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Fidget Toys in the University Classroom

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Abstract
- The multiplicity of in-class negative distractions detracts contemporary students from the learning process. The researcher initiated the use of fidget toys in the classroom in order to create a positive distraction to help refocus student attention on in-class topics. The fidget toys used in this research were small, squeezable, spongy, hand-held items. A twelve (12) question Likert Rating Scale survey was used to record data both at the beginning and end of each of the semesters. Research survey results suggest that fidget toys were instrumental in refocusing the attention of those students who had previously succumbed to distractions in the learning process.

Modification
- The Fidget Toy Survey was originally designed to accommodate both a course in construction management and a course in computer science. Since the collaboration with the co-researcher ended, the researcher has elected to eliminate questions three (3) and four (4) which were specifically aimed at computer use in the classroom.

Images of Fidget Toys Before Use

Presentation, Problem, and Solution

Presentation
- Summarizes and analyzes data collected from Fall 2008 through Fall 2011 (i.e., five semesters) from 246 students.
- Demonstrates the value of using fidget toys in redirecting student attention to in-class topic material.

Problem
- In-class distractions for contemporary students include, but are not limited to, fidgeting, chewing gum, chewing on pencils, nail biting, hair twirling, nose picking, clicking pens, tapping fingers, sleeping, doodling, consuming food and beverages, communicating on cell phones, text messaging, working cross-word puzzles, reading newspapers, working on assignments from other classes, and doing math puzzles.

Solution
- The working hypothesis was that the use of fidget toys would help refocus student attention on in-class topics. The researcher initiated the use of fidget toys in the classroom in order to refocus the attention of those students who succumb to distractions to the learning process. This may be viewed as a modification of behavior from a negative distraction to a positive distraction.

Data Collection, Presentation, and Value

Data Collection
- Twelve question Likert Rating Scale (LRS) survey with the following:
  - 1 = Terrible, None, Never
  - 2 = Poor, Low, Seldom
  - 3 = Neutral, Medium, Occasionally
  - 4 = Good, High, Frequently
  - 5 = Excellent, Highest, Always
- At the beginning and end of each semester.
- Students estimated the value of use of the fidget toys in redirecting their attention to in-class topic material.
- Survey was used in the Site Construction course.

Presentation
- Utilizes the LRS to display fidget toy survey data
- Survey questions illustrate the alignment of in-class student focus.

Value
- Determining how survey data collected from both the beginning-of-course and the end-of-course assist in identifying strengths, improvements, and insights for course management, design, and teaching processes.

Frequency of Use Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Use</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percent of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequency of Use by Number of Students

Frequency of Use by Percent of Students

Examples of Student Comments
- Good idea
- Think they are good for people who need them
- Fidget toys helped me to pay attention and stay off of my cell phone
- Was nice to have some days
- Helpful
- Good for paying attention
- Good tool to stay focused in class
- I usually stayed focused and had low stress
- I found myself more focused while using the fidget toy
- Good for an anxious person like me
- Very good idea
- I didn’t use it but I believe that it is very beneficial to many students
- Nice having them available
- Very useful on days when I was fidgety

Sample Survey Form Fall 2011

Frequency of Use after Use

- No
- Occasionally
- Frequently
- Always

Frequency of Use after Use

- Before
- After

Total Score
- Before/After

Frequency of Use

- How often should the fidget toys be available in class?
- What is the benefit level of a fidget toy to you during class?
- What was your reaction to the introduction of a fidget toy in class?
- Do you think the fidget toy will be useful in other courses?
- What should the instructor do to ensure the fidget toy is not distracting?
- How often do you use the fidget toy?
- Why do you think the fidget toy helps you to pay attention?
- How does the fidget toy help you to pay attention?
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