

# New system helps teachers gain back valuable instruction time, study finds

September 30 2015, by Molly Berg

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Elementary schoolchildren often dawdle between activities during the school day, losing valuable instructional time in the process. New University of Georgia research has found a way to reclaim these lost minutes and make the transition to a new subject fun while increasing student focus.

Co-authored by Scott Ardoin, professor of school psychology in the College of Education's department of [educational psychology](#), this new method resulted in an average of 39 extra minutes a week of instruction, or the equivalent of 2.6 extra hours of instruction [time](#) per month.

"With the system, the kids were given cues before it was time to transition," said Ardoin, director of UGA's School Psychology Clinic. "The warnings were projected onto a computer screen and then a timer would appear. The amount of time that they had to transition decreased as the study progressed.

"The students were always excited to beat the buzzer and therefore quickly prepared themselves for the next instructional session."

The findings were published in the September issue of the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*.

Ardoin and Jeffrey Hine, a former school psychology doctoral student in the department of educational psychology, developed software called Keep Busy and Carry On that would give students a notice before it was

time to transition to a new task.

Hine, who created the software and is now a licensed psychologist in pediatrics at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, found a lot of instruction time was lost due to transitions.

"Our idea was to come up with a prepackaged system with automated components," he said.

Hine developed Keep Busy and Carry On for two classrooms, one first and one second grade, in a local elementary school. UGA undergraduate students who took part in the research recorded how long it took students to transition between activities. Students had to be seated, quiet and academically engaged in order to be done with the transitions.

By identifying specific students who had the most difficulty transitioning between activities, Ardoin and Hine found the Keep Busy and Carry On system helped reduce the time the children spent between activities by 67 percent. Each classroom also increased instructional time by more than 20 percent.

The result, Ardoin said, is a way to keep students engaged while also taking some of the burden off the teacher.

"Teachers are busy instructing [students](#), so we wanted to create something simple for them," said Ardoin, co-director of the Center for Autism and Behavioral Education Research. "The system takes the responsibilities from the teacher and automates the intervention."

**More information:** To read the study on "Decreasing transition times in elementary school classrooms: Using computer-assisted instruction to automate intervention components," visit [onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/jaba.233/full](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/jaba.233/full)

Provided by University of Georgia

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