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The Effects of ENVoY on the Middle School Social Studies Classroom Behaviors

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The Effects of ENVoY on the Middle School Social Studies Classroom Behaviors

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In fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

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Advisor _____

Date _____

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Keywords: classroom management, ENVoY, middle school, behavior

Abstract

The aim of this study was to determine if ENVoY is an effective classroom management tool to use in a 7th-grade social studies classroom. There was a need to reduce the amount of time spent on stopping unwanted classroom behaviors, such as blurting and being off task. This research was completed over a six-week period in a suburban school. Data was collected using four different methods and completed multiple times throughout the research period. Classroom observations were conducted and behaviors were tallied. Students completed self-assessments asking them to reflect on four different behavioral criteria. Data was also collected using teacher-student conferences as well as a teacher journal. It was determined that ENVoY can be an effective method of classroom management when implemented consistently. This determination has led to the continuation of the method in my classroom.

Educators are faced with a variety of challenges throughout their days including class disruptions and students being off task. These behaviors negatively impact teaching and learning time leading to a need for solutions to address these unwanted behaviors. If an educator is not able to limit disruptions caused by poor classroom management, they lose instruction time resulting in fewer learning opportunities for their students (Brown and Sayeski, 2011; Marzano, 2007). There are many factors that could influence disruptive behaviors and the factor that is the most crucial and we have the most control over is the teacher's own action (Marzano, 2003; Engelhart, 2013).

There are a number of types of classroom disruptions and many ideas on what is the most effective approaches to addressing them. Educators concur that classroom disruptions must be addressed in order to create a positive learning environment but what they don't all agree on is the best method for curtailing the disruptive behavior. Educators can use methods such as incentives, game-based techniques, and non-verbal techniques. Most classroom management strategies start with a positive student-teacher relationship and from there a positive learning environment can be created, however, that is not the only factor needed.

The Educational Non-Verbal Yardsticks (ENVoY) method focuses primarily on teacher non-verbal communication with students. The ENVoY system uses Seven Gems to improve classroom behavior during specific teaching times (instruction, seated work, transition, etc). Reed (2018) found teachers who used ENVoY reported higher levels of efficacy in engagement, instruction, and management.

With so many options when it comes to classroom management strategies it can be difficult for a teacher to determine which would work best for their classroom. It became apparent that I needed to address the blurting, off-task conversations, and classroom disruptions

in my 7th-grade social studies classroom in order to create a positive and productive learning environment for all my students. The purpose of this action research project is to determine the effects of using ENVoY on these disruptive behaviors in the middle school social studies classroom. The results of this research will determine if this is a successful method to reduce the number of occurrences of disruptive behaviors.

Theoretical Framework

Glasser's theory of education is rooted in four basic psychological needs and the necessity of having these needs met in order to create the desire and motivation for learning. According to Glasser (1997), the four needs identified are belonging, power, freedom, and fun. These needs are not only vital for learning but also for creating a positive learning environment. Although Glasser does not specifically refer to classroom management in the theory it refers to the classroom environment which lays the foundation of classroom management.

Using Glasser's theory as a lens by which to analyze classroom management Bucher et al. (2002) indicate that if psychological needs are met then students will behave well versus if they are not met then students will misbehave. Bucher et al. (2002) indicate Glasser's theory would empower students to make the right choices to behave appropriately in the classroom. Glasser (1997) indicates that if the student views the teacher as caring, listening, and encouraging, the teacher will influence positive behavior. Bucher et al. (2002) recognize students must choose to change their behavior and that can not be forced upon them by a teacher. Teachers have to empower students and influence their behavior by allowing students to maintain self-agency.

According to Bucher et al. (2002), Glasser's theory differs from other psychological theories such as B.F. Skinner in that Skinner recognized behaviors could be changed or modified

with positive reinforcement such as tokens or rewards. Bucher et al. (2002) also indicate Skinner recognizes the need for reinforcement and that will encourage the desired behavior. Differing from Skinner, Glasser (1997) disagrees with the stimulus/response and advocates that “warm, supportive human relationships” (p. 16) are needed for students to succeed in school. Bucher et al. (2002) state that Glasser argues that a mutually beneficial relationship encourages students to make the right choices through a sense of belonging. Nelson (2002) concluded that Glasser even argues that rewards destroy relationships and should not be used to control students, rather students need to see value in competency.

Students must have a positive relationship with the teacher, one that the student feels valued and trusts the teacher will meet their psychological needs (whether they are aware of the needs or not). Students and teachers may not be aware of these psychological needs but based on Glasser they influence our motivation and desire to succeed. They are the underlying factors in determining behaviors and understanding that is crucial to classroom management. When a classroom is well managed it opens the door to learning and growing.

Glasser’s theory is a crucial foundation for creating a positive learning environment. It is vital to teaching and learning that a relationship of mutual respect rather than control is the foundation of the classroom environment. Glasser’s theory is evident in the ENVoY method as teachers focus on their own actions and behaviors to influence students’ behaviors. With the ENVoY, method teachers impact the classroom environment by motivating students with nonverbal communication rather than control and power.

Review of Literature

The Concept of Classroom Management

There are several ways classroom management can be defined. Korpershoek et al. claim effective classroom management focuses on preventative actions rather than reactive (2016, as cited in Lewis & Sugai 1999, p. 644). They specifically pointed out rules, procedures, and positive student-teacher relationships as crucial aspects of classroom management. Grinder (2013) agrees that teachers need to focus on building respectful relationships rather than executing power to influence behavior and learning. These definitions agree that the teacher plays a crucial role in preventing disruptive behavior in the classroom. Marzano (2003) even identifies the teacher as probably the only factor we have much control over when it comes to student achievement.

Disruptive behaviors have been researched and most literature reviewed agreed on the importance of addressing those disruptive behaviors in the classroom. Colpin et al. (2010) identify disruptive behavior as talking out of turn, non-attending, disobedience, not remaining at their desk, and being off-task (as cited in Arbuckle & Little 2004; Dishion et al. 1995; Wheldall & Beaman 1998). Brown and Sayeski (2011) and Marzano (2007) find disruptive behaviors contribute to the loss of instructional time. Brown and Sayeski (2011) and Marzano (2007) agree there is a direct link between teacher behavior and student behavior. Engelhart (2013) also concurs that if a teacher needs to change student behavior they will also need to change their actions as well. Similar to Marzano (2003), Engelhart (2013) identifies the teacher as the factor that they have the most control over when needing to change student behavior. Teacher classroom management is the key to reducing disruptive behaviors and increasing learning time.

Classroom Management Strategies

There are several programs teachers can implement to aid in classroom management. These programs can offer practices that are teacher-focused and others are student-focused. Marzano (2007) points to setting rules and procedures as a practical step in classroom management even without a specific program. Marzano (2007) suggests the teacher should seek student input to make rules even more effective. Along with classroom rules and procedures, Marzano (2007) finds that reviewing classroom organization, rules, and procedures periodically reinforces their effectiveness in creating a positive learning environment and preventing disruptive behaviors.

Brown & Sayeski (2011) also agreed with Marzano that clear rules and procedures "set the stage for effective student behavior" (p.12). They went on to claim that the teacher sets the tone for classroom behavior. Along with rules and procedures, several behavior management systems concurred with Marzano (2003) in the foundation of good classroom management is a teacher-student relationship, rules, and procedures. Brown & Sayeski (2011) and Sinclair et al. (2021) found that a positive teacher-student relationship will lead to fewer discipline issues and behavior problems.

Brown & Sayeski (2011) examined the effects of the Response to Intervention (RTI) method of classroom management. This system has three tiers and is more of a framework than specific practices that can take place in the classroom. RTI focuses on identifying problems and adjusts the interventions as needed. The RTI system can be used in combination with other systems, such as the Good Behavior Game, a token system.

Colpin et al. (2010) evaluated the effectiveness of the Good Behavior Game, which focuses on positive reinforcement as a team works to "win" the game. The team's goal is to keep

their points below a specific number, and points are given for unwanted behaviors. If team points are kept below a certain number a reward is earned. The Good Behavior Game is played during a set-aside time and not part of regular classroom instruction. Colpin et al. (2011) did find that the game led to teachers reducing negative remarks and increasing praise.

The Good Behavior Game reinforces positive behaviors while other programs focus on social-emotional development. Korpershoek et al. (2016) recommend using a classroom management system that focuses on this development. The CHAMPS (conversation, help, anxiety, movement, participation, and success) program is an example of one that has elements of social-emotional development. Sinclair et al. (2020) evaluated the CHAMPS program for effectiveness and found positive results. The CHAMPS program focuses on the teacher teaching responsible behavior quickly, calmly, and consistently while also recognizing responsible behaviors. Herman et al. (2020) concluded in their research that the CHAMPS program improved teachers' practices and student academic outcomes. Sinclair et al. (2020) also found that as students begin to succeed in the CHAMPS program, they continue to be successful in other aspects, including academics, social, and emotional.

The CHAMPS method focuses on teaching and recognizing appropriate behaviors while the ENVoY (Educational Non-Verbal Yardsticks) method uses non-verbal communication to influence students' behaviors while maintaining a positive teacher-student relationship. Building teacher-student relationships is a necessity in positive classroom management (Marzano 2007; Reed 2018). ENVoY is a method that practices and corroborates that same claim. The ENVoY method focuses primarily on teacher non-verbal communication with students. This system uses Seven Gems to improve classroom behavior during specific teaching times (instruction, seated work, transition, etc). Reed (2018) found teachers who used ENVoY reported

higher levels of efficacy in engagement, instruction, and management. The more training in ENVoY the higher the efficacy (Reed, 2018).

This review of literature has led to the conclusion that there are three priority components to classroom management; relationships, rules, and procedures (Marzano, 2007, Brown & Sayeski 2011, Sinclair et al. 2021). These are the building blocks of the most effective practices. Another similarity between the literature is that most were universal practices, meaning they apply to the entire classroom for all or part of the implementation (Brown & Sayeski, 2011; Colpin et al. 2010; Marzano, 2007; Sinclair et al. 2021).

Although there were areas of agreement, there were also differences. Some programs used tangible rewards (Colpin et al. 2010 & Brown & Sayeski 2011) and focused on specific student actions and behaviors. There are, however, other programs that focus on teacher actions to improve classroom management (Reed, 2018). Marzano (2003) identifies a good classroom manager as a teacher who knows that changes in their behaviors will lead to changes in their students' behavior.

The literature reviewed indicated that it is crucial to have a positive teacher-student relationship and if a teacher desires to change student behavior they must be reflective of their own behavior and the power of influence. This review led to the determination that this action research project would use the ENVoY method and examine its effectiveness in reducing unwanted behaviors in a 7th-grade social studies classroom

Methodology

The study of the effects of ENVoY on the 7th grades social studies classroom used four methods of data collection to increase credibility. During the action research process, classroom observations were made and tally logs were kept documenting the number of occurrences of

specific unwanted behaviors. I also had students complete five self-assessments as well as three teacher-led interviews. Along with these data sets, I kept a teacher's journal to document aspects that could not be captured in the other data collection methods. Prior to implementing the ENVoY method in my classroom, I logged classroom behaviors to be a baseline to later compare data.

The population of my action research project was 7th-grade students at a PreK-12 private school in a suburban town. The total population of the school during the period of the action research was 540. The sample included 25 students, 13 students in one section of the class and 12 in the other section. Of the 25 students, 13 were male and 12 were female. Students were in a 7th grade required social studies class and meet every other day for a total of 85 minutes.

The data tools were used over a six-week period and the data collected will aid in the interpretation of the effects of ENVoY in the middle school social studies classroom. Prior to beginning, the ENVoY intervention in the classroom observation logs was used to tally the number of specific unwanted behaviors during a set period of time. This provided me with a baseline to compare with the number of occurrences while implementing ENVoY.

Throughout the action research projects, I tallied specific disruptive classroom behaviors while utilizing specific gems of ENVoY. ENVoY Gems are specific teacher practices with the intention to reduce and curtail disruptive behaviors. There are some Gems that work better depending on what the students are expected to do. I completed a total of 16 observation logs between the two sections and used two different Gems most often, the Stop Sign Hand and 20 Second Freeze. The Stop Sign Hand is a non-verbal signal to students that they need to stop what they are doing and focus on what the teacher is about to share. The 20 Second Freeze is a non-verbal used when transitioning students to the next task. After the teacher gives instructions

and they want students to begin working they freeze at the front of the classroom and watch to make sure students transition to what they are supposed to. The observation logs tallied student behaviors, but also noted which ENVoY methods were being used.

Along with the observation logs, students were asked to complete five self-assessments thought the project with the intent these would provide me with insight into how the students viewed their's as well as their peers' behavior in the classroom. Students were asked to score themselves on a four-point system on four different criteria and they also had the opportunity to leave additional comments if they wished.

A follow-up to the student self-assessment was teacher-conducted student interviews. During the action research project, students met with the teacher one on one for a brief interview consisting of three questions regarding their behaviors in the classroom. Questions asked students to evaluate how they feel they were doing behaviorally, as well as what their peers and teacher might notice about their behavior.

The observation logs, student self-assessments, and student interviews provided specific data that could be observed as well as the student's perspective. My other data set, the teacher journal, provided data on aspects that could not be captured by the three other sets. The teacher journal noted factors that could not be logged in the other data sets but could be influential to classroom behaviors. In the teacher journal, I could note disruptions to the schedule, absent students, or other anomalies.

The process and tools outlined provided key findings regarding the effectiveness of the ENVoY method in a 7th-grade social studies classroom. They offered a variety of data providing an opportunity for triangulation. The next section will take a closer look at what the data revealed.

Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect the ENVoY Classroom Management system had on reducing the occurrences of disruptive and unwanted classroom behavior in a 7th-grade social studies classroom. The project consisted of the teacher implementing the ENVoY strategies and documenting the occurrences of behaviors as well as reflective feedback from students.

The raw data consisted of frequencies of occurrences regarding specific unwanted classroom behavior, student self-assessments on a four-point scale, as well as reflective feedback in the form of teacher-student conferences and teacher journals. Each set of data was reviewed based on when it occurred in the study. The classroom observations were used to determine if the frequency of behaviors diminished over time with using ENVoY. The student self-assessment and teacher-student conference were evaluated to determine if students' perceptions had changed over time with the use of the ENVoY Gems. Lastly, the teacher journal was used to take into consideration any other circumstances that may factor into classroom behavior and data.

Findings

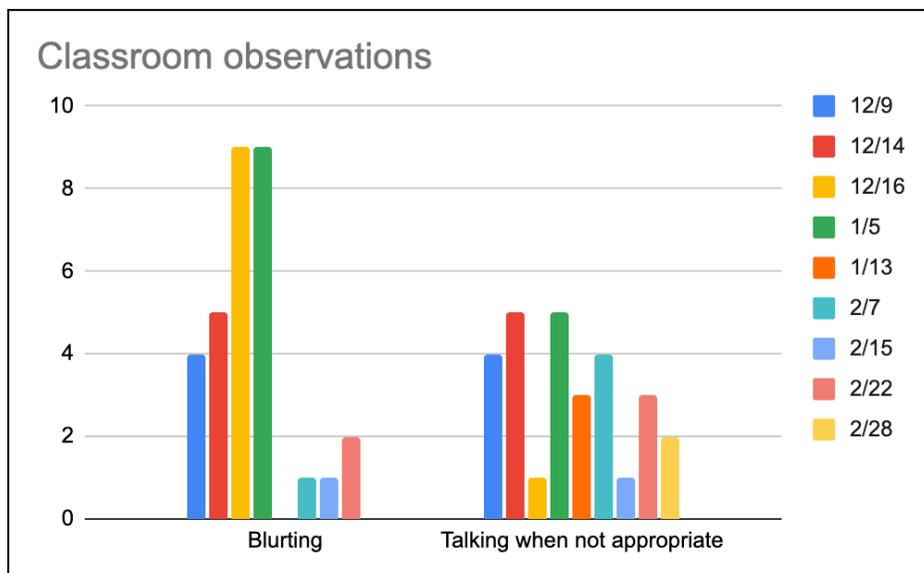
Classroom observations

The essential goal of this project was to determine if the ENVoY method reduced classroom disruptions due to unwanted student behavior. In order to determine this, classroom observations were made on six different days for 10-minute time periods. In order to determine if there was a reduction in unwanted behaviors, observations were also documented on four occasions prior to implementing the ENVoY method. Specific unwanted behaviors were watched for and tallied each occurrence (see Appendix A).

The classroom observation data in Figure 1 illustrates the two most common unwanted behaviors in the classroom, blurting and talking when not appropriate. The first three data points for both behaviors are prior to implementing ENVoY and are used as a baseline. Based on the graphs the blurting decreased significantly with the use of the ENVoY method. Incidents of talking when not appropriate also decreased but is less significant.

Figure 1

Classroom Observations

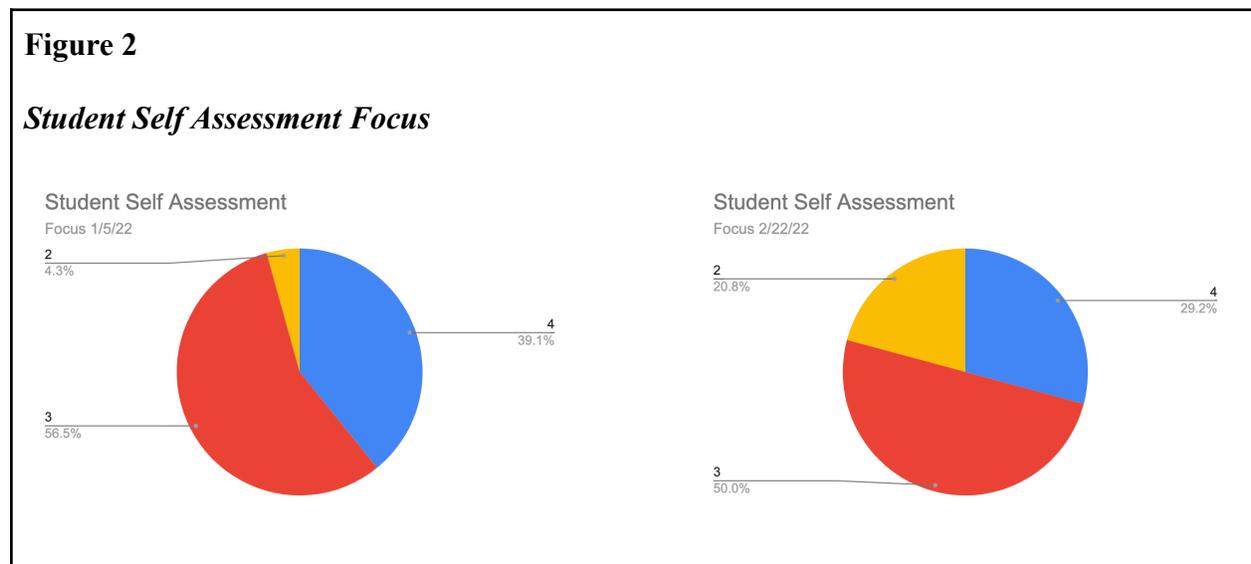


Student Self Assessment

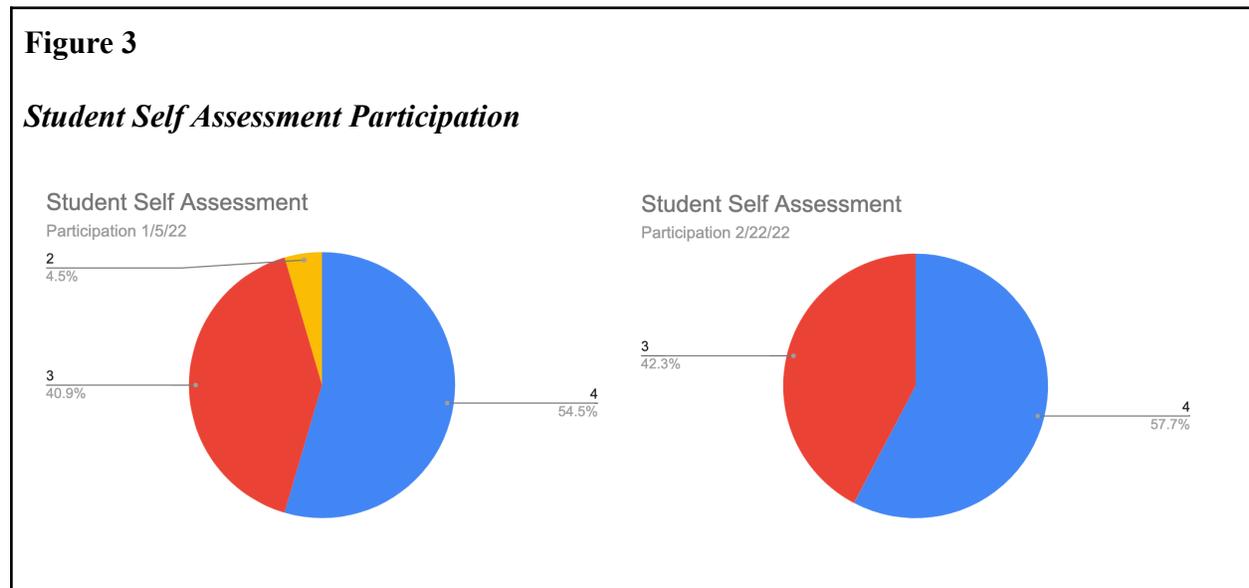
A secondary goal of this project was to determine if students' perception of the classroom environment changed due to using the ENVoY method. The self-assessments (see Appendix B) allowed students to reflect on their own behaviors and provide some explanations. Student self-assessments were completed four times throughout the course of the project. Students ranked themselves on a four-point scale, 4 equated to meeting expectations, and 1 equated to not meeting expectations. In each assessment, students evaluated their focus, participation, behavior,

and respect for the class. On each assessment, they were also provided space to leave additional comments if they felt their rating needed an explanation.

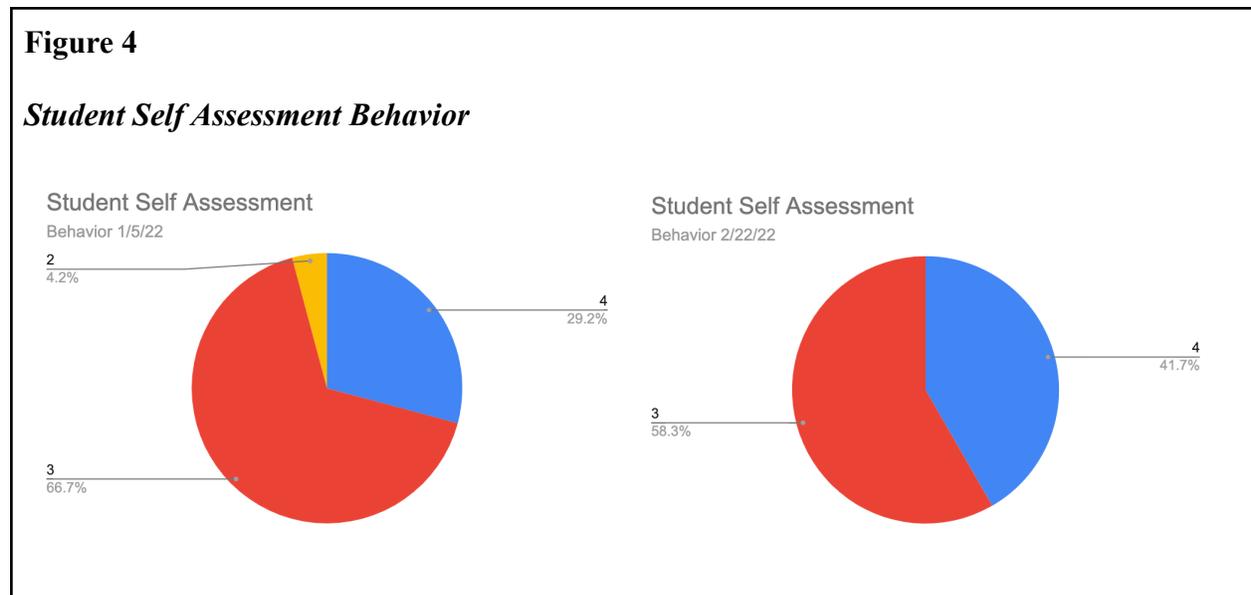
Based on the Student Self Assessments data illustrated in Figure 2, student focus decreased over the course of the project. At the beginning of the project, 95.6% of students ranked themselves at a 4 or 3, and at the end of the project, 79.2% ranked themselves at a 4 or 3. Very few students took advantage of leaving additional information on their assessment forms but those that did note that they were having a long day or were not feeling well made it difficult for them to focus.



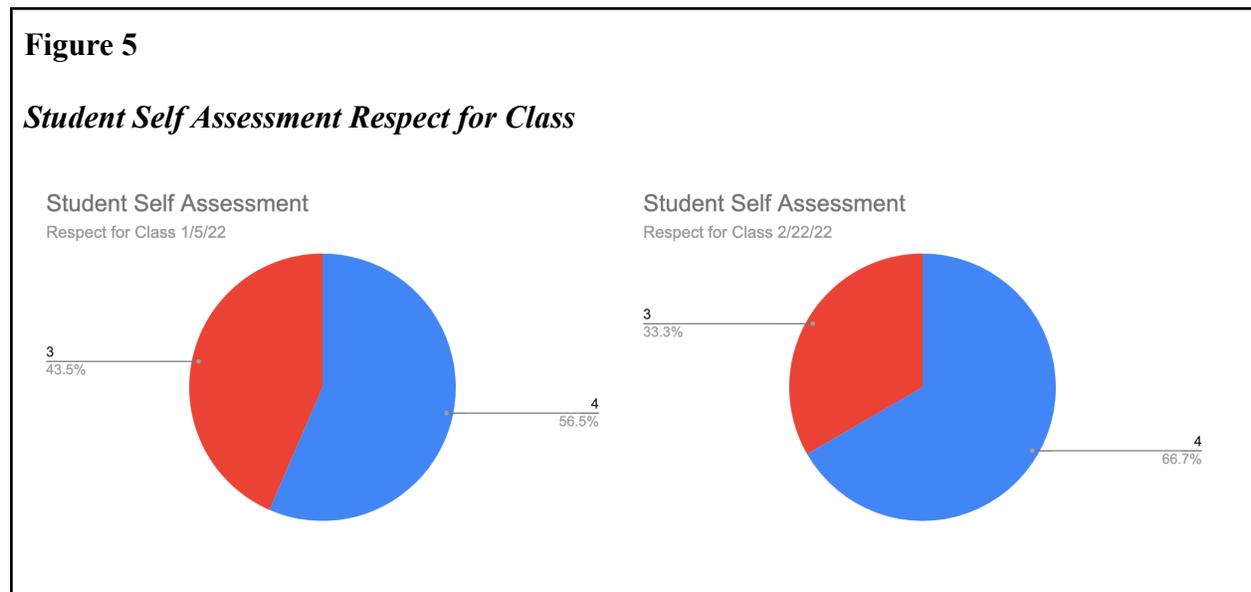
According to the Student Self Assessments illustrated in Figure 3 participation increased over the course of the project. In the beginning, 4.5% of students gave themselves a 2 rating and by the end of the project, all students gave themselves a 4 or 3 rating. Even though participation was acceptable at the beginning of the project there was still an improvement.



The Student Self Assessments data represented in Figure 4 indicated that there was an increase in student self-rating of behavior. The number of students that rated themselves as a 4 increased from 29.2% at the beginning of the project to 41.7% at the end. There were also no students who rated themselves a 1 or a 2 by the end of the project period.



Feedback from the Student Self Assessment expressed in Figure 5 indicates that students felt as though they were being respectful to the class over the course of the project. Those that rated themselves a 4 did rise from 56.5% to 66.7% by the end of the project. Similar to the participation rating, the self-rating for respect for the class was satisfactory however there was still improvement by the end.



Teacher-Student Conference

Along with the student self-assessments, teacher-student conferences (see Appendix C) were conducted two times during the project to help determine if students noticed a change in their behavior. The student self-assessment, as well as the teacher-student conference, allowed students to reflect on their own behaviors as well as provide some explanations.

Students were asked to reflect on how they felt they were doing in the class. When asked about this 63% of the students referred to their grades as an indicator of how well they were doing and 13% referred to doing their best. A fewer amount referred to subject knowledge as an indicator of how they were doing. Only 8% of students referred to engagement as an indicator of doing well.

Along with evaluating how they felt they were doing as a student they were also asked to reflect on what their peers and teacher noticed about them as a student. Three students did note an improvement in their behavior during the second conference. During the first conference, a student noted about their behavior that they “get distracted a lot and talk”, however, during the second conference the student noted they have “been better and not talking as much”.

Teacher Journal

The teacher journal (see Appendix D) was a tool used to add any additional information that may be relevant to the other data collected. This tool was used to capture abnormalities in the classroom, type of instruction and learning, other factors that may have influenced student behavior as well as feedback on the implementation of the ENVoY method used.

Based on the notes taken in the teacher journal the ENVoY Gems implemented were successful when used. In the first teacher journal, I noted that “The hand signal helped diminish the amount of time spent on disruptions.” When implementing the 20-second freeze I noted that

“students went right to work” which is the goal of this gem. The journals also indicate that a variety of teaching and learning methods were used during implementation.

The teacher journals also have notes regarding how to improve the use of the ENVoY method such as making sure the teacher is fully prepared to implement the method. This would mean making sure all details of the day are planned such as instructions ready to visually display as well as having all student materials ready.

Action Plan

The purpose of this action research project was to find an effective way to reduce the number of and amount of time spent on correcting unwanted student behavior in the 7th-grade social studies classroom leading to an increase in teaching and learning time. It was important I found a way that was in the best interest of the teacher-student relationship and in a way that did not simply demand compliance. These criteria were based on Marzano (2007) and Reed (2018) who found that building the teacher-student relationship was a necessity for positive classroom management.

The ENVoY method not only allowed for a positive teacher-student relationship but also focused on the teacher’s actions rather than the students. This practice meant the teacher implementing this system needed to know the system and be prepared. There were elements that focused on the teacher’s non-verbal communication and others that focused on preparation that eased classroom transitions and procedures. Over the course of the project, data was collected on behaviors in the classroom, student reflections, teacher-student conferences, and a teacher journal.

The ENVoY method was implemented in my classroom for six weeks while the data was collected. This method encompassed two very important components of classroom management;

relationships, and procedures (Marzano, 2007, Brown & Sayeski 2011, Sinclair et al. 2021).

While implementing ENVoY and correcting behaviors was accomplished by maintaining a positive teacher-student relationship. Corrections were done discreetly and some of the front-loading of non-verbals helped to diminish unwanted behaviors during times that tended to see more, such as transition times.

After analyzing the data collected I concluded that ENVoY is an effective method to reduce the amount of time spent on correcting unwanted student behavior leading to an increase in teaching and learning time. Each data set helped to determine this is an effective classroom management technique that also maintains a positive teacher-student relationship and learning environment.

The classroom observation tallies indicated a reduced number of behaviors over the study period leading to the conclusion of effectiveness. Along with the data of the reduction there began to be an ease with correcting the behaviors the longer the method was used. The students figured out what I was doing and rather quickly adapted their behavior. The data and environmental feel were encouraging.

The student self-assessments also indicated an improvement in students outlook on their own behavior. It should be noted that students didn't seem to notice their behaviors as disruptive as most of them gave themselves a 3 or 4 on the self-assessment. Had the teacher done the assessment they may have received a different score. I was pleased to see when a few students made notes regarding their scores to help me better understand why they gave themselves that score. It helped to keep in mind that students have obstacles and challenging days when they just are not feeling themselves and need some grace from those around them.

The notes on the student self assessment as well as the teacher-student interviews aided me in understanding the student perspective. Although it did not provide the insight I was expecting it did illustrate to me that when students determine if they are successful in the classroom they often think about their grades. Students did not recognize their behavior in contributing to their success or if they did they did not verbalize that to me.

The teacher journal was another reflective tool that helped determine ENVoY as a successful classroom management strategy. The journal provided insight into the successes and notes about what to try differently next time. The notes left throughout the project were overwhelmingly positive.

The data indicated that ENVoY can be an effective tool to reduce the amount of time spent on disruptive behaviors when implemented correctly. Students were responsive to the cues given and the teacher preparation helped make it successful and is most successful when consistently implemented.

Based on these findings this is a method I will continue to use ENVoY in my classroom. Going forward there are a few key elements that must be focused on. I will need to work on being prepared to implement the ENVoY method as there is some work that needs to be done to set the stage for successful implementation. It is not extensive but being prepared with written instructions is key to smooth transition times. During the project period, I focused on two main ENVoY gems and as I continue to use this method I will continue to bring in additional gems until I am using all seven.

I also learned that the student reflection and conferences were insightful and with a few modifications plan to continue to use these tools. In the future, during the teacher-student conferences, I would like to compare the student reflections with observations the teacher makes

to help students recognize some areas that they are doing great in and others that they could use some improvement in. While doing this I will also try to help students connect their behavior to their success as well as their grade.

I am very eager to continue to implement ENVoY and see the changes within my classroom. The non-verbal communication and positive interactions are vital to maintaining a positive teacher-student relationship and learning environment. With this system, I am hopeful that the teaching and learning will continue to be more successful.

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Appendix A

Classroom observations

Date:

1. Circle the two behaviors that will be observed this day.
2. Place a tally mark for each behavior by each student for the first 30 min of the 80 min class period.
3. Tally the behavior at the end of the observation period. Comments on the back.

	Focus			Participation	Behavior		
	head down	starting work before signaled	off task		blurting	talking to classmates when not appropriate (side conversation)	out of seat
Student 1							
Student 2							
Student 3							
Student 4							
Student 5							
Student 6							
Student 7							
Student 8							
Student 9							
Student 10							
Student 11							
Student 12							
Student 13							
Total							

Comments:

Appendix B

Student Number:

Date:

Circle the description that best describes your behavior today:

Criteria				
Focus	I was focused on class the entire class period without being prompted by the teacher	I was focused most of class and was only prompted by the teacher once or twice	I was focused but needed to be prompted 3-5 times.	I was not focused on class today and was asked to refocus more than 5 times
Participation	I raised my hand or was called on when it was time for me to participate	I participated only when the teacher called on my	I participated but would not wait to be called on.	I was disruptive when it was time to participate.
Behavior	I was on task and participated for the entire class period	I was on task and participated for most of the class period but off task once or twice.	I was off task 3-5 times - maybe out of desk when not supposed to be, touching other people's items, talking to a neighbor, etc.	I was off task more than 5 times - maybe out of desk when not supposed to be, touching other people's items, talking to a neighbor, etc.
Respect for class	I showed respect to my class by following our class expectations and rules the entire class period	I showed respect most of the time by following our class expectations and rules most of the class period	I showed respect but needed to be reminded more than twice to make a change in my behavior.	I was not very respectful of my class.

Student Comments:

Teacher Comments:

Appendix C

Conferencing

1. How do you think you are doing as a student? Tell me more about why you gave yourself the grade you did.
2. What do you think your classmates notice about your behavior?
3. What do you think the teacher notices about your behavior?

Appendix D

Teacher Journal

Date:

Time of class:

Notes regarding schedule or any other outside factors that may impact the classroom:

of present students:

of absent students:

Type of learning taking place:

ENVoY Tools used during class:

Unwanted behaviors:

Areas of Improvement:

Positive behaviors:

Successes: