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The Relation Between Observations of Students with Behavioral Disorders and Academic Success

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The Relation Between Observations of Students with Behavioral Disorders and Academic
Success

Research Paper

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Professional Development

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts

By

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Abstract

Students classified as having emotional and behavior disorders are students who struggle with controlling their behavior and emotions. Students with behavior disorders have been integrated into classrooms, but often they are removed from the general education classroom because of inappropriate behaviors. This problem becomes perpetual and causes deficits in many academic subjects for students with EBD. Direct observations (DO) are often used to track behavior performance in the classroom and to determine eligibility. The purpose of this research is to determine if there is a relation between the number of direct observations of high school students with behavior disorders and their grades and behavior. Results indicate that there is a low degree of positive correlation between the frequency of observations and both grades and observation scores. Completing more observations increased both grades and observation scores although this relationship was low.

Keywords: Observations, emotional/behavioral disorders, grades, direct observation, academic achievement, students with disabilities.

The Relation Between Observations of Students with Behavioral Disorders and Academic Success.

Chapter 1: Statement of the Problem

Background

Many school systems throughout the United States identify and provide special education services to students who have emotional or behavioral disorders (EBD). According to the West Virginia Department of Education (2012),

An emotional/behavioral disorder means a condition in which a student exhibits one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a student's educational performance: 1) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; 2) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; 3) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; 4) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or 5) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems; 6) Schizophrenia. (p. 27)

Parents of students with EBD seek assistance from both health care providers and public school systems. According to Simpson, Cohen, Pastor, and Reuben, (2008), Approximately 8.3 million children have parents who had talked with a health care provider about their child's emotional or behavioral difficulties. The health care providers may provide counseling services as well as medical assistance to help combat ADHD and other diagnosable behavioral conditions.

Statistics have also been gathered to determine how many students receive special education services from schools across the United States. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), during the 2011-2012 school year, over 373,000 children and youth with emotional/behavioral disturbances received services to address their individual needs related to emotional disturbance. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of the specialists, students with behavioral disorders have difficulty excelling in the general education environment.

One of the biggest issues students with EBD face is the time they spend outside the general education classroom. Students with BD are often removed from the general education environment because their behavior negatively affects the classroom setting. When removed from the classroom, they are often sent to a location with special education teachers who provide assistance in: a) de-escalating the student's anger, b) completing unfinished assignments, c) preparing the for reentry to the general education classroom, and d) teaching the student how to handle the situation better. This absence causes students with EBD to miss important activities and fall behind on assessments and assignments. Also, special education teachers in resource rooms do not have sufficient resources to provide students with EBD the same level of academic instruction as they would have had in the general education environment. The long-term effect of this perpetual removal from the classroom eventually results with many deficiencies in academic achievement. By the time these students are in high school, they have severe deficiencies in many academic areas. Unless the behavior is improved in the general education environment, it becomes a difficult and recurring cycle.

EBD specialists typically create pre-emptive plans that are put in place to help prevent disruptive behavior and its negative effects on the classroom. These plans are called positive behavior support plans (PBS) and behavior intervention plans (BIP). According to the Association of Positive Behavior Support (APBS, 2007), “Positive Behavioral Support is a comprehensive set of strategies meant to redesign environments in such a way that problem behaviors are prevented or inconsequential, and to teach students new skills, making problem behaviors unnecessary” (p. 13). Some studies suggest that PBS is effective in helping students with BD. According to LaVigna, and Willis (2012, p. 194), “PBS appears to be effective for the most severe problems (as well as less severe problems), for high-rate behavior (as well as low-rate behavior), and for behavior problems exhibited by people who live in institutional settings (as well as for people who live in the community).” Despite differing opinions from researchers, PBS remains an extremely common method for improving behavior.

BIPs are plans created to help students with EBD in the general education classrooms. A BIP is created after behavior specialists, general education teachers, administrators, parents, and school psychologists review the findings of a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA). According to Zirkel (2011), the purpose of an FBA is to focus on identifying the purpose of the children’s behavior and how to replace it with a more acceptable behavior. While these plans and modifications help the problem, other preventive ways to help are frequently created and tested throughout the educational system. One preemptive approach is to complete frequent direct classroom student observations. According to APBS et al. (2007, p. 4), the definition of direct observations is, “Observing an individual to clearly identify when problem behaviors occur, what happens right before a problem behavior, what the problem behavior looks like, and how people respond to the occurrence of problem behavior.” Direct observations are used to

collect data that can be reviewed with the general education teacher, the student, and possibly the Individual Education Program (IEP) team, once the observations are completed. Direct observations can also have an immediate impact on behavior by creating proximity control and reducing outbursts in class. Unfortunately, this effect on the behavior also results in an inaccurate observation. In other words, the student being observed may display different behaviors while the observer is in the room.

Standardized observation forms are usually used so comparisons of the observations can be used throughout the school year. These forms may contain a scoring system that allows for numerical representation of the observation. After gathering the results of the observations, behavior specialists may meet with the student, parents, or general education teachers to discuss possible issues that may occur. The observation, use of standardized observation forms, and the review of the observation are all considered a part of the observation system method.

Justification

Conducting research on classroom behaviors and methods for improving them are essential to attaining highly effective classrooms. The information provided from this study could help special educators understand the effect of frequent classroom observations. By using the observation system, general education teachers, special education teachers, the student, school psychologists, and administrators may have accurate and measurable data that may provide a plan to replace undesired behavior with more appropriate behavior. As a result, students with EBD will spend more time in the general education setting learning at a higher rate.

Research Questions

How does the frequency of classroom observations affect students with EBD's observations scores? How does the frequency of classroom observations affect students with EBD's failing grades?

Hypothesis

There is a relationship between the frequency of observations and the observation scores. Observation scores will increase as the frequency of observations increase. There is also a relationship between the frequency of observations and failing grades. Academic achievement will increase as the frequency of observations increase.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Who are students with EBD?

Since the 1950's, different names and definitions have been used to identify children who have difficulty controlling their behavior and emotions. Eli Bower (1959), categorized these students in his journals as emotionally handicapped and emotionally disturbed (ED). According to Merrell & Walker (2004) The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 also used Bower's ED term. Since that time, new terminology and definitions have been used to describe students with behavioral and emotional problems. The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) and the federal government have the same definitions but use different labels. The WVDE uses Behavior Disorders (BD) and the federal government uses the label Emotional Disturbances. According to the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE, 2012, p. 25), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), (2004),

An emotional/behavioral disorder means a condition in which a student exhibits one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a student's educational performance: 1) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; 2) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; 3) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; 4) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or 5) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems; 6) Schizophrenia.

How are students with EBD identified?

Students with EBD are identified through an eligibility process by creating a multidisciplinary eligibility team to determine if the student qualifies for special education services. The multidisciplinary team, or Eligibility Committee (EC), typically consists of the following members: a) general education teachers, b) special educators, c) administrators, d) school psychologists, d) the student (if they are 18 or older), and e) the parent of the student. Part of this process includes observations in a classroom setting. The Eligibility Committee will review the evaluations to determine if the child is eligible to receive special education services. According to the WVDE (2013), evaluations are specific tests, observations and other activities designed to collect information determine if the student requires special education services. Once observation and all other pertinent information is gathered, the EC makes the determination if the student qualifies for special education services. The parent is then provided with a prior written notice when the decision to make changes occur.

What are direct observations (DO)?

According to Adamson & Wachsmuth (2014, p. 1), “Direct observation (DO) of student and teacher behavior has historically been an invaluable tool for researcher and practitioners who work with students with emotional and behavioral disorders.” DO can be used for a variety of situations including determining eligibility, monitoring progress, and creating behavior plans. DO can be used to determine the what, how, and why behavior outbursts occur. Reliability of the information produced from DO has been debated by researchers. According to David Ferguson, Briesch, Volpe, and Daniels (2012, p. 195), “A 15-min observation was found to be adequate for making low-stakes decisions, whereas an hour-long observation was necessary for

high-stakes decision making.” While the reliability of the information provided by DO has been examined and tested, this project will focus on the effect DO has on the academic achievement of student’s with EBD.

How can DO help increase academic achievement?

There are several ways DOs could help the achievement of students with EBD. As a short-term impact, the mere presence of a behavior specialist in a classroom observing could alter the student’s behavior which could result in improved or worsened academic performance. For example, if a behavior specialist is present the student with EBD may be more or less likely to have an outburst in the classroom.

Another way DO could increase academic achievement is that information gathered about the environment of the classroom could be helpful in determining a possible cause of the behavior problem. The behavior specialist could provide pertinent information on what the student needs to become successful. This is similar to the process of Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) and the Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP) created from the assessments. According to Zirkel (2011, p. 262), “An FBA is a systematic process of identifying the purpose, and more specifically the function, of problem behaviors by investigating the preexisting environmental factors that have served the purpose of these behaviors.” According to O’Neill & Stephenson (2009), the purpose of a functional behavioral assessment is to describe the relationship between behavior, its antecedents, and the controlling consequences. By using the information provided by the FBA, a BIP may be created to help replace the unwanted behavior with a more appropriate behavior. According to Jolivettek Scott, Nelson, (2000, p. 2) “A replacement behavior should be readily acceptable to others in the environment (socially valid)

and serve the same function as the inappropriate behavior.” On a smaller scale, the process of DO could be used in a similar way as FBA to help to replace inappropriate behavior with a replacement behavior on a smaller scale.

How does inappropriate behavior relate to low achievement?

Farley, Torres, Wailehua, and Cook .(2012, p. 37) states that Students with EBD have problematic behavior and impaired social skills hamper their ability to develop meaningful friendships, but these same challenges also lead to negative impacts on student learning and academic achievement. Students must be able to behave appropriately so they do not interfere with their own learning and the learning of others. If a student with EBD is disrupting the general education learning environment, then they are typically and frequently removed from class and sent to a separate location. This solves the problem for the other students in the class but drastically hampers the learning of the student with EBD. Direct observations may help prevent behavior problems which will lead to a better learning environment.

Again, the purpose of this study is to determine if observations have a positive effect on grades and behavior. The two research questions that will be included in this study will attempt to determine the effect observations have on behavior and grades. The first research question is, “How does the frequency of classroom observations affect students with EBD’s observation scores?” The second research question is, “How does the frequency of classroom observations affect students with EBD’s grades?” The researcher has established hypothesis for each research question. The first hypothesis is, “Observation scores will increase as the frequency of observations increase. The second hypothesis is, “Academic achievement will increase as the frequency of observations increase. The methods used to test this hypothesis will be discussed in

the following chapters. Observation scores, grades, and frequency of observations will all be examined to determine if there is a relationship.

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a relation between observations of students with EBD and academic success. Data collected from observations will provide insight on how classroom observations affect the grades and behavior of students with EBD. This study will compare how grades and observation scores change when number of observations are increased.

Participants and Setting

The participants included in this are two Ripley High School students with EBD in the ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades (total of 8). According to the WVDE (2015), Ripley High School's demographic information is illustrated in Figures 1-2.

Figure 1 Ripley High School Enrollment Trend

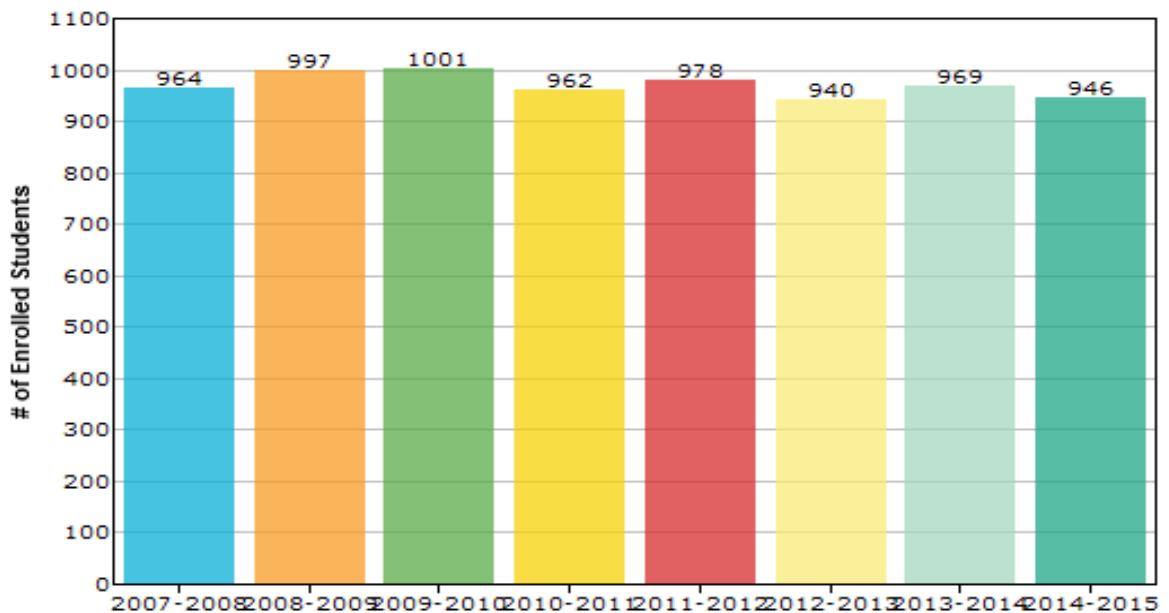
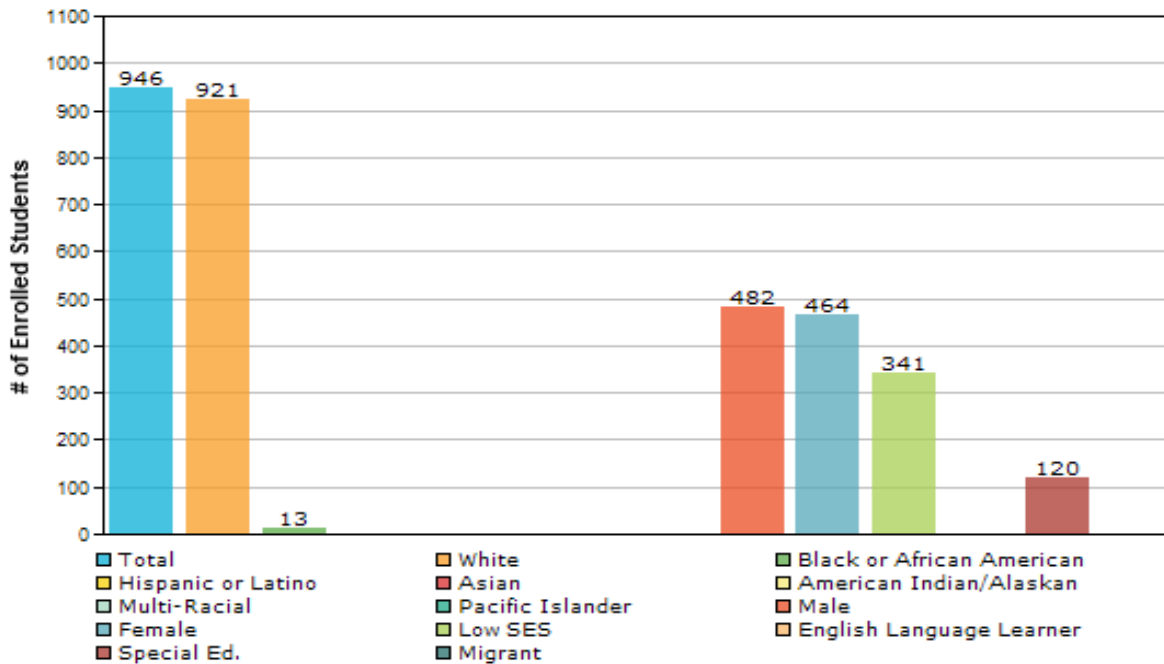


Figure 2 Ripley High School Enrollment Compensation



The ages of the students' who are included in this study range from 15 to 18 years old. All of the eight students receive affective education services between 20 and 225 minutes per week. All of the students are male and attend more than 60% of their time in a general education setting. Each of the students has received at least one day of In School Suspension (ISS) since the 2014-2015 school year began. All of the students are failing at least one subject with a grade below average (75%) on their report cards.

Procedures

Observation Form/Edline Report

As a part of the students normal services provided by the behavioral specialist, each of these students are observed two times per month in the class with the lowest grade according to their Edline reports. Edline is the program used by the teachers at Ripley High School that

provides immediate grade information on the students. Edline is a web-based tool that is utilized by students, teachers, parents and guests in various ways to get the most current information about students' grades. It offers parents and students the ability to track progress at any given time. The behavior specialist also uses Edline frequently to determine where the student may struggle academically and behaviorally.

In conjunction with the Edline reports, observations are completed to help provide the behavior specialist with information on classroom behaviors. The behavior specialist completes an observation form during each observation that provides a guideline for topics to be discussed with the student during affective education classes. Typically, two observations per month are conducted for each failing class. Observations are also scored based on how well the student performed during the observation. Table 3 shows an example of the observations form.

Figure 3 Observation Form

	On Time for class	Prepared for class	Work Ethic	Stays on task	Part. in class	Total Score	Dates
Teacher	Yes ___	Yes ___ Pencil ___ No	Yes ___ On task ___ No	Yes ___ Open book ___ No	___Y		___ Confer.
Period	No ___	Yes ___ Paper ___ No	Yes ___ no min infractions ___ No	Yes ___ Follow directions ___ No			___ Par./Tea
Class	Complete BR	Yes ___ Homework ___ No	Yes ___ Mods not needed ___ No	Yes ___ Head up/ Alert ___ No	___N		___ Sch./Par.
Date	Yes ___	Yes ___ Textbook ___ No	Yes ___ not disruptive ___ No*	Yes ___ Note taking ___ No			Yes ___ Time on task ___ No

To determine if there is a relationship between the number of observations and academic success, the behavior specialist doubled the number of observations for four of the eight students (1 per grade level) while keeping the standard number of observations for the other 4 (control group). Completing the research this way provided comparable data without decreasing the amount of services provided to the control group.

Edline reports and observation scoring were also be doubled and recorded for each student. This was used to show if the student displayed behavior and academic improvement when additional observations were performed. Data from the Edline reports and the Observation forms were collected and compared over a one-month period.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

An observation schedule was produced to observe each student for twenty minutes in the core classes they were failing. These observations were evenly distributed throughout March of 2015 and every attempt was made to make the observations on a weekly basis. By having the schedule created this way, a more accurate correlation with grades, observation scores, and observations were established by being evenly distributed.

Data for Observation Scores

Google sheets and Forms were used to collect the raw data from the observations while Microsoft Excel was used to create charts, graphs, and spreadsheets for analysis. The observation form was converted to a Google Form. The yes/no questions along with the comments section worked flawlessly for recording the data. The researcher took an Apple Ipad to each classroom to record appropriate responses for each part of the form. The data collected from Google Forms was then transferred to a Microsoft Excel Sheet. Formulas and sorting techniques were used to convert the responses into numerical data. A formula was created to give each student one point for a “Yes” response and minus one point for each “No” response. “Not Applicable” (N/A) responses were not assigned a numerical value. The points of the observation were then totaled and divided by the total “Yes” or “No” responses. This allowed “N/A” responses to not change the students score positively or negatively. The result was the final score. The spreadsheet that was created is listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Observation Scores

Date of Observation	Student Name	On time for Class?	Complete Bell Ringer	Pencil	Paper	Homework	Textbook	Notebook	On Task	No Minimal Infractions	Appropriate Behavior	Not Disruptive	Not Disrespectful	Open Book	Follows Directions	Head up/ Alert	Note Taking	Time on task	Participation in Class	Total Yes	Total No	Total NA	Score	Points Possible	Final Score
3/18	12-1-T	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	No	12	2	4	10	28	35.71
3/25	12-1-T	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	No	12	2	4	10	28	35.71
3/9	10-1-C	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	9	7	2	2	32	6.25
3/12	10-1-C	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	13	2	3	11	30	36.67
3/19	10-1-C	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	15	1	2	14	32	43.75
3/20	10-1-C	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	14	1	3	13	30	43.33
3/20	10-1-C	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	7	8	3	-1	30	-3.33
3/20	10-1-C	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	7	8	3	-1	30	-3.33
3/3	11-1-C	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	14	0	4	14	28	50.00
3/20	11-1-C	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	No	N/A	Yes	No	10	2	6	8	24	33.33
3/23	11-1-C	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	No	13	2	3	11	30	36.67
3/27	11-1-C	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	1	3	13	30	43.33
3/9	10-2-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	16	0	2	16	32	50.00
3/9	10-2-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	16	0	2	16	32	50.00
3/16	10-2-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	0	3	15	30	50.00
3/23	10-2-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	16	0	2	16	32	50.00
3/2	12-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A	10	4	4	6	28	21.43
3/9	12-1-T	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	9	4	5	5	26	19.23	
3/12	12-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	12	3	3	9	30	30.00
3/16	12-1-T	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	9	3	6	6	24	25.00
3/16	12-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	12	3	3	9	30	30.00
3/18	12-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	16	1	1	15	34	44.12
3/19	12-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	12	3	3	9	30	30.00
3/23	12-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	N/A	No	No	6	8	4	-2	28	-7.14
3/23	12-1-T	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	No	Yes	No	No	N/A	4	7	7	-3	22	-13.64
3/25	12-1-T	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A	3	2	13	1	10	10.00
3/25	12-1-T	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A	3	2	13	1	10	10.00
3/25	12-1-T	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A	3	2	13	1	10	10.00
3/2	9-2-C	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	12	0	6	12	24	50.00
3/10	9-2-C	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	No	14	2	2	12	32	37.50
3/16	9-2-C	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	1	17	-1	2	-50.00
3/17	9-2-C	No	No	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	12	3	3	9	30	30.00
3/24	9-2-C	Yes	N/A	No	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	12	2	4	10	28	35.71
3/27	9-2-C	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	12	3	3	9	30	30.00
3/4	12-1-T	Yes	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	N/A	N/A	Yes	No	No	5	9	4	-4	28	-14.29
3/10	12-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	N/A	No	No	Yes	No	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	10	5	3	5	30	16.67
3/12	12-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	15	2	1	13	34	38.24
3/12	12-1-T	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	8	1	9	7	18	38.89
3/18	12-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	N/A	No	No	Yes	No	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	10	5	3	5	30	16.67
3/23	12-1-T	Yes	No	No	No	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	10	5	3	5	30	16.67
3/23	12-1-T	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	N/A	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	7	9	2	-2	32	-6.25
3/25	12-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	N/A	No	No	Yes	No	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	10	5	3	5	30	16.67
2/25	9-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	15	1	2	14	32	43.75
3/9	9-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	13	2	3	11	30	36.67
3/10	9-1-T	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	No	Yes	N/A	No	No	10	5	3	5	30	16.67
3/10	9-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	11	5	2	6	32	18.75
3/11	9-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	No	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	Yes	No	No	No	4	9	5	-5	26	-19.23
3/12	9-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	17	1	0	16	36	44.44
3/16	9-1-T	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	Yes	N/A	No	No	4	8	6	-4	24	-16.67
3/16	9-1-T	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	N/A	11	4	3	7	30	23.33
3/17	9-1-T	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	10	3	5	7	26	26.92
3/17	9-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	13	2	3	11	30	36.67
3/20	9-1-T	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	N/A	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	N/A	9	3	6	6	24	25.00
3/23	9-1-T	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	12	1	5	11	26	42.31
3/23	9-1-T	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	N/A	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	No	10	4	4	6	28	21.43
3/24	9-1-T	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A	15	0	3	15	30	50.00
3/24	9-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	14	2	2	12	32	37.50
3/25	9-1-T	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	14	0	4	14	28	50.00

Distribution of Observation Scores

After data was collected by Google Forms and converted into the Observation Spreadsheet, the researcher began creating new spreadsheets and charts to display distribution of observation scores. Figure 4 shows the distribution of scores for all observations for all the control and target students. Figure 5 shows the distribution for the first observation scores while Figure 6 shows the distribution for the last observation scores.

Figure 4 Distribution of Observation Scores for All Observations

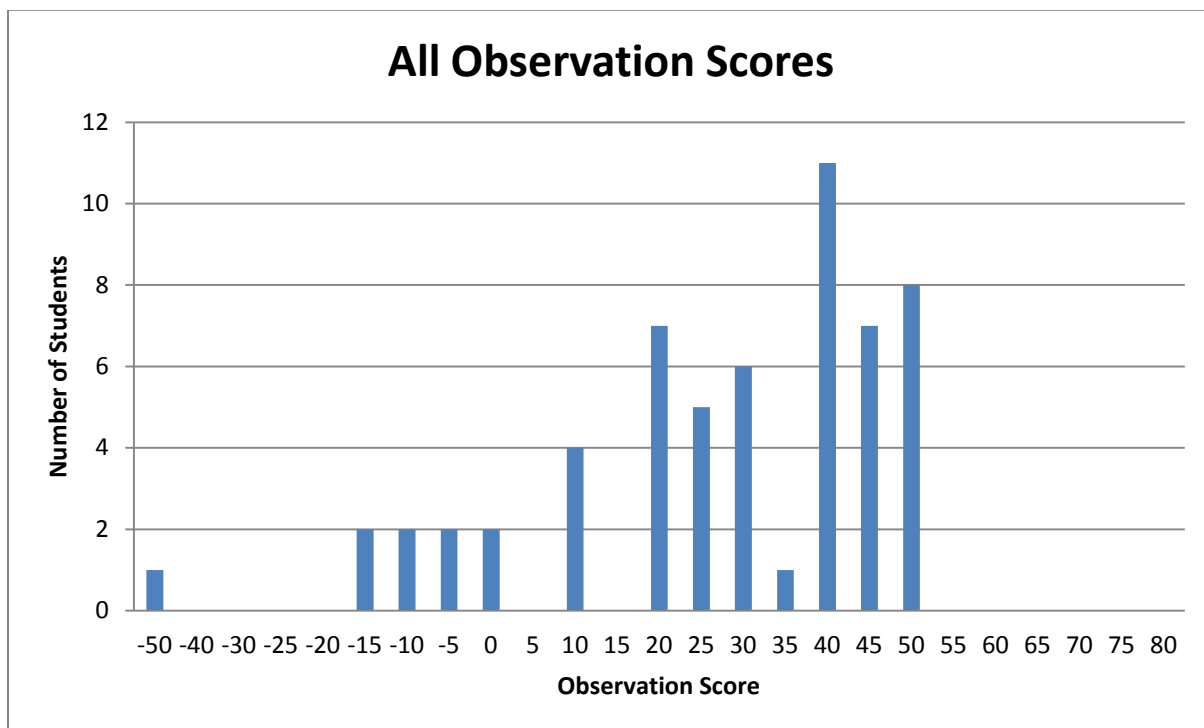


Figure 5 Distribution of the First Observation Scores

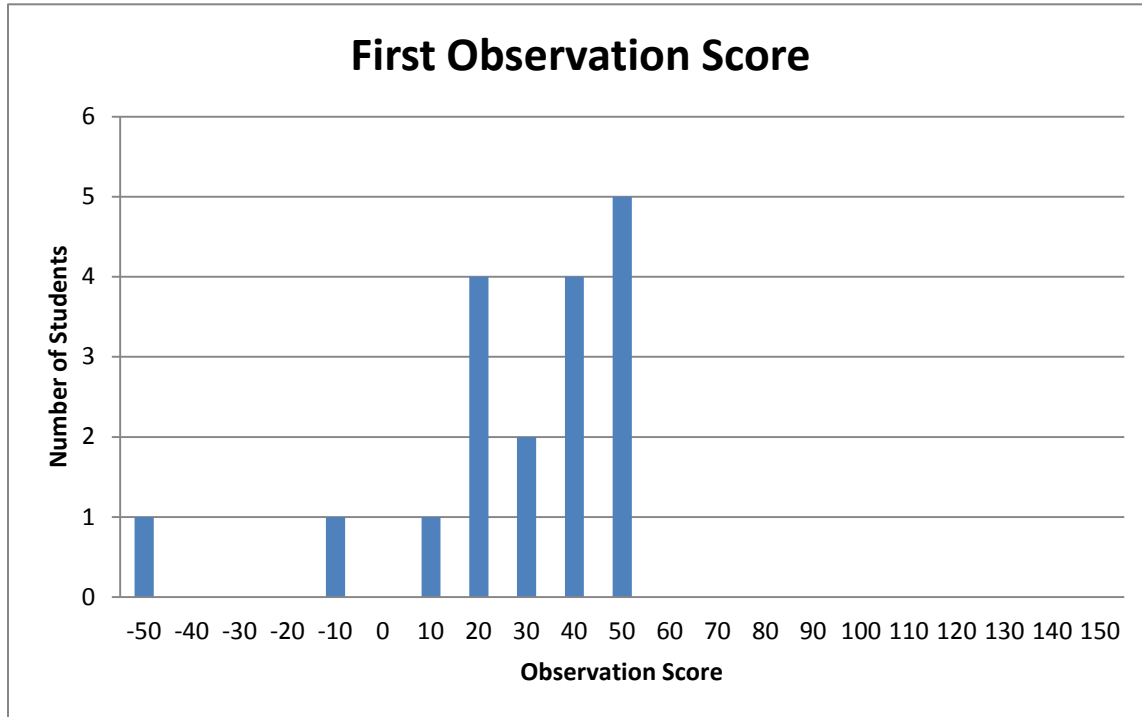
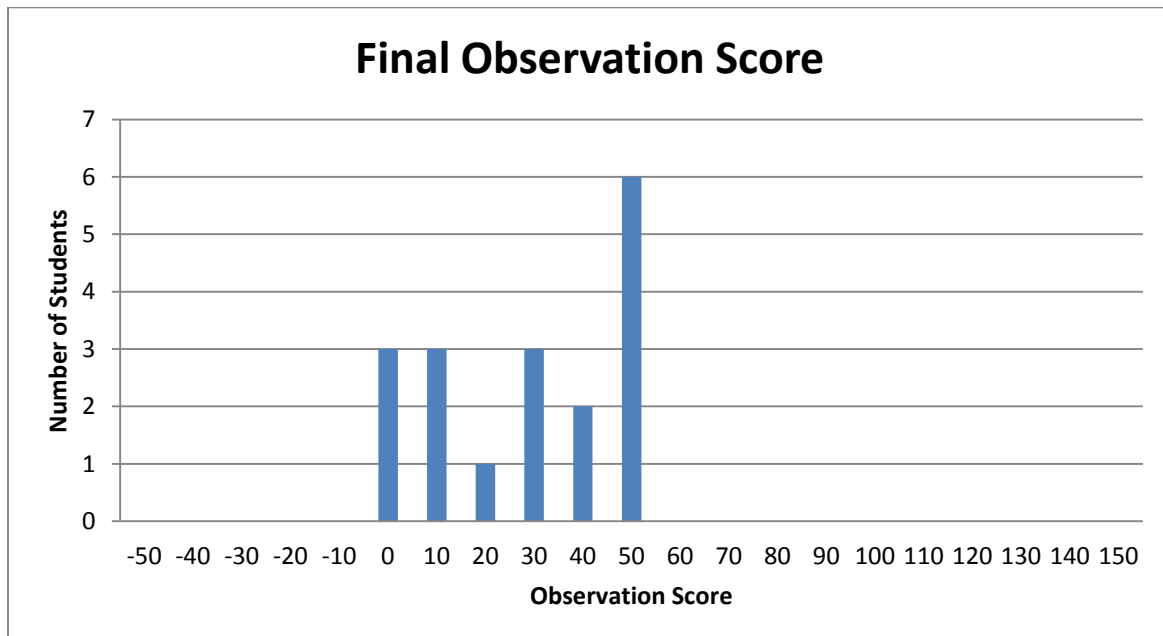


Figure 6 Distribution of Final Observation Scores



Comparing data for Observation Scores

To answer the first research question, “How does the frequency of classroom observations affect students with emotional or behavioral disorders?” the researcher had to compare the original observation scores with the final observation scores to determine if there was a relationship with the frequency of the observation and the change in the observation score. The mean gain on the observation score for the control group was .2975 points. The mean gain on the observation score for the target group was 1.258 points. The standard deviation of the change in scores was 38.1 for the control and 19 for the target group. Table 2 illustrates the results of the observation scores for the control group (two observations per failing class) and Table 3 shows the observation scores for the target group (four observations per failing class).

Table 2

Observation Scores for Control Group

# of observations	Student ID	Class	Beginning Observation Score	Ending Observation Score	Gain/Loss Observation Score
2	9-2-C	Biology	50	30	-20
2	9-2-C	Read	-50	35.71	85.71
2	9-2-C	Math	37.5	30	-7.5
2	10-1-C	Math	6.25	-3.33	-9.58
2	10-1-C	Biology	36.67	43.75	7.08
2	10-1-C	History	43.33	-3.33	-46.66
2	11-1-C	English	50	43.33	-6.67
2	12-2-C	English	35.71	35.71	0

Table 3

Observation Scores for Target Group

# of observations	Student ID	Class	Beginning Observation Score	Ending Observation Score	Gain/Loss Observation Scores
4	9-1-T	History	43.75	42.31	-1.44
4	9-1-T	English	36.67	50	13.33
4	9-1-T	Math	16.67	21.43	4.76
4	9-1-T	Science	18.75	50	31.25
4	10-2-T	Science	50	50	0
4	11-2-T	Math	21.43	10	-11.43
4	11-2-T	Biology	19.23	10	-9.23
4	11-2-T	Earth Science	30	10	-20
4	12-1-T	History	-14.29	16.67	30.96
4	12-1-T	Earth Science	16.67	-6.25	-22.92

After discovering the mean, standard deviation, and other statistics, the researcher compiled data to determine the level of relationship between the frequency of observations and the observation score. This was completed by attaining the correlation coefficient. The correlation coefficient was $r = .02238$, which indicates that there is a low degree of correlation between the frequency of observations and the observation score. Table 4 explains the degrees of correlation.

Table 4

Degrees of Correlation

Degrees	Positive	Negative
Absence of correlation →	Zero	0
Perfect correlation →	1	-1
High degree →	+ 0.75 to + 1	- 0.75 to -1
Moderate degree →	+ 0.25 to + 0.75	- 0.25 to - 0.75
Low degree →	0 to 0.25	0 to - 0.25

After gathering the correlation coefficient, the researcher was able to determine the results of the first research question “How does the frequency of classroom observations affect students with emotional or behavioral disorders observation scores?” The hypothesis “Observation scores will increase as the frequency of observations increase” is supported by the data collected, although this relationship is very weak. Possible explanations for the results of the data collected will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Data for Grades

The collection of grades for students with EBD is a common ritual for case managers. The data is simply collected and printed from an online program named Edline. Edline displays information about grades for all students at Ripley High School and can easily be collected in real-time by students, staff members, and parents. The process the researcher used to collect data is no different from the typical procedures used by a case manager.

Distribution of Grades

After collecting grades from the Edline program, the researcher began analyzing the distribution of failing grades. Figure 7 shows the distribution of grades for all students. Figure 8 displays distribution of grades for the first week, while Figure 9 displays the distribution of grades for the final week.

Figure 7 Distribution of Failing Grades for All Students

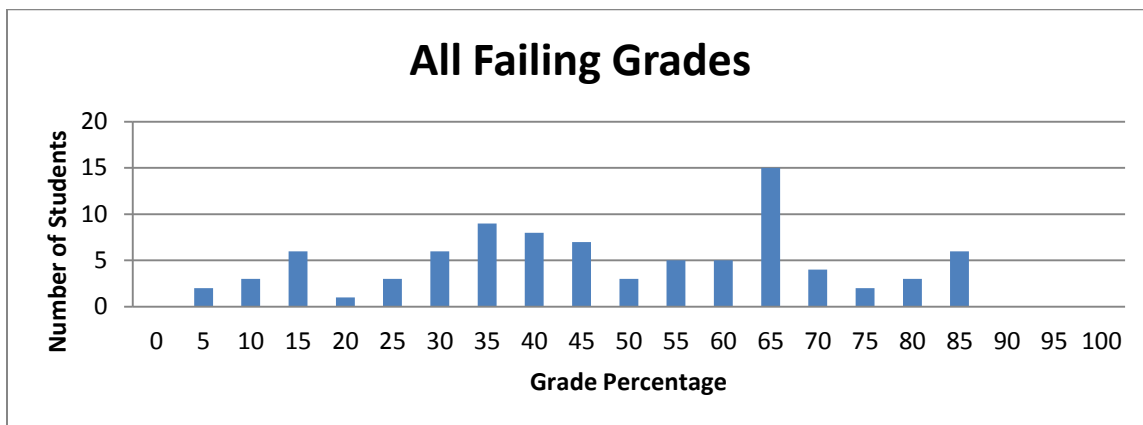


Figure 8 Distribution of Failing Grades for the First Week.

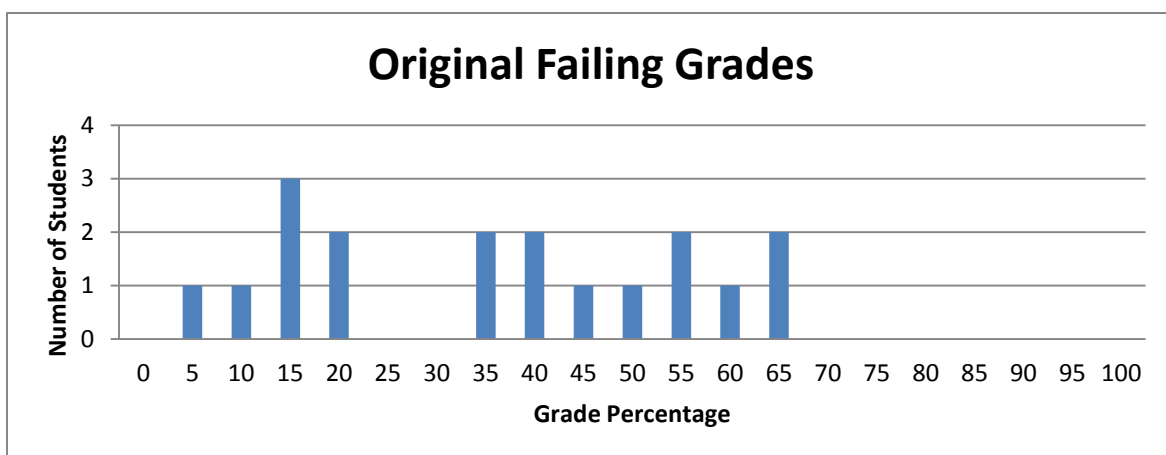
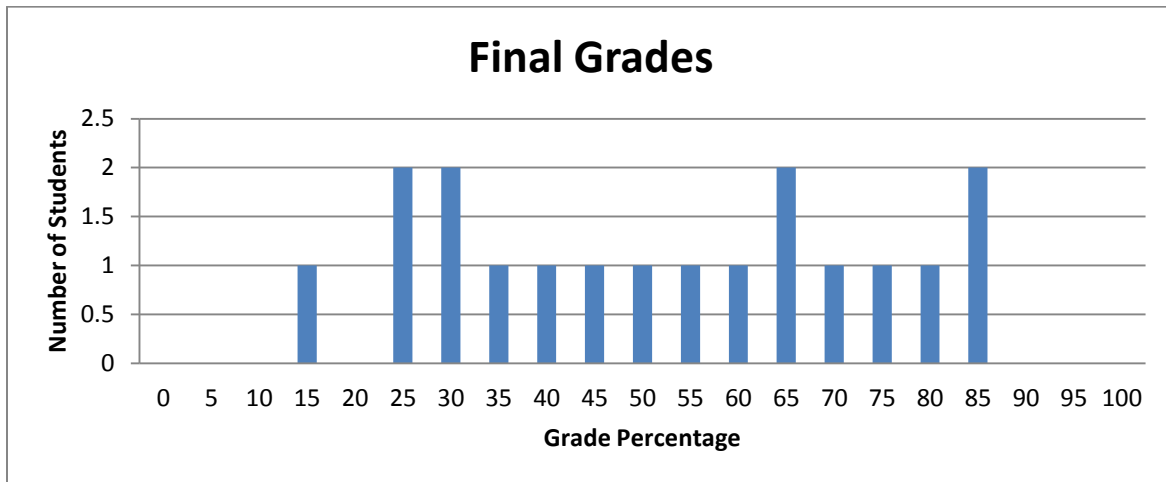


Figure 9 Distribution of Final Grades.

Comparing data for Academic Achievement

To answer the second research question, “How does the frequency of classroom observations affect students with emotional or behavioral disorders failing grades?” the researcher had to compare the increase/decrease in grades for control group with the change in grades for the target group to determine if there is a relationship with the frequency of observations and changes in grades. The mean change in grades for the control group was 2.3 and 10.8 for the target group. The standard deviation of the change in scores was 25.2 for the control and 26.7 for the target group. Table 5 illustrates the grades for the control group (two observations per failing class) and Table 6 shows the grades for the target group (four observations per failing class).

Table 5

Failing Grades for Control Group

# of observations	Student ID	Class	Beginning Grade	Ending Grade	Gain/Loss Grades
2	9-2-C	Biology	18.62	10.9	-7.72
2	9-2-C	Read 180	53.61	6.51	-47.1
2	9-2-C	Math	12.72	37.09	24.37
2	10-1-C	Math	3	10.5	7.5
2	10-1-C	Biology	61.96	76	14.04
2	10-1-C	History	42.75	31.57	-11.18
2	11-1-C	English	48.27	83.29	35.02
2	12-2-C	English	63.58	67.04	3.46

Table 6

Failing Grades for Target Group

# of observations	Student ID	Class	Beginning Grade	Ending Grade	Gain/Loss Grades
4	9-1-T	History	38.98	55.53	16.55
4	9-1-T	English	38.98	54.04	15.06
4	9-1-T	Math	17.11	22.4	5.29
4	9-1-T	Science	34.67	28.02	-6.65
4	10-2-T	Science	57.56	82.54	24.98
4	11-2-T	Math	6.06	64.11	58.05
4	11-2-T	Biology	52.81	11.77	-41.04
4	11-2-T	Earth	11.66	28.08	16.42

Science					
4	12-1-T	History	31.39	20.39	-11
4	12-1-T	Earth Science	11.66	42.03	30.37

After discovering the distribution of scores, mean, and standard deviation, the researcher compiled data to determine the level of relationship between the frequency of observations and the change in grades. This was completed by attaining the correlation coefficient. The correlation coefficient was $r=.16967$, which indicates that there is a low degree of correlation between the frequency of observations and the improvement of failing grades. Table 4 (displayed earlier) explains the degrees of correlation.

After gathering the correlation coefficient, the researcher was able to determine the results of the first research question, “How does the frequency of classroom observations affect students with emotional or behavioral disorders failing grades?” The hypothesis that “Academic achievement will increase as the frequency of observations increase” is supported by the data collected, although this relationship is weak. Possible explanations for the results of the data collected will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relation between the number of classroom observations of students with emotional/behavioral disorders (EBD) and their academic success. This chapter includes the following sections: a) interpretation of results, b) limitations of the study, and c) questions for future research.

Summary of Results

Observation Scores. The first hypothesis of this study was, “Observation scores will increase as the frequency of observations increase.” According to the correlation coefficient, there is a low degree of correlation between the frequency of observations and observation scores, although the relationship is very weak. Increasing the number of observations did increase the observation scores. Both the control and target groups’ data suggest that when any observations were performed, a natural increase of the total scores will typically take place. The control group saw a total increase of 2.38 points after two observations, while the target group increased 15.28 points after 4 observations.

When looking at the groups individually, the natural increase of scores is a little less evident. In the control group, one of the four students increased their observation score and two of the four students scored lower. This data suggests that more students in the control group had decreasing scores than increasing scores. In the target group, two of the four students increased their observation score whereas one of the four decreased their observation score. More students in the target group were positively affected when additional observations took place.

Considering the correlation coefficient and the comparison of the control and target group, there seems to be a positive relationship between the scores and the frequency of the

observations; however, the data does not present the magical number of observations that would be most effective and time efficient. The amount of increase indicates that observing students in the classroom setting does help, but does the amount prove to be worth the time required to complete the additional observations? The answer remains somewhat unclear.

Academic Achievement. The second hypothesis of this study was, “Academic achievement will increase as the frequency of observations increase.” According to the correlation coefficient, there was a low degree of correlation between the frequency of observations and academic achievement, although the relationship is weak. When the number of observations increased so did the failing grades. When comparing the change in grades for the control group and the target group, some differences were apparent.

Both the control and target group grades suggest that any observations will improve grades. As a whole, the control group increased their grades by a total of 18.39 percentage points in 8 classes they were failing. The target group increased their grades by a total of 108-percentage points in 10 classes they were failing. The mean increase of improvement for the control group was 2.29 whereas the target group’s mean increase was 10.8. One student from each group improved their grades enough to not be considered failing. This data suggests that students who received four observations improved their grades more than students who received two observations; however, only one student in each group improved their failing grades to passing.

When looking at the individuals within the groups, the increases in scores were apparent. Out of the four students in the control group, two increased their grades and two decreased their grades. This data suggests that half of the students in the control group improved their grades

and half of the students decreased their grades. Out of the four students in the target group, all four improved their grades. This data indicates that when given additional observations, more students will improve their grades.

Considering the correlation coefficient and the comparison of the control and target group, there seems to be a positive relationship between the frequency of observations and the grades; however, the data does not present the magical number of observations that would be most effective and time efficient. The amount of increase indicates that observing students in the classroom setting does help. It appears that increasing the frequency of observations has a greater impact on grades than observation scores does the amount of improvement worth the time required to complete the additional observations? The answer depends on how much time the teacher has available.

Limitations

Although the results of the study suggest that increasing observations improves observation scores and grades, there are a multitude of limitations to this study that are noted below.

Number of participants and Length of Data Collection. This study was conducted on eight high school aged students with emotional or behavioral disorders. The number of participants is a small representation of students with behavioral disorders in high school students across the United States. Including additional students would have produced more data concerning grades and observation scores. More data would have allowed for more accurate comparisons and more accurate data.

The window of time provided for observations was also too little. The observations took place during the month of March. Data that are more accurate would have been collected if additional time were allotted. This is especially true when considering grades. During some parts of the school year, students are more eager to complete work and improve their grades. Students may increase their effort during times that semester tests are due or at the end of a grading period. Differing levels of interest and effort from the students may provide inaccurate information. When the amount of time spent on collecting data is limited to one month, an accurate assessment of data may be skewed.

Type of grades. Only the student's failing grades were considered during data collection and analysis. This study did not consider information on grades that were D's or better. Without including this information, it is difficult to determine if the observations had an effect on all grades. Although improving failing grades is the most important data, non-failing grades must also be considered.

Edline Reports. There were also limitations when considering the Edline reports. These reports were very helpful in giving grades at a particular time, but cannot be considered completely accurate. Teachers of the students included in this study are required to upload current information to Edline on a weekly basis, but often times this does not occur. For various reasons, teachers are not able to put the most current information on the reports. This causes the data collected for the grades to be inaccurate.

Location of Students. As mentioned earlier in the report, students with emotional and behavioral disorders are often removed from their classroom and sent to resource rooms or other locations because of their troubled behavior. This happened to three of the students during the

study. This created a problem because the researcher had to alter the predetermined schedule. The change in schedule created discrepancy in the timing of the data collection. For example, student 9-1-T was removed from a class and given two days of in-school suspension during the third week of observations. The researcher had to reschedule one of the observations. The researcher completed two observations in the final week and none in the third week. This could allow for misrepresentation on the effect observations had on his score for that week. More time to complete observations (as mentioned earlier) would have provided more flexible scheduling and reduced the effect

Questions For Future Research

This study attempted to determine if the number observations had a relationship on observation scores and grades. Making additional observations was reviewed but reducing the number of observations was not considered. Removing observations was not considered in this study because the researcher felt that it would be unethical to remove services from a group of students with EBD that typically receive them. For future research, an experiment design that did not provide observations could be completed on a group of students with EBD that typically do not require observations. This might provide a more statistically accurate result while remaining ethical.

The students included in this study represented high school-aged students. Students from grades nine through twelve were equally represented, but no data was collected on middle school-aged or elementary-aged students. Future research could involve students with EBD from all ages to determine if there is a relationship between observations, observations scores, and grades.

This study focused on observations of students with EBD but additional research could be conducted on students with other exceptionalities. Students with Specific Learning Disabilities, Intellectual disabilities, and other exceptionalities could be included in future research. All special education teachers, not just teachers of students with EBD, would benefit from the information provided from this type of research.

Conclusion

The results of this study support the first hypothesis that observation scores will increase as the frequency of classroom observations increase. Students in the target group had higher observation scores as additional observations were performed than students in the control group. The correlation was considered low but there appears to be a positive relationship between the frequency of observations and observation scores.

The results of this study also support the second hypothesis that academic achievement will increase as the frequency of observations increase. Students in the target group received higher grades from their classes after additional observations than students in the control group. The correlation was considered to be low but there appears to be a positive relationship. It is difficult to say, however, if the amount of improvement is significant enough for teachers to use this strategy. The results also do not provide information on whether observations should be used as a time-efficient tool to improve behaviors and grades. What the results do suggest is that observations could be used to improve behavior and grades.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Observation Form

Successful Classroom Correlates

NAME: _____

This is a point system check-list, both academically and behavioral, which profiles student tendencies in a classroom environment. The results may be used as a rewards system component and an instrument to identify and correct undesirable traits in the learning process.

Student behaviors are defined in five basic correlates to be observed during the classroom visit. Scores shall be recorded in all these areas using an assigned numerical value of one (1) point for "yes" responses and two (2) points for "no" responses to each indicator within the behavior/correlate box. Scores are then recorded with tabulations determining a final score.

The scoring range is as follows:

13-22 (9 pts) = Conferencing – BD instructor and student = Positive Reinforcement.

23-26 (4pts) = Conferencing – BD, classroom teacher, and student = Proactive Intervention.

27-36 (9pts) = Conferencing – BD, classroom teacher, principal, student, and parent = Action Plan and Consequences.

* = Note: Any "no" response in this indicator, regardless of the total score, requires a meeting with the BD specialist, teacher, and student.

Teacher	On Time for class Yes ___ No ___	Prepared for class Yes ___ Pencil ___ No Yes ___ Paper ___ No Yes ___ Homework ___ No Yes ___ Textbook ___ No Yes ___ Notebook ___ No	Work Ethic Yes ___ On task ___ No Yes ___ no min infractions ___ No Yes ___ Mods not needed ___ No Yes ___ not disruptive ___ No* Yes ___ not disrespectful ___ No*	Stays on task Yes ___ Open book ___ No Yes ___ Follow directions ___ No Yes ___ Head up/ Alert ___ No Yes ___ Note taking ___ No Yes ___ Time on task ___ No	Part. in class ___Y ___N	Total Score	Dates ___ Confer. ___ Par./Tea ___ Sch./Par.
Period	On Time for class Yes ___ No ___	Prepared for class Yes ___ Pencil ___ No Yes ___ Paper ___ No Yes ___ Homework ___ No Yes ___ Textbook ___ No Yes ___ Notebook ___ No	Work Ethic Yes ___ On task ___ No Yes ___ no min infractions ___ No Yes ___ Mods not needed ___ No Yes ___ not disruptive ___ No* Yes ___ not disrespectful ___ No*	Stays on task Yes ___ Open book ___ No Yes ___ Follow directions ___ No Yes ___ Head up/ Alert ___ No Yes ___ Note taking ___ No Yes ___ Time on task ___ No	Part. in class ___Y ___N	Total Score	Dates ___ Confer. ___ Par./Tea ___ Sch./Par.
Class	On Time for class Yes ___ No ___	Prepared for class Yes ___ Pencil ___ No Yes ___ Paper ___ No Yes ___ Homework ___ No Yes ___ Textbook ___ No Yes ___ Notebook ___ No	Work Ethic Yes ___ On task ___ No Yes ___ no min infractions ___ No Yes ___ Mods not needed ___ No Yes ___ not disruptive ___ No* Yes ___ not disrespectful ___ No*	Stays on task Yes ___ Open book ___ No Yes ___ Follow directions ___ No Yes ___ Head up/ Alert ___ No Yes ___ Note taking ___ No Yes ___ Time on task ___ No	Part. in class ___Y ___N	Total Score	Dates ___ Confer. ___ Par./Tea ___ Sch./Par.
Date	On Time for class Yes ___ No ___	Prepared for class Yes ___ Pencil ___ No Yes ___ Paper ___ No Yes ___ Homework ___ No Yes ___ Textbook ___ No Yes ___ Notebook ___ No	Work Ethic Yes ___ On task ___ No Yes ___ no min infractions ___ No Yes ___ Mods not needed ___ No Yes ___ not disruptive ___ No* Yes ___ not disrespectful ___ No*	Stays on task Yes ___ Open book ___ No Yes ___ Follow directions ___ No Yes ___ Head up/ Alert ___ No Yes ___ Note taking ___ No Yes ___ Time on task ___ No	Part. in class ___Y ___N	Total Score	Dates ___ Confer. ___ Par./Tea ___ Sch./Par.

Appendix B. Sample Edline Progress Report

Edline Progress Report For _____

| Grade Level:

BIOLOGY | Teacher:

Overall Average: 48.94

Overall Grade: F

Semester 2 | Average: 48.94 | Grade: F

Assignments

Name	Date	Category	Weight	Possible
PP	1/23/15	**	150.00	150.00
XC	1/26/15	**	0.00	0.00
HW	2/2/15	**	14.00	14.00
HW	2/3/15	**	20.00	20.00
HW	2/11/15	HW	20.00	20.00
Quiz	2/20/15	Quiz	100.00	100.00
HW	2/25/15	**	12.00	12.00
HW	3/2/15	**	15.00	15.00
HW	3/15/15	**	20.00	20.00
HW	3/17/15	**	50.00	50.00
HW	3/24/15	**	18.00	18.00
Lab	3/26/15	**	0.00	0.00
HW	3/30/15	**	20.00	20.00
Quiz	4/3/15	**	100.00	100.00

HW	4/14/15	**	80.00	80.00
HW	4/20/15	**	60.00	60.00
HW	4/25/15	**	40.00	40.00

Categories

Category	Weight	Possible	Total Points	Average
HW	0.00	20.00	0.00	0.00
Quiz	0.00	100.00	33.00	33.00
**	0.00	599.00	270.00	54.10

Special Assignments

Name	Date	Category	Weight	Possible	Score (ft)
SEMEX2	2/2/15	**	20.00	**	**

Score Symbols	
S	90
N	70
U	50
Pass	85
Fail	50
√	100
ABU	0
ABE	NaN

Grade Scale	
A	92.5
B	84.5
C	74.5
D	64.5
F	0