

# Research: Focusing Together

## Overview

The Focusing Together Program is used to teach students how to stay on task and be productive in their classrooms while following basic classroom rules. To test the effects of the instructional program, a study was conducted in eight classrooms with a total of 225 students in grades four and five. The classrooms were randomly selected into an experimental and a control group. The four teachers of the experimental classes taught their students the strategies associated with the Focusing Together Program and continued using the program with the students. The four teachers in the control classes did not use the Focusing Together Program.

Observers visited the eight classrooms regularly. They observed the off-task behaviors of five students in each classroom using an interval recording system, with intervals lasting 60 seconds long. Each group of five students included one high achiever, one average achiever, one low achiever, and two students with disabilities. The observations lasted 15 minutes each during a time when students were completing independent work. Six observations were completed in each classroom, with three observations occurring at the beginning and three at the end of the study. Example off-task behaviors included being out of one's seat, looking around the room, talking, playing with objects, and not following the teacher's directions.

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## Results

At the beginning of the study, the observers recorded a mean of 21 off-task intervals in the experimental classrooms and a mean of 22 off-task intervals in the control classrooms (within the total of 45 intervals). At the end of the study (after the experimental classes had Focusing Together instruction), the observers recorded a mean of 5 off-task intervals for the experimental students and 18 off-task intervals for the control students. All types of students in the experimental classrooms exhibited a decrease in the number of off-task intervals. See Table 1 for results for the subgroups of students.

	All		Hi		Avg.		Lo		SWD	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Experimental	21.0	4.5	16.3	1.8	18.8	1.0	23.3	3.3	35.0	12.0
Comparison	21.9	18.3	14.0	14.0	23.0	12.0	28.3	32.0	22.3	15.0

When the teachers were asked to rate their satisfaction with their own class management skills and how well their students followed the rules and worked independently, the experimental teachers had a mean rating of 6.06, and the control teachers had a mean rating of 3.56 on a 7-point scale (with "7" equal to "completely satisfied").

Moreover, when asked to report rule infractions for a two-week period at the beginning and end of the study, the experimental teachers reported a 72% reduction, while the control teachers' report remained the same across the study period.

## Conclusions

This study showed that students with reading and writing disabilities could learn to write essay answers in response to essay questions such that their content and organization improved. In addition their essay answers were comparable to the answers of students without disabilities.

## Reference

Rademacher, J. A., Pemberton, J. B., & Cheever, G. L. (2006). *Focusing together: Promoting self-management skills in the classroom*. Lawrence: Edge Enterprises, Inc.