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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the effect of preceding activities upon the attending behavior of preschool children while listening to a story in a large group situation. Attending in the group subsequent to active play was compared with attending in the group subsequent to a quiet activity. The four subjects of this research ranged in age from 3 to 4 years and were a representative sample of the entire groups's attending behavior. The active play period took place outside where the children had access to playground equipment. Quiet indoor activities consisted of performing conceptual tasks, looking at books, or playing a game at a table. Observation of the children's attending behavior took place during large group. The observer used a 15-second scanning procedure and recorded whether the subjects were attending while a story was being read or a movie shown. Attending was defined according to bodily position directed toward the designated stimuli; silence; response to teacher instructions; display of disruptive behavior, and closeness to the group. Results indicated that the children were less attentive in large group when a quiet activity preceded it than when an active activity preceded it. This study points up the fact that behavior can be altered by scheduling a preceding activity which will reduce the occasion for inappropriate behavior. (Author/MS)

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THE EFFECTS OF ACTIVE AND QUIET ACTIVITIES UPON  
SUBSEQUENT ATTENDING OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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## ABSTRACT

Many teachers believe that a quiet activity is needed to precede a subsequent quiet activity in order to increase the probability of children's attending. If simply changing the sequence of activities can decrease the amount of an undesirable classroom behavior, such as non-attending, it is a useful technique and one which could be implemented in any classroom.

The present study examined the effect of preceding activities upon the attending behavior of preschool children while listening to a story in a large group situation. Attending in the group subsequent to active play was compared with attending in the group subsequent to a quiet activity.

The active play period took place outside where the children had access to a variety of playground equipment. In contrast, the quiet activity was conducted inside. Three to four children were seated at each table. The activities during this period consisted of performing conceptual tasks, looking at books, or playing a game at the table.

The transition time between the preceding activities and large group were the same in both conditions. Each teacher instructed a group of children to find their places in large group. The children's names were placed in a semi-circle facing the teacher conducting this activity.

The four subjects of this research ranged in age from three to four years. They were chosen on the basis of data recorded prior to beginning this study and were a representative sample of the entire group's attending behavior.

Observation of the children's attending behavior took place during large group. The observer used a 15-sec scanning procedure and simply recorded whether or not the subjects were attending while a story was being read or a movie shown. Attending was defined as: bodily position appropriate to and directed toward the designated stimuli; appropriate silence; appropriate response to teacher instructions; no display of disruptive behavior; fully seated in an upright position within three feet of the perimeter of the group. Teacher attention to these children was minimal during this time.

Results indicated that the children were less attentive in large group when a quiet activity preceded it than when an active activity preceded it. These findings are a deviation from the often simply accepted idea of the need of a quiet activity preceding another quiet time to increase attending behavior. The fact that behavior can be altered simply by scheduling a preceding activity which will reduce the occasion for inappropriate behavior, suggests the practical feasibility of implementing this procedure in regular preschool settings.

THE EFFECTS OF ACTIVE AND QUIET ACTIVITIES UPON  
SUBSEQUENT ATTENDING OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Many investigators have focused their efforts on developing techniques for remediating undesirable classroom behavior, but far less attention has been directed toward examining the effects of activities on children's behavior. The sequence in which activities are scheduled may function as an important variable in setting the occasion for inappropriate classroom behavior. Thus, if simply changing the sequence of activities can decrease the amount of undesirable classroom behavior, it is a useful technique which could be implemented in any classroom.

The purpose of the present study was to examine the effect of preceding activities upon the attending behavior of preschool children while listening to a story in a group situation. Therefore, data was taken during the first portion of large group while a story was being read. All of the children's names in the class were randomly placed on the floor in a semi-circle facing the teacher conducting the activity. The five teachers in the classroom shared the responsibility of reading a story throughout each condition. During this time, teacher attention was given only to those children not included in the study and administered in such a way so as not to be heard by the subjects. Attending during story time subsequent to active play was compared with attending in the group subsequent to a quiet activity.

The four subjects, ranging in age from three to four years, were enrolled in a University of Kansas Edna M. Hill Preschool classroom, meeting four mornings per week. The subjects were chosen on the basis of their attending behavior, two of them being high attenders and the other two being relatively low attenders. In comparison with data taken on each child in the classroom, the attending of these subjects was a representative sample of the group.

Data were recorded by an observer who scanned the four subjects every 15-sec, beginning with the first subject seated to the right of the teacher reading the story. The other three subjects were consecutively observed according to their positions in the semi-circle.

The independent variables included contingent teacher attention delivered in the form of verbal praise or correction regarding the attending behavior of the group or individual subjects; and, other general teacher attention. The dependent variable was the subjects' attending behavior during the group activity while a story was being read.

(Show Slide 1)

The sequence of activities was systematically varied at the onset of each experimental condition. A reversal design in which Conditions A and B were replicated was utilized for this study. However, due to lack of time, Condition C was not replicated.

(Turn Slide Off)

The schedule during experimental condition A, consisted of having large group during which a story was read, preceded by a quiet activity conducted inside. During this time, three to four children were seated at a table with a teacher. They engaged in quiet activities such as

performing conceptual tasks, looking at books or playing a game while seated at the table. At the end of this activity, each teacher instructed her group to sit down at their places in the large group area.

Experimental condition B, consisted of having large group preceded by an active play period which took place outside on the playground, thereby, making large motor activities available to the children. The teachers prompted the children to be active, i.e., to climb, run, jump, push, or pull a play object. When the active play period ended, each teacher brought a group of children into the classroom and instructed them to find their places in the large group area.

Experimental condition C, was implemented in which an active play period was conducted inside. During this condition, equipment requiring large motor activity such as the rocking boat, spring-a-lene, see-saw, and large mat were brought into the classroom. This play period preceded the story time conducted during large group. At the end of this active play period inside, the transition to large group was the same as in the previous conditions. This condition investigated the question of whether the setting such as being inside the classroom during the active play period affected the children's attending behavior in the subsequent quiet activity.

Slide 1

This graph shows the total percent of intervals the four subjects were attending during large group when the preceding activities were: small group, active outside, small group, active outside, and active inside. Therefore, the data were recorded only during large group while the children were listening to a story. When the preceding activity was small group, the mean attending for the group was 56% and

38.7%, respectively. However, when the preceding activity was outside time, their percent of attending increased, the means being, 72% and 74%, respectively. Although the data are available within each condition, the highest percentages of attending occurred during those conditions when the subjects were active outside prior to large group, while the lowest percentages of attending occurred when the quiet small group activity preceded large group.

There is no replication of the last condition in which the children were active inside the classroom preceding large group. However, this condition does yield interesting results in that the mean of the four subjects' attending behavior was higher than when a preceding quiet activity was conducted inside, but lower than when a preceding active activity was conducted outside on the playground.

Slide 2

The four graphs presented here, demonstrate the percentage of each subject's attending behavior during large group when the preceding conditions were: small group, active outside, small group, active outside, and active inside. When the preceding activity was small group, the percent of each subject's attending was lower than when the preceding activity was active outside time. Subjects 1 and 2 were the high attenders while subjects 3 and 4 were the low attenders. For all four subjects, however, the lowest percentages of attending occurred during the condition when the quiet small group activity preceded large group.

Individual data show that Subjects 1 and 4 are representative of the group's behavioral trends when the active inside condition was implemented in that the mean percent of attending was higher than when



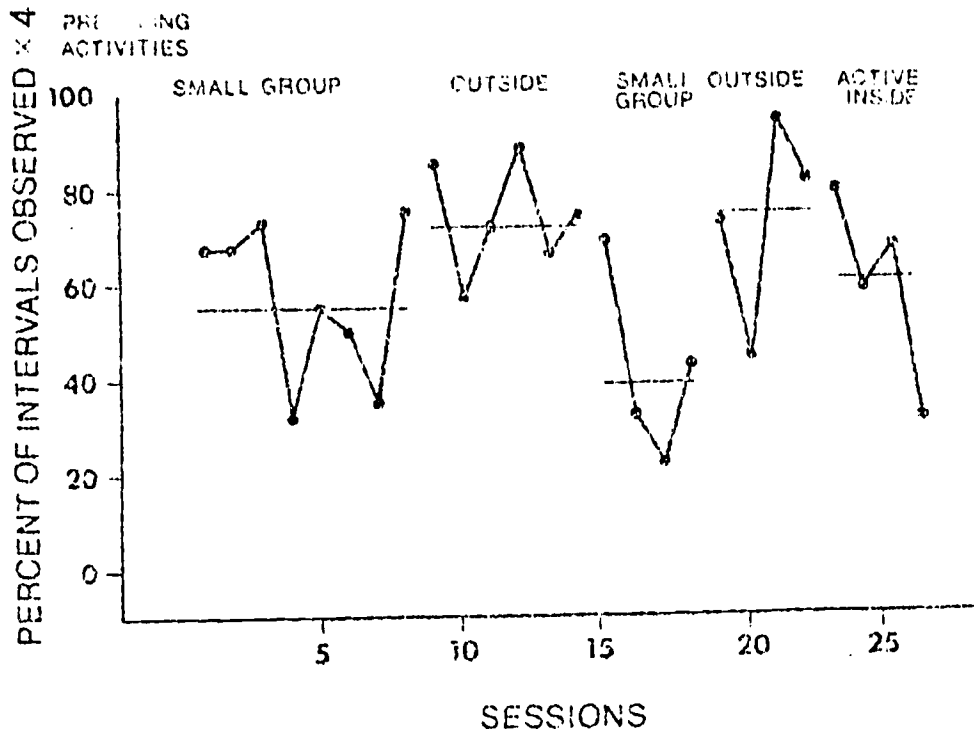
the preceding activity was small group and lower than when a preceding active activity was conducted inside.

Teacher attention to the group and to individual subjects was observed during large group. It was maintained at a near zero level throughout the study. Therefore, since teacher attention was held constant during every condition, it was not responsible for effecting changes in the attending behavior of the subjects.

Observer reliability was checked several times during each condition of the study and averaged 91%, with a range from 83% to 96%.

In summary, the children were less attentive in large group during story time when a quiet activity preceded it. These findings contradict the often simply accepted idea of the need for a quiet activity preceding another quiet time to increase attending behavior. Therefore, if the amount of an undesirable classroom behavior such as nonattending, can be decreased simply by changing the sequence of activities, it is a useful technique which could be implemented in regular preschool settings.

# GROUP ATTENDING



# ATTENDING FOR EACH SUBJECT DURING LARGE GROUP

PERCENT OF INTERVALS OBSERVED

