with staff once per week to discuss behavioral goals, learn the association between behaviors and consequences, role play potential troubling situations, problem-solve, and receive rewards for success. After two years of intervention, students in the program demonstrated improved grades and attendance compared to controls. A one-year follow up investigation suggested that students who participated in the intervention self-reported less delinquency, drug abuse, suspensions, and tardiness. Similarly, a five-year follow up study reported that students involved in the monitoring intervention had fewer county court records than control students that did not participate in the intervention (Center for the Study and Prevention of

Violence, 2006). Reports like these emphasize that behavior monitoring may be important for improving short-term behavioral outcomes, but may also play a role in reducing more severe lifelong cases of delinquency.

Additionally, it is important to note that teachers' and parents' perceptions of acceptability and feasibility of behavior monitoring strategies is crucial in order for these interventions to be implemented with integrity. In a study related to teacher use and acceptability of a daily report card monitoring strategy, Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, and Sassu (2006) found that about two out of three of their teacher sample used daily report cards for students. Teachers also indicated that the report cards were flexible and could be tailored to more than one problem behavior or situation. Teachers also emphasized using behavior report cards as stand-alone interventions or as a component of a larger behavior plan. Thus, the ability to use behavior monitoring as an intervention to target an array of behaviors helps increase the feasibility and social validity of this practice. Behavior monitoring has also produced more sustainable outcomes when parents are involved with delivering rewards and consequences in conjunction with feedback and rewards or consequences offered by the school (Jurbergs, Palcic, & Kelley, 2010). Therefore, there has been a plethora of research on the role of behavior monitoring strategies (e.g., daily report cards, Check-in/Check-out) in decreasing disruptive behaviors and improving student engagement with school.

In summary, although there is not widespread research regarding just behavior monitoring as an intervention, there is abundant research evidence that when it is tied with

other interventions, behavior monitoring can be a powerful, maybe essential tool to identify struggling students and to target interventions for them.

Conclusion

Individual student behavior monitoring is useful at all grade levels as part of a behavior changes strategy, starting early in a child's education and continuing throughout high school. Through monitoring and teaching students to set behavior goals, schools can expect improved behavior, and behavior monitoring is an essential element of efforts to change individual student behavior. Its use has strong research support when part of a more comprehensive plan to monitor and intervene to change individual behaviors.

School personnel can also use long term behavior monitoring as a way to identify student who are at risk for dropping out or other negative outcomes and to intervene earlier before problems escalate. Others have advocated for school wide behavior screening to occur on a regular bases throughout elementary school years.



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Note: See related *Strategy Brief on Behavior Contracting* and the *Program Briefs on Check and Connect* and *Check-in/Check-out* which are also available from the Student Engagement Project at <http://k12engagement.unl.edu>

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