

Generalization Programming: Incorporate functional mediators

Function of the Generalization Programming Category:

Add additional stimuli to the target behavior's teaching environment in order to transfer the new stimuli into a natural environment where it may be generalized. This generalization programming brief was based on Stokes & Osnes (1989).

Brief Description:

This method incorporates teaching with artificial cues (cues that are not naturally used in generalizing environment) which include using physical object cues, social cues, self-regulated physical object cues, and self-regulated verbal cues.

What "Common Problems" Does This Address?

The student will not perform target behavior in another environment.

Method 1: Incorporate common salient physical stimuli in both the training and the natural environment (the environment in which you would like for the target behavior to generalize)

- Step 1: Choose a significant (salient) physical stimulus that can be found in both the training environment and the natural environment. Ex: Clearly written rules written in the cafeteria and in the library. The target behavior is using quiet voices which are included in both places' rules.
- Step 2: Use the significant physical stimuli (objects) when teaching the target behavior in the training environment. Ex: Have student look at rules every time he comes into the cafeteria. You may have to reinforce him for both attending to the new physical stimuli AND being quiet if you have verbally reminded him of the rules in the past.
- Step 3: Introduce your student to the new environment and reinforce the student IMMEDIATELY if they engage in the target behavior. Ex: When he walked into the library he immediately looked at the rules and sat down quietly. He received 2 extra minutes of PE time.

Method 2: Incorporate common salient social stimuli

Train an outstanding mediator as a stimuli in both the training environment and in the natural environment.

- Step 1: Choose a mediator that will exist in both the training environment and the natural environment (the environment in which you would like to generalize). Ex: Choose a peer that shares the same schedule as your target student.
- Step 2: Train the mediator to model appropriate behavior for the target student and prompt the target student's behavior change if the student is behaving inappropriately. Ex: Train a peer to sit beside target student in all classes and elbow target student when the student needs to lower his voice.

Step 3: Reinforce the target student and the peer if target behavior occurs in the natural (not training) environment.

Method 3: Incorporate salient self-mediated physical stimuli

Use self-mediated stimuli such as a token board, a rule sheet, or a self monitoring sheet that the student can carry around with them from setting to setting (i.e. from class to cafeteria).

- Step 1: Choose a stimuli (such as a clipboard or index card) that is transportable and write the rules for proper behavior.
- Step 2: Model and discuss the rules for appropriate behavior with the target student.
- Step 3: Teach target student how to check off the behavior that he is exhibiting (ex: put a check beside quiet voice if your voice is quiet).
- Step 4: Make sure that all of the teachers know why student is carrying around stimuli.
- Step 5: Reinforce the student IMMEDIATELY when they engage in a target behavior when that is generalized to a new environment.

Method 4: Incorporate salient self-mediated verbal stimuli.

Use verbal communication (can be the student talking to herself or you verbally talking to her) to set goals and remind the student of how and when to engage in appropriate behavior.

- Step 1: Decide what the goal and verbal prompts are that go with target behavior (i.e. When I walk into music class I will sit quietly and put my hands in my lap. If I talk I will lose a card.)
- Step 2: Teach the child to use the verbal prompt in order to engage in target behavior.
- Step 3: Reinforce the child when they engage in generalized target behavior.

Critical Components that must be implemented for intervention to be successful:

All stimuli must be transportable so that they can be taken and used in every environment in which you want for the behavior to generalize. The transportable stimuli must be easily located and used in every environment for which you want for the behavior to generalize. Choose a reward that will be reinforcing to target student. Reward student IMMEDIATELY when they generalize a new behavior. Also, be meticulous when choosing a transportable stimulus to make sure that it is relevant to the target behavior occurring in new environment.

Critical Assumptions/Problem-Solving Questions to be Asked:

The child will be able to recognize the transportable stimuli in the new environments. The portable stimuli are relevant enough to be related to target behavior. The trainer will be near the target child enough to catch the first generalization of the behavior and reinforce it immediately. The mediator will be capable to prompt and model appropriate behavior.

References

- Burns, M. K., Riley-Tillman, T.C. & VanDerHeyden, A. (In Press). *Response To Intervention Applications Volume 1: Academic and Behavioral Interventions*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- 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.