Special Education Self-Monitoring Strategies

Completing homework, answering accurately, arriving punctually, behaving appropriately, attending attentively, using skills for life, are a few of the skills that have improved when students utilize self-monitoring models/techniques.

Self-monitoring refers to the strategy of a student observing his/her own behavior and discriminating when he has performed a targeted response (Agran, 1997). Typically, self-recording is paired with self-monitoring. Self-monitoring has been utilized to direct a student toward measuring and recording his or her attending behaviors (SMA) and/or to measure and record his/her academic performance (SMP)(Rock, 2005).

Self-monitoring is one of the most comprehensive research supported techniques of behavioral self-management (McDougall, 2008). Improvements across skills, age ranges, and populations have been documented. In addition, most self-monitoring strategies are simple to administer and have a plethora of supportive tools available to teachers.

Self-monitoring is an effective yet underutilized intervention in general education. Techniques and tools reported in the self-monitoring literature include: self-talk, self-graphing, video-modeling (student watches himself complete tasks), self-recording, self-instruction, self-evaluation.

Self-monitoring promotes independence, responsibility, takes little time or expense to train and can be easily faded. With successful application a teacher's time is more efficient with less time devoted to dealing with behavioral issues.

This article shares research information, tools and techniques cited in the literature, strategies and tools utilized by consultants at the Watson Institute, and resources for teachers.

Simplicity and effectiveness are keys to success with self-monitoring.

When using self-monitoring strategies, it is important to:
- Train students systematically: model each step, train across multiple stimuli-role play, give feedback, engineer the environment so the student has multiple opportunities to self-monitor
- Train students in general education classes rather than in an outside setting if the behavior is targeted for GE
- Periodically monitor for correct usage of the technique
- Have support available to the GE teachers to collaborate - special education teachers or behavior therapist; McDougall, D. et.al (2006).

Here are some examples of techniques you can use in your classroom!

This student had difficulties in gym. The special education teacher, physical education and behavioral consultant observed, discussed, and taught him strategies to use when he felt agitated. This chart went with him into the general education gym class. At the end of the period he colored in a block if he felt he did the statement. He then went to the special education room and reviewed it with his teacher. He liked going there, talking with her, and taking a break at a center. The process of completing the form and taking it to her was his reinforcer.

I am keeping track of school behaviors that I am doing. This is what it looks like:

If we had to take turns in gym, I remembered to do it!

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

I was OK when I or my team didn't win today:(I even said something nice to the winners)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

When something worried me I remembered to tell an adult, calm myself, & make a plan

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

I made good decisions today with other students

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

This chart was created on card stock as a daily tool for a 1ˢᵗ grade student with Autism Spectrum Disorders. He had difficulty completing tasks, transitioning to the next task, and attending. The blocks designated each part of his day with intermittent low to high level reinforcers built in. After checking his schedule, transitioning and completing a task he colored in the block. Once he reached a reinforcer he received it. This was also adapted for another student with the actual schedule of activities written on each block, with an AM and PM card.

| COMPUTER |
| |
| |
| ART ACTIVITY |
| |
| |
| GUM |
| |

DAILY REPORT CARD   Date_____

Behaviors:	Reading	English	Spelling	Math	S.S.	Sci/Hlth	Music	Art	Library	Gym	Stwk	Comp	HR/AM	HR/PM
Completed my assigned work	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
I used my self-control strategies if I got upset	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
I did my assigned job in small group	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
I transitioned myself (or with a little help)	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Teacher's Initials														
I met my goal:	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
I had: S=some help; N= no help; L=lots of help today														

I Completed departure activities   Y   N
All by myself

I kept my "cool"
A   = all day;

M   = most of the day;

NM   = not much of the day

This chart was a portable chart going with the student to general education, specials, and special education. The special education teacher reviewed each student's card at the end of the day. Points were earned and cashed in at the end of the week. Some students could self-graph the percentage of "Y"s they received each day to visually chart their progress. All goals were based on student IEPs.

The following chart was initially utilized to increase participation for a student in general education. It was adapted for other students in the classroom by deleting some of the columns. One general educator liked the chart so much after using it with one student that she utilized the word list column for many students to focus their attention on listening and beginning note-taking.

My In-Class Checklist

I raised my hand	The teacher called on me	I answered	I heard these words
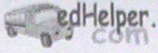
The photo below demonstrates "chunking" a task with visual cues for self-monitoring while working. This strategy is quick, easy, efficient, reinforcing to the student, and has shown immediate success in various settings. The student completes about 3 items then follows the directions on the post-it note, completes 6 items follows the next direction, continuing until the paper is completed. This provides a systematic way for the student to receive attention for 'expected' classroom work behaviors.

Name _____ edHelper. Date _____

For each pronunciation, give the correct spelling of the word.

Sample
This is only a sample pre-made worksheet. Sign up now!

1. dihsohn	2. suhvihlyuhn	3. wEHsturn
disown		
4. dihsEHmuhnayt	5. ihnsuhlEHrihtee	6. kohpeeuhs
7. ihntuhnayshuhn	8. kuhnuhndruhm	9. uhnfawrchuhnuhtlee
10. rihspEHktfuhlee	11. hEHnuh	12. dihmEHnshuhn
13. rihguruhs	14. ajuhtayshuhn	15. kuhnglomuruht
16. ihkstreemlee	17. rihjuhd	18. kwoluhfii
19. moduhst		

Show the teacher

Raise your hand

Get on the computer

This chart helped a student monitor his getting up and down compulsively to sharpen his pencil in a 2nd grade general education classroom.

I have three sharp pencils in my desk to use. If I still need to sharpen a pencil I can do it 3 times. That will be enough until after lunch. My pencils will be sharp enough to do a good job!

There are many resources with ready-made self-monitoring tools available for teachers. Kathleen McConnell and her colleagues' book, **Practical Ideas That Really Work for Students with ADHD** offer such resources appropriate for many children. The following are a few of the examples in their book.

A timer, adult "check", or a tactile cue as a wrist vibrator can cue the student at intervals to check whether on or off-task.

Although this can be used only by the teacher it can also be utilized as a monitoring tool by the student during and immediately after completion of an assignment. Agreement can then be checked with the teacher. If there is agreement it can serve as a coupon for a pre-determined reinforcer.

Neatness Counts

This coupon recognizes your:

❑ Neat Handwriting

❑ Heading

❑ Complete Assignment

❑ Editing

The following example is found in **Social Standards at School** by Judi and Tom Kinney. Their book provides 53 social skills that include **self-monitoring pages** for the student and teacher. Each student page includes a "self-talk story", a student "self-monitoring checklist", and a section for the teacher to individualize information called "my story". This example is for "standing in line".

standing in line
student page

date _____

time _____

setting _____

teacher _____

period _____

student name _____

_____

self-talk story

When I am waiting in the line to get lunch I need to remember to stay in my own place. I have to respect other students and not let a friend cut in front of me. I have to try to keep my hands and feet to myself and not put them on the walls or lean against someone else. It is hard but I have to try to be patient and not get upset with those people in front of me because the line is moving slowly. I can talk to my friends in a normal classroom voice. We can talk about what we want to do at recess or make plans to do something together on the weekend.

self-monitoring checklist

M T W R F

1. I stay in my place.
2. I keep hands to myself.
3. I am patient while I stand in line.
4. I talk in a normal voice.
5. I talk about okay things.

my story

M T W R F

_____

_____

_____

_____

The Social Times by K. Buron, offers students a tool to self-monitor their emotions and need for assistance. The 5 point scale engages the student and helps them problem solve solutions for individual needs.

Rating	Can I Do It?	What Are Some Things That Belong in This Box?
5	This is impossible for me to handle! I am not ready to do this on my own.	
4	This is pretty hard for me. I will need some help.	
3	This is kind of hard for me, but I could try it on my own.	
2	With a plan, I can do this on my own.	
1	No sweat. Easy as pie. I can do this totally on my own.	

An elementary teacher and her student devised a self-monitoring system together. The teacher visually 'chunked' written work. As the student completed each designated section, she dropped a cube block into a cup. Once all her blocks were used she independently chose an item from a prize box.
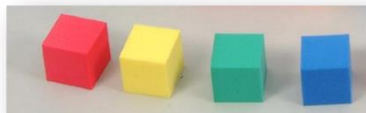
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K. Buron (2016) *The Social Times.* AAPC Publishing.

Kinney, J. & Kinney, T. (2005*). Social Standards at Schoo*l. Verona, WI: Attainment Company, Inc.

McDougall, D., Skouge, J., & Farrell, A.(2006 Summer). *Research on Self-Management Techniques Used by Students with Disabilities in General Education Setting: A Promise Fulfilled?* Journal of the American Adademcy of Special Education Professionals.
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Additional Self-Monitoring Tools with video vignettes can be accessed on:
https://www.thewatsoninstitute.org

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