

I. Analysis and Synthesis

The student I chose for this case study is a second grade student at an elementary school. I will call him John Smith. John is a Hispanic student who has two other siblings: a younger brother in first grade and a newborn sister. I chose John after observing him in the classroom and talking to his first and second grade teachers. Among a class of 19-second grade students, he is the only one who sucks his thumb and has difficulty interacting with other students. John can be extremely argumentative and short tempered with the other students. After speaking with his first grade teacher she stated she had a very difficult year with John. On many mornings, John screamed and cried in class and rarely completed any class or homework. Even after conferencing with his parents his academic performance did not improve.

John's current second grade teacher says that he doesn't cry and scream, but that he doesn't complete class or homework. The few instances he did complete some work it was very sloppy. His 2nd grade teacher, Miss Jones, says that John has the potential to do so much more in class because when giving oral responses, he understands the daily lesson, but fails with the written work.

I continued to collect information about John by looking at his CUM folder. Inside his CUM was paperwork for a Student Intervention Team (SIT). A SIT involves the school counselor, teacher, and parent of the student who is experiencing difficulties in school. The purpose of a SIT is for a counselor and teacher to intervene and develop strategies to help a child. A SIT was conducted on John in October 2007. Miss Jones stated on the SIT the major problem she has with John is his

classroom behavior: remaining in seat, independent work completion, and organizational skills. Her second concern is his interaction with other children and temper. John is in a constant bad mood usually early in the morning before school begins. Ms. Smith, John's mother, said she is concerned with his behavior and that he is struggling in math. In addition, she says she rarely sees his homework and that could be the reason why it is not turned in because he is not bringing it home.

To attempt to address the problems, the counselor suggested shortening the length of assignments in order to keep John motivated to finish work, getting John involved in another agency who conducts group counseling with students on the campus one time per week for anger management, and the counselor will maintain weekly interaction with John.

On the back of the CUM is an area for the teacher to record student grades for the year and write comments before the child is promoted to the next grade. Johnny's kindergarten teacher wrote, "John has made many improvements this year. With more self-discipline, John would be on grade level." On May 15, 2007, his first grade teacher wrote, "John needs constant praise and prodding. He's capable but lacks the thrill of achievement. Poor self-discipline."

Finally, I viewed his report card for the last three quarters. He is receiving below average grades in reading and language. His grades in math are worse. He is earning far below basic grades. Miss Jones recommended after school tutoring and summer school for John.

I gave John a simple six question pre-test. The questions included the following:

A. *I complete and turn in my homework;*

- B. I try my best when the teacher gives me work to do;*
- C. I listen when the teacher is talking;*
- D. I always have my pencils, paper, and crayons ready to work in class;*
- E. I like to read when my work is finished;*
- F. My class work is neat.*

After each question John bubbles in a response to the question. The happy face is a response for always; the neutral face is a response for sometimes; the sad face means never. The final question is a sentence completion: The best thing about me is...

As I was administering the pre-test I had to repeat what the meaning of a pre-test is because he started to cry in the middle of administration. I had to stop and tell him he was not in trouble, nor was the test a referral to the principal. The test was for my eyes only. After he finally understood the purpose of my pre-test he stopped crying. John seems to be aware of the areas he is deficient- not listening, sloppy class work, and not trying his best. He says he sometimes turns in homework and has materials ready for class. I don't think he is aware of his strengths yet because on the last question he writes the best thing about him is to be good and listen.

Diagnosis

John is consistently being described as a student who has the potential to excel academically, but that self-discipline is his problem. I noticed this also. During instruction time when he should be writing, he is sucking his thumb or copying someone else's work. On one occasion when he should have been listening to the teacher, he was flicking paper off his desk.

He also has problems on the playground. Other students are complaining he is calling them names. These names usually involve curse words. One Friday he actually received two referrals from two different teachers. Miss Jones wrote a referral because of his behavior in the classroom and another primary teacher wrote a referral because of his behavior on the playground. What I am concerned with is his negative attitude so early in the mornings. Because it's so early in the morning, I am curious to know what is going on at home which may cause his attitude. I am questioning whether he is being yelled at on a constant basis at home. Or perhaps now that there is a newborn at home he is feeling ignored. This does not explain his screaming and crying in 1st grade, but that has now stopped.

Intervention

My interventions targeted three areas: homework, academic classroom performance, and social skills for five weeks. For a 2nd grader I thought five questions on the pretest would be appropriate. The first happy face stands for something a student always accomplishes. The face in the middle with the line for the mouth is something the student sometimes accomplishes. The sad face is something the student never accomplishes.

Homework: The first area for intervention was homework. First, I contacted his mother to ask her permission and that John would be bringing her a permission slip making her aware of my interventions for getting John motivated to complete and turn in his homework. I gathered paperwork for a homework plan and contract. I believed if John was aware that someone was checking his daily progress with his

work he would be more likely to turn it in. Each Friday if all his homework was completed he would be allowed to choose a prize from the school's treasure box.

Each Monday John and I discussed the homework plan for the week and why he was completing each assignment. I read the directions with John for each assignment to make sure he understood what was expected of him. Next, we discussed what time each day his homework was to be completed. We both decided everyday he would come home, grab a snack to eat, and he would devote 30 minutes to completing his homework. After completing his homework, his mother would sign the papers and the next day he would return the assignment to me and we would discuss what he thought was hard or simple about the work. Miss Jones collects student work on Friday; however, John turned in his work the next day so that we could chart and discuss his progress one-on-one.

Academic Performance: My goal regarding John's academic performance was to help him feel lovable and capable because I have a suspicion he is not receiving this at home. My approach was to determine some of his abilities and then to provide continuing affirmations of these abilities. Since I only had five weeks of intervention, we met 2 times per week for individual counseling during the afternoon in the cafeteria. I conducted individual counseling activities, such as the "Toilet Paper Brainstorm." In this activity John unrolled some toilet paper from a roll. He tore off individual sections of paper from the roll. Each time a section was torn off, John told me about one of his abilities by completing the sentence, "I can..." I then helped John to see that he can use these abilities to help him in class to complete his work and to be successful.

In addition, I showed John how a student behaves when he is ready to listen to a teacher. We role played these strategies. I modeled how to have his materials ready on his desk when it was time to work; how a student sits when he is listening to the teacher; and how to turn in neat work.

Social Skills: John needed help in dealing with his anger and getting along with other students. My goal was to help John realize the situations that make him angry and to brainstorm ways to express his anger. To begin, I started with an activity called “Bears & Turtles.” In this activity, when John starts to get angry, he is to think of bears and turtles. If he reacts like a bear, he may hurt someone and get into big trouble. If he reacts like a turtle, he would have a better chance of avoiding a serious confrontation (See the handout “Bears & Turtles). Due to our limited time span, these sessions were conducted during lunch time once per week.

Evaluation

John made the biggest improvements with his homework. During the 5 week period he missed only three assignments. Whereas before the intervention, Miss Jones reported John rarely turned in his homework. She said on a few occasions, she found his homework torn apart in the parking lot at school. The positive reinforcement of choosing a prize each Friday excited him.

There were also some improvements with his academic performance. Together, we discovered some of his abilities and I tried to teach him to use his abilities in the classroom. For example, John realized he is a good reader. I advised John to show Miss Jones just how well he is a good reader. Miss Jones reported John is now focusing more on his work and actually completing more assignments. Now during

the Reading/Language Arts block of time, instead of not turning in any assignment, John now completes about 70% of his work.

John is still struggling with his anger and cooperating with others. During the third week of intervention he received a referral for fighting. He was suspended for a day and given detention. I asked him before the fight began, did he think about the strategies we discussed when he gets mad. John said no and that the situation was the other student's fault.

Given the time, overall I believe I made the best progress I could make with John in terms of his homework and class work. I do not think he is going to show any improvement with his anger unless he has ongoing counseling along with more help from his parents.

Reflection

I am used to working with Hispanic students; however, the difficulty I faced was working with a 2nd grader. My teaching experience has been with the intermediate grades (4th – 6th). Therefore, I found working with a 2nd grader an entirely different experience. The biggest adjustment I had to make was working with a child who has a shorter attention span than an intermediate student. Whatever message I was trying to relay to John, the message needed to be brief and straight to the point. Also, I had to make sure whenever we were engaged in an activity the vocabulary had to be appropriate for a 2nd grader.

Another adjustment I had to make was taking more responsibility in terms of making sure the homework and other paperwork reached his mother. This involved more phone calls home, making John a homework folder and that the work was inside

the folder, and also that he did not lose the folder. Normally, my kids are responsible for their own folders and returning the work. This was not the case with John because he really did not want to complete his work in the first place so it was easy for him to lose his work.

Overall, I found working with a 2nd grader challenging, which is why I never tried to teach the primary grade levels. I know now for the future when working with this age group, it takes a lot more preparation on the part of the counselor.

Pre/Post-Test

I complete and turn in my homework. 😊
Always Sometimes Never

I try my best when the teacher gives me work to do. 😊

I listen when the teacher is talking. 😊

I always have my pencils, paper, and crayons ready to work in class. 😊

I like to read when my work is finished. 😊

My class work is neat. 😊

The best thing about me is
