

EVALUATION SETTING – ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY, MN

This evaluation of the Hocus Focus program took place over a six week period. The researchers were Graduate Students from St. Cloud State University (MN) who are specializing in special education.

The program was implemented in four level IV settings with thirty-two students who are diagnosed as having an emotional behavior disorder (EBD) and learning disability (LD). Students' ages ranged from 12-14 years old.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The proposed purpose of this evaluation is to evaluate the curriculum using the following questions as guidelines.

- 1) To what extent are the desired participant outcomes being achieved?
- 2) What are the strengths of the curriculum?
- 3) What are the weaknesses of the curriculum?
- 4) What is the cost/benefit ratio for the teacher where “cost” being time and “benefit” being student growth?
- 5) What areas on RSE demonstrated the greatest improvement?
- 6) What areas of Self-efficacy demonstrated the greatest improvement?

DESIGN AND METHODS

Data was systematically collected and evaluated utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. These methods include observation, pre/post student surveys, and interviews with students and teachers.

RESULTS

The program was implemented differently by each of the Evaluators based on time constraints, classroom schedule, and other obligations placed on the teacher.

1) To what extent are the desired participant outcomes being achieved?

Evaluator #1:

- Students improved their on-task and participation behaviors

- Peer mentoring was observed; students worked together and demonstrated leadership skills by taking the initiative to assist their classmates
- Improvement in leadership and socialization skills

“I witnessed classmates getting along with one another who usually fought constantly and had a history of negative peer relationships. I was amazed at the camaraderie between the kids and the friendship skills they demonstrated.”

- Improvement in Homework completion

“My supervising teacher was so impressed by the hard work students were putting into the school work and could not believe how much integrating the magic was motivating them.”

Evaluator #2:

- Students improved their on-task and participation behaviors
- Improvement in leadership and socialization skills
- Initiative to help their peers
- Improvement in homework completion

Evaluator #3: Program was implemented in a Social Thinking Class with improvements noted in:

- Self-esteem
- Positive Behavior
- Motor Coordination
- Socialization
- Self-determination
- Attention to task
- Willingness to participate/become involved

Evaluator #4: *“I found that my students did feel very good about being able to master what appeared to be a complex trick. This led them to occasionally talk to others and present the trick they had learned.”*

2) *What are the strengths of the curriculum?*

Evaluator #1:

- The curriculum is engaging.
- It was a positive motivator for the students and improved their on-task behaviors.

- Students were able to follow multi-step direction, problem solve, show concentration, and improve memory skills.
- Students also improved their self-esteem, frustration level, and social interaction skills.

“Many teachable moments happened while learning the tricks and I found those moments a great opportunity to make connections to the students’ everyday lives. For example, at one point or another every student was frustrated because s/he could not master a magic trick. Those moments were very important because I could talk with the student about the frustrations of daily life. I also had a mini lesson on what self-determination is and how to handle frustrations appropriately.”

Evaluator #2:

- The curriculum is engaging.
- Positive motivator for the student
- Improved student on-task behaviors

“They learned and were also able to recognize themselves that they were following multi-step directions, accepting feedback, and had an increased sense of determination.”

Evaluator #3:

- The curriculum provides a foundation for broad-based improvement in socialization skills
- Increases student motivation to learn

Evaluator #4:

- Students demonstrated confidence in social situations, more willing to talk to others
- The more reserved students (quiet/shy) became more confident in their performance and teaching skills.
- Students indicated the curriculum was fun and engaging.
- Curriculum was well organized, lesson plans were complete, all support materials were provided and well developed.

“My students said they liked that it seemed like I was having fun in class...that I seemed more relaxed.”

3) What are the weaknesses of the curriculum?

Evaluator #1:

“I don’t consider this a weakness; however, I modified some of the lesson plans because my students have a difficult time writing. I focused more on verbally discussing the lesson and using the visuals provided (like the instructional DVD and the chart).”

Evaluator #2: Indicated no weaknesses

Evaluator #3: Evaluator felt the DVD chapters for each trick were difficult to follow.

Evaluator #4:

- Many of the tricks were age appropriate for 7th grade students but lesson objectives seemed to be more elementary.
- Curriculum should include instructions for Secondary level teachers to adapt some lesson terminology (Wizard’s Academy, Wizard’s Book of Secrets, etc) to a more appropriate level

4) What is the cost/benefit ratio?

Evaluator #1:

- Positive growth in all areas and in the majority of the students
- Improvement in motivation levels, especially to complete homework
- Positive peer relationship skills, peer mentoring, and peer collaboration

Evaluator #2: Students demonstrated positive growth in all areas

Evaluator #3: Students demonstrated 100% growth in these areas:

- Self-esteem
- Positive behavior
- Motor coordination
- Socialization
- Self-determination
- Attention to task
- Willingness to be involved.

Evaluator #4: *“Just because I did not find the curriculum beneficial in my math class doesn’t mean that there is not a place for it. I do believe that, if it was combined with other social skills curriculum, this could work wonders in helping the students interact with each other and other students outside of the special education classroom.”*

5) What areas on RSE demonstrated the greatest improvement?

Evaluator #1:

- Social Interactions – students all felt as though they were able to work together and problem solve better after completing the curriculum.
- Frustration Tolerance – student all felt they could deal with frustrations in a more appropriate manner

Evaluator #2 – did not provide a response

Evaluator #3 – demonstrated significant increase in self-respect

Evaluator #4:

- Students demonstrated improvement in this statement: “I feel that I do not have much to be proud of.”

“Much of the day, these students are reminded of the difficulties they have in school but when they mastered a trick they felt smart and proud of what they could do.”

6) What areas of Self Efficacy demonstrated the greatest improvement?

Evaluator #1:

- Finishing homework assignments in a timely manner
- Asking for help with a task

Evaluator #2 – did not provide a response

Evaluator #3:

- Increased confidence to speak in front of a group
- Increased the quantity and quality of relationships with peers

Evaluator #4:

- Greatest growth in these statements: “I can work and play well with a group of other people” and “I can get my parents to take part in my school activities.”

“These surprised me a little bit because I have had a hard time getting homework done in my class and felt that it was possibly due to the fact that my students did not have someone at home to help them with it. However, when my students said they enjoyed teaching their parents their tricks, it showed me that they had someone who was interested in what they learned at school.”

“I believe that the curriculum allowed me to connect with my students in a way that I would not have otherwise. To share something more social and fun with my students

helped them feel closer to me and, hopefully, allowed them to see me as someone they could talk to about issues in their lives.”