

Stability Balls as a Tool to Increase Focus and Engagement 2012-2013

Andrea Sanders

(with support from T. Di Ninno & L. Krochak)

Introduction:

Students within the grade 3 class do not seem to know how to appropriately engage one another in either an academic or social setting. Students are struggling with selecting the necessary language to communicate how they are feeling to their fellow classmates. This struggle then creates and perpetuates unhealthy relationships and communications within the classroom. Some students have the skills to use appropriate language, but when the safety and security of the classroom is jeopardised, they are unable to apply these skills. In addition to these issues, a significant number of students have diagnoses of ADHD. This necessitates the establishment and maintenance of routines while providing constant physical breaks. Ultimately, these students are not engaged and their performance and achievement is suffering.

Goal:

This project aims to increase the students' ability to focus, to stay on task, to interact respectfully and effectively, and to engage in the learning.

Strategies: Stability balls will be used instead of chairs and students will sit on these balls for the majority of the day. During transition times the students will be doing exercises using the balls. They will be moving on their ball in a controlled and structured manner and perform stretches to increase blood flow and muscle range of motion.

Data Collection Tools:

Checklists, with rubrics, for behaviour, on-task time and focus
Engagement checklist

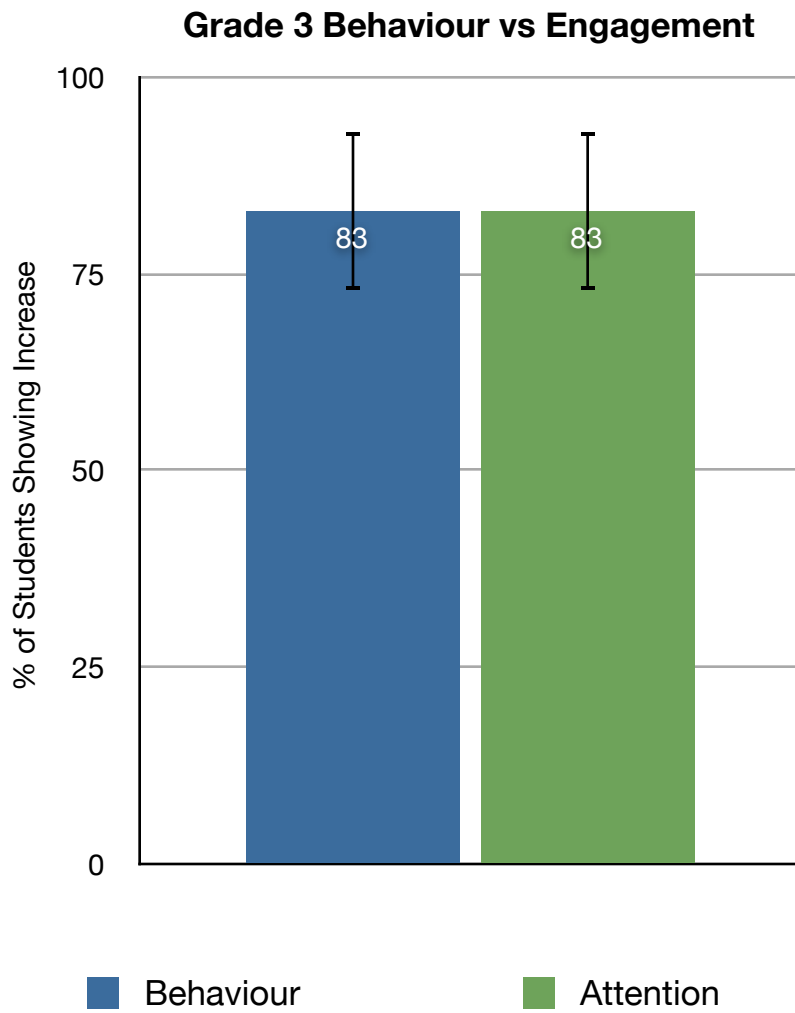


Figure 1. This figure shows that the use of stability balls in this grade 3 class resulted in improved student behaviour and increased student engagement.

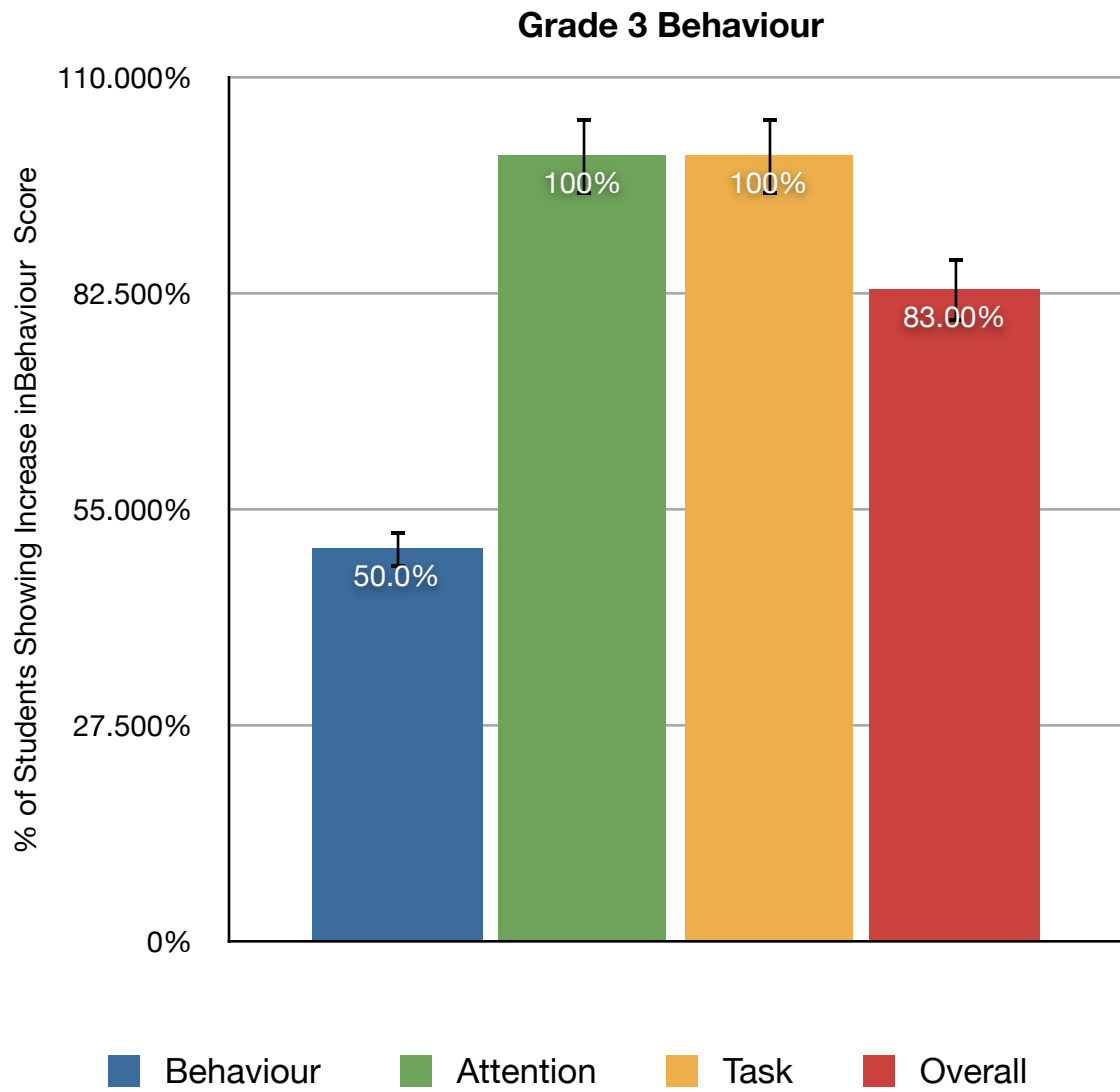


Figure 2. This graph indicates that all students showed an increase in their ability to focus (i.e. paying attention) and to stay on task.

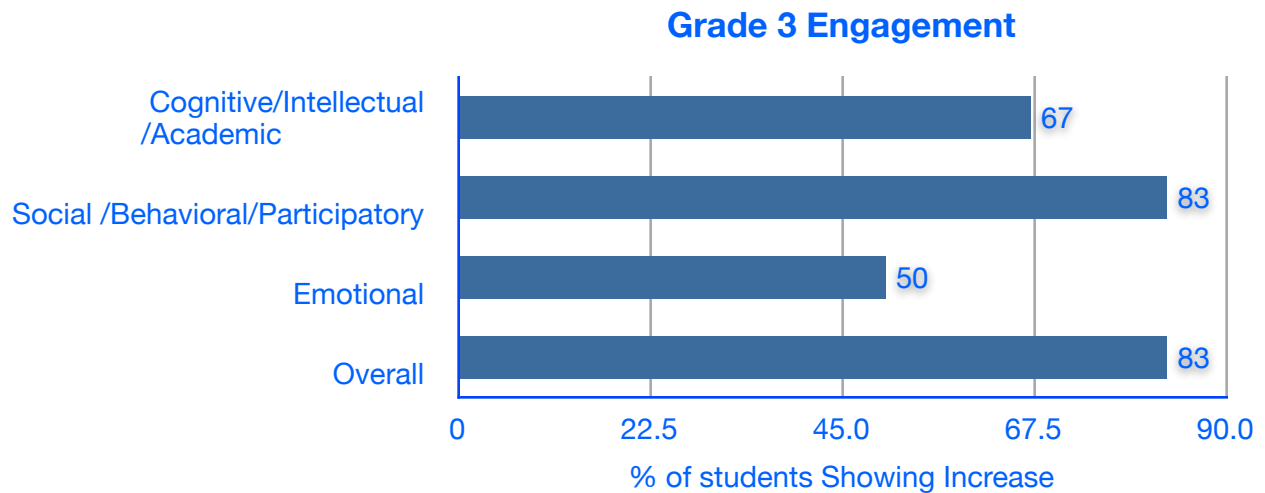


Figure 3. This figure shows that a significant number of the grade 3 students showed an increase in the Social/Behavioural/Participatory engagement. This was indeed one of the goals of this project.

In conclusion, the data show that the use of stability balls in this grade 3 class resulted in improved student behaviour and increased student engagement. The stability balls were effective for individual body breaks as well as class body breaks. The skills that seem to have shown greater improvement were paying attention and staying on task. Even though the data show an improvement in student behaviour, that improvement was not as pronounced as expected. A significant percentage of the students demonstrated increased engagement overall but emotional engagement, though showing improvement, seems to need more attention.

Future Direction:

It would be interesting to continue this project to investigate further the use of stability balls as a tool to foster greater engagement especially in the emotional area. It would also be interesting to follow this group of students through the next few years to investigate the long term benefits of this project, if any.

Bibliography:

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