

Generalization: From Classroom to the Community

Abstract

Students with Severe Varying Exceptionalities (SVE) can improve their quality of life by participating in the community. The purpose of this action research is to explore how the use of daily money skills activities performed in the classroom improves generalization in the community. Another purpose is to determine whether simulated money helps or hinders their understanding of the concept of money.

Statement of the Problem

Students with SVE display difficulties with generalizing skills taught in the classroom into the community. Transition students (ages 18-22) with disabilities are not able to generalize money skills. For these students participating in the Post-graduate Alternative for Secondary Students (PASS) program, learning money skills is an essential functional skill. A functional approach focuses on individualized skills needed for independent functioning across educational, community, domestic, recreation/leisure and vocational domains.

In the classroom setting, students practice both shopping and money skills daily in a simulated grocery zone. Once in the community, and often in the checkout line, I have observed students having difficulty with counting change and cash, giving the correct dollar amount, determining the better buy of items and understanding if they have enough change left over from a previous purchase to make another purchase. I have also observed students struggling with knowing the value of each coin and counting them.

Although, students are receiving training on money and shopping skills in the classroom, I am concerned that these skills are not generalized across settings. In order to investigate my concern, data must be collected on strategies needed to improve students' ability to generalize money skills in the community by reevaluating my instructional strategies.

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this proposed action research project is to explore how or what use of daily money skills activities will improve generalization in the community. Another purpose is to determine whether simulated money helps or hinders their understanding of the concept of money. Will using real cash help students generalize money skills?

Literature Review

According to Stone-MacDonald (2011) a functional curriculum teaches students the knowledge and skills they will need in the community as adults. The emphasis in the functional curriculum is on the students' learning skills to improve their quality of life (Stone-MacDonald, 2011). The researcher studied students with disabilities in the developing country of Tanzania where most students with intellectual disabilities, visual impairments or hearing impairments are educated in self-contained classrooms in a public school or a separate school. In this study, results show that local context is important and knowledge of local context in designing functional curricula for students with developmental disabilities is essential. The overall goal of education, according to Stone-MacDonald (2011), was to create members of society who can participate economically and socially. Two students who left the school to enter the community as adults showed signs of being able to earn money for their basic needs and work in the family and also evidence showed they were accepted by their neighbors and friends in the community as equal members.

Research concludes that the quality of life for individuals with disabilities is enhanced with given opportunities to participate in the community as a valued citizen by teaching life skills (Hansen & Morgan, 2008; Stone-MacDonald, 2011; Xin, Grasso, Dipipi-Hoy, & Jitendra, 2005).

Instructional setting is a variable to consider when providing purchasing skill training (Xin et al., 2005). Xin and colleagues reported that combining simulated and in vivo training

yielded better results. In vivo training or instruction involves participants applying what they learn in real-world settings using math skills (Browder, Spooner, Ahlgrim-Delzell, & Wakeman, 2008).

Research Methodology

The action research will take place in the community such as the grocery or retail store and in a public high school's SVE classroom. Participants include 8 transition students who range from the ages of 18-22, the special education teacher and two paraprofessionals. The 8 secondary students involved are in the transition program at the school called PASS. Of the eight students, two have been diagnosed with Autism and the other six students have been diagnosed with intellectual disability. There are 3 male students and 5 female students. The classroom teacher and two paraprofessionals will be responsible for implementing intervention and collecting data. Parent participation is needed to send money to school for their child in order to shop in the community. Resource tools needed for this research would be real money (cash and coins), a teacher made worksheet and a task analysis to measure student success.

Results

After I complete my action research project, I hope to find that my students with severe varying exceptionalities can generalize money skills taught in the classroom to the community. I am hoping my students can apply the functional life skill of money in all community settings such as the grocery store, retail store, restaurants and even at any vending machine. I will collect data for nine weeks beginning the first week of February and ending at the end of March. I plan to have the data analyzed by April 2016. With the interventions of money worksheets, role-playing using actual money and an online counting change resource, I am hoping to achieve

student success in generalization. Research findings will be available in time for the conference and will be presented.

Implications

An individual feeling like a valued member of society is extremely essential for students with disabilities. One way of ensuring that they do feel valued is to have them participate in the community like shopping. Money skills are essential to obtain for shopping. In order to be successful in shopping in the community, it must be learned in the classroom and generalized to the community. Generalization involves applying what is learned or being learned in a different setting.

References

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