

USING CLASSDOJO TO HELP WITH CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT DURING GUIDED READING

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the use of a free behavioral management software program to see if it was successful to help first grade students recognize and self-monitor their behaviors while working in centers during teacher directed guided reading time. The study found that ClassDojo had a positive impact on these first grade students' behaviors and helped them to become more aware of their own behavioral choices. The use of ClassDojo allowed students to redirect their behaviors in order to be successful while working in centers and teacher-directed guided reading lessons experienced fewer interruptions.

Teachers use guided reading groups to work with small groups of students who have similar instructional reading levels (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). However, this also means that work stations or centers have to be created where students can work independently or with a buddy (Diller, 2003; Morrow, 2003) while the teacher is engaged in explicitly teaching a developmental lesson to groups of students.

This may cause a concern for some teachers (Rose & Gallup, 2006). Because the teacher is involved in a small group lesson, classroom management problems may arise, as some children may feel that the teacher is not paying attention to them, so they can do whatever they want in the centers/ workstations and the teacher won't see them (Morrow, 2003). It is important that students become responsible for their own behavior. However, some students are not aware of the behaviors they exhibit. This study explores the use of ClassDojo as a tool to help students recognize and self-monitor their behavior during center work and guided reading time.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework for guided reading and work stations is supported by Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development. Zone of Proximal Development supports the idea that when children receive direct instruction at their reading level from an educated expert they are better able to

develop into independent and fluent readers. In addition, small group configuration supports the idea that learning is social and occurs in social context (Vygotsky, 1978).

Classroom management and student engagement are supported by a positive learning framework (PLF, McDonald, 2013). This is important as teachers must set up and maintain a caring environment where students feel safe to explore and learn. In addition, the ClassDojo program can be linked to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD), as the students create rules with the teacher's help and then the teacher uses ClassDojo to scaffold positive student behavior. It is hoped that as the teacher calls attention to students' behaviors, students become aware of their behaviors and change them independently to match the social occasion.

ClassDojo also promotes constructivist ideas, as students are encouraged to change their avatar model to their liking. In addition, students are encouraged to talk about positive/negative behaviors and pick icons that represent each. Finally, students are asked to create classroom rules with the help of their teacher. Through these processes, children are constructing their own understanding of what is right and wrong (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969).

GUIDED READING

"Guided reading is a key part of a balanced reading framework and an essential element of successful reading instruction" (Richardson, 2009, pg 6). Small-group reading instruction begins with assessment, as "teachers need to be aware of each child's competencies, interests, and experiences" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 11). Once the reading level of each child has been determined, students can be grouped according to their learning needs. Guided reading instruction "supports each reader's development of effective strategies for processing texts at increasingly challenging levels of difficulty" (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, p. 2).

During guided reading groups, the teacher helps small groups of children learn more about the reading process and engage in higher-level thinking activities (Strickland, Ganske, & Monroe, 2002). When developing a guided reading lesson plan, teachers need to think about the before-during-after format in order to help students activate background experiences, summarize and synthesize text, and extend and evaluate their understanding of the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

WORK STATIONS OR CENTERS

While the teacher is focused on teaching in small reading groups, the other students must be kept busy (Diller, 2003). Thus, it is important to create a routine for movement from workstation to workstation and to post behavioral rules that keep students actively engaged in the instructional material found in each workstation.

Center work should provide students practice with the curriculum objectives (TEKS). Center work can be created using language arts, writing, math, science, social studies, art and drama so students have time to explore and expand their understanding of the curriculum being taught (Diller, 2003;

Richardson, 2009). The work found in each workstation/center should be purposefully planned to either give students more practice on what they have been learning or to provide work on what they are still having difficulty. Partnering students provide scaffolding as they help each other through the tasks presented at each station.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Classroom management is a purposeful and thoughtful process in which the actions of teachers create an environment conducive to learning (Garrett, 2013). Each year teachers need to determine an appropriate behavioral management plan (Good & Brophy, 2008), as the student-teacher relationships are the single most important component of classroom management and an essential part of creating a highly effective community of learners (Wolk, 2003).

Discipline, classroom management, and engagement strategies are critical in developing a risk-free environment where students are engaged in learning (Rischer, 2008). Teachers use proactive behavior management strategies to create a positive learning environment, as they may prevent the occurrence of problem behavior, whereas reactive punitive strategies may exacerbate behavior problems (Barton-Arwood, Morrow, Lane, & Jolivette, 2005). Classroom management is one of the biggest challenges facing new teachers and novice teachers are concerned about student's disruptive behaviors (Rose & Gallup, 2006). One way to help teachers with discipline problems is through positive behavior support (Crone & Horner, 2003), which is something that ClassDojo reinforces, as it appears to improve behavior.

CLASSDOJO BEHAVIORAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

In the 21st century, it is not surprising that technology can also be used to get students active, motivated, and engaged in creating and following their classroom discipline plan. "Technology nowadays makes everything easy and effective. It helps teachers in managing their classroom efficiently" (Colao, 2012, para 1).

ClassDojo, which is "distributed free of charge is used by roughly 200,000 teachers" (Colao, 2012, para 6) as a tool to help teachers. ClassDojo was created to help the classroom teacher keep up with specific behaviors on each individual student, both positive and negative. The company reported that teachers using ClassDojo reported a 45% – 90% increases in positive behavior and a 50% – 85% decrease in incidents of negative behavior" (Colao, 2012, para 5

Because the program can give minute-by-minute, day-by-day, week-by-week feedback, students are encouraged and motivated to do a better job. In addition, building the avatars (see Figure 1), creating classroom rules and choosing icons for each (see Figure 2) help to develop a caring, supportive relationship with and among students as well as with the teacher (Pianta, 1999). Additionally, it promotes the development of student social skills and self-regulation (Bear & Watkins; 2006).

ClassDojo rewards students instantly with both a “thumbs-up” picture and a point. Students receive one point for each positive behavior related to the rules and/or other positive behaviors the teacher wishes to reward (e.g., working hard, being respectful, helping others). When students have successfully earned the necessary points, the teacher can use the ClassDojo certificate to reward the student(s) positive behavior. The certificate is a cute, colorful certificate with all the avatars framing the certificate. In addition, a poster can be created that shows what students can earn when they reach certain point levels. For example: if a student have earned 10 points, they would receive an avatar sticker; with 20 points, a student can visit the treasure box; with 40 points a student can sit with a friend at lunch; with 50 points, a student can receive a “no homework” pass. Beside individual rewards, Whole Class Award can be given. For example, if 80% (teacher set this) of the students receive a certain amount of positive points during the week then the class can be reward with an extra recess or a “Fun Friday” activity.

All you need for ClassDojo to work is a computer. If you want students to see their progress during class you need an interactive whiteboard or a projector. In addition, the teacher can use her/his smartphone, tablet or iPod Touch to give points remotely. Finally, parents can be involved, as once the teacher “sets up” the program, parents can access their students daily behavior chart.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this study were first-grade students who attended a school district in northeast Texas. The ethnicities of the 24 students’ (16 boys and 8 girls) consisted of: 5 African American students (24%); 9 Caucasian students (36%); 8 Hispanic students (32%); and 2 multiethnic students (8%). The students attend a Title 1 school. Three students (12%) were identified as having a learning disability. Ten students (40%) were identified as struggling students in the classroom. Sixteen students (68%) were considered low SES and received free and/or reduced breakfast and lunch.

PROCEDURES USING CLASSDOJO

To determine if ClassDojo is an effective tool to reduce classroom management problems during guided reading instruction, the program was implemented from January to March in a first-grade classroom. To begin, the teacher created a class account (teachers can have multiple class accounts if needed). The teacher then uploaded the class roster. ClassDojo automatically assigns each student an avatar. An avatar is an icon or figure that can be used to represent a person in an online environment (Garriott, 1985).

During small group instruction, the students personalized the appearance of their avatar by changing the color, shape, hair, facial features, as well as adding accessories. Three examples of avatars can be seen in Figure 1.

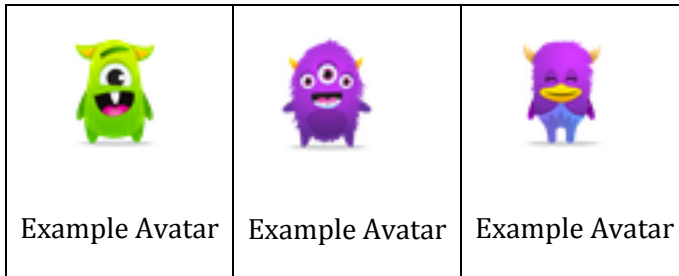


Figure 1. Examples of children’s avatars.

Next, during whole class instruction, the students with the teacher’s guidance determined what behaviors should be part of the classrooms’ behavioral plan. A list of good behaviors was created which included: following directions, being kind and helpful, whisper/talking low while working with buddy. In addition, a list of negative behaviors was generated which included: shouting/talking loud, off task, body parts on others, and too much talking.

Icons were chosen to represent each behavior (Figure 2). The class selected sounds from the choices provide by the program to associate with the positive and negative behaviors. The positive behaviors were associated with a “ring” (or “ding”) sound while the negative behaviors were associated with a “buzz” sound. Once programmed, the ClassDojo tool automatically recognizes the behavior as a positive or negative behavior and adds/deletes a point and determined if a buzz/ring is appropriate. This immediate sound feedback helped students to become aware of their behaviors, even though they do not know which student received the negative or the positive acknowledgement.

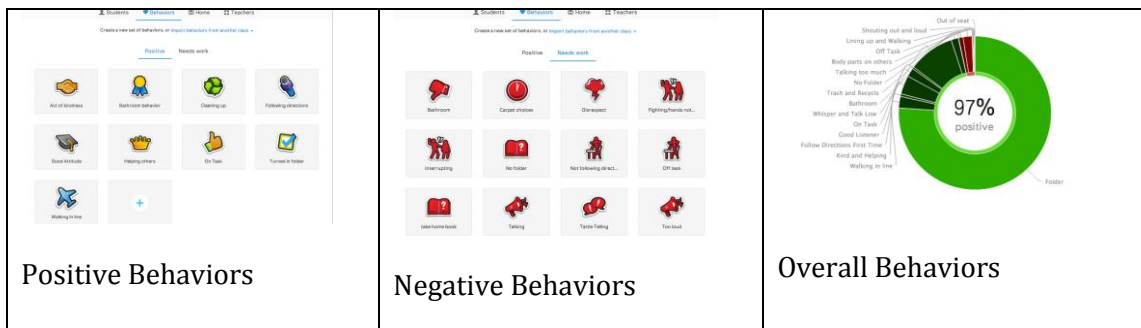


Figure 2: Icons for behavior.

The teacher consistently displayed the open website in the classroom not only during guided reading and workstation time but also during transition time and whole class teaching. With the click of the mouse, the students knew someone had received a positive “ding” or a negative “buzz” and the icon seen on the whiteboard told them what behavior was being rewarded or redirected.

DATA ANALYSIS

Once the plan was in place, the avatars created and the behavioral icons matched to class rules, Class Dojo kept tracked and calculated the students’ daily behavior by simply tallying the icons received. As seen in Figure 2, the final picture, the program is able to display behaviors in a variety of ways. A teacher can look at the class overall behavior for the day, or look at individual students overall behavior scores to see if there is daily improvement and this can be used to help develop a behavior plan.

ClassDojo scores were collected and calculated for a total of eight weeks. The cumulative negative and positive tallies for the whole class were collected every Friday throughout the study. Thus, this study did not look at individual students but at the class as a whole.

RESULTS

As seen in the Table 1, the students exhibited more negative behaviors at the start of the study than they exhibited at the end of the study. The use of ClassDojo during the time of the study tripled positive behaviors while decreasing negative behaviors. The classroom teacher (first author) was consistent at observing and giving students constant feedback, as the total behavior for each month observed were similar at 202 and 198.

Table 1 Class Total and Average Per Individual			
Months	Positive Behaviors	Negative Behaviors	Total
January 10 th to February 10 th	67	135	202
February 11 th to March 10 th	147	51	198

DISCUSSION

There are several limitations to this study that must be kept in mind. First, the number of participants in this study is small. Second, the study took place in a self-contained first-grade classroom. Third, this study only collected data for two months. Finally, the classroom teacher

possesses expert computer skills and personally found ClassDojo to be engaging. Some teachers may find ClassDojo to be too time consuming, especially if they are not comfortable with using and experimenting with technology.

The study was conducted to determine if ClassDojo is an effective tool to assist students to both recognize and to self-monitor their behaviors. Because the icons were projected and linked to the smart board, the students were able to see displayed which behavior the teacher had observed. The “ring” or the “buzz” sounds cued the students to understand and realize if the behavior was positive or negative.

ClassDojo worked for this classroom teacher because the teacher embraced the use of technology. She was excited about the positive possibilities this app could provide and she felt very comfortable using and experimenting with this computer-based program. She had fun with the students and let them experiment with their avatar design and let them determine which icons would be used to represent each class rule so they would remember which rule was broken. This constructivist approach to classroom management gave power to the students and helped them to self-monitor their behavior. This classroom management tool decreased interruptions during guided reading instructional time and it helped first grade students in this study to become more aware of their behaviors.

The teacher noted that she had to redirect students less when she was using ClassDojo than when she was not using it. By the end of the school year she felt the overall morale of the students had grown. The visual and audio aspect of the ClassDojo program provided students with extrinsic motivation, yet that visual and audio feedback allowed students to feel something intrinsically. If the student received a “ding” they felt good about themselves. However if students received a “buzz” they began to recognize their negative behavior choice and were able to redirect their behavior to more positive ones. She also liked the fact that parents had access to their student’s behavioral chart online.

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