Generalization Programming Brief - Exploit Functional Contingencies

Function of the Generalization Programming Category:
Adapt consequences found naturally within the environment to increase the likelihood that the student will generalize the target behavior. This generalization programming brief was based on Stokes & Osnes (1989).

Brief Description:
This generalization technique utilizes consequences found naturally in or artificially added to the environment in order to promote generalization of behavior. There are four ways to exploit natural functional contingencies: identify natural consequences, recruit natural consequences, modify maladaptive consequences, and reinforce occurrences of generalization.

What "Common Problems" Does This Address?
Student does not know how or when to exhibit the desired behavior in environments other than the one in which he was taught.

Method 1 with Sample Procedures: Contact natural consequences
Figure out which reinforcers are found naturally in the environment.
Step 1. Identify the environment(s) in which you would like for the desired behavior to be exhibited. Ex: Student will raise his hand in order to obtain teacher attention in the classroom and library.
Step 2. Figure out why the student is responding inappropriately within those environments. Ex: Student calls out the answer and the teacher sporadically acknowledges him by nodding her head. After looking at the antecedents and consequences of calling out, you figure out that he wants the teacher's attention.
Step 3. When implementing an intervention try to find reinforcers that exist naturally within the environments. Ex: We know that most teachers will acknowledge a student when they raise their hands appropriately so acknowledgement (attention) will be the natural consequence that we try. When student raises his hand quietly the teacher looks at him, listens to his answer, and nods. This should increase the frequency at which he raises his hand in class.

Method 2 with sample procedures: Recruit natural consequences.
Employ natural reinforcers at a higher frequency when the student is learning a new behavior.
Step 1. Identify the student's natural reinforcers. Ex: The student likes to acquire the teacher's attention.
Step 2. Deliver the identified frequency at a high rate when the student is first starting to learn an appropriate response. Ex: Step 1 of student's intervention - teacher calls on student every time she raises his hand with a quiet voice. Step 2 – Once student has learned the appropriate

behavior, teacher calls on student every 2 times the student raises her hand appropriately.

Step 3. If student is still exhibiting target behavior at a high frequency teacher will call on student at the same rate as the other students.

Method 3: Modify maladaptive consequences
Make sure that the desired behavior is not accidentally being punished.

Step 1. When the frequency of the desired behavior decreases analyze the antecedents and consequences of the behavior in order to determine the connections that exist between the desired behavior and the environment. (Ex: Student raises hand quietly but teacher does not acknowledge her.)

Step 2. After paying attention to antecedents and consequences, determine if consequence is the reason why behavior is decreasing. (Ex: Student raises hand less and calls out more if teacher does not acknowledge his raised hand.)

Step 3. When punishment is figured out, replace punishment with a consequence that is reinforcing to the child. (Ex: Student raises hand quietly and teacher calls on him. Student raises his hand 3 more times.)

Method 4: Reinforce occurrences of generalization
Noticing when generalization occurs and providing reinforcement.

Step 1. Observe student in new environment.

Step 2. Immediately reinforce your student when she engages in desired behavior.

Critical components that must be implemented in order to ensure a successful intervention:
- Must accurately identify the antecedent, behavior, and consequence.
- Must know the function of the behavior (why does the child engage or not engage in the behavior? Hint: Study the antecedents and consequences of the target behavior)
- Must alter contingencies so that target behavior is being reinforced
- Must strictly follow set schedule of reinforcement
- Must heavily reinforce first few occurrences of generalization

References
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Stokes, T. F., & Baer, D. M. (1977). An implicit technology of generalization. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 10*, 349-367.
Stokes, T. F., & Osnes, P. G. (1989). An operant pursuit of generalization. *Behavior Therapy, 20*, 337-355.