EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHER

GREETINGS TO INCREASE ON-TASK BEHAVIOR AT

A CLASS-WIDE LEVEL IN ELEMENTARY

CLASSROOMS

By

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2016

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2019

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
May 2023

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Date of Degree: MAY 2023

Title of Study: EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHER GREETINGS
TO INCREASE ON TASK BEHAVIOR AT A CLASS-WIDE LEVEL
IN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS

Major Field: SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

Abstract: There is currently limited research detailing the effects of teacher greetings on increasing on-task behavior at a class-wide level in the general education setting. Teacher greetings are used as a feasible and effective classroom management strategy to improve rapport between students and teachers, increase on-task behavior, and reduce disruptive behavior. Results from previous research conducted by Allday et al. (2007) and Allday et al. (2011) found that providing noncontingent reinforcement in the form of a teacher greeting was effective in improving on-task behavior at an individual level. Therefore, the goal of this study was to replicate previous studies and examine the effect that teacher greetings pose at a class-wide level. Specifically, this study measured whether teacher greetings increased class-wide on-task behavior in two elementary classrooms (fourth and fifth grade) in a rural school in Central Oklahoma. Results from this study indicate that by applying noncontingent reinforcement in the form of a teacher greeting, the class-wide on-task percentage increased from an average of 70.4% to 82.5% in Classroom A. In Classroom B, the class-wide on-task percentage increased from an average of 65.2% to 83.5%.

   Keywords: on-task behavior, classroom management, teacher greetings, maintenance, non-contingent reinforcement.

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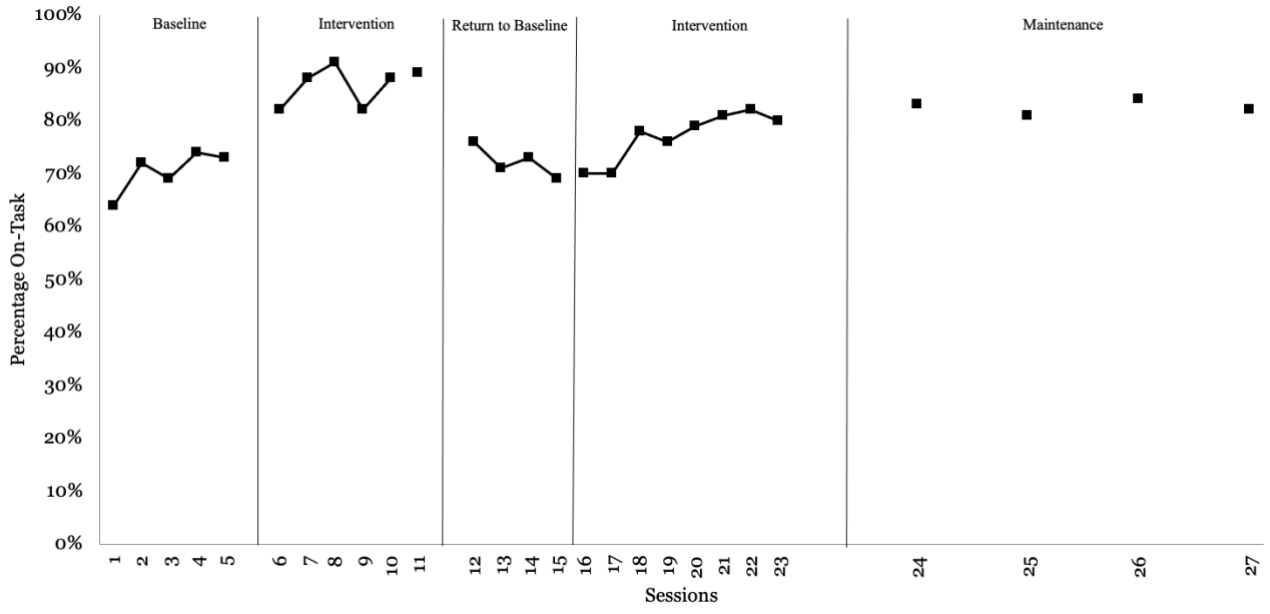
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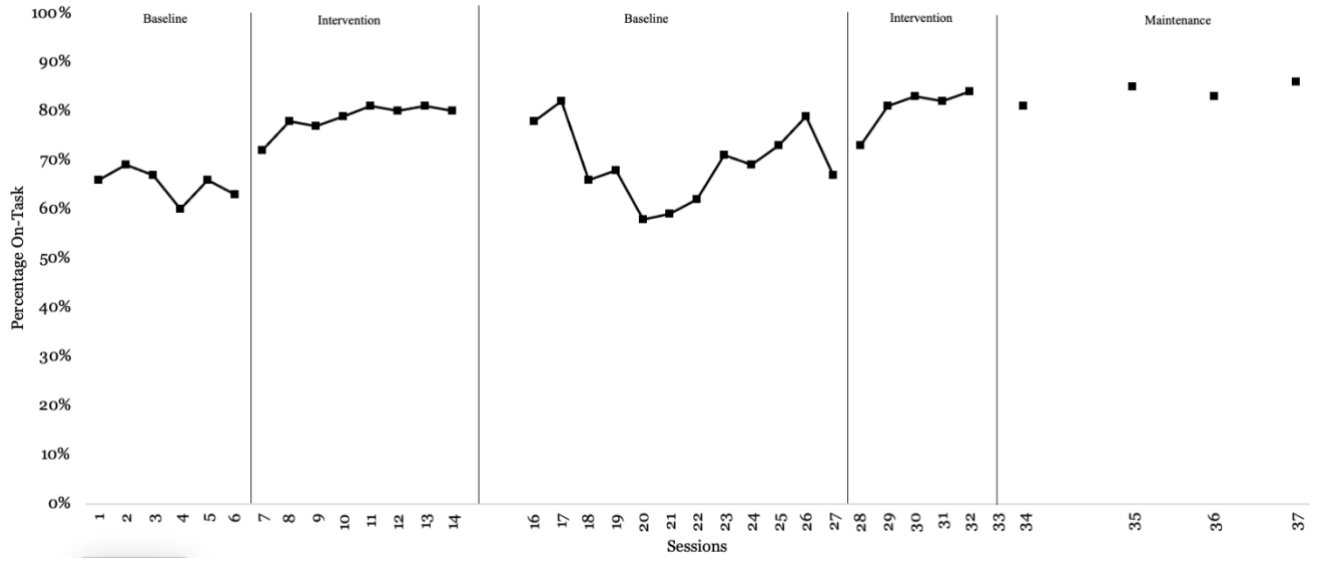
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As reported by Reinke et al. (2011), one of the most common challenging apprehensions first-year teachers report is behavior management within the classroom. Research suggests that teachers report feeling unprepared in this critical skill area. When reviewing the literature, in the recent past, teachers have begun to address the fact that they are not prepared upon completing their college education for managing disruptive behaviors within their classrooms. According to The Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) "First-year teacher surveys" (2018), problem behaviors and classroom management strategies were the number one issue teachers ranked when completing their survey. Additionally, in a survey by Wolery et al. (1995), more than 90% of elementary school teachers reported they needed more professional development in behavior management to feel adequate in handling disruptive behaviors in their classrooms. This information is consistent with a nationwide survey which found that teachers, among all grade levels, reported needing more behavioral management training in classroom management techniques (American Psychological Association, Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education, 2006). If teachers were equipped with the knowledge of how to effectively manage a classroom these numbers could decrease. According to the National Association of School Psychologists (2004), effective classroom management entails four vital components, including effective teaching,

preventative and proactive strategies, correction techniques, and supportive, as well as positive strategies. As School Psychologists, trained in behavioral underpinnings, it is our responsibility to not only serve students individually but provide behavioral consultation to teachers and faculty in the academic setting to create a foundation of understanding effective, evidence-based behavioral management strategies. By delivering educational providers with effective and feasible classroom management strategies, their concerns and needs in how to handle disruptive behavior would likely lessen and they could return to concentrating on providing adequate instruction to their students.

Classroom Management

In order to deliver successful classroom instruction, effective classroom management strategies must be implemented to sustain appropriate student behavior, maintain on-task engagement, and support academic achievement (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Developing research supports the relationships between effective classroom management and reducing disruptive behavior while improving academic achievement. When surveying both disruptive behavior and academic achievement, it is apparent the significance of effective classroom management. Existing studies inform researchers, not only does effective classroom management improve academic achievement, but there is also evidence that supports disruptive behaviors can be decreased through the implementation and consistency of effective classroom management. Reports from state education departments demonstrate that first-year teachers believe classroom management to be the most challenging part of their job. While the same reports from state education departments suggest that first-year teachers are not fully primed to manage difficult behaviors within the classroom upon entering the field. A teacher's capability to manage the classroom and organize instruction is

an unpretentious component of successful teaching. There is an abundance of research that already exists supporting different effective classroom management strategies. Conroy, Alter, and Sutherland (2013) identified four main categories of different strategies in managing classrooms; antecedent prevention, including classroom expectations and non-contingent attention; instruction and interaction, including instructional choice; consequence-based strategies, including group contingencies; and self-management strategies, including self-monitoring.

Self-monitoring is typically used as an individual intervention that involves the student recording and evaluating their behaviors (Alberto & Troutman, 2006). One study used self-monitoring at a class-wide level; where the students were divided into four teams and their behavior was rated as a group (Salend, Whittaker, & Reeder, 1992). The results from this study showed that students' time on task increased and their disruptive behaviors were reduced. Self-monitoring is a worthy tool in that the students are taught to be more self-governing. However, with self-monitoring, there are more disadvantages. Disadvantages of self-monitoring include the time it takes for the teacher to train the students on accurately reporting their behavior. Self-monitoring also includes relying on students to report their behavior truthfully. Additionally, self-monitoring may be more difficult to implement with elementary-aged children, therefore it is not a feasible and universal behavior management strategy.

Another strategy for classroom management the research identifies is the use of instruction and interactions. One method of this suggested via research is an instructional choice. Instructional choice gives the students a choice of two or more activities and then the student is told to select the activity they would like to work on. This strategy, along with self-

monitoring is associated with increased academic engagement and decreased disruptive behaviors. Instructional choice has been done at the individual level and shows to be effective in reducing incidences of disadvantageous behavior (Powell and Nelson, 1997). Additionally, instructional choice has shown improvement in task engagement (Dunlap, et al., 1994). However, instructional choice has limited research being conducted at the class-wide level. Like most class-wide management strategies, instructional choice comes with disadvantages and advantages. Despite instructional choice being feasible by its simplicity of implementation and limited preparation, teachers may be opposed to allowing students a great deal of autonomy. Students may develop too much autonomy in which they may expect to have a choice in every assignment that they receive. Given the research on instruction and interactions, as well as self-management class-wide strategies to help manage a classroom, they appear to be beneficial to implement. Consequently, they both pose some difficulties and consist of adverse effects that teachers may be conflicted to implement. Two additional strategies that are very common in the literature and have an enhanced rate of teacher approval are a consequence and antecedent strategies. Consequence intervention strategies can at times be delivered in ways such as group contingencies.

There are three types of group contingencies identified by Litow & Pumroy (1975); independent, interdependent, and dependent. In a dependent group contingency, all members of the group may receive reinforcement, only if the behavior of one, or a few identified target students meets the criteria. Interdependent group contingencies are based on the entire class as a whole. The entire class must meet the criteria for the preferred behaviors in order for any reinforcement to be received (Skinner et al., 2002).

Independent group contingencies offer the same reinforcement to a group, but the reinforcement is contingent upon a single individual's behavior and whether or not they meet the established criteria. In independent group contingencies, the other members behavior in the group does not affect the individual's chance for reward. When these group contingencies are implemented and used correctly, research shows they can result in an increase in positive behavior, and on-task behavior, as well as a decrease in disruptive behaviors (Skinner, Cashwell, & Skinner, 2000; Heering & Wilder, 2006; Kelsha-Levering, Sterling-Turner, Henry & Skinner, 2000). Much of the supporting literature identifies evidence-based classroom management procedures. Such as instruction and interaction, self-management, and consequence-based strategies, a handful of teachers are opposed to applying them because they are too difficult to implement and require time and strategy. Antecedent strategies tend to get a higher approval rate from teachers which they are an effective preventative strategy. Antecedent strategies resemble naturally occurring teaching strategies and eliminate the problem behavior before it occurs.

Past research suggests that antecedent strategies demonstrate the ability to decrease disruptive and perplexing behaviors. Antecedent strategies can be implemented through the form of class-wide interventions which are able to address the needs of all students in the classroom. There are many positive features of implementing antecedent intervention strategies at the class-wide level. Research suggests that Antecedent strategies help to prevent problematic behavior from occurring and they are quick-acting (Kern, Bambara, & Fogt, 2002). They also allow for the environment in which the problem behavior is occurring to be manipulated which is likely to reduce the problem behaviors from happening again in the future (e.g., Kern et al., 2006). Antecedent strategies when applied at the class-wide level

assist to create a classroom environment that is positive, orderly, predictable, and motivating (Sugai, Horner, & Gresham, 2002). There is growing research in our field that identifies the benefits of using antecedent variables to reduce behavior problems and increase appropriate behavior (Kern, Choutka, & Sokol, 2002). The implementation of clear rules and expectations, praise, reducing task difficulty, and providing more opportunities to respond are a few of the class-wide strategies used in general education classrooms to improve individual behavior among the entire class.

Another type of antecedent strategy is shown to be effective in delivering non-contingent attention in the form of a teacher greeting. Unlike the aforementioned strategies, teacher greetings are a simple and time costly intervention. Teacher greetings in the past, have shown to be highly accepted by teachers. Additionally, teacher greetings have proven to be effective in increasing levels of on-task behavior in students. (Allday et al., 2007).

Teacher Greetings

Non-contingent attention, in the form of teacher greetings, has shown positive results in past research in increasing students' on-task behavior. Additionally, non-contingent attention has shown overall success in reducing problematic behaviors (Carr, Severtson, & Lepper, 2009; Cooper, heron, & Heward, 2007). Teacher greetings consist of reduced time constraints and the simple implementation of greeting a student which can lead to a higher acceptance rate from teachers to utilize the intervention. Previous research has been conducted by Allday et. al. (2011) to assess the impact of teacher greetings on student behavior outcomes. Additionally, there is another study done by Allday et al. (2007) that examined three middle school students and their behavior. Results indicate that the student's

percentage of on-task behavior increased from 45% to 72% after the introduction of the teacher greeting. The majority of research is consistent with Allday and his previous studies in which they examine a small subset of students or individual student behavior. Given that teacher, greetings are a class-wide intervention. There is a necessity to conduct research that will examine the use of teacher greetings and the effect it has on students' behavior at a class-wide level.

Class Wide On-Task Behavior

Two common dependent variables in effective classroom management research are student engagement and on-task behavior. Respectfully so, academic knowledge is contingent upon whether a student is engaged in the associated learning task demand (Brophy & Good, 1984; Emmer and Stough, 2001). A student's on-task behavior and engagement include the student being oriented toward the task presented or the teacher, following the instructions given, and demonstrating verbal or non-verbal listening responses (Allday, Bush, Ticknor, & Waller, 2011; Allday & Pakurar, 2007).

On-task behavior is measured by calculating the total percentage of students who are engaged in the tasks presented. Student engagement increases their instructional time while minimizing the opportunities to engage in disruptive behaviors. A review of the literature indicates that class-wide interventions are effective when aiming to increase individual students' on-task behavior. However, there is minimal research that measures class-wide on-task behavior in response to the implementation of teacher greetings.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to analyze on-task behavior at a class-wide level, rather than individually while replicating previous studies conducted by Allday et al. Additionally, the previous research conducted by Allday et al. examined teacher greetings and on-task engagement at the individual level. The following research questions were investigated for this current study:

a) Does class-wide on-task behavior increase by applying non-contingent attention in the form of a teacher greeting?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Classroom Management

According to research, problem behaviors are one of the top concerns of early childhood teachers (Conroy et al., 2002). McMahon and Estes (1997) stated that disruptive behaviors are among the most prevalent behavior problems of youth. According to their research, behavior problems account for one-half to one-third of all recommendations to mental health sites for children. Both behavioral and emotional problems appear to occur when a child is transitioning into a formal school setting. As they are beginning to learn and develop the language skills needed to regulate their emotions and behaviors (Egger & Angold, 2006). Many children who are entering their first years in an academic setting are uncertain of how to manage their emotions and behavior and interact socially with their peers. All of these skills are important when it comes to school and developing positive academic skills to be successful (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004). Teachers report when children are first entering into the academic setting, the children occasionally have difficulty paying attention and getting along with their peers. Teachers are in a situation in which they have to support the developmental areas of children that are critical for their success, whether that be academic or behavioral. According to Raver and Knitzer (2002), of children that struggle upon beginning kindergarten, 16-30% of them have lasting behavioral or academic

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problems. Teachers have many different strategies in their toolkits that they can implement to address behavioral and academic concerns before they are left untouched and cultivated into serious behavioral problems. The issue is, many teachers have expressed they feel as if they are not prepared upon becoming certified to deal with disruptive behaviors, while also maintaining effective classroom management and adequate instruction. The lack of knowledge in this area could potentially be a factor in the recent increase of teachers leaving the education field in Oklahoma (OSDE, 2018)

No matter the climate of the school environment that the teacher is placed in, effective classroom management must include relationship building, setting clear and precise expectations, and reinforcing appropriate behaviors. It can be difficult for teachers to establish rapport with a student who frequently engages in disruptive behaviors. When trying to develop a classroom that is well managed, not only is rapport important, but having a clear set of expectations is a very important factor. The establishment of clear and concise expectations, or rules, is often found in classes that implement positive behavior intervention support (PBIS). However, many school districts are not PBIS districts. Despite schools not being PBIS schools it is still important to implement clear and concise classroom expectations. When creating simple expectations for a classroom, they can be as precise as, "be safe, be responsible, be thoughtful." These rules, however, will need to be taught in the classroom and operationally defined. Examples of what the expectations are must be modeled for the students to begin engaging correctly in these preferred behaviors. Lastly, reinforcement is a principle that also needs to be implemented within the classroom. Reinforcement allows children to develop a habit of frequently engaging in the appropriate behavior and classroom

expectations. Reinforcement of appropriate behavior should be the custom in any well well-managed room, no matter the age of the students.

Applied behavior analysis and classroom management. Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is, "the science in which tactics derived from the principles of behavior are applied systematically to improve socially significant behavior, and experimentation is used to identify the variables responsible for behavior change," (Cooper et al., 2007).

ABA discovers extraneous variables which may influence behaviors within the classroom, whether they be negative or positive behaviors. Methods within the ABA framework have been identified as being effective for disabled students, as well as non-disabled students in reducing target behaviors (Didden, Duker, & Korzilius, 1997; Weisz, Weiss, Hand, Granger, & Morton, 1995). Over time, there has been much opposition to the use of ABA within the classroom. Glass (1993) made the statement that said, "Teachers do not need data-based findings of experiments to decide how to best teach children." Glass's statement is the view many educators still have today in regard to the use of ABA techniques. While ABA is not accepted among some educators still, there are many benefits of ABA within the classroom. Such as identifying the function of specific student behaviors and using data analysis to measure the effectiveness of treatment (Emmer & Stough, 2001; LeCroy * Goodwin, 1979; Sugai et al., 2000; Sutherland, Lewis-Palmer, Stichter, & Morgan, 2008).

While ABA has not been integrated within the classroom and has been met with rigidity, the revision of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 began requiring behavioral support for students within the classroom (P.L. 108-446, IDEA).

Effective classroom management. Effective classroom management creates an atmosphere that can inhibit student academic growth, as well as limit disruptive behaviors within the classroom. Additionally, it can increase instruction time and reduce teacher stress levels (Reinke, et. al., 2011). A 2003 study examined a list of over 200 variables that affected student achievement and found that classroom management was the greatest influential variable (Wang, Haertel, and Walberg,). Good and Grouws (1997) studied a mathematics research program and discovered teachers with more effective classroom management skills experienced less time handling discipline problems and the students exhibited less disruption during transitions. Respectfully so, these outcomes led to subsequent gains in the student's overall academic achievement.

There can be long-term undesirable effects when students are positioned in an unsuccessfully managed classroom. Students' behavior, social well-being, and academics can be at vaster risk for demonstrating future challenging classroom behaviors, being identified for special education services, as well as experiencing social-emotional difficulties such as depression and conduct disorder (Ialongo, Poduska, Werthamer, & Kellam, 2001; Kellam, Ling, Merisca, Brown, & Ialongo, 1998; Weinstein, 2007; National Research Council, 2002). Negative effects such as these are why classroom settings should be a vital concentration of school psychologists and for the school at a systems level. As school psychologists, we should observe teachers' classroom management skills, consult with teachers, and provide them with preventative teachings on effective classroom management strategies.

Brophy and Good (1984) conducted process-product correlational and experimental research examining the relationship between student academic achievement and teacher behavior. Results suggested that student engagement and achievement were reliant on the implementation of effective classroom management strategies. Strategies such as established classroom rules and routines developed from the first day of the school year, the teachers' "witetness," or clearly communicating to the students they are aware of their behavior, they followed through with accountability for task completion, the rapid pacing in instructional delivery, and clearly instructing how to request for help. Additionally, teachers provided direct and precise instruction on what behaviors the students were to engage in once the required task had been completed. Transition times appear to be the most common time when students might engage in disruptive behaviors. Campbell and Skinner (2004) suggested that the beginning of the day is the most common time when students demonstrate less engagement in appropriate behaviors due to three reasons: transition times make behavior more difficult to monitor, access to reinforcement through acceptable behaviors is not as readily available, and students are closer in physical proximity to their peers.

Class Wide On-Task Behavior

The majority of research reviewed on classroom management focused on the outcome variable of students' on-task behavior and engagement (Brophy & Good, 1984; Emmer & Stough, 2001). Research indicates that when individuals engage in disruptive behaviors in the classroom environment it not only inhibits their success individually, but it also adversely affects their peers' opportunities to learn within the classroom (Sugai & Horner, 2002; Walker et al., 1996).

Defining on-task behavior. In a 2007 study by Allday and Pakurar, on-task behavior was defined as (a) actively listening to the teachers' instructions; (b) being oriented toward the teacher or task, and responding verbally (e.g., asking questions about the instructions) or nonverbally (e.g., eye contact or nodding head); (c) orienting their body correctly toward the teacher or task; (d) seeking help in the appropriate manner; and (e) following the teacher's instructions.

In Gil and Remedios (2013) literature review, authors deliberated research as they grappled to operationally define on-task behavior as well as off-task behavior. The literature review examined 54 studies that measured on-task behavior. Results suggested that on-task behavior and student engagement should not be viewed as equal. Instead, on-task behavior is a representation of the underlying concept of task engagement.

Momentary Time Sampling. Momentary time sampling is when an observer records whether the target behavior is occurring at the moment that each time interval ends (Cooper et al., 2007). Data from momentary time sampling are typically reported as percentages of the total intervals in which the behavior occurred. They are used to estimate the amount of the total observation period that the target behavior occurred (Cooper et al., 2007). Like all data collection methods, momentary time sampling does contain some disadvantages. As the observations are conducted, the individual is only observed for a short moment resulting in some student behavior being missed. However, research has shown that momentary time sampling both overestimates and underestimates the continuous duration measure when time intervals are greater than 2 minutes. (Gunter, Venn, Patrick, miller, & Kelly, 2003). Therefore, with intervals of less than 2 minutes, the data obtained more closely matches data obtained using continuous duration

measurements (Cooper et al., 2007) and is more likely to be a better representation of the behaviors being observed.

Disruptive Behavior. Oftentimes when discussing classroom management with elementary teachers, it is reported that student and classroom behavior is the most trying issues they face when teaching within their classrooms. According to Beaman et al. (2007), approximately 50% of teachers across all education levels report that they spend more time addressing student disorderliness than they feel they should. However, the literature and past studies suggest that teachers are not proficient in dealing with disruptive behaviors upon completion of their graduation requirements and entering the classroom.

Within the classroom, disruptive behaviors interfere with students absorbing instructional information and their ability to pay attention to the teacher. Not only does it affect the individual's information they are retaining, but it also can be a distraction to other students from learning. Additionally, when a child is engaging in disruptive behaviors it can take away time from overall classroom instruction as the teacher has to address the problem behaviors which are occurring. This can cause children to struggle in learning the materials, and it also may affect their success within the classroom causing them to fall behind their peers.

McGoey et al. (2010) state, "Children who engage in disruptive, impulsive, and inattentive behaviors can be at risk for a number of difficulties within the school setting." Previous research has found that hyperactive and inattentive behaviors within early

childhood classrooms are more predictive of high school dropouts, as compared to aggressive, and oppositional behaviors.

Class Wide Interventions

Bambara & Kern (2005) inform teachers of preventative intervention approaches which hold many advantages instead of utilizing reactive approaches to managing classroom behavior. The four advantages provided by Kerns and Clemens (2007) begin with how class-wide antecedent interventions can help to avert problematic behavior from initially occurring. This is done by removing or transforming the environment that would head the problem behavior. The removal or transformation of the environment results in the problem behavior being reduced or abolished. Secondly, another advantage of antecedent strategies is that they tend to be quick-acting (Kern, Bambara, Fogt, 2002). Eliminating or altering the events that influence the problem behavior is likely to result in an immediate reduction of problem behavior. Another asset of antecedent interventions is the capability to correct the environment that is causative to the problem behavior. The final advantage provided by Kerns and Clemens (2007) is how antecedent interventions ultimately can enhance the instructional environment. In this instance, antecedent events which are associated with problem behavior are decreased while desirable behaviors are increased.

Implementing antecedent strategies in the class seeks to form a classroom environment that is positive, orderly, predictable, and motivating (Sugai, Horner, & Gresham, 2002). When these strategies are implemented, it will likely result in increased student engagement which in turn promotes appropriate behavior. Subsequently, which

aligns with the suggestion that class-wide strategies are the most crucial first phase when it comes to dealing with student behavior. There are times when a student may not respond to the broader efforts of class-wide interventions, in these few cases, individualized intervention is needed (Kerns & Clemens, 2007). However, studies show that class-wide interventions pose to be more cost-effective and less time consuming than individual interventions. A teacher may use the implementation of class-wide interventions to help one student perform better in the classroom, but its implementation may subsequently benefit the behavior of all the students in the classroom.

Non-Contingent Reinforcement.

Problem behaviors within the classroom are often maintained by many different factors including access to attention and escape from tasks. Research indicates social attention is one factor that is a very powerful variable in influencing student behavior in the classroom (Craft, Alber, & Heward, 1998). Noncontingent attention is based on the concept of noncontingent reinforcement. When utilizing noncontingent reinforcement, the reinforcer is identified which is responsible for the problem behavior and delivering the reinforcers independent of the occurrence of the problem behavior (Carr, Severtson, & Lepper, 2009). For instance, if a student is engaging in problem behavior that is maintained by attention, noncontingent reinforcement in the form of social attention is delivered independent of the problem behavior.

Several studies utilizing noncontingent attention have been conducted to decrease problem behaviors, including within the classroom. Behaviors range from severe self-injurious behavior to minor disruptive behaviors. Jones et al. (2000) examined the effects

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noncontingent peer attention had on students in a classroom to reduce minor disruptive behaviors such as talking out, out of seat, and playing with objects with an 8-year-old boy who was diagnosed with ADHD in a clinical setting. A functional analysis was conducted to identify the function of the child's behavior. Results indicated that peer attention maintained his behavior and that the implementation of noncontingent peer attention decreased the disruptive behaviors that the young boy was exhibiting.

There have been many studies conducted within clinical and private settings examining noncontingent reinforcement. One limitation of noncontingent attention is the limited amount of research conducted within the general education classroom setting. There is one example in which noncontingent attention was used to decrease attention maintained, talking out behaviors in a student diagnosed with ADHD (Austin & Soeda, 2008). Results suggested that noncontingent attention decreased the participant's talking out behavior.

Benefits. Interventions within the school setting are normally individualized and time sensitive, which causes teachers to need to set aside more time. Teachers are already strenuous on time and when attempting to implement individual interventions they lose more time that could be spent providing instruction to the class. Subsequently, class-wide interventions that target all students in the classroom could be an effective and feasible alternative to highly individualized interventions when addressing behavior concerns within the classroom. Class-wide interventions are more cost-effective and time efficient than individualized interventions. While class-wide interventions target the entire class, if there are one or two students, particularly struggling with their behavior in the classroom,

a class-wide intervention allows for the students who need the intervention more so than the rest of the classroom to remain unidentified.

Non-contingent reinforcement has selected empirical sustenance which validates its use for reducing disruptive behavior and increasing student engagement. However, the components of non-contingent reinforcement such as teacher greetings (e.g., greeting the student by their name) or simply providing a non-contingent reinforcing statement, have yet to be examined at the class-wide level. The literature does not indicate whether non-contingent reinforcement in the form of a teacher greeting has positive or negative effects in decreasing disruptive behavior across all students within the classroom. Allday et. al. (2007) has shown the effects of teacher greetings improving on-task behavior and decreasing disruptive behavior among selected students. However, there is no literature on the effects it has at the class-wide level.

Conclusion and Research Questions

Earlier literature has validated the use of non-contingent reinforcement and its effectiveness to decrease disruptive behavior and increase individual student engagement. However, the current study is replicating past research by utilizing the deliverance of class-wide non-contingent reinforcement in the form of a teacher greeting. Although it examined the effects it had on the class as a whole to improve on-task behavior and decrease disruptive behaviors at the beginning of the classroom session at the elementary level. The following research question was proposed to grow the literature regarding the effectiveness of non-contingent reinforcement.

a) Will class-wide on-task behavior increase by applying non-contingent attention in

the form of a teacher greeting?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Study Design and Rationale

In single-case design research, there is a plethora of designs to choose from and the psychological research field has typically utilized research using large numbers of participants to compare groups. However, Cooper, Heron, & Heward (2007) suggest that by using small-N research designs validity can be increased.

In this study a small-N the A-B-A-B design, also referred to as the "reversal design," (Baer et al., 1968) or "withdrawal design," (Leitenberg, 1973) was used. Throughout the history of small-N, behavioral research, this has been one of the most used designs. This design demonstrates experimental control when the level and trend of a target behavior improve under specific conditions (Intervention) and deteriorate under baseline conditions (Baseline).

The first phase, the initial baseline, measures class-wide behavior in the original classroom setting without the experimental variable. The second phase; the first intervention phase, measures classroom on-task behavior with the inclusion of the experimental variable (teacher greetings). In the third phase (return to baseline), the teacher greeting is withdrawn, creating a reversal of the experimental condition (Cooper et al., 2007). Then the intervention is reintroduced, becoming an A-B-A-B reversal design. There are variations and extensions to A-B-A-B designs (Cooper et al., 2007).

One of those extensions is maintenance. Teacher greetings are implemented to build rapport, increase on-task behavior, and improve work completion. Therefore, following the second phase of intervention implementation, class-wide on-task behavior will be probed once weekly to evaluate the maintenance of behavior with the implementation of teacher greetings.

Participants

Students who may participate in this study are made up from two, elementary classrooms (4th and 5th grade). Participants were selected according to the following criteria. First, elementary classroom teachers ranging from 1st grade to 5th grade were interviewed via a semi-structured interview with the primary investigator to assess behavioral problems upon arrival to the classroom in the morning. Researchers briefly observed the classrooms that volunteered (4th grade and 5th grade) to verify whether they were having difficulty with on-task behavior upon arrival to the classroom. Both classrooms demonstrated low levels of on-task behavior and were approved for the study. The fourth-grade classroom was taught by Teacher A, who was a White female between the ages of 30-40. The fourth-grade classroom was made up of 12 students, 4 females, and 8 males (e.g., White, African American, Native American, and Hispanic). The fifth-grade classroom was taught by Teacher B, who was also a White female between the ages of 30-40. The students in the fifth-grade classroom were made up of 15 students, 7 females, and 8 males (e.g., White, African American, Native American, and Hispanic). The school's superintendent and both teachers were recruited via the script in Appendix 1. An opt-out permission form was sent home to both classrooms and none were returned, therefore, all students in the classrooms were included in the data collection.

Setting

The study was conducted at an elementary school located in central Oklahoma in a 4th and 5th-grade classroom. Training for the teachers occurred individually during the teachers' plan time. Classrooms were observed during the first 30 minutes upon student entry into their classroom after being provided with instructions and the task they are to complete.

Dependent Variable

Class-wide On-task behavior. Class-wide on-task behavior was measured for the first 30-minutes upon student entry into the classroom. The 30-minute interval began when the students were assigned their morning tasks. Using a stopwatch and behavior recording sheet, the researchers began observing student behavior. Operationally, on-task behavior occurred when a student was observed "participating actively in the task delivered by the teacher," a student is considered actively participating when he/she is oriented toward the teacher or task, has the necessary materials needed to complete the task, following the directions, and listening through either verbal or nonverbal means" (Allday, et al., 20110, p. 394). On-task behavior was recorded using momentary time sampling.

The researchers measured on-task behavior via a stopwatch. Once 80% of the students entered the classroom, the observer started the stopwatch signaling the beginning of the observation interval. Students were observed using 10-second momentary time sampling intervals for a total of 30 minutes. At the end of 10 seconds, the researcher would look up and observe whether the student was on-task by definition or off-task and

note it on the recording sheet. The percentage of on-task behavior was calculated by dividing the number of intervals coded as "on task" by the total number of intervals and multiplying the quotient by 100. The students' seating arrangements varied throughout data collection and the order in which they were observed was different for each observation.

Independent Variable

Teacher Greeting. In the independent variable and intervention phases, teachers were asked to provide a greeting to each student, upon entry into the classroom. The greeting consisted of only a quick, simple, "hello," "good morning," "hi," and the student's name (i.e., "Good morning, Johnny!").

Materials

Materials during the study include stopwatches and data collection sheets. The data collection sheets consist of documents for recording momentary time sampling of class-wide on-task behavior, treatment fidelity, as well as inter-rater reliability.

Experimental Design

A reversal design across two classrooms with probed maintenance was used to compare the effects of teacher greetings on class-wide on-task behavior.

Baseline. During baseline, teachers were requested to engage in their normal morning routines. Students were greeted upon entry to the classroom. An observer was present to observe and collect class-wide on-task behavior for the classroom.

Intervention. During this phase, teachers greeted students upon entry to the classroom with a non-contingent greeting, which consist of only the students' name and hello (i.e., "Hello, Johnny"). The teachers were trained prior to the first day of the first intervention phase by the principal investigator on how to elicit a simple teacher greeting. After greeting the students, teachers were instructed to maintain expectations, routines, and consequences for on-task behavior and proceed as usual with their normal routines.

Return to Baseline. During this phase, the teachers were asked to return to engaging in their normal morning routines and discontinue providing the teacher greeting.

Intervention. During this phase, the teachers returned to implementing teacher greetings in the same method as was done in the first intervention phase.

Maintenance. Once there was a stable upward trend established in the final phase, the researcher began to collect maintenance data weekly in which the researcher probed on-task behavior once per week for 6 weeks for Teacher A and 4 weeks for Teacher B.

Interobserver agreement

Interobserver agreement was measured during observation sessions. To establish inter-observer agreement, a second observer simultaneously recorded class-wide on-task behavior with the data collection sheets following the teacher's greeting and upon entry into the classroom with the primary investigator. For class-wide on-task behavior, both observers compared and evaluated their agreement for each 10-second interval observed. Agreement was calculated using point-by-point agreement. The point-by-point agreement

is calculated by dividing the total number of agreement intervals by the total number of agreement and disagreement intervals, then multiplying by 100 (Yoder & Symons, 2010). Interobserver agreement was assessed for at least 30 percent of the sessions.

Procedural Integrity

The researchers measured treatment fidelity during all phases of the intervention. During the baseline phases the teachers were asked to continue their morning ritual as normal. They were not required to greet the students as they entered their classrooms in the morning. During the intervention phases, the teachers had to meet two criteria: (1) they had to provide a greeting to the student, and (2) say the student's name. The observer recorded this information as a percentage via the data collection sheet. If treatment fidelity fell below 100% the principal investigator provided immediate feedback to teachers and consulted if there were any questions to guarantee that they understood the expectations of each intervention phase.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Class-wide On-Task Behavior.

Table 1 presents the average (in percentage) and range (in percentage) of on-task beahvior for each subject. Table 2 presents the average (in percentage) and range (in percentage) of on-task beahvior during the maintenance phase.

Classroom A. Research suggests that students are on-task an average of 85% of the time (Rhode et al., 2010). Therefore, it was apparent given Classroom A's average percentage of on-task behavior during baseline which was 70%, they demonstrated difficulty with remaining on-task behavior. Visual analysis indicated that once Classroom A's on-task behavior demonstrated a decreasing trend, intervention implementation began. Classroom A's percentage of on-task behavior increased from baseline conditions (70% on-task) to the first intervention phase (87% on-task), demonstrating an effective response to intervention. As Classroom A demonstrated stable behavior over the course of six observation sessions (82-91% on-task) the Intervention was removed, and Classroom A returned to Baseline. With the return to Baseline, on-task behavior decreased from an average of 87% to 72%. During the second baseline phase, Classroom A showed a quick response to the removal of the intervention. Classroom A remained in the second phase of Baseline until the data demonstrated a stable and decreasing trend. Once a stable and decreasing trend was established, Classroom A returned to the second

Intervention phase. Returning to Intervention resulted in an increase in class wide on-task

behavior after the second session of teacher greetings being re-introduced. Upon

returning to intervention, Classroom A's on-task behavior increased to an average of

77%.

The researcher continued to probe Classroom A once weekly for four weeks to

assess the effect of teacher greetings and class-wide on-task behavior and whether class

wide on-task behavior would remain stable, increase, or decrease. Over the course of four

weeks, Classroom A maintained an average of 83% on-task behavior during the intervals

observed which was 13% higher than the starting point of the intervention.

Classroom B. Visual analysis indicated that Classroom B's percentage of on-task

behavior reflected that of Classroom A's. Table 2 displays that Classroom B's initial

average of class wide on-task behavior averaged 65% which is significantly lower than

the suggested 85% by Rhode et al., (2010). As represented in Figure 2 the

implementation of teacher greetings increased class wide on-task behavior from 65% to

76%. Classroom B experienced a positive response to the implementation of teacher

greetings as class wide on-task behavior ranged from 63-81%. Once data represented a

stable trend the intervention was removed, and Classroom B returned to Baseline. Upon

returning to baseline, Classroom B demonstrated a decrease in on-task behavior. Given

that Classroom B experienced inclement weather days and school breaks the consistency

of the children's schedules were affected. Therefore, the second Baseline phase was

lengthier and displayed wide variability. However, once there was a stable and decreasing

trend, intervention was reintroduced. With the return to intervention, Classroom B's class

wide on-task behavior increased from 69% to 81%, demonstrating a positive response to

treatment. The researcher continued to probe Classroom B once weekly to assess whether class wide on-task behavior would maintain. Over the course of four weeks, Classroom B maintained an average of 84%, ranging from 73-84% on-task during the intervals observed.

Procedural Integrity.

Classroom A. Procedural integrity was met 100% (100% for 27 sessions) for a total of 27 observation sessions. Therefore, Teacher A was observed greeting each student who entered the classroom by the requirements of the study.

Classroom B. Procedural integrity was met 100% (100% for 34 sessions) for a total of 34 observation sessions. Teacher B was observed greeting each student who entered the classroom by the requirements of the study.

Interobserver Agreement.

For on-task behavior IOA was collected 44% of sessions observed for Classroom A; the mean agreement averaged 94% (range of 90% to 95%) for baseline and 95% (range of 87% to 98%) for intervention. For Classroom B, on-task behavior IOA was collected 43% of sessions observed. The average mean agreement was 97% (range of 95% to 99%) for baseline and 98% (range of 96% to 99%) for intervention.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

As a result of providing teacher greetings, both classrooms demonstrated an increase in class-wide on-task behavior. Classroom A appeared to have a more significant response to treatment from Baseline phases to the Intervention phases. However, Classroom B has maintained a higher class-wide on-task percentage throughout the maintenance phase. Both classrooms showed an increase in class-wide on-task behavior when examined through visual analysis.

In the current study, the researcher hypothesized that the current study would replicate the findings at a class-wide level. The current study's results converge with previous research in which Allday et al. (2007) the researchers found that teacher greetings resulted in a higher percentage of on-task behavior. When visually analyzing the data, Classroom A appeared to have a better response to the first Intervention phase. However, there were interruptions in the data collection for Classroom B in which data was being collected over the course of school holidays and winter weather (i.e., school closures due to inclement weather). Despite these interruptions, Classroom B continued to demonstrate a response to treatment by increasing their class-wide on-task

behavior when the intervention was reintroduced. This indicates that despite large breaks in the data, the students continued to respond to treatment, and it appears to be an effective classroom management strategy for elementary classrooms at a class-wide level given these data.

Overall, both classrooms demonstrated an increase in class-wide on-task behavior, the teachers implemented the intervention with 100% fidelity, and interobserver agreement was obtained 44% of the time for Classroom A and 43% of the time for Classroom B. Therefore, the intervention replicates previous research conducted and suggests that teacher greetings can be effective at a class-wide level as research suggests they are at an individual level.

Limitations to the present study include that Classroom B's data was being collected over holiday breaks. Therefore, there was a large gap from Baseline with Classroom B to Intervention. Additionally, Classroom B had interruptions in the implementation of Intervention due to inclement winter weather and Spring Break. Additionally, attendance varied throughout the study. Classroom A consisted of 15 students, on average there were 14.7 students present. Classroom B consisted of 12 students, and on average there were 11.7 students present. In the educational setting, it is difficult to control class attendance, however, there was an attendance rate of 98% for Classrooms A and B. Other limitations to note were that Classroom A's teacher originally stood outside her door as the children arrived, she did not implement a formal greeting, nor did she greet each student as they arrived, but she demonstrated more presence than Classroom B's teacher in the mornings.

Future Research

Future research should explore the different components of teacher greetings, as well as the different times of day students are arriving to the classroom (i.e., transition times). Previous research has evaluated individual behavior during transition periods throughout the day (Allday et al., 2011), but it has not been completed at a class-wide level. Additionally, future research could also examine whether stating the child's name is an important component of the research or does simply saying, "Hello" suffice. Future studies may also consider replicating this in special education classrooms to compare the effects on different student populations. In classes that are on a rotating schedule, it would also be important for future studies to examine the effects of one teacher across multiple groups of students (e.g., first hour, second hour, third hour). Due to the timeliness of the current study, maintenance of on-task behavior was measured during the maintenance phase (i.e., four weeks). It would be essential for future studies to measure the duration of the effect teacher greetings has on class wide on-task behavior.

Classroom management is a detrimental factor in teacher and student success. It is not only important for positive academic outcomes, but behavioral as well. Effective classroom management includes building relationships between teachers and students. When students are demonstrating disruptive behaviors (i.e., off task) it can be difficult for the teachers and students to develop rapport. Therefore, the implementation of teacher greetings is a feasible and effective strategy for increasing on-task behavior at a class-wide level and may result in more positive outcomes for students in the classroom.

This study replicated previous research (e.g., Allday et al., 2007; Allday et al., 2011) to examine whether teacher greetings would increase on-task behavior at a class-

wide level. The results among two elementary classrooms (fourth and fifth grade) indicated that on-task behavior upon arrival to the classroom increased across both classrooms between phase changes. Additionally, class-wide on-task behavior has been shown to maintain weeks after the phase change (i.e., four weeks) and does not appear to be satiating or habituating between the second Intervention phase and Maintenance in either classroom.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1

September 6, 2022

Dear Parents,

I am writing to inform you that I, Erin Healey, a School Psychology Doctoral Candidate at Oklahoma State University will be conducting my dissertation research study in your child's classroom this Fall 2022.

The research study is aiming to improve student on-task behavior with the simple implementation of Teacher Greetings at The Door at the start of each school day. Each student will be greeting individually and personally upon entering the classroom. Once the entire classroom is present in the class and attending to the assigned task the assigned research assistant or principal investigator (Erin Healey) will begin collecting behavioral observations of the classroom for 30 minutes.

Throughout this research study identifiable, private information will not be collected and there will be no way to trace the data collected back to individual students.

If, for any reason, you do not want your child/children to participate in this research study, please sign this form below and return it to the office. I will honor your request.

If you have any questions or other concerns, please contact Erin Healey (principal investigator) at this email: ehealey@okstate.edu

Sincerely,

Erin Healey, MS

School Psychology Doctoral Candidate

Oklahoma State University

- -

My child may NOT be included in the data collection for the research study which consists of teacher greetings at the door to improve students' on-task behavior.

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian	Date

Appendix 2

To: Teacher

Subject: Dissertation Classroom Eligibility

Hello,

I am writing to ensure your classroom is a good fit for my dissertation research study. I am seeking classrooms that are experiencing minor disruptive behaviors (e.g., talking out, out of seat, etc.) during the first 30 minutes of arrival into the classroom. Students within the classroom can be of any race, ethnicity, or gender. There are no requirements for the inclusion of the students. The only exclusionary criterion is if you are already implementing Teacher Greetings At The Door with your students in the morning upon arrival.

Please complete this form to help direct me to select classrooms that meet eligibility: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdlMhgb-TyylNf0Ty75cAQu4-vpw_v4ewRpynzujDnMIiMubQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

Appendix 3

TEACHER GREETINGS AT THE DOOR INTERVENTION GUIDE

The goal of this study is to independently greet each student upon their arrival to the classroom. Once the students are in the classroom and working on their assigned activity data collection will begin.

1. The teacher will remain by the door to greet students first thing in the morning
2. The teacher will greet the student individually by stating his/her name, and a positive statement (e.g., "Good morning Tommy!" "Hello, Anna")
3. The student will enter the classroom as usual and proceed with their morning activity as usual.
4. Data collection will begin as soon as 80% of the student roster has entered the classroom.

Appendix 4

Date:_____   Classroom:_____

+: On-Task is defined as (a) actively listening to teacher instructions; (b) being oriented toward the teacher or task and responding verbally (e.g., asking questions about the instructions) or nonverbally (e.g., eye contact or nodding head); (c) orienting appropriately toward the teacher or task; (d) seeking help in the appropriate manner; or (e) following the teacher's instructions.

-: Off-Task any behavior not pertaining to on-task behavior

	10s	10s	10s	10s	10s	10s
1	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
2	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
3	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
4	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
5	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
6	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
7	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
8	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
9	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
10	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
11	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
12	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
13	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
14	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
15	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
16	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
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24	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
25	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
26	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
27	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
28	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
29	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
30	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -

Appendix 4

Totals from Observation

Phase	Requirement		Treatment Integrity
Baseline	Teacher did not say students name	Teacher did not say positive statement, non-contingent on the student behavior	/ 100%
Intervention	Teacher says students name	Teacher provided a greeting non-contingent on the student behavior	/ 100%

On Task Percentage

Behavior	Percentage
On Task	
Off Task	

IOA

Agreed intervals	Total Agreed/Disagreed Intervals	Percentage of Agreement

Appendix 5

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	02/05/2022
Application Number:	IRB-22-43
Proposal Title:	Evaluating the Effectiveness of Teacher Greetings to Increase On-Task Behavior at a Class-wide Level
Principal Investigator:	Erin Healey
Co-Investigator(s):	
Faculty Adviser:	Gary Duhon
Project Coordinator:	
Research Assistant(s):	
Processed as:	Exempt
Exempt Category:	

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in 45CFR46.

This study meets criteria in the Revised Common Rule, as well as, one or more of the circumstances for which <u>continuing review is not required.</u> As Principal Investigator of this research, you will be required to submit a status report to the IRB triennially.

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:
1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be approved by the IRB. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, adviser, other research personnel, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any unanticipated and/or adverse events to the IRB Office promptly.
4. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact the IRB Office at 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Sincerely,

Oklahoma State University IRB

VITA

Erin Walsh Healey

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHER GREETINGS TO INCREASE ON TASK BEHAVIOR AT A CLASS-WIDE LEVEL IN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS

Major Field: School Psychology

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in School Psychology at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 2023.
Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Educational Psychology at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in 2019.
Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Family Life Education – Child Development at the University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma in 2016.

Experience:

Shadow Practicum at Osage County Interlocal Cooperative
School-Based Practicum at Osage County Interlocal Cooperative
Clinic-Based Practicum at Oklahoma Pediatric Therapy Center
Completing the requirements for a pre-doctoral internship as a clinical intern at the Oklahoma Private Practice Internship Consortium – Oklahoma Pediatric Therapy Center 2022-2023

Professional Memberships:
School Psychology Graduate Organization (2018-2022)
National Association of School Psychologists (2018 – Present)
Oklahoma School Psychology Association (2018 – 2022)