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ABC Project

CEP 832

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Problem Identification

The particular student I have in mind when I reflected on the most challenging behavior in the classroom would be a student who struggles with ADHD. He takes medication for it twice during a school day, has a supportive grandma who keeps up with his doctor appointments and contact with me, and starts off the day strong. After about an hour of being at school and working hard to stay in control and focused, you can see when the major change in this 7 year old. He starts shouting out, has inappropriate outbursts, and can even become violent. He becomes frustrated and aggressive and starts talking back or shouting at me, throwing things across the room, and I struggle to keep him in his desk space. During small groups, leveled reading, and workshop it is hard to focus on any student but him as he is not only distracted, but flailing around. Students in his group will start to play with him, or become frustrated that he is off task. For example, just yesterday, T was in a small group. I was reading with a different group and he was to be practicing verbs on the smartboard with his two other group mates. I have purposely put him in a smaller sized group to help stay on task and eliminate distraction. I asked him and then warned him when he was roaming from group to group and to the window. He then dropped the smart board pen during his turn and broke it. The last action that had him removed from his group to take a cool off was when he threw a pencil across the room and hit me in the face. It was not intentional, and he was horrified when he saw where it had landed, but this is an

excellent example of what happens after he loses control and is no longer thinking of the effects of his actions.

I have tried multiple solutions. Sometimes we have successful days. I've simply talked to him before every workshop. We have a great relationship and he will open up and share the issues with me. If I can't get to him at a time and I know he just wants to be heard I ask him to write it down and put the note on my desk and that I will read it later. We discuss expectations and that is he welcome to stay in the classroom if he stays on task and works hard. I've used modeling, and tried setting him up with a group that would ignore his inappropriate behavior and model high expectations. Regarding the text from Brophy, I assist him with basic socialization and helping skills by working with him and talking out different social skills he struggles with. We walk through every situation that has not gone his way and how he could have made that situation better. I also eliminate a power struggle by removing him and talking to him one on one about the issue once his calm and collected.

The general attributes of effective socializers that I am constantly reflecting and trying to build myself would be the Patience and Determination category. I do care about this particular student, however my patience wears thin at times as he persistently is continuing to misbehave. I praise his positive actions and he knows that I care about him through it all, however at times I have to tell him that I saw his inappropriate behavior, and that we will discuss it later because at some points I have lost patience and need time before I can help him and make a better decision about matching the most appropriate consequence to the behavior.

The behaviors that are the most challenging to me would be those of T's during direct instruction. I struggle to stay on task myself when he is so out of control. It is distracting and I

lose my train of thought to redirect him while guiding a lesson. A strength of mine would be empathy. I was high energy as a kid, and I knew many teachers did not like me because I was so hyper and excitable. I always start off our conversations calm to help him calm himself down, keep my tone low and endearing, yet stay firm about the expectations. I can usually get him to reenter the classroom, yet it takes a lot of patience and focus, which I am continuing to improve within myself.

Lastly, the home-school collaboration with T's grandma could be challenging to T because of a lack of consistency. Grandma is very supportive and an excellent guardian, however I believe her management style is chaotic, as I see her other grandsons and T are publicly yelled at. Going from a chaotic home to a classroom would be a difficult transition to deal with daily, and I keep these aspects in mind when supporting T in the classroom.

Understanding the Problem

The behavior of T that I would like to target are the actions he displays that are the most disruptive. Those would be shout outs, lack of control of his body, and using conflict resolution skills when something goes wrong. The shout outs happen when he is excited, knows an answer, or is angered by a redirection and disrupts the lesson by shouting at me. When discussing the lack of control T has on his body is the fact that he doesn't seem aware of personal space, staying near his desk (I understand he struggles to stay still or in a seat so I am lenient about him standing while working or staying near his area). He is often redirected to go back to his seat during a silent and independent work activity. I will redirect him two or three times within a subject period, and he doesn't seem to realize he has drifted, yet again. It is frustrating to continue repeating the same direction, and he gets frustrated once the consequences come and he

feels he actually cannot handle it. The last issue we will target are his conflict resolution skills. Often T is not the instigator, or is actually in the right during a dispute. It is how he handles it that puts him in the wrong, or receives a worse consequence. For example, a student called T a name. Instead of handling it the way we discussed, he was consumed with anger and ran at the other child with clenched fists swinging. I intercepted him before he made contact, and he started shouting at me. I removed him from class and told him he was not welcome to come back if he was going to be aggressive and harm other students. After he had calmed down I then discussed that I saw the other student call him a name and that was wrong. However, the way he handled it made the situation far worse. We then discussed different solutions to that particular conflict for next time. Within these discussions T got off topic, was struggling to pay attention, and repeatedly asked for toys I had confiscated during the day. Although he is the oldest student in the class because he has been retained, he is the most immature. He wants to be better, and tells me that when he leaves on a good day he feels confident and happy with himself. His immaturity makes our solution discussions difficult as he cannot focus for a long enough period of time to talk out the problem in its entirety. It is definitely our goal, and we continue to work on it every day.

My calm, patient, and emotionless stance when dealing with T when he is upset works, however it is challenging to keep patience and emotions out of it when the same issues continue to occur within minutes. When reflecting on my stance toward this student I would have to say that I consistently practice Brophy's time out, effective praise, and shaping through successive approximations. In regards to time out, Brophy's text discussed that when a student is angry, upset, or out of control may respond well to time out from regular classroom activities. I have a

cool off desk in the back. It is an area away from everyone where the student reads the poster that says “We still care about you. What were your actions, and who did your actions affect?” Usually after five minutes there the student is calm enough to discuss what made them upset, and we can find a solution to the issue.

The second Brophy technique discussed in the book that I have found productive to use with T would be ignoring the negative behavior when he is acting out for attention, and praising his positive behavior. I give him positive praise with variety, confidence boosting, and appreciation. I have seen with this consistent positive praise he is more likely to try something new and handles making mistakes better.

The last Brophy technique that has been effective on T would be shaping through successive approximations. T came to me with bad habits that he had been practicing for a long time at home. Whining, acting immaturely, shouting, and turning in low quality work were some of them. Once T understood my expectations in each of these areas and I was consistent, I saw the changes. We took it one goal at a time, and he became more successful with assignments and could recognize the progress he made.

I notice that when I do not feel overwhelmed, am more patient, and stay one step ahead of T that he tends to have better days. He is definitely very challenging to work with, does not take change well, however my feelings have changed within the student now that we are having small successes. Our relationship has changed for the better, and he trusts that I am doing everything I can for him because I care about him. We still have days where he struggles, however he is able to forgive himself and start with a fresh attitude.

Within the week of observing T, I noticed these problems didn't occur when he was with specific students, in a particular subject, and was working in smaller groups. It seems he gets overwhelmed in a whole class discussion and that is when he starts to act out. He seems more content in smaller groups. He seems more engaged with his work during Spelling, Reading, and Math. During the Math unit on money, he was on task throughout the lesson, was accurately answering questions, and was participating correctly. He even helped a friend next to him who was confusing the mixed coins. During snack he chose a very kind student to sit by and they chatted pleasantly for fifteen minutes. He did very well during these times, and the behavior issues started during workshop, lunch, after lunch, and grammar. During workshop when he is self directed he loses control. He is not on task unless there is an adult within a few feet of him.

A time I lost my patience this week, which caused T to react negatively, was when he continued to ask me about a toy I had confiscated. He brings these little trinkets to school every morning. His grandma, him, and I have discussed these are distractions and he is almost obsessed with them. She told me if he brings it to take them and throw them away. I know from experience that if I do that, I will never get him back on track for the rest of the day and it will only make him hysterical. Despite our conversations and his grandmother's threats, he never fails to bring a trinket every morning. I find him playing with them under his desk every day. I had absolutely lost my patience with this. He had brought something every day this week, and I was tired of the same issues arising. I took the toys and put them in my desk, as usual. When I turned my back an hour later, he snuck up to my desk and took them out, putting them back in his pocket. When I found him playing with them again, I was furious. He went inside my desk which he knows is off limits and took these objects after I had already confiscated them. I took

them and told him what he did was unacceptable, to never go in my belongings again, and that we would discuss this at a later time. I was floored when he raised his hand during my lesson to ask for them back. I told him if he asked again, I would throw them away. I should not have handled it his way, but I was so aggravated and let my emotions take over. He started throwing a tantrum, pushing his chair into his desk, causing everything to fall. I sent him to the cool off and got back to my lesson. After reflecting, I know I should have handled it differently, and actually made things worse by giving into the negative behavior. It took away from instruction and his control.

His afternoons are always the most difficult part of the day. This is after lunch. During lunch he is supervised by the dean of students. The dean does not let the students get away with anything. T gets consequences almost daily during lunch, and comes back with a bitter attitude for the rest of the afternoon. He also does not enjoy the subjects of Social Studies or Science as much. He enjoys the discussion and experiments, however when it is time for silent reflecting and writing in journals, he starts to act out. I believe this is because he does not like writing, as I stated earlier with the Grammar issues.

Plan Development and Implementation

I used the Time Sampling Observation this week to record data on TL's behavior. I did this during two different lessons. Science, taught in the afternoon when he has the most issues, and Math, his best subject. TL sits near two students, one high level student in my top tier, JN, who is usually on task, and a tier 2 student, MP, who is strong in Math, yet behavior is inconsistent. During his Math lesson TL was displaying the most on task behavior. The following are notes from the Reading lesson.

TL	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
MP	no	no	yes	no	yes	no	no	yes	yes
JN	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	yes

Throughout this Science Lesson TL was struggling to focus. His off task behaviors included rummaging through his desk, sketching in his journal, shouting out, and standing next to his desk. He was extremely disruptive and became emotional after my redirections. I ended up moving him to the cool off because he was fixated on immature situations that I did not have the time to help him talk through at the moment, as I was in the middle of a lesson. He was upset that I took a toy away and it lead to this off task behavior. He raised his hand several times and asked me for the same toy multiple times. When I moved him he kicked the desk and created other distracting sounds trying to get attention from other students. I addressed these behaviors after the lesson, but did not allow him to deny other students their learning time.

Math Lesson:

TL	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
MP	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no	yes	yes
JN	no	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no

TL showed impressive focus during the Math assessment. I simply observed while students were doing their independent Math assessment after the lesson. Usually TL has trouble completing an assignment around other students, gets up 3 or 4 times for tissues, pencils, etc. Throughout this lesson I was ready with the usual tricks which may be water breaks, moving to a more secluded area, or allowing him to take a clipboard and work on the floor. As I continued to observe I noticed he completed the assessment silently, and accurately. He even scored better on the time on task analysis than the peers I compared him to.

I believe TL was more successful during the Math lesson was because it is his favorite subject. It is also before lunch time, when his medication has not worn off. He goes downstairs and takes his ADHD medication right before lunch, however we find that his mornings are better. This week's afternoons were very challenging for TL. We've noticed a change in the effects of the medication. TL's grandmother scheduled an appointment with his doctor for next week because she believes that he now needs a stronger dosage, or to switch to a new medication. She believes that TL may have grown and needs a larger dosage, or perhaps the medication isn't as effective anymore. I do not have the answers as of now, since the doctor appointment is next week, however TL did have this going against him this week. I noticed a change in his work ethic, attitude, and demeanor, as his grandmother and I discussed. His behavior was inconsistent and he struggled to stay on task. The afternoons were the most difficult of all. He became more emotional, aggressive, and impulsive. We also have specials in the afternoon at the end of the day, and by that time he was totally out of control. He usually struggles during specials because it is a more chaotic time for the students, but he uses his tools he has learned in his therapy class

that he is able to practice while his medication is working. Without the medication working properly, by the end of the day he was not himself, even with interventions I use that I shared with the Specials teachers before I left. He received a strike out for slapping a student in the face one afternoon during a special.

While reflecting the classroom activities, culture, energy, and activities and relating it to his on or off task behavior, I found that he is most on task when it is independent work time. When there is silence in the classroom and an activity or assessment has been given he is the most on task. His off task behavior occurs more frequently when the students have more freedom, like in workshop or a lesson that is more kinesthetic. When there is more commotion, distraction, movement, and louder volume of his classmates, he gets carried away and acts off task and even impulsively. He is involved with his peers or specials teachers when I see the most off task behavior. He is involved with a teacher assistant, or me directly one on one when I see the most on task behavior. He also works the best independently. It seems when there is a lesson that is more boisterous and includes more movement, he becomes over stimulated which leads to these off task, unsuccessful behaviors.

The settings and conditions that I have noted to see the most on task behavior is when he is alone, or working with fewer students. There are many different situations where I could make this happen. I could put him in the hallway with a clipboard and timer right by my window so I can still see him. I could allow him to work on assessments in the back closet, where I keep my Science kits and have turned it into a small study space. There is a desk and a light back there. The door is propped open so students are visible, and it is large enough to work in. It is almost the size of a small office. I covered the science kits with shower curtains to ensure the kits are

not a distraction. Lastly, I could create a study hall scenario for TL. His grandmother comes for him later on in the day as we have staggered dismissal, and TL has to wait for his older brother. Any assignments that he did not complete because of distractions could be completed in my classroom.

The intervention plan I have decided on would change TL's aggressive behavior. Until his medication has been adjusted by a doctor and more effective, he needs my help so he does not continue to receive strikeouts, detentions, or even suspensions while he is having difficulty controlling himself.

The first strategy is location. I have placed TL by students who are calm, patient, and display on task behavior. Removing him from other students who cause mishap will help. He can simply look up and see students modeling positive behavior. They are also there for when he starts to lash out. They are very patient, and know TL very well. Instead of arguing back, which makes TL more upset, they simply give him space and tend to ignore him until he is more calm.

I will also implement frequent brain breaks. Some colleagues in this course discussed taking 20 minute walks twice a day. I think this would help TL to be successful. It would be a much needed break for him, and he would look forward to go with the TA and spend one on one time moving around, talking, and even going outdoors. I believe this would also give TL something to look forward to. He may be more motivated to show on task behaviors because he knows the walk is coming.

I will also implement water breaks for when he is angry, or secret notes. Simply removing him from the situation and having him get water allows for him to be alone, take time to calm down, and be away from whatever has triggered this aggression. Secret notes work well

with him because he is immature. I will sometimes write a note to a fellow teacher that says “this student needed a break.” I staple the note so TL does not know what it says. I then tell him I have a very important note that I need delivered, and choose him to deliver it. This makes him feel important, distracts him from the original issue, and gets him up and moving about for a quick break from the classroom.

I believe these strategies will work because of TL’s personality, triggers, and tendencies. He tends to get antsy, off task, and aggressive when he has to sit for long periods of time. These breaks get him up out of his seat, alone time, and out of the classroom. These help with breaks from students and instruction. I anticipate with these interventions I will start to see more control of his actions and words he chooses to use. If these interventions are used in a timely fashion, when TL is starting to show signs of restlessness, it will help his schedule, attitude, and success in the classroom socially and academically.

The hardest part of maintaining this will be making sure that I have shifted back into a helpful stance. I need to identify when it is happening, manage and multitask, and keep my patience. I also will ensure that I am being more consistent.

Plan Evaluation

The strategy implementation this week for TL helped him to make improvement. We have yet to meet our goal, however TL took small steps in the right direction. He was on board and willing to try the new strategies. TL and I met in the morning and I discussed with him the ideas for getting him to become more in control of his emotions, show on task behavior, and handle conflicts with appropriate strategies. He agreed and identified his areas of growth, and we also discussed what he was proud of. He told me that he liked Writing and Math. He agreed that

he needed to be able to stay near or in his seat, stop shouting out, eliminate disruptive behavior, and use conflict resolution skills. I told him that he didn't have to reach these goals alone, and that I'd be there to help him out, cheer him on, and be there when he needed support. I shared with him the few ideas which were water breaks, a new seating arrangement, frequent brain breaks, and secret notes. I told him that sometimes when he is getting agitated he starts to become aggressive. In that moment if I will tell him to please go get a drink of water, and come back composed. If he was starting to get stressed and I did not see it first, then he was to be responsible and ask me quickly if he may walk out to get water. Secondly, him and I discussed a new seating arrangement. At first he chose his best friend, but I explained to him that this wasn't a seating arrangement for recess or lunch. I wanted him to really think about an area in the classroom where he'd be able to ignore distractions, pay attention to disruption, and near someone who he can work with however won't play with. He chose his best friend again, so I gave him a few options with reasoning. I wanted him to choose so he felt a sense of responsibility and ownership, however I did not want him to continue to choose his best friend, as they would not be productive together. He ended up choosing a student that I have with Autism who has a paraprofessional. He liked the idea of being near another adult. Lastly, we discussed various brain breaks. I have an ipad that has many Math apps and Reading Language Arts games that he could look forward to playing for 4 minutes after he completed an assessment silently and accurately. Another brain break was a walk around the school with my Teacher Assistant. He especially loved that idea, as he is a very social boy and adores 1 on 1 attention with any teacher.

In order to help TL be successful, it wasn't up to just him to make changes. I needed to change my demeanor as well. TL and I had a good relationship, however I had to admit to myself that I was a bit drained from his constant disrespect and disruptions that I also needed to make a few changes. We needed to start off fresh and have a meeting. During our meeting I took his hand and told him that I truly cared about him and loved having him in my classroom. I told him that I promised to be patient, follow our strategies consistently, and be there for him. I have been more sympathetic and have taken the emotions out of it to help him be a successful student. I have also decided not to follow our classroom consequence continuum for TL because it is just not effective. Students in the classroom receive warnings, and then card turns. Green means great, yellow means stop what you're doing and make a change, and red is unacceptable behavior. When TL gets a warning and a card turn he loses all motivation to be good, even if he is just on yellow. I identified that the card turns did not work for him like they did many others in the class, so we reverted to popsicle sticks. It is more of a game that also reinforces his good behavior, and allows him to notice when he is doing something negative. He starts the day off with 5 popsicle sticks. If he breaks a rule, I go over and take a popsicle stick from him. If I catch him on task, I give him a popsicle stick. Whoever has the most popsicle sticks at the end of the day wins. He loves this game, thinks of it more as a competition, and it has taught him to not take it so hard when he loses a stick, and just make a simple change. Lastly, when TL does have an off day and gets emotional, I ensure that I do not. I don't make any emotion with my face and just tell him to go ahead and take a water break and come back in a few minutes more composed. This helped sometimes this week, but not every time. He gets stuck in the problem and sometimes cannot be talked out of it. I predict that if I stay consistent with my calming strategy it

will start to help more often. I am pleased to share that these strategies have helped and even our relationship has become a bit better. He made me laugh the other day when I pulled him aside and told him he was doing a great job, and asked him which one of our strategies he was trying. He told me none, he was “pretending to be deaf, except the only person I can hear is you.” He still has a lot of work to do and is not where he needs to be with his maturity and behavior, but I make sure we celebrate the little steps so he continues to be motivated to do well!

Looking at the future and prospects with our plan it is working now, however I know it won't work until the end of the year and I will have to continue to be creative and change up some strategies or add more when needed. The same ones won't work for long time periods. Grandma has been very involved, and has even asked to give her a quick call when possible when he starts having one of his meltdowns so she can talk him through it if I can't in that current moment. She has been great with this, and I am so happy that she's been a partner in his goals. She will talk to him for a bit about what the issue is, and different resolution skills that his therapist has taught them each week, and gives him a pep talk to try one of these out. She has truly been so helpful and supportive of TL and making sure he is following the expectations of the classroom. I look forward to this week and the progress he will make.

Professional Stance

Overall I would say the intervention was somewhat effective. TL made progress with behavior and attitude on a day to day basis. His mood was more positive by the end of the quarter and he was more willing to work. He enjoyed his incentives and they helped motivate him to get through the day with cooperative behavior. He seemed more confident in himself as well. Behavior is still not meeting expectations, but his improvement on a weekly basis is

satisfactory. His classwork assessments showed improvement, however homework and tests still received failing grades, which negatively impacted his report card grades for Quarter three. TL and I encountered a new problem during the last week of the intervention, before Spring Break. His negative attitude towards females came to my attention this week as he received three separate strikeouts, all because of inappropriate behavior towards females. He said inappropriate and sexual things to one of my female second graders, and became very aggressive with another, getting in her personal space and threatening her. He even went as far as to push me out of the way when he was angry. I spoke with his grandmother about these alarming incidences, and she said that at home there are times he pushes her, too. TL has every reason to be angry with his mother for abandoning him, however his actions and attitude towards women need to be addressed and interventions and therapy will start taking place.

The factors that contributed to the effectiveness of the strategies would be his attitude at the start of the day. On days where he came into school on time with no disagreements with his brothers or grandma, he was a pleasure to work with. Days he came into school upset, sneaking toys, or fatigued from not sleeping enough, it was a battle. I did my best to stay patient and follow the intervention plan. Days where TL contributed to the effectiveness of the strategy happened more so than not. The water breaks and wiggle room given to him for his squirming has been effective. When working with him in a small group or one on one, if he has trouble sitting still I will tell him “you’re going to wiggle for ten seconds, and then you’re going to be still for the rest of the Math mini lesson.” He enjoyed that very much so. The water breaks and secret notes worked well for reaching him when he was angered, especially the notes. Using the notes back and forth was effective because he was able to write back to me, telling me what had

upset him. Writing it down and then understanding the consequences for his actions helped him put things into perspective. The location and seating arrangement for TL worked wonders. Because he had so many different options around the room for doing independent work, it never seemed to become ineffective, because if one spot wasn't working, then during the next subject I just wouldn't have that area an option. Allowing him to choose made him more motivated to finish the work because he felt he had a say. TL could choose to stay in his seat and put a divider up around the desk, work at the back table, work in the hallway with a clipboard, work in the corners of the room with a clipboard, or move his desk away from other students. The size of my room was very helpful for this intervention. The brain breaks helped TL to get the energy out, move around, and refocus for the next lesson. I let him choose to dance, stretch, do jumping jacks, jump rope, or have IPAD time in between each subject. He seemed more refocused in the morning. The brain breaks became ineffective during the last hour of school, so the seating arrangement worked best at that point. In the end it all comes down to TL getting the extra attention he needs and yearns for. The walks alone with the TA, the lunches with me, getting more one on one time during assessments, and our little talks seemed to help because he knows he was being cared for, had a support system, and was receiving the attention he was acting out for all along. Even after long, difficult days, he would come up to me at dismissal and say, "Can I have a hug? I'll try again tomorrow, okay?" That quality and strength of TL makes me believe in him and know that he will reach those goals.

Reflecting back and critiquing the strategies used for TL I would say that I did well with repairing our relationship. It took a lot of patience that I didn't know I had, consistency, and staying positive and sympathetic. If I could change something I would have more interventions

set in place. The strategies I used daily were realistic and feasible, however I wished I would have done more. We recently lost our Special Education teacher, and I have ten other students who are challenging, high risk, or have needs that are not getting met, so the time I could spend with TL creating and consistently implementing the strategies were not enough, however there is only one of me and many other students that need assistance. I don't like admitting that I felt overwhelmed, however it was the truth. I need more help with the students who have IEP and special needs that are not receiving the accommodations necessary, because it does impact the rest of the class. Lastly, I should have implemented self monitoring procedures, and I will even after this class is complete. I would, and definitely have recommended the strategies from our CEP blog, my group B, and the Brophy readings to other colleagues. These strategies have helped me with my student, TL, and has also improved my classroom management style. I feel using the ideas from my group, the readings, and this class have given me the tools to help TL get back on track, and I am grateful.

References

Brophy, J. E. (1996). *Teaching problem students*. New York: Guilford Press.