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## The effects of using an off-task paper as a nonverbal intervention for inappropriate disruptive behavior

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THE EFFECTS OF USING AN OFF-TASK PAPER AS A NONVERBAL  
INTERVENTION FOR INAPPROPRIATE  
DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

A Thesis

by

PAMELA R. VANCLEEF

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Texas Pan American  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR THE CULTURALLY AND  
LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE LEARNER


August 2004

Major Subject: Special Education


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PAMELA R. VANCLEEF

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August 2004

## ABSTRACT

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The following study took place within the Academic Compliance Training program at Cathey Middle School in McAllen, Texas. Off-task papers were implemented as a nonverbal intervention during inappropriate behavior occurring after students were given directions for independent assignments. An A-B design was utilized to demonstrate a functional relationship between the independent variable, off-task papers administered as a nonverbal intervention, and dependent variable, operationally defined as all academically off-task behavior. The results of this study suggest that using off-task papers as a nonverbal intervention effectively reduces academically off-task behavior during independent seatwork.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Students who have behavioral problems and lack social skills training often struggle academically and may be at-risk of failing. Many times these students demand extra attention and as a result experience negative verbal attention. When awarded negative verbal attention, many students with behavioral problems increase demands for further attention through misbehavior, which may include use of inappropriate language, talking out of turn, humming, attempts to draw negative attention, and talking back. Consequences of misbehavior during academic instruction and/or independent seatwork may result in verbal reprimands, detention, or possibly on-campus suspension, often resulting in the reinforcement of the inappropriate verbal behavior and/or missed instruction. These demands for extra attention may result in missed academic instruction for not only that particular student, but for other students in the classroom as well.

Negative verbal attention results in the isolation of the student with behavioral problems from peers, which in turn further reduces self-esteem and positive school experiences. Peers commonly isolate these students as well and the school atmosphere becomes a hostile and negative experience. Social attention, whether positive or negative, appears to be a powerful variable with the potential for altering inappropriate verbal behavior during classroom instruction. Several studies have indicated that reducing verbal attention reduces negative behavior. In one study conducted by Keeney,

Fisher, Adelinis, and Wilder (2000), it was discovered that destructive behavior decreased when verbal attention was withdrawn. In another study conducted by Magee and Ellis (2000), it was confirmed that aggression decreased when attention was discontinued. Finally, Perry and Fisher (2001) found that disruptive behavior was minimized by reducing attention phases.

### *Need for the Study*

Despite the wealth of information available to educators in myriad diverse avenues of specialization, there is currently little useful information focusing specifically on the Academic Compliance Training (ACT) Program. Due to the immediate academic need for the acquisition of such information, as well as the substantial amount of money currently invested in the program, this study will prove to be invaluable to the academic community. The present study will additionally aid educators specializing in academic behavioral problems in comprehending the importance of utilizing nonverbal intervention in correcting academic misbehavior.

### *Statement of the Problem*

Across the nation, and at all levels of education, it has become evident that academic and behavioral problems are on the rise. Accompanying this increase in academic misbehavior is an alarming increase in student illiteracy, despite the implementation of modern behavioral interventions. Thus it is essential that new methods of intervention be researched and tested to adequately combat this severe problem, and most importantly, in order to reach out to these struggling students.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of the following study is to determine the effectiveness of utilizing an off-task paper as a nonverbal intervention in managing the behavior of students who are struggling academically and behaviorally. Similarly, this study is important in substantiating the effectiveness and efficiency of the Academic Compliance Training (ACT) Program, as well as contributing to the recognition and implementation of alternative educational strategies. Finally, it is crucial that the chosen method of intervention may be continued and expanded upon if proven successful, so that other students, parents, and educators may benefit.

### *Significance of the Study*

Because there is currently little useful information available focusing specifically on the ACT program, an immediate academic need exists for the acquisition of such information. The present study will prove to be invaluable to the academic community in ascertaining the significance of utilizing nonverbal intervention in correcting academic misbehavior. Furthermore, due to the substantial amount of money invested in the ACT program, it is crucial that the immediate and long-term consequences of nonverbal methods of intervention be thoroughly evaluated. Ultimately, if the chosen method of intervention is proven successful, this study is crucial to the present and future success of students, educators, and parents alike.

### *Research Question*

Accompanying an increase in academic and behavioral problems at all levels of education is an alarming rise in student illiteracy, despite modern behavioral

interventions. In order to effectively combat this critical problem, it is essential that new methods of behavioral and academic intervention be researched and utilized. Therefore, the present study researches the significance of administering off-task papers as a nonverbal intervention in order to correct academic misbehavior.

### *Definition of Terms*

Various terms and concepts of significant importance appear throughout this study. Certain terms may restrict the ease with which the text may otherwise be interpreted by the general population because they are part of a vocabulary commonly used among educators. Hence, the following is a list of terms warranting clarification.

#### *Academic Compliance Training (ACT) Program*

The ACT program “emphasizes compliance skills in the academic environment, task completion, and appropriate social skills,” and is “an educational placement option designed to give academically non-compliant students the skills needed to be successful in regular education classrooms” (McAllen Independent School District, 2001, p. 1).

#### *Academically Noncompliant Behavior*

Academically noncompliant behavior refers to any behavior signifying a lack of “compliance skills in the academic environment, task completion, and appropriate social skills” (McAllen Independent School District, 2001, p. 1).

#### *At-Risk*

At-risk is a term used to identify students who are eligible for enrollment in the Academic Compliance Training (ACT) program. Students are considered for eligibility “only after interventions in the less restrictive environment have failed or for extremely

aggressive behavior in an academically non-compliant student” (McAllen Independent School District, 2001, p. 2).

#### *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)*

ADHD is a “family of related chronic neurobiological disorders that interfere with an individual's capacity to: regulate activity level (hyperactivity), inhibit behavior (impulsivity), and attend to tasks (inattention) in developmentally appropriate ways” (MedicineNet, 2004).

#### *Off-Task Paper*

Off-task papers are “worksheets that are academically easy, given the student’s academic ability level,” and may be “either academic in nature or designed to reinforce a specific social skill” (McAllen Independent School District, 2001, p. 5).

#### *Summary*

Students who frequently exhibit academically noncompliant behavior often struggle not only academically, but behaviorally and socially as well. When normal intervention techniques utilized in regular education classrooms prove ineffective or even counterproductive, the success of these at-risk students relies heavily on the effectiveness of alternative instructional techniques. The following study examines the effects of off-task papers as an alternative nonverbal intervention.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Academically inappropriate and noncompliant behavior may be increased or decreased as a direct result of awarding varying levels of social attention. In many instances, social attention negatively interacts with inappropriate and noncompliant behavior when administered unintentionally or without strategy. However, the results of several studies suggest that nonverbal intervention effectively decreases noncompliant behavior when used in conjunction with appropriate social skills training.

#### *Effects of Social Attention as Verbal and Nonverbal Intervention*

##### *Nonverbal Intervention*

Results of several studies indicate that inappropriate verbal behavior is sensitive to social consequences. In a study conducted by Dixon, Benedict, and Larson (2001), the independent variable was defined as vocal utterances not relevant to the context. The dependent variable consisted of giving social attention when appropriate verbal behavior was displayed. The authors suggest that inappropriate verbal behavior is maintained through attention from others.

Contingent verbal reprimands are found to produce higher rates of the problem behavior than contingent statements that are unrelated to the target response, according to Fisher, Ninness, Piazza, and Owen-DeSchryver (1996). The dependent variable



utilized in this study was destructive behavior such as hitting or throwing objects at others. The independent variable consisted of two attention conditions: in the first condition, a verbal reprimand was given; no attention was given in the second attention condition. It was concluded that destructive behavior is sensitive to attention and maintained by attention in the form of verbal reprimands.

Hagopian, Wilson, and Wilder (2001) propose that problem behavior is maintained by negative reinforcement through escape from attention and positive reinforcement by gaining access to preferred tangible items. The independent variable was defined as disruptive behavior, such as tearing papers or spitting. The dependent variable consisted of the termination of attention for disruptive behavior. The results of this study suggest that problem behavior is undertaken to terminate social attention.

In a similar study conducted by Hanley, Piazza, and Fisher (1997), it is suggested that destructive behavior is sensitive to attention as reinforcement in that destructive behavior is maintained by adult attention. The independent variable was defined as aggressive behavior, such as throwing objects. The dependent variable consisted of an attention phase and a tangible phase. The results indicate that destructive behavior increases during the attention phase.

Keeney, Fisher, Adelinis, and Wilder (2000) propose that destructive behavior is sensitive to both negative reinforcement, such as escape from attention, and positive reinforcement. The independent variable was defined as disruptive behavior, including breaking objects. The dependent variable consisted of response cost, attention, and music phases. The authors found that destructive behavior did not increase when access to attention was withdrawn.

In a study conducted by Magee and Ellis (2000), it was discovered that aggression decreased when contingent attention was discontinued. The independent variable was defined as inappropriate language and gestures. The dependent variable consisted of attention and alone phases. The authors found that the highest levels of problem behavior were associated with the demand and attention conditions.

Perry and Fisher (2001) suggest that increasing the price of the reinforcer for communication shifts subject responses away from communication and toward destructive behavior. The independent variable was defined as disruption, such as throwing objects. The dependent variable consisted of demand, or attention, and punishment phases. The authors found that disruptive behavior was consistently higher in the demand condition.

#### *Verbal Intervention*

Attention is one form of social reinforcement that has been demonstrated to maintain destructive behavior, according to Piazza, Bowman, Contrucci, Delia, Adelinis, and Goh (1999). The independent variable in this study was defined as destructive behavior such as self-injury. The dependent variable consisted of verbal reprimands and praise. According to the authors, destructive behavior is sensitive to adult attention when verbal reprimands are used as reinforcement.

Sasso, Reimers, Cooper, Wacker, Berg, Steege, Kelly, and Allaire (1992) propose that an intervention based on negative reinforcement can be successfully implemented. The independent in this study variable was defined as aggression in the form of hitting. The dependent variable consisted of an attention phase, escape phase, and an ignore

phase. The results of this study revealed that negative reinforcements were identified as the maintaining variables for deviant behavior.

### *Social Skills Training*

One of the most popular approaches to remediating deficits in social competence functioning in students with high-incidence disabilities is social skills training (SST) (Gresham, Sugai, & Horner, 2001). In this study, the independent variable consisted of peer relations, self-management, academic, and compliance skills. The dependent variable was defined as the implementation of social skills training. The authors indicate that SST training alone, without other appropriate interventions, demonstrates weak effects of increased social competence.

### *Summary*

While several of the previously examined studies find that academically inappropriate and noncompliant behavior often increases as a result of negative social attention, numerous others discovered that noncompliant behavior may be effectively decreased as a direct result of nonverbal interventions in combination with social skills training. These studies warrant further research examining the impact of nonverbal interventions, when administered with appropriate social skills training, in reducing negative behavior. Hence, the following study examines the effects of nonverbal intervention and social skills training on three participants in order to demonstrate a reduction of unwanted behavior.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

Three middle school students participated as subjects in the present study, in which a multiple baseline design was utilized to determine if the designated treatment (off-task papers as nonverbal intervention) would effectively reduce academically inappropriate and noncompliant behavior during classroom instruction. A baseline was established over a period of five consecutive days prior to the implementation of the treatment. Two observers participated in measuring the treatment, and the results were recorded onto a frequency chart.

#### *Research Design*

A multiple baseline design was utilized in this study to demonstrate a functional relationship between the target behaviors, including all academically noncompliant behaviors, and the use of off-task papers as a nonverbal intervention. Each of the three participants received the same intervention (the off-task paper) for misbehavior. This design was selected to allow for the continuance of the appropriate academically compliant behavior, rather than return to baseline. It was decided that allowing the subjects to return to the baseline after demonstrating successful academic and behavioral compliance would have been unethical.

### *Subjects*

Three middle school boys enrolled in an ACT program participated in this study with informed parental permission (Appendices A and B). Prior to being enrolled in ACT, interventions were administered in the least restrictive environments. Previous interventions included switching teams, counseling, parent conferencing, detention, on-campus suspension, and behavioral implementation plans. It was ultimately determined that these options proved ineffectual for these particular students.

#### *Subject One*

Randy<sup>1</sup> is a Hispanic male, 12 years of age, who previously failed sixth grade. Upon successfully passing summer school, he was promoted to seventh grade. However, he was enrolled in ACT after failing all core subjects. He has been identified as having ADHD and currently takes prescribed medication for his condition. Randy is easily distracted, calls out without raising his hand, does not keep up with his assigned homework, tends to lose assignments, and is prone to attention-getting behavior.

#### *Subject Two*

Jose<sup>1</sup> is a Hispanic male, 12 years of age, and enrolled in sixth grade. He successfully completed fifth grade, but began failing core subjects his sixth grade year. Academic interventions were administered when it was discovered he was struggling with completing assigned work. Jose is easily frustrated, lacks the necessary social skills to effectively manage peer confrontations, and has been in several fights with peers. He is currently in the process of being tested for placement in Special Education.

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<sup>1</sup> The names of all students have been changed in compliance with ACT policy

### *Subject Three*

David<sup>1</sup> is a Hispanic male, 14 years of age, and is enrolled in sixth grade after being retained twice. He is extremely intelligent and had been previously enrolled in a Gifted and Talented program. Although David does not have any learning problems or disabilities, he lacks motivation to stay on-task. He is prone to daydreaming and drawing during academic instruction, rather than staying focused and continuing to work.

### *Setting*

Permission to conduct the present study was attained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix C), and McAllen Independent School District authorized Cathey Middle School to host the study (Appendix D). This study took place in the ACT classroom at Cathey Middle School, which is geographically located in McAllen, Texas. This classroom specializes in behavior management and social skills training, which all students must successfully complete before earning the privilege of mainstreaming back to regular education classes. Academic and behavioral compliance and social skills are typically improved after two weeks. However, rates of students' progress may vary depending on individual strengths and needs.

While students participate in the ACT program, they must adhere to strict guidelines. Off-task papers are administered as nonverbal intervention for noncompliant behavior. Continuous misbehavior results in time owed after regular school hours equivalent to the number of off-task sheets the student has accumulated. Students must complete their accumulated off-task sheets before they are allowed to be released from the classroom to their parents or guardians.

After satisfactory demonstration of academically compliant behavior, students are gradually mainstreamed into an appropriate regular education classroom. Those students who continue demonstrating noncompliance, or who relapse into misbehavior, are retained in the program for further training. The school psychologist monitors the ACT program to ensure that each individual's learning and emotional needs are met (McAllen Independent School District, 2001, p. 1).

### *Materials*

A data recording sheet (Appendix E) was used to collect data during the baseline and intervention phases of the study. Each student had baskets on the floor beside their desks for the collection of off-task papers. Individual curricula and texts for independent seatwork are provided by the appropriate regular teachers.

### *Dependent Variable*

The dependent variable, which refers to all academically non-compliant behavior, was operationally defined as any and all behavior during which the subject fails to stay on-task. To be considered academically compliant, the subject must not only stay focused on his work, but must also work continuously as instructed. Target behavior was measured in five-minute intervals three times per school day during designated times for five consecutive school days during the baseline phase. Identical measurements were taken after the implementation of the treatment for five consecutive school days. The target behavior was then recorded for analysis using a frequency chart.

Measurements were administered while students engaged in scheduled independent seatwork, during which there was no teacher instruction. The primary

investigator trained her assistant in recording data onto a data recording sheet before enlisting her help in scoring observations. Practice recording sessions were conducted throughout the previous year until the commencement of the study. Interobserver agreement was calculated to be at approximately 97%. The agreement coefficients were calculated by dividing the total number of agreements by the number of agreements plus disagreements, and then multiplying by 100% as demonstrated by the formula below (Richards, Taylor, Ramasamy, & Richards, 1999, p. 53):

$$\frac{\text{Number of Agreements}}{\text{Number of Agreements} + \text{Number of Disagreements}} \times 100\%$$

*Independent Variable*

Off-task papers were administered as nonverbal intervention for misbehavior during Phase B. Prior to enrollment in the program, all rules and expectations of the ACT program were carefully described to each subject. All students were made familiar with the rules and expectations of the program before the study commenced. These rules and expectations were not discussed again except during individual social skills lessons, which were not conducted during the intervals reserved for recording measurements.

When off-task papers were administered as a nonverbal intervention, the investigator did not award the student with eye contact or social attention, either verbally or nonverbally. Off-task papers are simply delivered to the appropriate student's basket beside their desk, at which point the investigator steps back. If the subject continues to demonstrate academically off-task behavior, the investigator sets another off-task paper in the student's basket. Each subject understands that the number of off-task papers they accumulate is directly proportional to the amount of off-task behavior they choose to



exhibit, as was explained to them prior to participation. Once the subject resumes academically on-task behavior, intervention is halted.

### *Experimental Procedures*

#### *Phase A (Baseline)*

Phase A was implemented for five consecutive school days, during which intervention was not administered. Academically noncompliant behavior was measured during each of the five-minute intervals scheduled to occur three times throughout the school day. During these intervals, all ACT students were engaged in independent seatwork. Phase A was terminated after five days of observations subsequent to each subject demonstrating continuous academically non-compliant behavior.

#### *Phase B (Intervention)*

Phase B was implemented for five consecutive school days upon termination of Phase A. Designated intervals for observations and lengths of intervals were identical to those administered in Phase A. As in Phase A, the ACT classroom was engaged in independent seatwork during these measurement intervals. Phase B was terminated after five consecutive days of observations once the subjects successfully demonstrated academically compliant and on-task behavior.

### *Summary*

Methods of behavioral and academic intervention had been previously attempted in regular education classrooms and proved ineffectual for the three subjects enlisted for participation in the present study. Several studies discussed in the previous chapter supported further research focusing on observation of the effects of alternative methods

of intervention. Hence, the current study was conducted to determine whether a substantial relationship exists between the independent variable, distinguished as off-task papers administered as nonverbal intervention, and the dependent variable, defined as a significant reduction in academically noncompliant behavior in an academic setting. The findings of this study are presented in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

During Phase A, the Baseline for Subject One was monitored during three designated five-minute intervals each day for five consecutive school days. Phase B commenced the following school week upon establishment of Baseline data, during which intervention was administered in the form of off-task papers for all academically noncompliant behavior. Phases A and B were then implemented for Subject Two and Subject Three respectively to establish Baseline and Treatment data under identical parameters. Every demonstration of off-task behavior during each of the designated recording intervals was tallied and recorded onto separate tables during both the Baseline and Treatment phases. Results of each table were then totaled and translated onto frequency charts unique to each student.

#### *Subject One*

##### *Results of Phase A (Baseline)*

Baseline Phase data recording for Subject One began on Monday, February ninth and ended on Friday, February thirteenth. On the first day of Phase A, Subject One was recorded as being academically off-task ten times during the first designated recording interval, seven times during the second five-minute period, and five times during the final

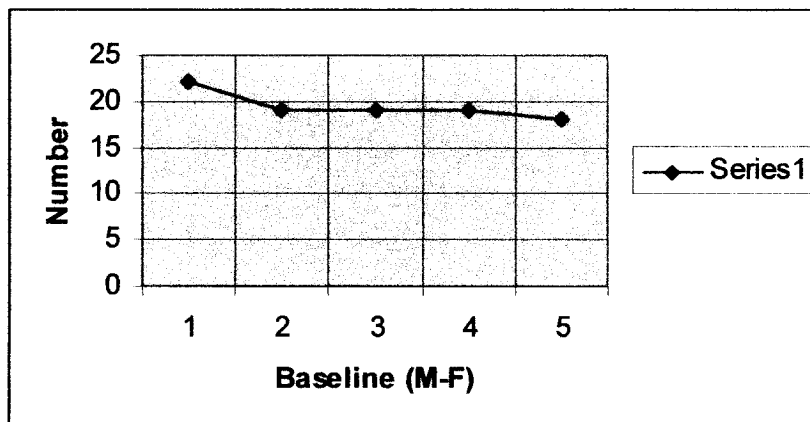
interval. Noncompliant behavior was similarly tracked and recorded each consecutive day for the remainder of the Baseline Phase, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1.  
*Incidents of Baseline Off-Task Behavior for Subject One*

Time Interval	Date				
	2/9	2/10	2/11	2/12	2/13
9:00-9:05 am	10	8	10	9	8
11:30-11:35 am	7	7	5	6	5
2:30-2:35 pm	5	4	4	4	5

Incidents of noncompliant behavior were then totaled by day, and the results were plotted for visual assessment. There is a general trend of fewer incidents of off-task behavior by this subject as the week progresses. However, as illustrated in Figure 1 below, the frequency of incidents of off-task behavior remained relatively constant throughout the Baseline Phase.

Figure 1.  
*Total Incidents of Baseline Off-Task Behavior for Subject One*



### *Results of Phase B (Intervention)*

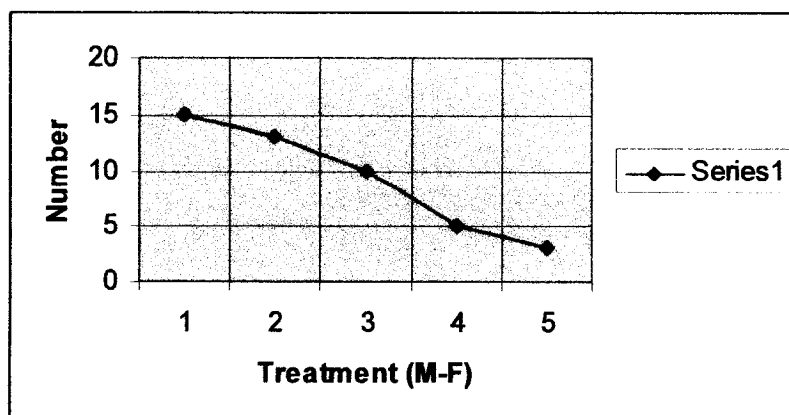
Phase B was implemented the week following the establishment of the Baseline, from February sixteenth through twentieth. During Phase B, intervention was administered in the form of off-task papers for all academically noncompliant behavior observed in each five-minute designated interval. Results were recorded onto a table identical to the one used in Phase A, as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2.  
*Incidents of Treated Off-Task Behavior for Subject One*

Time Interval	Date				
	2/16	2/17	2/18	2/19	2/20
9:00-9:05 am	6	5	4	3	2
11:30-11:35 am	5	5	3	1	0
2:30-2:35 pm	4	3	3	1	1

As illustrated in Figure 2, incidents of off-task behavior declined substantially throughout the week after the implementation of the treatment package. On the first day of Phase B, Subject One demonstrated a total of fifteen incidents of academically noncompliant behavior. After five days of administering treatment, Subject One exhibited only three incidents of off-task behavior throughout the day.

Figure 2.  
*Total Incidents of Treated Off-Task Behavior for Subject One*



*Subject Two*

*Results of Phase A (Baseline)*

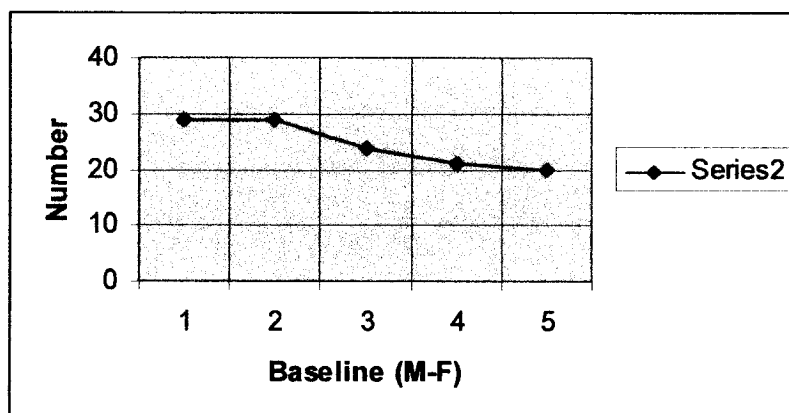
Baseline Phase data recording for Subject Two began on Monday, February twenty-third and ended on Friday, February twenty-seventh. The process of data recording was identical to that for Subject One. Similarly, incidents of off-task behavior declined slightly as the week progressed (Table 3).

Table 3.  
*Incidents of Baseline Off-Task Behavior for Subject Two*

Time Interval	Date				
	2/23	2/24	2/25	2/26	2/27
9:00-9:05 am	12	11	10	9	6
11:30-11:35 am	10	10	7	7	7
2:30-2:35 pm	7	8	7	5	7

As illustrated in Figure 3, incidents of off-task behavior slightly declined throughout the recording phase. On the first day of Phase B, Subject Two demonstrated a total of twenty-nine incidents of academically noncompliant behavior. Throughout the recording phase, Subject Two exhibited a similar number of incidents.

Figure 3.  
*Total Incidents of Baseline Off-Task Behavior for Subject Two*



*Results of Phase B (Intervention)*

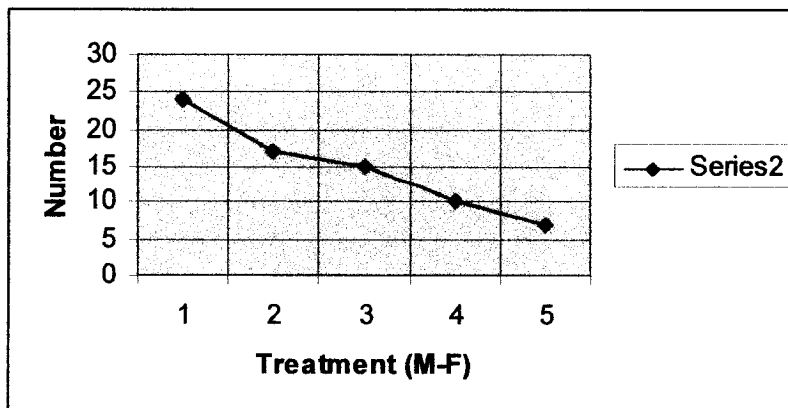
Phase B was implemented the week following the establishment of the Baseline. During Phase B, intervention was administered in the form of off-task papers for all academically noncompliant behavior observed in each five-minute designated interval. The results were recorded onto a table identical to the one used in Phase A, as demonstrated in Table 4 below:

Table 4.  
*Incidents of Treated Off-Task Behavior for Subject Two*

Time Interval	Date				
	3/1	3/2	3/3	3/4	3/5
9:00-9:05 am	11	7	7	5	4
11:30-11:35 am	7	6	5	4	1
2:30-2:35 pm	6	4	3	1	2

Incidents of off-task behavior declined significantly throughout the week after the implementation of the treatment package. After five days of administering treatment, Subject Two exhibited only seven incidents of off-task behavior throughout the day as illustrated below in Figure 4.

Figure 4.  
*Total Incidents of Treated Off-Task Behavior for Subject Two*



*Subject Three*

*Results of Phase A (Baseline)*

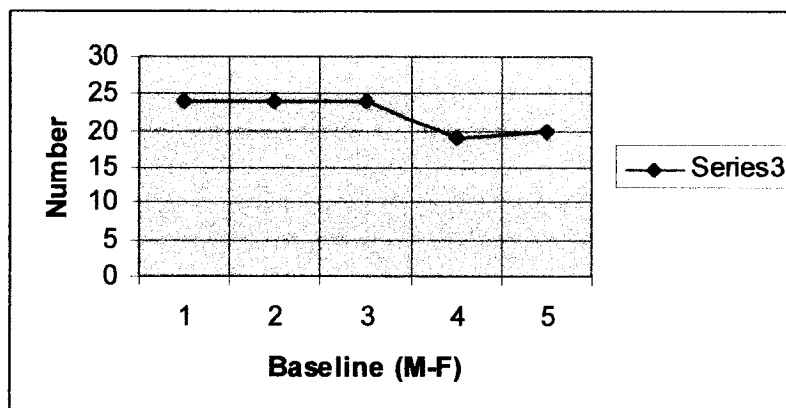
Baseline Phase data recording for Subject Three began on Monday, March fifteenth and ended on Friday, March nineteenth. The process of data recording was identical to that used for Subject One and Subject Two. As Table 5 displays, the incidents of off-task behavior declined slightly during the course of the week.

Table 5.  
*Incidents of Baseline Off-Task Behavior for Subject Three*

Time Interval	Date				
	3/15	3/16	3/17	3/18	3/19
9:00-9:05 am	9	10	10	7	7
11:30-11:35 am	7	7	8	6	5
2:30-2:35 pm	8	7	6	6	8

As illustrated in Figure 5, incidents of off-task behavior slightly declined throughout the recording phase. On the first day of Phase B, Subject Three demonstrated a total of twenty-four incidents of academically noncompliant behavior. Throughout the recording phase, Subject Three exhibited a similar number of incidents of off-task behavior throughout the day.

Figure 5.  
*Total Incidents of Baseline Off-Task Behavior for Subject Three*





### *Results of Phase B (Intervention)*

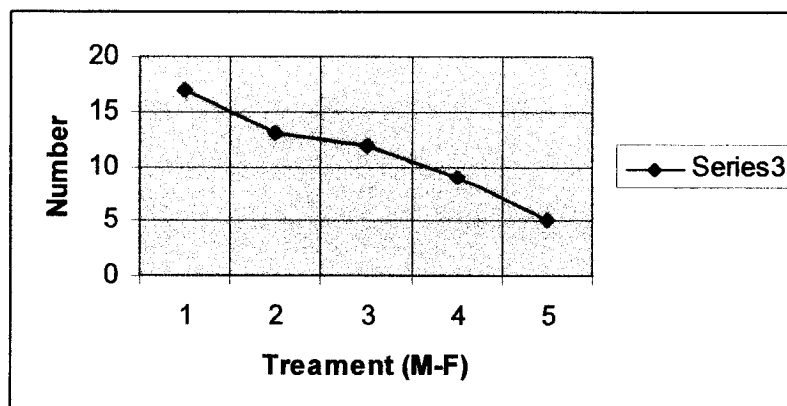
Phase B was implemented the week following the establishment of the Baseline, from March twenty-second through twenty-sixth. Results were recorded using a process and tables identical to the ones used for the previous two participants. Rates of off-task behavior declined steadily after the implementation of the treatment package (Table 6).

Table 6.  
*Incidents of Treated Off-Task Behavior for Subject Three*

Time Interval	Date				
	3/22	3/23	3/24	3/25	3/26
9:00-9:05 am	8	6	6	5	3
11:30-11:35 am	5	4	3	3	2
2:30-2:35 pm	4	3	3	1	0

Incidents of off-task behavior declined significantly throughout the week after the implementation of the treatment package. Subject Three demonstrated seventeen incidents of academic misbehavior throughout the initial day of Phase B. After five days of administering treatment, Subject Three exhibited only five incidents of off-task behavior throughout the day as illustrated in Figure 6 below:

Figure 6.  
*Total Incidents of Treated Off-Task Behavior for Subject Three*



*Summary*

Academic behavior in three subjects was monitored and recorded over a period of six weeks using an AB model, in which intervention was only administered during Phase B of the data recording process for each student. The treatment package consisted of administering an off-task paper for all academically noncompliant behavior. The results of the present study indicate a strong functional relationship between the independent and dependent variable, as evidence by substantially improved behavior exhibited by the subjects in Phase B not witnessed in Phase A where the treatment package was absent.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSIONS

Students who frequently exhibit academically noncompliant behavior often struggle not only academically, but behaviorally and socially as well. When normal intervention techniques utilized in regular education classrooms prove ineffective or even counterproductive, the success of these at-risk students relies heavily on the effectiveness of alternative instructional techniques. Numerous studies have shown that academically inappropriate and noncompliant behavior may be effectively decreased as a direct result of nonverbal interventions in combination with social skills training. This was confirmed by Hagopian, Wilson, and Wilder by a study conducted in 2001 where termination of attention resulted in reduced academic misbehavior. Furthermore, contingent verbal reprimands are found to produce higher rates of problem behavior according to Fisher, Ninness, Piazza, and Owen-DeSchryver (1996). Hence, the present study examined the effects of nonverbal intervention, after appropriate social skills training as part of the ACT program requirement, on three participants in order to demonstrate a reduction of unwanted behavior.

#### *Implications of the Findings*

Academic behavior in three participants was monitored and recorded over a period of six weeks. Only during Phase B was the treatment package, which consisted of

administering an off-task paper for all academically noncompliant behavior, implemented. The present study discovered a strong functional relationship between the independent variable, or nonverbal intervention for misbehavior in the form of off-task papers, and dependent variable, which refers to all academically noncompliant behavior, was evidence by substantially improved behavior exhibited in exclusively in Phase B.

### *Implications for Practice*

The present study provides an invaluable source for educators in all specializations throughout the academic community who are interested in learning more about nontraditional methods of academic and behavioral intervention. Furthermore, this study provides a valuable source of scholarly literature for educators seeking to learn more about off-task papers as one possible method of correcting academic misbehavior. Ultimately, because this research demonstrates that off-task papers may be successfully administered where prior treatments failed, it may lay the foundation for the future success of students for whom prior interventions proved ineffectual.

### *Limitations of the Present Study*

Because only three subjects participated in this study, it is difficult to assess the usefulness of the results for special and alternative educational programs in general without replication. Additionally, each of the three participants shared common background characteristics, including gender and ethnicity, which warrants further research utilizing a more diverse student sample. Research extending over a broader length of time is warranted to allow for in-depth observation, which would more accurately test the long-term impact of alternative intervention. Finally, it is probable

that a small margin of error was encountered throughout the data recording process due to the awareness of the three participants. Additional research that controls for this element would be useful in verifying the integrity of the discoveries of this study.

### *Recommendations for Future Research*

Future replications of the present study should utilize a larger and more diverse student sample to thoroughly assess the general applicability of these results in special and alternative educational settings. Future research should additionally extend over a broader length of time to provide for in-depth observation of both immediate and long-term consequences of off-task papers as a method of alternative intervention. Finally, it may be desirable to establish a more isolated academic setting to control for any margin of error encountered due to the awareness of the participating subjects.

### *Summary*

The following study took place within the Academic Compliance Training program at Cathey Middle School in McAllen, Texas. Off-task papers were implemented as nonverbal intervention without either nonverbal or verbal attention via eye contact or verbal warnings. An A-B design was utilized to demonstrate a functional relationship between the independent variable, or off-task papers, and dependent variable, which included all academically noncompliant behavior. The results of this study suggest that off-task papers as a nonverbal intervention effectively reduce academically noncompliant behavior. Replication of this study using a larger and more diverse sample over a greater length of time is necessary to verify the integrity, general applicability, long-term impact, and efficacy of these findings.

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APPENDICES



APPENDIX A  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM (ENGLISH)

University of Texas-Pan American  
 Department of Educational Psychology  
 Edinburg, Texas 78537

### Informed Consent Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, the parent of \_\_\_\_\_, have been asked for my child to participate in a master's research study. The purpose of this study is to provide data for a research study examining the use of an off-task paper to reduce inappropriate behavior. Off-task papers consist of English and Math skills that the student has previously learned. For example, a math off-task paper could consist of multiplying or dividing skills. An English off-task paper could consist of using adverbs or adjectives. These are given randomly and there is no specific order. The student may learn more appropriate skills that he/she can use in place of inappropriate behaviors in the classroom. Other forms of treatment are not available to the student during this study.

The teacher and one other observer will observe and record the behavior of the student. All information gathered and collected will be kept strictly confidential. All information will be kept in the CMC classroom at Cathey Middle School, McAllen Independent School District, in a locked filing cabinet.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board-Human Subject in Research. For research-related problems or questions regarding the subject's rights, the Human Subject Committee may be contacted through Dr. Mark Granberry, Chair, at (956) 292-7309.

I have read and understand the explanations provided to me and voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand I can withdraw my child from the study at any time and my child can withdraw from participating in the study at any time. I understand I will be provided with a copy of this consent form.

If you have any questions about the study or procedures, please call Pamela VanCleaf, Academic Compliance Training, Cathey Middle School, McAllen Independent School District, at (956) 971-4328.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I give permission for my child to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I do not give my child permission to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

**APPENDIX B**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FORM (SPANISH)**

Universidad de Texas Pan American  
 Departamento de Psicología Educativa  
 Edinburg, Texas, 78537

### Forma de Consentimiento Informado

Yo, \_\_\_\_\_, el padre de \_\_\_\_\_, he recibido una solicitud para permitir a mi hijo/a participar en un estudio de investigación a nivel maestría. El propósito del estudio es proporcionar datos para una investigación que examine el uso de una hoja "off-task" para reducir el comportamiento inadecuado. Una hoja "off-task" consiste en destrezas de Inglés y Matemáticas que el estudiante ya ha aprendido. Por ejemplo, una hoja "off-task" de Matemáticas podría consistir en ejercicios de multiplicación y división. Una hoja "off-task" de Inglés podría consistir en ejercicios de adverbios o adjetivos. Se entregan al azar, y sin un orden específico. El estudiante puede aprender destrezas mas apropiadas que puede utilizar en lugar del comportamiento inadecuado en el salón de clases. Ningun otro tratamiento está disponible para el estudiante durante el estudio.

El maestro y un observador documentarán y observarán el comportamiento del estudiante. Toda la información recopilada se mantendrá absolutamente confidencial. Esta información se archivará en el salón de CMC de la Escuela Secundaria Cathey en el Distrito Escolar de McAllen, en un archivero bajo llave.

Esta investigación ha sido revisada y aprobada por la Comisión de Revisión Institucional – Investigación en Sujetos Humanos. Para problemas o preguntas relacionadas con la investigación concerniendo los derechos del sujeto, puedo comunicarme con el Comité de Sujetos Humanos por medio del Dr. Mark Grangerry, Presidente, al 956-292-7309.

He leído y entiendo las explicaciones que me han proporcionado, y acepto participar en éste estudio. Entiendo que puedo retirar a mi hijo/a del estudio en cualquier momento, y que mi hijo/a puede retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento. Entiendo que se me proporcionará una copia de ésta forma de consentimiento. Si tuviera alguna pregunta sobre el estudio o los procedimientos, puedo llamar a Pamela VanCleaf, Entrenamiento de Cumplimiento Académico, Escuela Secundaria Cathey, Distrito Escolar Independiente de McAllen, al 956-971-4328.

\_\_\_\_\_ Sí, doy permiso para que mi hijo/a participe

\_\_\_\_\_ No, no doy permiso para que mi hijo/a participe

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Firma del Padre o Tutor

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Fecha

APPENDIX C  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM



MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Pamela VanCleaf  
EDC 244  
MK

**FROM:** Dr. Mark Granberry  
Chair, Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects in Research

**DATE:** March 30, 2004

**SUBJECT:** Protocol for "The Effects of Using an Off-Task Paper as a Non-verbal Intervention for Inappropriate Disruptive Behavior"  
IRB #308

The above referenced protocol has been:

- Approved (committee review)
- Approved (expedited review)
- Conditionally approved (see remarks below)
- Exempt from IRB review
- Tabled for future consideration – re-submit with corrections  
(submit 2 copies of your protocol)
- Disapproved (see remarks below)

by the Institutional Review Board Federal Wide Assurance Number (FWA 00000805).

**Please have other observer (Form II, Part III) submit IRB Web-based certificate.**

As stipulated in the guidelines of the IRB, this protocol will be subject to annual review by the IRB and any deviations from the protocol or change in the title must be resubmitted to the board.

For additional information you can contact the IRB University website at <http://www.panam.edu/dept/sponpro/Policies/Policies.html>

**AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY, YOU MUST FILL OUT THE ENCLOSED REPORT FORM**

**cc: Dr. Wendy A. Lawrence-Fowler, AVPR.  
Dr. Terry Overton**

APPENDIX D  
RESEARCH STUDY PERMISSION MEMO

## RESEARCH STUDY PERMISSION MEMO

To: Institutional Review Board – Human Subjects in Research  
From: Priscila Hinojosa, Principal, Cathey Middle School  
Subject: Pamela VanCleaf, Research Study  
Date: November 4, 2003

Pamela VanCleaf has my permission to conduct her research study entitled “The Effects of Using an Off-Task Paper as a Nonverbal Intervention for Inappropriate Disruptive Behavior” at Cathey Middle School. If you have any questions, please call me at (956) 971- 4300. Thank you for the opportunity to help Mrs. VanCleaf.



APPENDIX E  
DATA RECORDING SHEET

DATA RECORDING SHEET

Select Subject Designation: One Two Three

Operational Definition of Target Behavior: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_.

Time Behavior is Most Likely to Occur (determines monitoring periods):  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

FREQUENCY MONITORING CHART

Place a tally mark in the appropriate box each time the target behavior is observed.

Class/Time Period	M /	T /	W /	Th /	F /	M /	T /	W /	Th /	F /

## VITA

Pamela R. VanCleaf graduated from Moorhead State University in Moorhead, Minnesota in 1991, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Special Education for the Emotionally Disturbed/Autistic and a minor in Women's Studies. Shortly after, her career brought her to McAllen, Texas, where she has taught Special Education for over 13 years, and ACT for six years, in both elementary and middle school classrooms.

Pamela VanCleaf is presently attending the University of Texas-Pan American in Edinburg, Texas to further her education by earning a Masters in Special Education for the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learner. She currently resides with her husband and two daughters in McAllen, Texas; her permanent mailing address is 401 West Fern Avenue, zip code 78501.