

Effects of Schedule Changes on Staff Engagement in Residential School Classrooms

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Abstract

Staff engagement with their students is at the core of a productive school day. Time spent away from social activity and/or academic involvement allows students to potentially stray from stimulus control and may result in more corrective interactions occurring. This in turn may result in more intrusive procedures and a negative classroom environment developing. This study examined the rate of staff engagement throughout the school day. Prior to implementation, staff engagement rates were not at ideal levels. A procedure involving a 2-hour schedule change was implemented in a multiple baseline design across four classrooms. Once adopted, staff switched student groupings throughout the academic day. Results show that the application of treatment was effective in the improvement of staff engagement.

Participants and Settings

Staff

- 3-5 per classroom
- Education – G.E.D. to Master's degree
- Age Range - 21-56 years
- 1-3 students per academic grouping

Student

- Four separate classrooms (units)
- Eight Student with multiply-diagnosed special needs
- Students skill and cognitive levels varied greatly within each unit

Setting

- Residential treatment facility
- 11 units
- 96 students

Dependent variable

- Staff engaged-touching talking to, or applying a prompt/consequence or within arm's reach and looking at student.
- Job-related activity –retrieving/manipulating appropriate task materials
- Staff Not engaged-not able to score as one of the above categories

At randomly generated times (excluding the hours during which lunch would be served), researcher walked into classroom and in a clockwise fashion observed staff actions for 3 seconds to determine presence or absence of staff engagement

Independent variable

- Staff switch-changing student grouping every two hours during academic day (9:00-2:00)

PROCEDURE

Baseline

- Staff assigned to same students for entire 8-hour shift
- Baseline continued for 6 weeks for units 1 and 2, 10 weeks for unit 3, and 20 weeks for unit 4 (see graphs, below).

Treatment

- Staff schedule changed to a 2-hour block with same students
- After 2 hours, staff switched groups

Experimental Design

- * Multiple baseline design across classrooms

RESULTS

Figures shows the average weekly rate of staff engagement.

- Baseline rates of engagement ranged from 45-80% (X=___%)
- Engagement rates during treatment increased to a range of 60-90% (X=___%)

DISCUSSION

- Subject reactivity effect – due to data collection procedure, staff probably influenced their levels of engagement
- Further research is necessary to determine which component of the treatment package had the most beneficial effect
- Unobstrusive data collection would be preferred
- Measure to what extent increased staff engagement resulted in improved student performance

