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Stephanie Prentice

Illinois Wesleyan University

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Student Choice: How Does it Relate to Student Behavior?

Stephanie Prentice and Leah Nillas*

Educational Studies, Illinois Wesleyan University

Research Question

- How does student choice in the classroom affect intrinsic motivation and student behavior?
- *Student Choice* refers to an opportunity for students to make choices that are meaningful and relevant to them (Williams, 2017).

Literature Review

- According to the Self Determination Theory (SDT), coined by Baard, Deci, and Ryan (2004), people are intrinsically motivated when they have a sense of autonomy
- When students are provided choices that are connected to individual goals, interests, and values, students become intrinsically motivated (Katz & Assor, 2006; Thompson & Beyer, 2015; Evans & Boucher, 2015).
- In his research, Morgan (2006) found that choice can be used to effectively manage problem behaviors in the classroom, increasing task-completion and decreasing the occurrence of destructive behaviors.

Methodology

- 21 third grade students from a rural town in central Illinois. Four students had IEPs.
- Data was collected through field notes, anecdotal records, student work, and classroom behavior management data
- Data was analyzed using coding techniques (similarities and differences, linguistic connectors, repetition, missing data) in an effort to find common themes and behavior patterns when choice was implemented in the classroom.
- I focused on *intrinsic* motivation in this research.

Results and Data Analysis

- Students genuinely enjoy having choices in the classroom and are excited to work on assignments in which they have a choice, demonstrating an increase in intrinsic motivation.
- Findings demonstrate, on average, students score higher on assessments of which they had choice by nearly 8%. In addition, students demonstrated more anxious behaviors while taking standardized assessment.
- When choice was used over extended periods of time, it was ineffective in eliminating the occurrence of problematic behavior. However, when choice was used for single assignments, the problematic behavior decreased and students worked well together.



Figure 1. Students work together to finish their trivia-style board game for their economics project. Instead of a unit exam, they were given four choices for their formal assessment: create a board game, write a children's book, write a test, or create a business. 17 of 22 students chose the option to create a board game. The choices included in this assessment are format choices, giving students freedom to present the learned content in different ways. Other types of student choice include mobility, strategy, and topic.

Conclusion

- Student choice empowers students to be self-advocates for their own learning. Teachers should incorporate student choice into their instructional practices to promote student empowerment.
- Research about student choice and different learning styles would help teachers design tasks that effectively reach the individual learning styles in their classrooms.
- If I were to complete this research again, student surveys and inventories about learning styles would provide more direction in this study.