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The relationship between behavior-based goal groups and point-based school wide behavior systems

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BEHAVIOR-BASED GOAL GROUPS AND POINT-BASED SCHOOL WIDE BEHAVIOR SYSTEMS

by

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Abstract

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This study evaluated six students between the ages of 14 to 17 years old who are classified with emotional disturbance and attending an alternative school in suburban New Jersey to determine the impact of individual behavior-based goal-oriented groups on student behavioral performance. The goals groups were crafted using goal theory and were designed to address observed target behaviors in the school's pre-established point-based school-wide behavior support system. Data collected via the schoolwide point-based behavior system for the 2016-2017 and the 2017-2018 school years were analyzed to identify student performance. Additionally, data collected from the student self-evaluation process was compared to the 2017-2018 student behavioral performance data.

The results of this study revealed that individualized goal-oriented groups can successfully increase the instances of target behaviors identified in the school-wide behavior support system. This study also determined that student perception of understanding plays a significant role in the behavioral performance of students with emotional disturbance. The data showed that all students displayed behavior that correlated between behavioral performance and perception of learning, i.e., high behavioral performance, high perception of learning, low behavioral performance, low perception of learning.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

For students who are identified with a disability, the topic of behavior can be an important discussion between school staff and families. Students' behavior is consistently monitored throughout their academic career and addressed through various strategies and modifications to work demands, classroom and school environments, and individualized education plans (IEPs). A student's behavior is often understood to be their ability to display appropriate and effective interpersonal and work-related skills in the classroom and at home. In most cases, this serves as one of the key factors used to determine the students overall future success in obtaining and maintaining work after graduation (Carter & Wehby, 2003). This is especially so for students classified with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD).

In a study focused on examining the job performance of students with EBD, it was observed that students in model transition programs that prepared them for future success in the workforce face unemployment rates of 31%-46%, while students transitioning out of a typical high school faced unemployment rates of 42%-70% (Carter & Wehby, 2003). This study also determined one of the primary factors for this high unemployment rate correlated to the student's inability to appropriately perform expected job behaviors (interpersonal and work-related skills) (Carter & Wehby, 2003). What was even more significant in this this study was that they also found a division between the students' perception of what behaviors and skills were needed to function within the job and what their employers determined was needed (Carter & Wehby, 2003). This shows that student behavior does not play a vital role in student success by itself, but that

students perception of their behavior and what is expected does as well. With these findings in mind, it is crucial to then determine ways we can address both student behavior and their perception of their behavior as it relates to interpersonal and work-related skills.

Most schools and classrooms working specifically with students who have emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) address student behaviors by employing the use of school-wide behavior support systems. These systems act as a proactive intervention which aims to motivate and direct student behaviors toward desired outcomes (George, Harrower, & Knoster, 2003). All behavior support systems should function on four levels: school wide, non-classroom setting, classroom, and individual student (George et al., 2003). In a successful support system, each of these levels will have procedures and processes intended for the student population that inhabits the level's space, with the exception of the individual student level. When addressing the behavior of an individual student, processes and procedures are based on strategies that are developed to address a plan for growth for that specific student aimed to support desired behavioral outcomes (George et al., 2003). When implementing a school-wide behavior support system in an alternative school setting, evidence has shown that positive based support systems are the most successful because they reinforce appropriate behaviors while limiting negative reinforcement (Simonsen, Jeffrey-Pearsall, & Sugai, 2011). In a point-based behavior support system, students receive points in response to displaying appropriate behaviors and those points then become part of a token economy. In token economies, students can exchange money, or points, earned for goods in a school store or for other privileges designated by the school token system (Simonsen et

al., 2011). Point-based systems provide a daily collection of behavioral data for each student which can be analyzed for a variety of reasons. This data, at a glance, provides insight into where and when behavior is happening, allowing analysis and modification to take place in response to students and their learning environment (Simonsen et al., 2011).

Despite the significant impact provided by school-wide positive behavior support systems, students still have undesired behaviors on a regular basis. In many cases, the reasons for these behaviors are varied. In the end, it all comes down to the behavior serving a more desired outcome or function. Students may perform behaviors consciously or unconsciously. In either case, providing a motivating alternative to the behavior's function may help to further prevent and proactively address student behaviors in a classroom setting. Providing or helping students craft goals for desired behaviors may provide this proposed alternative.

The 1960s saw the development of "Goal Theory" (Dowson & McInerney, 2001). Goal theory was developed through a social-cognitive framework that focuses on how students think about themselves and their ability to perform learning-based tasks (Dowson & McInerney, 2001; Kaplan, Midgley & Middleton, 2001). The architects of goal theory have categorized two groups: "Mastery Goals", also known as "learning goals" or "task goals," are goals that aim to develop ability by focusing on a task or developing an understanding of concepts; "Performance Goals", also known as "ego goals" or "ability goals," are goals that aim to evaluate a student's ability and performance in relation to the achievements of others (Dowson & McInerney, 2001; Kaplan et al., 2001). In some cases, mastery goals and performance goals are separate from a third type of goal, "social goals." Social goals seek to address the social aspects of

a learning environment that a student is seen as needing to achieve success (Dowson & McInerney, 2001). While goal theory itself deals with a perception of student intentions as they relate to their own learning, and their perception of their own learning, its concepts do influence the crafting of student learning goals as they apply to IEPs and their subsequent implementation. If we were to help students craft their own social goals with similar intended outcomes to mastery goals, it is possible that we could help students address their behavior as they would an academic goal. They could focus on developing or limiting their own target ability. While the three noted goal types might serve to promote growth in desired behaviors in the academic setting, their success is possibly contingent on one final factor, motivation.

Motivation is always at the forefront of any educator's mind. While it is easier to expect all students want to excel and achieve great academic and social achievements because their family and peers have; there is always a group of students who seem to need an answer to the "why" question as it relates to all classroom expectations. Additionally, studies now show there is a definite connection between motivation and one's perception of their abilities. For any student, classified or typical, if they have a high perception of their own abilities, they are more likely to perform tasks with increased effort and find more value and interest in academic tasks (Archer, 1994). Unfortunately, for most students classified with EBD, it is not uncommon for their own self-perceptions to become skewed by other factors connected to their classification. It is thus important to provide students with academic choices that serve as avenues for growth that both challenge the student appropriately while still being perceived as achievable. It is possible that if students are provided with a structured, goal-oriented

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choice of how they aim to improve behaviorally within their learning community, it could positively impact the instances of undesired behavior.

Research questions this study will examine are: Are individualized goal-oriented groups a viable method for increasing instances of target behaviors as defined in a point-based school-wide behavior system? Can individualized goal-oriented groups increase the overall behavioral performance average of students in an alternative school setting that utilizes a point-based school-wide behavior system? Is there a relationship between student display of target behaviors as defined in a school-wide behavior support system and student perception of their own learning?

In this study, I examined the effectiveness of individualized behavior-based goal-oriented groups on student achievement when used alongside a point-based school-wide behavior system in an alternative school setting. The point-based school-wide behavior system was implemented over five years ago and has been determined to be effective via the school's administration. The behavior system identifies five target behaviors all students should strive to achieve in our academic setting, "follows instructions and maintains focus, participates, completes assignments or is actively working, respectful of classroom environment and materials/cleans up, appropriate behavior and language to staff and students". Each student is awarded two points for target behaviors achieved within a class period of forty minutes. The data that this system has collected over the past two years regarding student behavior was used to determine a baseline for student's behavioral averages. Therefore, in this study, student achievement was defined as an increase in student's behavioral averages or in the period of time students maintain an

increased, or perfect, behavioral performance as it relates to the school-wide point-based behavior system.

During the 2016-2017 school year, these students had been evaluated via the school's point- based school-wide behavior system. This evaluation recorded student's daily performance of target behaviors for at minimum three months. During the time of this study, the 2017-2018 school year, students were again evaluated using the school's point-based school-wide behavior system. The data collected via the school's point-based system from both school years was evaluated for significant improvements or declines in target behavior.

This study identified and evaluated six students who had been attending Lamberts Mill Academy for at a minimum of one year before the study. They spanned four academic grades: ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth. Each of these students was between the ages of 14 to 17 years old and had been classified with emotional or behavioral disorders. Students were provided one individual therapy session each week, one group therapy session each week, and a therapeutic life skills course each morning. Each student participated in college prep courses, however, all data collected for this study will reflect performance in only one of those subject areas, social studies.

Individualized behavior-based goals groups are my proposed framework for crafting behavior-based goals that students actively self-monitor and work to improve on. The goals groups were crafted using goal theory and were designed to address observed target behaviors in the classroom. Target behaviors were labeled as: organization, study habits, work completion, and integrity of work. In preparation for this study, students were given a growth mindset workshop and directed to analyze their own learning and

the ways they wish to improve as an individual during the school year. Using their own conclusions, students chose one of the structured goals groups aimed at the study's target behaviors. Each goals group had a check list of achievements that students were focused on attaining throughout the course of each marking period. Students were asked to reflect at the end of each week, evaluating their own progress.

In response to research from existing studies, student perceptions of their own abilities in the learning environment were also monitored daily in the form of self-assessment turn-in bins. Turn-in bins provided no penalty to student grades but provide an avenue for students to express how they felt about their understanding of the material learned. Each bin reflected a number on a four-point scale: number one was the lowest and meant that students believed they had no understanding of key concepts or confidence in the material covered; number four was the highest and meant that the student completely understood concepts covered and could explain it to others.

This study ultimately compared data collected in the social studies classroom via the school-wide point-based behavior system for the 2016-2017 and the 2017-2018 school years. Data was evaluated for an increase in performance, maintenance of previous performance, or a decline in performance. This data comparison aimed to establish a correlation between an increase in student behavioral performance and the use of behavior-based goal-oriented groups. The same data sets were compared to determine the overall impact on student behavioral performance within the alternative school community. Additionally, data collected from the student self-evaluation process was compared to the 2017-2018 student behavioral performance data. This analysis aimed to establish a correlation between student behaviors and perceptions of one's own learning.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

The federal government has designated a classification for students with emotional and behavioral disorders as "emotional disturbance." United States census data reveals that in the 2014-2015 school year, an estimated five percent of students received special education services under this classification (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). In order for students to become classified under this category, students must present one of six characteristics for an extended period of time, which include: inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; inappropriate behavior types and feelings in normal situations; pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; and, a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (IDEA, 2004). Students classified in this category can possibly face an extensive list of intellectual, academic, behavioral, physical, and communication difficulties as a result of their medical diagnosis (IDEA, 2004). These difficulties pose unique challenges for students with an emotional disturbance classification, and manifest in classrooms in a variety of ways.

Classification for students with emotional and behavioral disorders can cover a large scope of medical and psychological diagnosis. Because of this there can be wide variations in student behaviors and interventions being implemented in the classroom. A 2003 study by Landrum, Tankersley, and Kauffman, evaluated the behaviors and circumstances that challenged instruction of students within the classification of

emotional disturbance. They identified three categories of behavioral characteristics for these students: inappropriate behavior, academic learning problems, and unsatisfactory interpersonal skills. Each characteristic category was broken into potential behavioral targets of intervention. For the purposes of this study, we will only focus on the first two characteristics (inappropriate behavior and academic learning problems) as these two have target behaviors for intervention that are not reliant on academic instruction. The first characteristic category, inappropriate behavior, identified the excessive targets of aggression and disruptive behavior and the deficit targets of social withdrawal and noncompliance as areas for intervention. The second characteristic category, academic learning problems, identified attention to task, academic responding, reciprocal peer tutoring, and achievement as target areas for improvement. The study concluded that while certain types of evidence-based practices were more effective than others, depending on the characteristics and the target behaviors, the strategies' effectiveness was dependent on three things: whether they were preventative and proactive based strategies, implemented early, and with consistent frequency (Landrum et al., 2003).

Throughout the research, it was clearly agreed upon and expressed that students classified with emotional and behavioral disorders had significant behaviors, but details about the specific behaviors displayed by students was difficult to locate. Many studies defaulted to using a medical diagnosis, for example conduct disorder or bi-polar, as a behavioral description to craft a clear picture of the state of the student's behaviors. Unfortunately, the lack of specifics leads readers to self-reference what these diagnoses mean in terms of behavioral manifestation within the classroom.

School-Wide Behavior Support Systems

School-wide behavior support systems are preventative systems that aim to reinforce target behavior while discouraging and mitigating undesired behaviors. All school-wide behavior support systems address and manage behavior via multiple levels. These levels are called primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention (George et al., 2002; Simonsen et al., 2011; Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans, Ialongo & Leaf, 2008). Primary prevention occurs for all students at all times in the form of strategies that promote and maintain target behaviors. Secondary preventions are crafted and implemented for a group of students who exhibit routine, high frequency, off target behavior. Tertiary prevention addresses students whose behavior is greatly different from their peers and implements a series of strategies to address their unique needs (George et al., 2002; Simonsen et al., 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2008). While these three levels specifically address the crafting and implementation of school-wide systems, their intended structure can be utilized to address student behavioral needs in the classroom. Whether these strategies are implemented throughout a school building or independently in the classroom, the key to their successful implementation is by defining clear expectations, instituting explicit training toward them, acknowledgement for their manifestation, and consequences for deviance (George et al., 2002; Simonsen et al., 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2008).

The successful implementation and use of school-wide support systems in a traditional school setting have proven to be beneficial for several reasons. In a 2008 study, it was determined that one of the major unintended benefits of school-wide support systems is its impact on staff and the work environment (Bradshaw et al., 2008). The

study found that the use of a system increased the studied schools' organizational health via measurement tools and increased the academic direction of the schools which led to an increase in resources being allocated to the schools being evaluated (Bradshaw et al., 2008). These additional resources to a school and an increased focus on academics indicates an increase in successful outcomes. The success of school-wide support systems in a traditional setting is again echoed via a 2010 study solely focused on student outcomes (Bradshaw, Mitchell & Leaf, 2010). This study evaluated outcomes for students in elementary schools who were exposed to school-wide behavior support systems (Bradshaw et al., 2010). It found that when students were participating in a school-wide behavioral support system that was implemented with high fidelity students displayed a significant increase in math and reading scores over students in schools without the high-fidelity system (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

The universal application and effectiveness of school-wide behavior support systems becomes clearer when evaluating its impact in an alternative setting. In a 2005 study, an alternative school run by Leigh University implemented a school-wide behavior support system to address the aggressive and sometimes violent behavior of its students classified with emotional disturbance and autism (Miller, George & Fogt, 2005). The impact of the system was almost immediate on the school environment, noting a decrease in physical restraints from 1.3 per day to 0.05 per day and a decrease in time-outs from 3.18 per day to 0.6 per day for one classroom (Miller et al., 2005). By the end of the study, the use of physical restraints and time-outs within the school was eliminated and the majority of students exhibited appropriate social behavior.

While establishing a system that focuses on increasing target behaviors in a positive, supportive environment is significant, its long-term success is reliant upon data-driven management. Effective data-driven management systems, also known as school-wide functional assessments, monitor student behaviors, where they are occurring, frequency of their occurrence, and potential reasons for their occurrence (George et al., 2002; Simonsen et al., 2011). The data in these systems can be used to amend primary and secondary preventions, or implement new secondary or tertiary preventions (George et al., 2002).

In a 2011 study, the data-driven management system implemented in the majority of alternative school settings was identified as a point-based system (Simonsen et al., 2011). A point-based system is an example of a token economy. Token economies provide a visual representation or tangible object as a reward for student performance of identified behavioral expectations. In a point-based system, point values are allocated to target behaviors and students are awarded points based on student performance of target behavior. The same 2011 study found that while earned points serve as meaningful data to use in the response to the school-wide system, many alternative schools collected data through additional means which included incident reports and direct observations (Simonsen et al., 2011). In a 2012 study of school-wide point-based behavior system in a primary preventative (known in study as tier 1) setting, the effectiveness of the system and the fidelity of implementation in a therapeutic school serving students classified with an EBD were evaluated (Farkas, Simonsen, Migdole, Donovan, Clemens, & Cicchese, 2012). It was determined that teachers implemented the system with an overall fidelity

score of 83.75 percent lending to occurrences of positive student behaviors increasing, and office disciplinary referrals decreasing.

When the impact of school-wide behavioral support systems is assessed for effectiveness, 80 to 90 percent of students are positively impacted by their implementation (Miller et al., 2005). The remaining 10 percent of students are provided individualized or group targeted interventions. The remaining percentage of students failing to participate meaningfully in this school-wide behavior support systems signifies there are areas for possible improvement in their crafting and implementation. Throughout my research, I have noticed a lack of student involvement in their own behavior management outside of adhering to established systems. The systems generally establish school-wide goals based on reported behavioral averages (Farkas et al., 2012; Miller et al., 2005). In contrast, the identification of individualized student-based behavioral goals seemingly does not occur outside of a small portion of 10 percent of students who do not exhibit marked behavioral improvement in these systems. Even then, student involvement in establishing behavioral goals is rarely, if ever, noted.

Achievement Goal Theory

Achievement goal theory was the product of a 1960s desire to understand student motivations for self-application in an academic setting (Ames, 1992; Archer, 1994; Dowson & McInerney, 2001; Kaplan, Gheen, & Midgley, 2002). The result of this almost four-decade long analysis of student academic motivation is the creation of a social-cognitive framework that utilizes student perceptions of self and academic abilities to craft learning based tasks (Dowson & McInerney, 2001; Kaplan et al., 2002; Wolters, 2004). This social framework focuses on two types of goals: mastery goals and

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performance goals. Mastery goals focus on student development and acquisition of skills and their ability to demonstrate understanding and competency. Performance goals are collectively known to identify students' ability and performance in relation to the achievements of their peers (Ames, 1992; Archer, 1994; Dowson & McInerney, 2001; Kaplan et al., 2002; Wolters, 2004). Since the spectrum of student comparative performance can manifest in a wide range, this goal type is further broken into two categories: performance-approach and performance-avoidance. Performance-avoidance represents a student's attitude focused toward avoiding the demonstration of high ability (Archer, 1994; Kaplan et al., 2002; Wolters, 2004). The application of mastery versus performance lies in the structure of the learning environment and the focus of student participation in that environment. Theoretically, in a classroom structured around mastery goals, student abilities and performance are focused on developing and maintaining skills, understanding their performance and progress in that development, and recognizing their success via self-determined measures (Ames, 1992). In a classroom structured around performance goals, student abilities and performance are focused on their performance amongst peers (Ames, 1992; Archer 1988). The consequence of this orientation is student academic ability becomes contingent to a student's perception of self-worth, as their demonstration of ability is being compared to norms established by a dynamic group (Ames, 1992).

When student demonstration of academic ability is focused on the mastery of skills and less on comparative performance, students focus more on skill demonstration and less on success and failure. This assumption is validated in a 2004 comparative study by Wolters that sought to better understand the impact of all goal theory types on student

performance. One outcome from the study revealed that students who perceived their

classroom as mastery goal oriented performed more successfully in mastery and

performance-approach goals, and exhibited less performance- avoidance goals (Wolters,

2004). Conversely, the same study identified that when a classroom is perceived oriented

toward performance-approach goals, students exhibit more performance-avoidance goals.

These results were echoed in a similar study which analyzed the application of goal

theory to instances of undesired behaviors related to students noted to have a history of

disruptive or violent behaviors. This study also concluded that students who perceived

their classroom as mastery goal oriented performed more successfully in mastery and

performance-approach goals and exhibited less off-task behavior (performance-

avoidance goals) (Midgley et al., 2002).

To understand the impact of performance goals is a complex task. The research

indicates its successful application can be seen as variable to student perception. A 2001

study by Midgley, Kaplan, and Middleton evaluated the purpose of performance-

approach goals as its relative success was questionable in application. It determined that

performance-approach goals were more so connected to students learned patterns of

cognition, affect, and behavior (identified in the study as "patterns of learning")

(Midgley, Kaplan & Middleton, 2001). They concluded that while performance-approach

goals in some cases provided mixed outcomes amongst students, its successful use

alongside mastery goals provided a purposeful but situational need for their use.

Motivation

In recent years, researchers have identified a possible new type of goal for goal

theory- social goals. Social goals address the need to work on the development of a skill

as it relates to the social motivations of a learning environment that are not addressed through academic knowledge acquisition (Dowson & McInerney, 2001; Ali, McInerney, Craven, King & Yeung, 2014). The development of social goals was born from the evaluation of motivation's role in achievement goal theory. Student motivation plays a role in all types of goal theory. Students, intentionally or unintentionally, seek to answer, "why am I doing this?" The answer, using mastery goals, would be to develop or improve skills. The answer through performance goals would be to measure skills comparative to peers. Through social goals, the answer would be related to social factors achieved or lost via participation in the activity (Dowson & McInerney, 2001). When evaluating social goals and their application, the foundation for understanding its use lie in understanding motivation.

Motivation, as a concept and theory, revolves around the two key types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is driven by a desire for rewards that come from an internal place and are generally associated with emotional factors. Extrinsic motivation is driven by a desire for rewards that are external and generally associated with tangible material goods, such as money or recognition. While few studies specifically target the outcomes and influence of social goals as concrete concept, many theories, including all those noted thus far, imply its importance by noting student motivation plays a role in all success attributed to mastery and performance goals.

Dowson & McInerney (2001) specifically targeted the impact of social goals on student outcomes through an analysis of eighty-six middle and elementary school students Through conversational interviews and classroom observations, they were able to determine a positive connection between social goals and performance-avoidance

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goals. They also determined that students were conflicted by wanting to socialize with peers and also complete assigned work concurrently. Most saw socialization as higher in importance even if it reflected negatively in their academic performance. All students, regardless of academic performance noted that they were concerned with "being responsible and concerned for performance" (Dowson & McInerney, 2001). These findings on social goals were tested in 2014 in a comparison of social goal theory's impact on Anglo-American and Native American (Navajo) students. This study was able to determine that while there were distinctly different cultural and social expectations between the two groups, the application and results of social goal theory indicated that both groups were socially motivated by the same factors (Ali et al., 2014).

Areas for Further Research

Previous research has generally not evaluated the use of student choice and input in developing a behavior management system. While student responses to their environment, academic achievement, and participation in established systems is noted, all explored topics failed to identify student input in development and application. Additionally, while social, academic, and behavioral factors have been analyzed, controlled, and monitored through the noted systems, we still see a significant percentage of most students with behavioral disorders failing to find academic success within tailored academic settings. Achievement goal theory has shown us that student perception of their own abilities and a focus on development of skills results in increased success, effort, and interest in academic tasks (Archer, 1994). For students classified with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD), self-perception is already a characteristic of their academic persona that is impacted by their diagnosis. As a result, addressing the

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undesired behaviors of students using a combination of mastery and performance-approach goals may be the key to involving students in their own behavioral improvement while still keeping the needs of their social goals met. Additionally, achievement and social goal theory may explain the possible reasons for the ten percent gap in students positively impacted by point-based school-wide behavior support systems. The application of goal theory to the structure offered by a school-wide behavioral support system may be the key to addressing the needs of students in this ten percent gap.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Setting and Participants

This study took place across four grade levels in a secondary alternative school that aims to address the therapeutic needs of students classified with emotional disturbance. The study focused on the effectiveness of individualized behavior-based goal-oriented groups on student achievement. Students were selected for participation in this study based on the following criteria: students must have attended the alternative school setting for a minimum of two years prior to the study; be in a social studies course scheduled for a minimum of four days per week; be in one of the four identified grade levels (ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth); and be between the ages of fourteen to eighteen years old.

Students chosen for this study came from four grade levels (9th grade, 10th grade, and upper classmen (11th and 12th grade). The students come from different school districts within the county and are attending for varied reasons including, but not limited to behavior problems. Within the ninth-grade group there is one female student who began attending during the summer of 2016. She is a fourteen-year-old Hispanic female classified with emotional disturbance. Presently, she fails to show consistency in work effort, becoming easily distracted by her peers which can impact her academic performance and limit the completion of tasks.

The tenth-grade group consists of three males. Tenth grade male #1 is a sixteen-year-old male classified with emotional disturbance. He began attending our program in the fall of 2015. This male fails to show consistency in work effort. At times he displays

work avoidance by having side conversations with peers or walking out of the classroom. This can impact his academic performance and limit the completion of tasks. Tenth grade male #2 is a fifteen-year-old male that is also classified with emotional disturbance and began attending our program in the spring of 2016. This male fails to show consistency in work effort. At times he displays work avoidance by covering his head with his hands and placing it on the desk and other times he tightens his hoodie around his head, blocking his eyes by pulling the strings tightly. This can limit the completion of tasks and assignments. Tenth grade male #3 is a sixteen-year-old male that lives in a medical rehabilitation facility. He comes to our school for academic purposes and goes home to the medical facility. He is classified with emotional disturbance and began attending our program in the fall of 2015. This male can become easily distracted by his peers through having side conversation. At times he can be disorganized, losing notes or assignments which can impact his academic performance and limit the completion of tasks.

The final group consists of two upper classmen, one male and one female. Eleventh grade male #1 is a sixteen-year-old male classified with emotional disturbance and began attending our program in the fall of 2015. This student can become easily disorganized, failing to complete notes or losing assignments. Additionally, he can become easily distracted by his peers which can impact his academic performance and limit the completion of tasks. Twelfth grade female #1 is an eighteen-year-old female classified with emotional disturbance who began attending our program in the fall of 2014. This female fails to show consistency in work effort, becoming easily distracted by her peers. She also displays work avoidance by putting he head down in class and

pretending to sleep which can impact her academic performance and limit the completion of tasks.

Each student in the study participated in the school-wide behavior support system that employed a point-based system. The behavior system employs a point sheet that focuses on five target behaviors identified as keys to success in the academic setting: "follows instructions and maintains focus, participates, completes assignments or is actively working, respectful of classroom environment and materials/cleans up, appropriate behavior and language to staff and students." Each student is awarded two points for target behaviors achieved within a class period of forty minutes. Students in this study have been required to be participants in this system for a minimum of two years to ensure student understanding of the behavior system and expectations.

Procedure

The procedure for this study had four parts: data collection on student behavioral performance over the two school years noted in the study, baseline establishment, growth mindset training and introduction of goals groups, behavioral data collection and progress monitoring, and daily self-reflection. Student behavior baselines were established by collecting student point data from the 2016-2017 school year. Student point data from the school-wide behavioral support system was collected and averaged by week and month for a three-month period. The same three-month period was examined during the 2017-2018 school year.

Students participated in a growth mindset training utilizing Avid Professional Learning materials. This training taught students to focus on their own overall personal growth as a student and helped them to identify areas they wanted to improve about

themselves. The workshop prepped students for choosing their own behavior-based goals groups. These goals groups were crafted using goal theory and the standing school-wide behavior support system. Goal theory is a social cognitive framework that utilizes student perceptions of self and academic abilities to craft learning based tasks. The frame of mastery goals, student development and acquisition of skills directed toward demonstrating understanding and competency, was used in the incorporation of target behaviors into the goal-oriented groups. Target behaviors were drawn from the established school-wide behavior support system. Student target behaviors were identified as: following instructions, maintaining focus, participation, completing assignments, actively working, and respectful of classroom environment and materials.

Using these target behaviors, four goals groups were identified and labeled as: organization (following instructions, maintaining focus, completing assignments, respectful of classroom environment and materials), study habits (maintaining focus, participation, completing assignments, respectful of classroom environment and materials), work completion (following instructions, maintaining focus, completing assignments, actively working), and integrity of work (following instructions, actively working, completing assignments, respectful of classroom environment and materials, participates). Following the growth mindset training, students chose one of the structured goals groups aimed at the study's target behaviors. Each goals group had a check list of achievements that students were focused on attaining throughout the course of each marking period. Students were asked to reflect at the end of each week, evaluating their own progress within their group. Student reflection forms served as behavioral data collection and progress monitoring. The frame of performance goals, students' ability and

performance in relation to the achievements of their peers, was utilized to craft the process by which students were recognized for their accomplishments. Students who achieved their goals each month were celebrated by having their names announced via a bulletin board in the classroom.

Students' perceptions of their own abilities in the learning environment were also monitored daily in the form of self-assessment turn-in bins. Turn-in bins gave students an avenue to express how they felt about their understanding of the material learned. Each bin reflected a number on a four-point scale: number one was the lowest and meant that students believed they had no understanding of key concepts or confidence in the material covered; number two reflected some understanding but needed more practice; number three reflected an understanding of the material but an inability to explain it to others; number four was the highest and meant that the student completely understood concepts covered and could explain it to others. At the end of class each day, students were asked to place their card in the bin that reflected their perception of their abilities within the classroom and with the material covered.

Upon completion of the three-month study, student behavioral data collected via the 2017-2018 school year in the social studies classroom was compared to student behavioral data collected in the 2016-2017 school year in the social studies classroom. The comparison sought to identify any increase in performance, maintenance of previous performance, or a decline in performance. Data collected from the student self-evaluation process will be compared to the 2017-2018 student behavioral performance data to establish a correlation between student behaviors and perceptions of one's own learning.

Variables

The independent variable for this study was the growth mindset training. The dependent variables in this study were the individual performance on the point-based behavioral support system, the collective performance of student performance within the point-based behavioral support system, and the attainment of self-assigned goals within the behavior-based goal-oriented groups.

Chapter 4

Results

Summary

In this study, the impact of individual behavior-based goal-oriented groups on student behavioral performance was evaluated to determine if its use as an intervention could increase the behavioral performance of students in an alternative school setting that utilizes a point-based behavior modification system. Student behavioral performance data from the 2016-2017 school year was collected and compared to the behavioral performance from the 2017-2018 school year, after the intervention was implemented.

Additionally, in an effort identify a possible relationship between student perception and the use of target behaviors, student perception of their own learning was measured via four student turn-in bins. Over the three-month study period, students turned in their assignments into these bins daily.

Results

Table 1 displays the results of student behavioral performance in the established point-based school-wide behavior system. It displays student performance averages over the period of January to March of 2017, prior to the implementation of individualized behavior-based goals groups as an intervention, and student performance averages over the period of January to March of 2018, after the implementation of individualized behavior-based goals groups. Student points earned throughout each of the three months was averaged and compared to the corresponding month. This comparison revealed that students performed behaviorally in three categories, with most showing some or complete behavioral improvement.

Student 4 and Student 5 showed complete improvement earning higher behavioral

point averages for each month of 2018 than they achieved in 2017. Student 4's

performance increased by .2 in January, 2.4 in February, and .65 in March. Student 5's

performance increased by .2 in January, .6 in February, and .3 in March.

Table 1

Student Behavioral Performance as Earned

	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6
January 2017	9.8	10	8.28	9.8	9.8	9.8
January 2018	9.5	9.8	8.25	10	10	10
February 2017	10	9.8	7.8	7.2	9.4	9.4
February 2018	10	9.3	9.3	9.6	10	10
March 2017	10	9.7	8.7	8.2	9.7	9.7
March 2018	9.7	9.5	8.5	8.85	10	10

Student 3 and Student 6 showed some improvement. Student 3 showed a

significantly higher behavioral performance for one out of the three months in 2018

showing an increase of 1.5 in February. Student 3's behavioral performance in the other

two months of 2018 closely resembled the previously achieved averages scoring within

.03 to .45 points. Student 6 showed a significantly higher behavioral performance in one

month of 2018 showing an increase of 1.64, showed a decrease in behavioral

performance in the second month with a difference of .24 points, and maintained the same performance in the last month observed. The final two students, Student 1 and Student 2 showed no significant improvement and overall displayed a decrease in behavioral performance. The behavioral performance for Student 1 decreased for two out of the three months, averaging a difference of between .3 points difference in both January and March. Student 1 maintained behavioral performance in February. Student 2 showed an overall decrease in behavioral performance showing a .2 decrease in January, a .5 decrease in February, and a .2 decrease in March of 2018.

Student perception was measured daily on a four-point scale via four classroom turn-in bins. Students self-assessed how they felt about their understanding. Student scores were recorded and analyzed to determine a connection between student behavioral performance and student perception of understanding. During analysis student ratings were identified as having a positive or negative relationship. Positive relationships were defined as instances where the student's perception and behavioral performance were matched, i.e. a high behavior performance aligned with a high perception of understanding, or a low behavior performance matched a low perception of understanding. Negative relationships were defined as when the student's perception and behavioral performance were mismatched, i.e. a high behavior performance aligned with a low perception of understanding, or a low behavior performance matched with a high perception of understanding. Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3 review the results of this analysis.

Figure 1 displays the student perception analysis for the month of January 2018. In this table, the data shows that all students displayed an almost entirely positive

relationship between behavioral performance and perception of one's own learning. Three out of the six students in the study showed a negative relationship: Student 1 showed four instances of a negative relationship, Student 2 showed one, and Student 6 showed three. All other instances were positive. Student absences were also observed to identify any trends that could impact student perception of behavioral performance. Both students with the highest, Student 4, and lowest absences, Student 3, had no instances of negative relationships. Students who did display instances of negative relationships had varied levels of absences, some severe and others moderate.
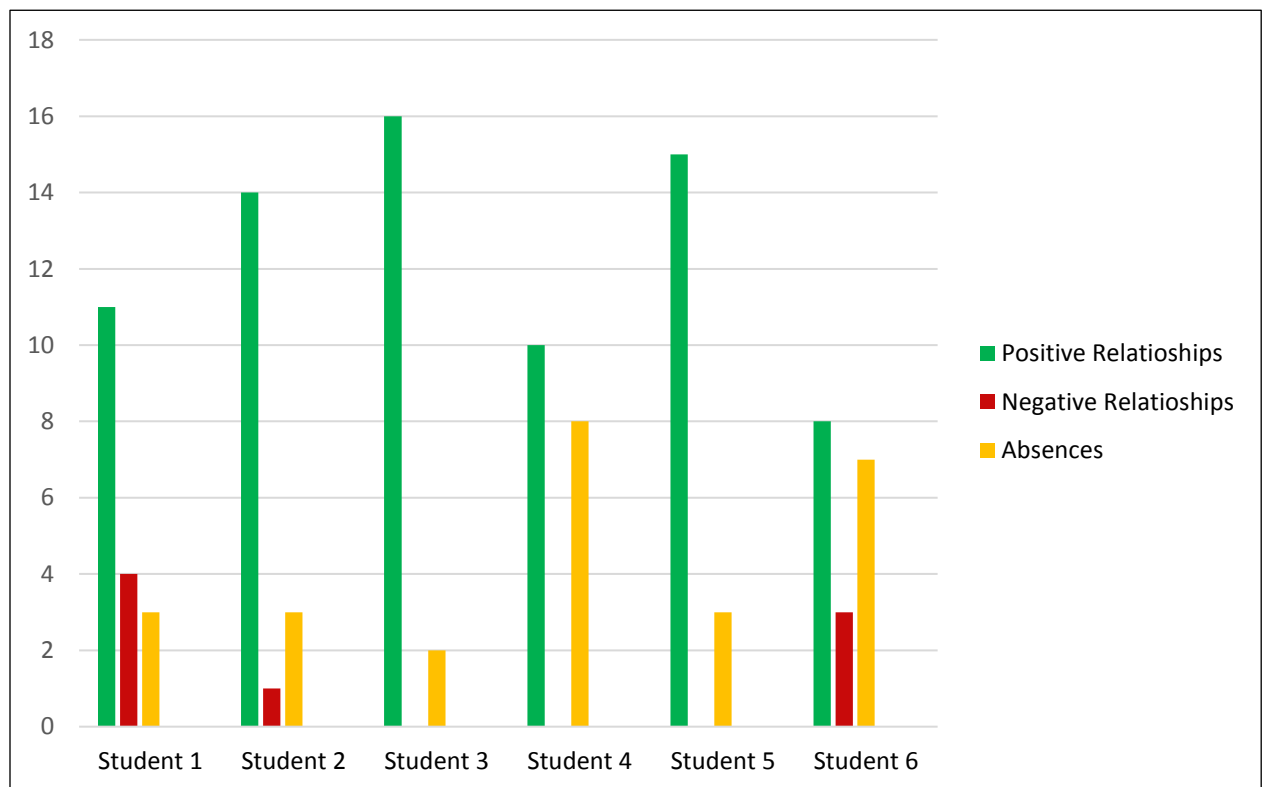

Figure 1. Student Perception Analysis for the Month of January 2018

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Figure 2 displays the student perception analysis for the month of February 2018. In this table, the data shows that all students displayed an almost entirely positive relationship between behavioral performance and perception of one's own learning. Two out of the six students in the study showed a negative relationship: Student 3 showed one instance of a negative relationship, and Student 6 showed two. All other instances were positive. Student absences were also observed to identify any trends that could impact student perception of behavioral performance. Both students with the highest, Student 6, and lowest absences, Student 3, had no instances of negative relationships. Students who did display instances of negative relationships had varied levels of absences, some moderate and some mild.
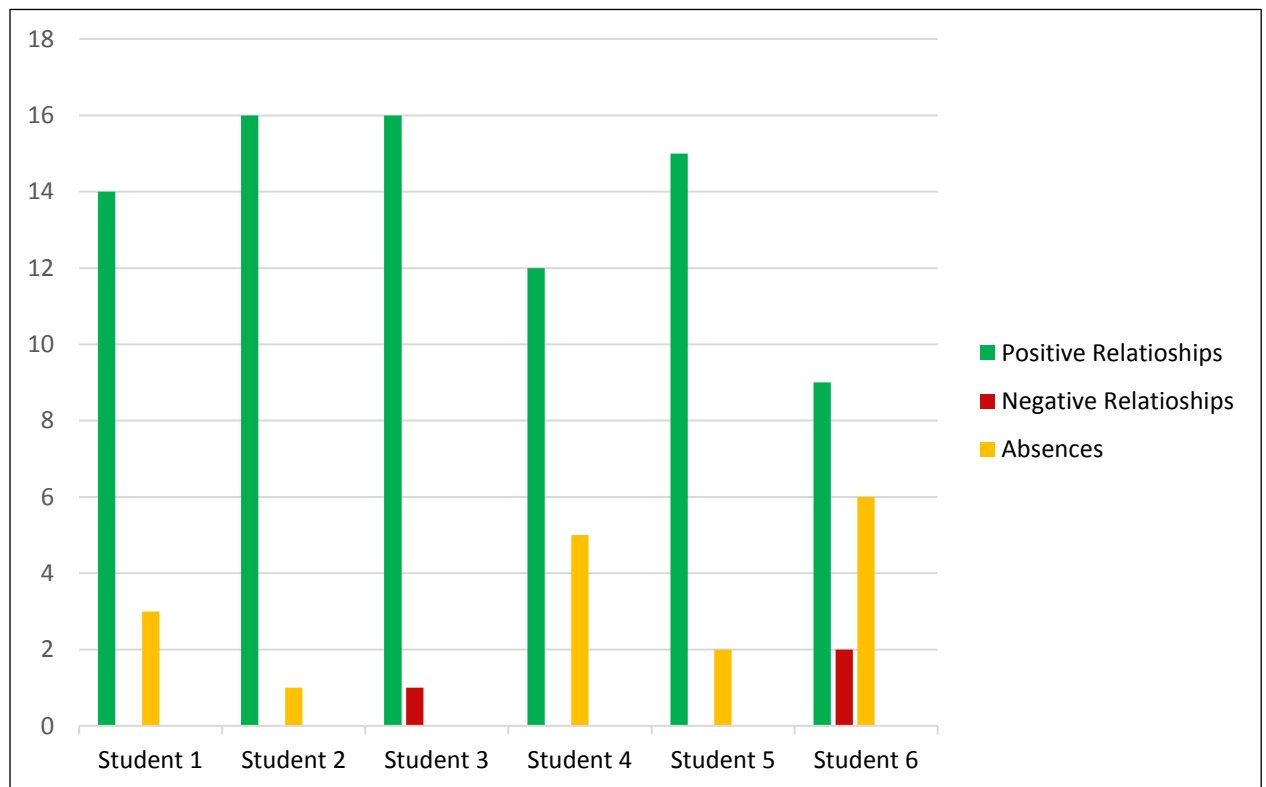

Figure 2. Student Perception Analysis for the Month of February 2018

Figure 3 displays the student perception analysis for the month of March 2018. In this table, the data shows that all students displayed an almost entirely positive relationship between behavioral performance and perception of one's own learning. One out of the six students in the study showed a negative relationship: Student 6 showed two instances of a negative relationship. All other instances were positive. Student absences were also observed to identify any trends that could impact student perception of behavioral performance. Both students with the highest, Student 4, and lowest absences, Student 5, had no instances of negative relationships. Students who did display instances of negative relationships had varied levels of absences, some severe and others moderate.
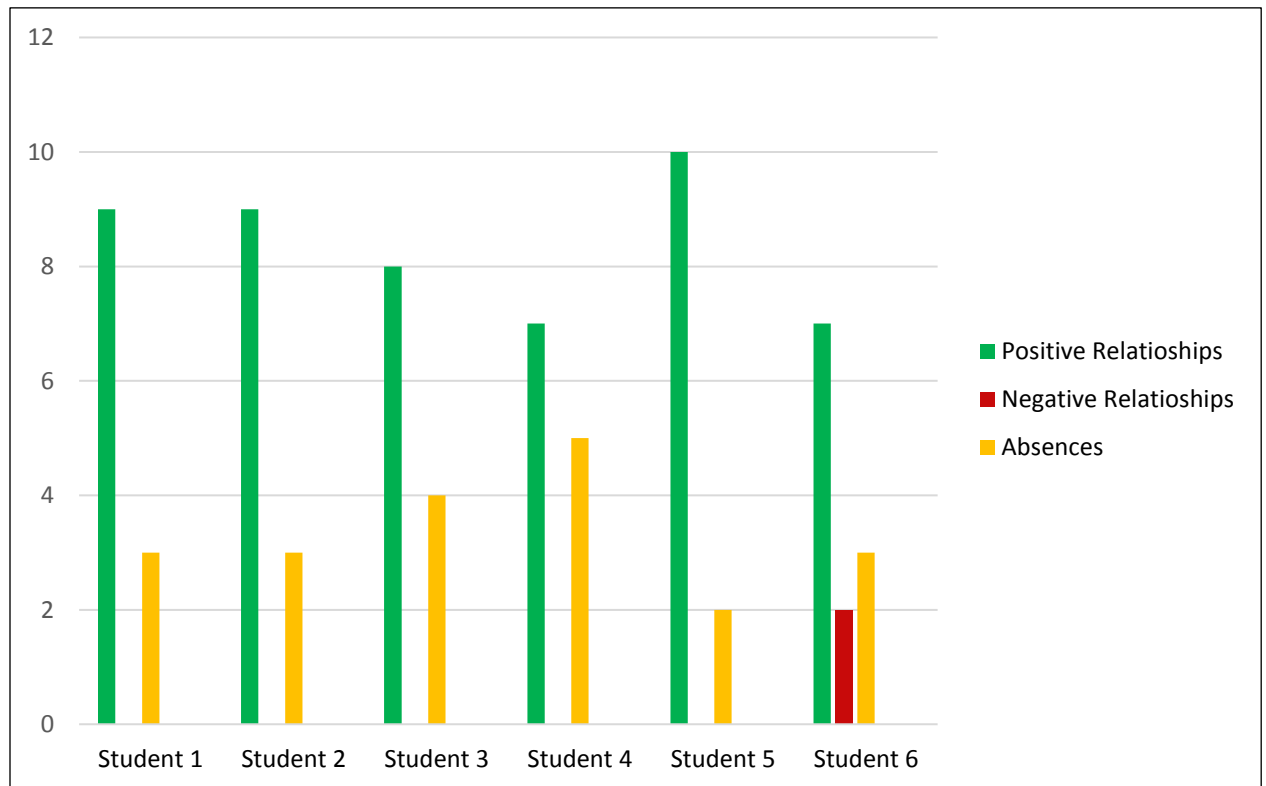

Figure 3. Student Perception Analysis for the Month of March 2018

Over the three-month study period, there were 13 instances of negative relationships. In twelve of the thirteen instances, students earned all their behavioral points but rated their understanding low. In the final instance, the student rated their understanding as high and did not earn all their behavioral points.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This study examined the effectiveness of individualized behavior-based goal-oriented groups on student achievement when used alongside a point-based school-wide behavior system in an alternative school setting. Additionally, it aimed to identify a possible relationship between student perception and the use of target behaviors identified in the point-based school-wide behavior system.

This study evaluated six students who had been attending an academy for a minimum of two years before the study. They spanned four academic grades: ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth. Each of these students was between the ages of 14 to 17 years old and had been classified with emotional or behavioral disorders. Two of the participants were female, one Hispanic, one African American, and four were male, two African American and two Hispanic.

To address the undesired behaviors (defined as behaviors that are converse to those defined in the school-wide behavior-support system) of the students in this study, an intervention using individualized behavior-based goal-oriented groups was crafted using a combination of mastery and performance-approach goals. To determine the impact of individual behavior-based goal-oriented groups on student behavioral performance, behavioral data was evaluated to determine if its use as an intervention could increase the behavioral performance of students in an alternative school setting that utilizes a point-based behavior modification system. A 2003 study by Landrum, Tankersley, and Kauffman stated that certain types of evidence-based practices were more effective than others depending on the target behaviors and the application of

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preventative and proactive based strategies when implemented early and with consistent frequency (Landrum et al., 2003). In response to this study's recommendation, the intervention was crafted and implemented using preventative and proactive strategies that were established early and used with consistent frequency that was responsive to students' individual target behaviors.

In order to analyze the intervention's impact, student behavioral data from the school-wide point-based behavior system from the 2016-2017 school year was used as a baseline for students' behavioral averages. During the time of this study (the 2017-2018 school year) students were again evaluated using the school's point-based school-wide behavior system. The data collected via the school's point-based system from both school years was compared for significant improvements or declines in target behavior. This comparison revealed that the majority of students were positively impacted by individualized behavior-based goal-oriented groups, with four students showing some or complete behavioral improvement. Two students had behavioral results that could indicate a negative impact of behavior-based goal-oriented groups, experiencing an overall decline in behavioral averages.

The impact of individual, behavior-based goal-oriented groups in the current study was similar to the results of a 2001 study Midgley, Kaplan, and Middleton that concluded that the use of performance-approach goals is successful when used alongside mastery goals (Midgley et al., 2001). It is also similar to the results found in a 2002 study by Kaplan, Gheen, and Midgley that found that if students believe a classroom is oriented toward mastery goals, they will perform better in performance-approach goals and exhibit less off-task behavior (Kaplan et al., 2002).

Limitations and Future Studies

During this study, student behavioral performance was only evaluated within one classroom and in one subject area. The impact of individual behavior-based goal-oriented groups in other areas of academic study and in other age groups should be evaluated to determine the overall impact on the target population. Additionally, therapeutic records could not be referenced to assess their impact on student behavioral performance. Since all students in the study are diagnosed with vast and varied psychological conditions, these conditions could have played a role on student's behavioral performance. Student decline in behavioral performance could have been impacted by outside factors including those with a therapeutic component. Additionally, students outside of having an emotional disturbance classification were not evaluated using this method of intervention.

Further research needs to be done to evaluate if this perception of understanding impacted student academic performance. This will clarify if the perception is purely psychosomatic or an accurate interpretation of performance.

Implications for Practice

The current study discovered that individual behavior-based goal-oriented groups are a viable method of behavioral intervention for some students. Educators were able to utilize individual behavior-based goal-oriented groups to assist in increasing student target behaviors. The majority of students were able to increase or maintain their behavioral performance.

The implementation of individual behavior-based goal-oriented groups is a viable method of behavioral intervention for students with emotional disturbance. Implementation has the potential to be successful in increasing the instance of desired

target behaviors in the classroom. Future iterations of individual behavior-based goal-oriented groups should be restructured to better define benchmarks for behavior and target behavior for individual students.

Monitoring of student's perception of understanding provides a meaningful insight into possible antecedents for student behavioral performance. Monitoring perception of understanding also provides the added benefit of gauging which students need further assistance on course skills and material.

Conclusions

This study sought to answer the following questions: are individualized goal-oriented groups a viable method for increasing instances of target behaviors as defined in a point-based school-wide behavior system, and is there a relationship between student display of target behaviors as defined in a school-wide behavior support system and student perception of their own learning? The results of this study demonstrated that individualized goal-oriented groups have the potential to successfully increase the instances of target behaviors in the classroom. Implementation of individual behavior-based goal-oriented groups is dependent on the group's definition of target behaviors based on student needs. Student behavioral data was collected from the school-wide point-based behavior system from the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school year. The data collected via the school's point-based system from both school years was evaluated for significant improvements, maintenance, and/or declines in target behavior. This comparison revealed that the majority of students were positively impacted by individualized behavior-based goal-oriented groups, with four students showing some or complete behavioral improvement.

This study also determined that student perception of understanding plays a significant role in the behavioral performance of students with emotional disturbance. Student perceptions of their own abilities in the learning environment were monitored daily through self-assessment turn-in bins. Analysis of student self-assessment in these bins was broken into two groups: positive or negative relationships. Positive relationships were defined as when the student's perception and behavioral performance were matched. Negative relationships were defined as when the student's perception and behavioral performance were mismatched. The data from this analysis, overall, showed that all students displayed an almost entirely positive relationship between behavioral performance and perception of one's own learning with few instances of a negative relationship.

After researching and defining the components of goals theory and using it as a framework to develop the intervention of individualized behavior-based goal-oriented groups to improve target behaviors in students classified with emotional disturbance in an alternative setting, it is apparent that this intervention has a positive impact on some students. While this study saw a decline in some participants, future studies and further restructuring of goals groups has the potential to positively impact a broader range of students.

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