“I Will” Cards

1. The potential subjects used in this study will be a convenience sample of elementary school students with an educational diagnosis on the autism spectrum that the researcher works with. The researcher will be working with all of the students that receive services from her. Since autism occurs 4-8 times more frequently in males, and the researcher only has males on her caseload, the participant pool will be solely male. There will be up to 4 male participants, ranging in age from 6 years of age to 8 years of age. All of the children are healthy, however some of the children do take medications for Attention Deficit Disorder and anxiety. The children are of either Hispanic or Caucasian decent, as those are the children served by the researcher. The students used in this study must be on the autistic spectrum, as the purpose of the study is to test an intervention for children with autism.

2. The students will be recruited from the social communication supports and services (SCSS) class at a central Texas elementary school. The SCSS teacher will obtain consent by contacting the parents either by phone or in person to explictly explain the project, and follow up with a written consent form to obtain their signature and ensure their understanding of the project.

3. A combined design using both reversal design and multiple baseline design will be used for this study. These two designs were chosen in combination to differentiate if the intervention is successful on an individual basis or if it works consistently with several children diagnosed on the autism spectrum.

For each student given consent, target behaviors will be identified though informal interviews and Bellini’s Autism Social Skills profile with their general education teachers and observations by the SCSS teacher. The target behavior will be identified as a behavior that the student is having difficulty with within general education settings. Once the target behaviors have been identified, the Social Communication Supports and Services teacher (SCSS) teacher will create a social story for the child concerning the target behavior and help the child problem solve the replacement behavior that would be more socially appropriate for the student. The SCSS teacher will also help the student create an “I Will” card, where the student identify 3-4 “I Will” statements that he can keep with him to remind him of the techniques he can use to replace his inappropriate behavior with a socially appropriate behavior.

Baseline data will be taken for 4-8 data points, depending on the frequency of the activity (ie PE is only every other day, classroom work is multiple times daily). The intervention will continue for one month, with data taken 2-3 times per week. Following the first intervention phase, there will be a return to baseline for 5 data points. The intervention will then be introduced again to determine a functional relation for 3 more weeks, with data taken 2-3 times per week. Maintenance will be monitored for 1 month and 2 months following the intervention during random observation checks.

4. Though no study is risk-free, the risks in this study are minimal. Students might become frustrated during the intervention stage when prompted to use their card to problem solve the situation instead of someone just telling them what to do or letting the behavior slide by.

5. The students will be introduced to the “I Will” cards by a familiar person. All of the students have already been introduced to social stories and have had a positive reaction to them. In the consent, parents will be notified of the confidentiality of the study that their children’s identities will not be exposed to anyone except for the researcher.

6. The subjects in this study will potentially gain appropriate social skills in various school settings making them independently successful. This could also benefit society since these students can be a meaningful part of society once they attain appropriate social skills.

7. There will be no compensation offered or provided to the participants.

8. The risk that the students will become frustrated when learning to use the “I Will” cards is outweighed by the potential benefits to the students and society.

9. The study will take place at a central Texas elementary school.

10. I am a Master’s student in Special Education, with a concentration in Autism, thus working on an intervention to help students with autism attain appropriate social skills. My supervising faculty member will be Dr. E. Amanda Boutot.

11. n/a

12. n/a

13. The individuals beside myself who will have access to the results are my supervising faculty member, Dr. E. Amanda Boutot and the student’s Admission, Review and Dismissal committee.