

Teaching Organizational Skills to Promote Academic Achievement
in Behaviorally Challenged Students

Description:

- Organizational difficulties are major obstacles for many students with learning and behavior problems. Students' disorganization, including their inability to keep track of assignments and turn them in on time, can contribute to low grades and academic failure, particularly beginning in secondary school when teacher expectations are greater and supervision of students tends to be more limited than during the elementary years.
- Students learned to use the Organizational Skills Form (OSF) over 3 lessons divided into eight instructional steps. The steps are discussed in detail below.

Materials:

- Pencil
- Notebook
- Divider Tabs
- Organizational Skills Form

Steps:

Lesson 1

- 1) Organizing a notebook
 - a) Gave the students the opportunity to clean and organize their notebook binders using a step-by-step approach.
 - b) Students created a divider tab for each of their classes and placed an OSF plus blank lined notebook paper in each section.
 - c) A pencil pouch in the front of the binder stored small items such as pens, pencils, and erasers.

Lesson 2

- 2) Completing the Demographic Data and OSF Overview
 - a) This step formally introduced the OSF
 - i) (i.e., When you have a strategy for writing down assignments, you will be more successful at completing and handing in your assignments on time. This will help you get better grades.)
- 3) Beginning to Use the OSF
 - a) Students were instructed to write dates of the upcoming week in column 1 of the OSF.
 - b) Column 2 allowed students to self-record whether they were on time to class.
 - c) Column 3 served a dual purpose:
 - i) It prompted students to remember which materials were needed for class
 - ii) It allowed students to self-evaluate by circling/checking each item at the beginning of class
 - iii) Students were taught to ask themselves, "Do I have a pencil? Are my divider tabs in my binder? Have I put the papers from this class in the right section of my binder?"

- 4) Listing Tests and Assignments
 - a) Students who have acquired a strategy for recording assignment due dates are often more successful
 - b) Hypothetical scenarios from the students' academic classes were used to teach them how to accurately record the information
 - c) Students can use the top half of Column 4 to write the first assignment given and the bottom half for any additional assignments given.

Lesson Three

- 5) Noting Procedural Exceptions
 - a) Students were taught abbreviations for assignments
 - i) "W" for worksheet or "L" for lecture
- 6) Recording Assignments Turned In
 - a) Column 5 provides a place for students to check when each assignment has been completed.
 - b) To increase accountability, the students were also instructed to ask the classroom teacher to initial the box when the work was turned in.
- 7) Tracking the Assignment Score
 - a) When students have a written record of their scores, they are aware of the grade they will be receiving, and there are no surprises at the end of the term.
 - b) Students benefit from accurate and timely feedback because it reinforces the appropriate behavior and lets them know whether and how they need to change.
- 8) Counting completed OSF Items
 - a) After filling in the columns for a specific class, students counted the number of items completed and wrote that number in Column 7.

Reference:

Anderson, Munk, Young, Conley, & Caldarella. (2008). Teaching organizational skills to promote academic achievement in behaviorally challenged students. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 40, (4), 6-13.