

The Effects of Interruptions and Transition on Student Focus

How Do Interruptions and Transitions Effect Student Focus in a Third Grade Classroom?

LaQueshia S. White

East Texas Baptist University

## The Effects of Interruptions and Transition on Student Focus

### **Research Problem and Topic**

The topic of this study is to determine how interruptions and transitions affect student focus in third grade classrooms. With the many interruptions in the classroom from both visitors and office personnel it would be helpful to determine if there is an effect on the students. Also, I would like to determine whether transitions during the day affect the students' focus as well. Third grade is the first grade where students are being held accountable for a state assessment and it would be beneficial to find out if these variables contribute positively or negatively to the time being spent preparing learners.

### **Research Questions**

How do interruptions and transitions effect student focus in a third grade classroom? Do the attitudes of office staff affect the frequency of interruptions? How are teachers able to redirect student focus after transitions or interruptions? What are teachers' attitudes regarding interruptions and their effects on the focus of their students?

### **Limitations**

Limitations of this study could be unreliable data gathered during interviews with teachers that have negative attitudes or bias regarding interruptions. The time allotted to gather this data might affect the number of teachers that are able to be interviewed or observed. Little knowledge of factors that may contribute to some behaviors exhibited by students during observations may limit the outcomes of this study (medications taken by students or specific

## The Effects of Interruptions and Transition on Student Focus

services being received). The researcher may overcome the obstacle of not knowing about the make-up of the classroom within the interview by preparing questions that will give more insight on the classroom make-up without violating confidentiality. To avoid biases, the researcher must have an opportunity to observe and interview multiple subjects so that he or she is able to have enough data to be able to differentiate between the bias and validity of the data being presented.

### Literature Review

#### Topics to Search (Keywords)

- Classroom Interruptions
- Student focus after transition
- Distractions

Planas, N. & Civil, M. (2002). Understanding Interruptions in the Mathematics Classroom: Implications for Equity. *Mathematics Education Research Journal*, 14(3), 169-189.

O'Connor, K.A. (2003). Retain teachers by listening to Their wants and needs. East Carolina University.

Lee, Y.J., Skinner, C.H., Lemmons, H., & Yarbrough, J.L. (2004). Decreasing transition times in a second grade classroom: Scientific support for the timely transitions game, *The Hawthorne Press*, 20(2), 85-107. doi: 10.1300/J008v20n02\_06

McGrath, C.J & Rust, J.O. (2002). Academic achievement and between- class transition time for self-contained and departmental upper elementary classes, *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 40-43.

## The Effects of Interruptions and Transition on Student Focus

### **Qualitative Research Method**

My study will be Critical Action Research because I'm studying the way interruptions and distractions affect the focus of students in the classroom. It will be conducted by conducting classroom observations and interviews of third grade teachers. Additionally, parts of my research will include ethnographic data considering the culture and attitudes of the staff members.

### **Setting**

The study will be conducted within the four third grade classrooms at Sunset Acres Elementary so that data collection will be more thorough. It would also assist in reducing the time needed to collect the data necessary to complete this study.

### **Participants**

Third grade students will be observed to determine factors that are relevant to this study. Third grade Teachers will also be interviewed in order to identify themes as well.

### **Sampling**

Purposive, homogeneous sampling will be utilized within this study while these teachers and classrooms are being observed or interviewed.

### **Trustworthiness**

The question of interpretive validity may arise because during the interview process, the researcher has to interpret the words of the teachers and make sure that they are doing this accurately. Considering the fact that I am a third grade teacher, extra effort must be taken in order to that I am objective enough to make sure that I do not report the data with any bias.

## The Effects of Interruptions and Transition on Student Focus

### **Dependability/Transferability**

Listen for common themes during interviews with each teacher and document thoroughly. Establish structural corroboration and ensure that there are no internal conflicts or contradictions by comparing verbal accounts from teachers to actual observations made by the researcher in the classroom. Make sure that the data is descriptive of the context so that themes are more easily identified. A questionnaire could be given to the students just to get some insight on how they feel after their classrooms are interrupted. This may assist in providing opportunities for triangulation of all the data collected.

### **Types of Data**

Observations will be conducted so that the researcher can observe an accurate account of how the students respond to interruptions and transitions within the day. In order to gauge the situations from the teacher's point of view, interviews will be conducted. So that the students' opinions and feelings are considered a very brief questionnaire will be provided with one open ended "feeling" question.

### **Data Analysis**

Color coding will be used while analyzing the field notes in order to determine common themes between observations and the interviews. Interviews will be transcribed in detail to assist with coding. Common themes will be highlighted in the appropriate color when they arise in the student questionnaire as well. A table will also be included illustrating each classroom's population (girls/boys, socio-economic factors, etc.). Illustrations of the classroom designs will be included so that all factors can be included (overstimulation, clutter, proximity to the door, etc.).

## The Effects of Interruptions and Transition on Student Focus