THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TOOL SKILLS AND A HUNCH ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE AND LEARNING OF RETARDED PERSONS

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These charted data were taken by the instructional staff of COF Training Services, Inc., Ottawa, Kansas. Distributions plotted on the Chart show the number of correct digits written per minute. Two (2) one-minute timings were given in March, 1978, to a group of ten mildly retarded adults who had some computing skills. These timings were "writing digits-numerals in sequence" and "writing digits-basic addition facts." A range of 16 to 28 weeks of tool skill drills followed to increase the frequency of computing and writing. The median celeration during this period was xl.3 per week. In December of 1978 the same two timings were again given to the ten adults to check the durability of the tool skill drills. As seen on Chart 1, the median frequency of "numerals in sequence" increased by xl.8 and the median frequency of "basic addition facts" increased by x3.5.

The distribution at the far right shows one-minute performances of 45 seniors at Ottawa High School. These seniors were given the same basic addition drill sheet used with the retarded adults. Since the performances of both groups have a similar median and range, and since the group of 10 retarded adults can learn to compute and write at a median celeration of x1.3 per week, an obvious hunch arises: MANY RETARDED PERSONS CAN LEARN AND PERFORM AS FAST AS THEIR "NORMAL" PEERS; THEY ARE SIMPLY BEHIND AND HAVE FURTHER TO GO.

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REMEMBERING PEOPLE A MINUTE A DAY

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I have a hunch knowing and using a person's name multiplies the "warmth" of an interaction with that person. Seeing Ogden Lindsley lead a workshop in Precision Teaching, I noticed the sincere, direct, immediate effort Og makes in finding out and using a person's name (Lindsley, 1978).

After several years of unsuccessful attempts at learning names and faces of students in large classes of between 100 and 200 people, I finally started practicing three Precision Teaching strategies, and was rewarded with success. Four replications have convinced me of the method's usefulness. The strategies used were: (1) pinpointing learning channels; (2) practicing a minute a day; and (3) encouraging high initial error frequencies.

Two learning channels pinpointed were "Sees person/Thinks name" (Chart 1) and "Sees name/Thinks face" (Chart 2). Twice a week during class while the students are taking a test, I look at each student present and try to think first and last name. Chart 1 illustrates the results of this effort. Several other behaviors that divide my time seem to have kept my peoplenamed-per-minute at about 10 at the end of the quarter. More accurate timing may be in order.

Outside of class, I use my seating chart, a counter, and a stopwatch to practice visualizing the person as I look at his/her name. Results of these efforts are shown in Chart 2.

The minute a day strategy comes into play in a relative fashion. When one faces a mass of people, there's a tendency to believe that a "mass" of time is necessary to learn their names and faces. Other more necessary and immediate activities win our attention. The two to three minutes necessary to run through my seating chart, however, isn't that much of a strain on my daily behavior.

Exposure to Learning Pictures and the ensuing encouragement of high initial error frequencies helped overcome my feelings of hopelessness in the face of the multitude. Charting my progress gave me faith in the future. In fact, trend-following celerations of "hit" frequencies in both learning channels (Charts 1 and 2) show the highest celerations in the first two weeks, when I "needed" them most.

REFERENCE

Lindsley, O. R. Workshop in charting and projecting multiple baselines. Presented at The Pre-Convention Institute, Association for Behavior Analysis, Chicago, May, 1978.

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