Reaching In to Reach Out: Therapy Box for Escape-Maintained Aggression

Susan E Elswick EdD LCSW, Assistant Professor/BA Program Coordinator & Mallory Williams LMSW, MSW Graduate 2015

Description and Purpose

- The Therapy Box is a new treatment package intervention, being researched to determine its effectiveness as a Response to Intervention (RtI) Tier 2 and Tier 3 behavioral intervention for identified students. This intervention is intended to target students that display escape-maintained aggression.
- The Therapy Box assists students with increasing Emotional Intelligence and their social-emotional literacy while providing a supportive, caring, and safe classroom environment. The Therapy Box encompasses the theories of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), function-based assessments and supports, B.F. Skinner’s theory of manding, and Differential Reinforcement of Communicative Behavior (DRC).
- This intervention also utilizes the systems approach of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBS) and Response to Intervention (RtI) Models.
- The hypothesis of The Therapy Box is that the student will be able to mand for “calm down time” with the box in lieu of an anger outburst/episode within the classroom.

Methods

- This study used a non-concurrent multiple baseline A/B design to show demonstration and replication of effects, across three first grade classrooms.
- The multiple baseline design is widely used in behavioral research, and lends itself to being useful in the area of educational research due to its flexibility in approach and ability to continue the intervention without the need to utilize a reversal design to show effectiveness of the intervention (Barlow & Hersen, 1984).

Results

- Student 1, after the institution of the Therapy Box intervention, the student’s office referrals related to aggression decreased over a six month analysis.
- Student 2, data indicates that the intervention was effective for the first two months of data analysis, by the third month the teacher stopped employing the intervention with fidelity, and usage of the Therapy Box in the classroom was limited.
- Student 3’s data also indicates that the Therapy Box was an effective intervention for decreasing aggression within the classroom which in turn decreased the number of office referrals related to aggression.
- This research indicates that The Therapy Box proves to be an effective Tier 2 and Tier 3 behavioral intervention for at-risk students.

Significance to Social Work Practice

- Many students present with maladaptive behaviors that decrease the amount of time students are able to engage in academic instruction due to the time teachers are forced to take away from the curriculum to intervene on problematic behaviors.
- Often, these behavioral challenges exhibited by students are behavioral excesses. A behavior excess is defined as socially maladjusted behavior that happens at a high rate, frequency, with great intensity, and which happens in a setting where it is not appropriate or accepted.
- Many times these behavioral excesses are present due to developmental delays, possible diagnoses (identified and un-identified), inappropriate social skills, because the behavior serves a specific function, and lack of training and professional development for teachers in regards to managing maladaptive behaviors within the classroom.
- The specialized area of school social work brings a unique knowledge and set of skills to the broad field of social work and to the school system.
- School social workers are vital in furthering the mission and purpose of the schools, to help the district obtain its academic mission, and help to reduce the gap between home, school, and the community.
- Identifying and Implementing Evidence-Based effective interventions for school-based social work practice is imperative to educational success.

References


