

Common Reason for Academic Failure: They have not had to do it that way before
Intervention Name: Reinforce Natural Occurrences

Brief Description:

Academic problems may stem from lack of generalization. The student may know the skill but has not learned to generalize it to a new environment. When that student naturally shows signs of generalization, reinforce the generalization.

What “common problems” does this address?

Many students have learned a certain skill such as reading or adding. When presented with a new environment, the child does not understand that he/she should use the previously learned skill and apply to the new situation.

Reading example: A child may read small, reading books for fun, but complains that he cannot read his science textbook. He has not learned to generalize sounding out phonemes in order to make a word because that is not what is taught in science class. This type of problem is directly related to social behavior and learning to generalize appropriate behavior across contexts (example: acting the same in the classroom and the playground).

Procedures:

1. Opportunities should be provided for students to generalize academic performance across many settings
2. When generalizations are made, reinforcement should be immediate
3. Help students make the connection between the original environment and the new environment. Explain why and how the skill is applied in both areas.
4. Encourage further generalizations.

Critical Components that must be implemented for intervention to be successful:

Reinforcement should be given immediately when the appropriate behavior is exhibited. Thoroughly explain why the specific skill applies in the new environment.

Critical Assumptions/Problem-Solving Questions to be Asked:

This intervention assumes that the child has a thorough understanding of the skill for which generalization is hoped to occur. Similarly, the teacher needs to be mindful of watching for natural occurrences of the skill. Generalization may take time and patience in order for a student to fully understand what is being asked of him/her. Reinforcement selection procedure needs to be in place in order to assure that reinforcement is appealing to the student.

References

There is a large body of evidence on the use of reinforcement to motivate students' academic progress. This type of intervention is universal and should generalize in many situations.

Stokes, T. F., & Baer, D. M. (1977). An implicit technology of generalization. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 10*, 349-367.

Stokes, T. F., & Osnes, P. G. (1989). An operant pursuit of generalization. *Behavior Therapy, 20*, 337-355.