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Investigating the Effect of Brain Breaks in the Classroom on Teaching Practice

-Sarah Dlouhy-

Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects that short and active “brain breaks” have on students and teaching practice in the classroom. The living educational theory method was used in order to tally off-task behaviors before and after brain breaks were implemented. Findings show that student off-task behavior decreased due to the use of brain breaks in the classroom, and in effect the teacher in the study spent less time re-directing students, and students were more attentive and able to follow directions. This resulted in effective lesson execution and successful activities.

Introduction:

I am a current student teacher teaching in a first grade classroom in a lower SES community. I wanted to conduct this study in hopes to find an effective method at reducing student off-task behavior. By doing so, I can more effectively teach my students. Brain breaks have been shown to increase off-task behavior in the past and I sought to see if it was going to do the same in my classroom.

Literature Review:

- Data currently shows that on-task behavior increases greatly after the use of brain breaks, and that these brain breaks have the most significant impact on the least on-task students (Mahar, 2011; Wells, 2012; Howie et al., 2014; Carlson et al., 2015; Schmidt et al., 2016; Ma et al., 2014; Raney, 2017)
- In one study, brain breaks were shown to have increased on-task behavior in the least on-task students by 19.9%. This study also showed that on-task behavior did not simply increase with a break given to the students, but rather the behavior was increased with highly active-activities, such as Energizers (Mahar, 2011).

Methods:

- Self-study (living education theory method)
- One first grade classroom
- Collected baseline data (tallied and averaged the amount of “off-task” behaviors seen within a 5-minute period)
- Implemented 3-4 brain breaks weekly for 7 weeks
- Recorded class five minutes following each brain break
- Tallied “off-task” behaviors
- Wrote daily reflections

Findings:

- Baseline student “off-task” behavior was 13
- Weekly average “off-task” behavior following brain breaks was; 8, 7, 7, 5, N/A, 4, 6
- Student enjoyment and participation was high
- Worked well with the most inattentive students
- I was re-directing students less, and students were more attentive and able to follow directions. This resulted in more effectively taught lessons and successful activities.

Conclusion:

Overall, student off-task behavior decreased due to the use of brain breaks in the classroom. Due to this, I was better able to effectively teach my lessons because I spent less time redirecting students and students were more attentive and able to follow directions. Furthermore, my “teacher voice” was more positive towards students. Evidently, the use of brain breaks positively impacted my teaching practice.

