Scaling Up an Intervention with Social Validity in Mind: The Iterative Process of Manualizing a
Program in the Pursuit of Meaningful Effects

Mary Rose Sallese
Texas A&M University

Kimberly J. Vannest
The University of Vermont

Background/Context:

The long-standing gap between research and practice in education is well documented. Despite efforts to lessen the gap over time, evidence does not suggest that the discrepancy has been meaningfully reduced (Cook & Cook, 2011; Cook & Cook, 2016; Cook & Odom, 2013). In order to improve student outcomes, the field must find a way to empower educators with knowledge of evidence-based practices (EBPs) and the support necessary to incorporate them into instruction. Prior research has shown that self-monitoring (SM) is one way to make positive behavior change. SM involves consciously observing behavior, recording results, and using the data to improve outcomes in the future. Educational research suggests that SM interventions are related to positive behavior changes with a range of adult and student populations (Briere, Simonsen, Sugai, & Myers, 2015; Guzman, Goldberg, & Swanson, 2018; Rispoli et al., 2017).

Our research team designed and executed a multiple-baseline across participants single-case research design study which examined the effects of a multi-component SM intervention on the use of a classroom management practice with pre-service teachers. While the intervention was designed for behavior change in the pre-service teacher, the program was completed as a partnership with the mentor teacher. What Works Clearinghouse (WWC; 2017) standards were used to develop the research protocol and inform the final write-up. The intervention resulted in increased use of behavior specific praise with all four participants and demonstrated good social validity across the three constructs: goals, procedures, and outcomes. A functional relation was established with consistent effects across three of the four participants.

Current Project:

Based on positive results and feedback from the original study, the research team decided to improve and expand the intervention. The team drafted a manualized version of the procedures, training materials, and intervention resources. The Empowering and Supporting Educators (EASE) program includes self-monitoring, performance feedback from a mentor or supervisor teacher, and goal setting with options to include modeling and action planning. The current program expands the original intervention population beyond mentor teachers and pre-service teachers to include a variety of mentor/mentee relationships.

Effective interventions only hold meaning to the extent to which they are used in practice. Even if the current intervention consistently improves teacher behavior in empirical investigations, to provide practical significance and meaningful effects in the long run practitioners must be willing and able to engage in the program. Research dissemination efforts will not be effective if the practitioners view the program as impractical and irrelevant. With this in mind, the task of refining and converting the intervention into a manualized program and assessing the efficacy will be accomplished through a prioritization of social validity. Strain, Barton, and Dunlap (2012) describe their collective attempts to emphasize social validly in their work as a "consumer-oriented assessment perspective" that serves as a "steering wheel" rather than a "luxury add-on" (p. 183; 197). Mirroring this view of social validity, the process of expanding the current intervention will be accomplished through an iterative process in two phases. During the first phase, the team will solicit relevant stakeholder feedback to inform program edits. The second phase will include a single-case research experimental design to examine the manualized program.

Phase 1 (in progress):

    Purpose: To assess the feasibility, usability, and acceptability of the manualized version, the research team will solicit relevant stakeholder feedback.

    Participants: pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, instructional coaches, paraprofessionals, & faculty members in higher education

    Data Collection & Analysis: After providing the program manual for review, the team will conduct semi-structured interviews, facilitate focus groups, and send out a survey to gain feedback. The team will review the data to identify themes and determine the appropriate edits to the program manual prior to the study in Phase 2.

Phase 2 (Expected Start January 2020):

    Purpose: The purpose of the study is to examine the effects of the manualized version of the multi-component self-monitoring intervention on the rate of classroom management practices. In addition, the study will include measures to assess the social validity of the goals, procedures, and outcomes with relevant stakeholders prior to, during, and after the intervention.

    Participants: Researchers will recruit four dyads. Participants may be from one of the following groups: teacher/pre-service teacher; paraeducator/special education teacher; novice in-service teacher/mentor; or four peer in-service teachers.

    Setting: School district in south-central region of the United States.

    Intervention: While the intervention is designed for behavior change in one person, the program is completed as a partnership between an instructor and a supervisor teacher. EASE includes self-monitoring (SM), performance feedback (PF) from a mentor or supervisor teacher, and goal setting (GS) with options to include modeling and action planning. Four days a week for three weeks the instructor teaches during the previously agreed upon 10-minute time period while monitoring the frequency of the target behavior with a handheld counter (supervisor observes and collects data). After lesson is complete, the supervisor teacher and instructor will meet to debrief about the target behavior. This meeting is brief (10-15 minutes) and remains at a consistent time. The supervisor teacher provides PF and facilitates GS with the option to add modeling and action planning when appropriate. The session ends with the instructor graphing the target behavior.

    Research Design: Phase 2 will use a multiple-baseline across participants single case research design. WWC (2017) standards will inform the design and research protocol.

    Data Collection & Analysis: Data collectors will measure the primary dependent variable by systematic direct observation, during a specific 10-minute time period of teacher directed instruction. Mentor teacher and researchers will use data collection sheets to record the frequency of the behavior by marking a tally for each instance of the target behavior. IOA will be collected for at least 20% of data collected in each condition for each participant.

    The analysis procedures will include visual analysis, masked visual analysis (Byun, Hitchcock, & Ferron, 2017), and statistical analysis specific to data and sampling characteristics (Parker, Vannest, Davis, & Sauber, 2011; Pustejovsky, 2018; Vannest et al, 2018).

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