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Behavior modification project

Behavior Modification Project

# I. Identify the Target Behavior

A. Andrew is a fun, kind hearted, twelve year old, Caucasian male in the Sixth Grade. He is medium height for his age, is thin, has dark hair and fair skin and wears glasses. Andrew’s parents recently divorced so he lives with both his mother and father, alternately. He comes from a lower-middle class home and has two older sisters, one of whom is an adult, and one who is in high school. All three siblings have remained in their original home with the father, while the mother lives in an apartment. Andrew has explained to the school counselor that he is happy his parents divorced because they can now both do what they want and he does not have to hear them fight any longer. Behaviorally, Andrew displays some areas of concern. Attention span during lessons presents some challenges and he often fails to give attention to his daily work. Late and missing assignments are common in most of his classes, and in the class in which he is being observed, it is a weekly and sometimes daily occurrence. Andrew’s verbal outbursts can be frequent and a distraction to his peers and teacher. He is frequently unprepared for class, can have inappropriate boundaries with peers, and at times, his comments and outbursts can come across as provocative. Andrew’s academic performance appears to be average in all areas, however, he is a bright, creative individual who exhibits results of an underachiever. Andrew’s parents are supportive in the fact that they pay for him to go to school. They are known for letting their children do things on their own, fostering their creativity, and taking responsibility for their actions. They are supportive of the teachers because they want their son to have old-fashioned discipline, which to them, means a structured, strict classroom environment. Due to the variation of learning styles within a classroom setting, however, this environment is not always available to Andrew. In terms of personal characteristics, Andrew is outgoing, and has a sense of humor that is oftentimes, ahead of his peers. He has a tough time controlling his body movements and laughter when he creates a humorous situation or hears something particularly amusing. It is quite difficult to bring Andrew back to task in these situations. Since hearing about the divorce, the teachers and staff, having longevity with the family and at the father’s request, have given Andrew consideration, both behaviorally and academically, though Andrew has no formal diagnosis.

B. Andrew is being observed in a Language Arts classroom that has fourteen other same age peers. The class period occurs five days a week, is forty minutes long and is at the same time each day, before lunch. Three target behaviors can be identified in Andrew. A primary concern is his getting class and homework assignments completed within the timeframe allotted. One consequence for this is receiving only fifty percent for the assignment when it is turned in the next day. Another is having to stay in for study hall instead of going to recess, in order to complete an assignment. Ordinarily, those assignments that are falling by the wayside seem to be tasks that need to be completed or finished at home. Assuring they get done at school is helpful for both student and teacher. Another behavior that requires attention is his inattentiveness. Andrew is oftentimes found daydreaming, doodling, or messing around with things in a desk that doesn’t belong to him. Lastly, a reduction in verbal outbursts or speaking without permission would be beneficial to all in the classroom. Since Andrew is liked by his peers for the most part, his outbursts are not only distracting, but they gain him much laughter and attention. The two above social behaviors are often preceded by unstructured classroom tasks, and the consequences to these have been emailing Dad, and/or removing Andrew from the group.

C. During class time, I am going to observe Andrew’s verbal outbursts. Due to the amount of disruption Andrew’s outbursts cause the class as a whole, but most importantly for the betterment of Andrew learning his own self-control and self-discipline, I feel this is an observable behavior that warrants change. Since this behavior in Andrew occurs frequently, I would like to see a decrease in Andrew’s verbal outbursts by raising his hand before he speaks.

# II. Define the target behavior in measurable terms

During teaching, Andrew will raise his hand to be called on before responding in Language Arts class 75% of the time on 4 out of 5 days per week.

# III. Collect and chart baseline data

A. The method to be used to collect baseline data is event recording done by the teacher. Tally marks are used to record when the student raises his hand to speak and when he speaks without raising his hand. The behavior is observed for 10 minutes per day during instruction time.

B. A table is used to record frequency of behaviors. First, the objective is recorded. The time period is chosen and the behavior is counted and entered. Each time the desired behavior occurs it is tallied in the appropriate column on the table. The number of desired responses is counted to form a percentage. This will tell me if the criterion for the objective has been met.

Student\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date Initiated\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Objective\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Raises Hand Doesn’t Raise Hand

C. The table is used to record responses due to the ease with which I can tally. While teaching I can simply observe during instruction and keep record directly on the top shelf of my podium, which I return to frequently for the text of my lesson. In short, I can consistently chart at the podium throughout the observation and instruction process without the student’s knowledge.

# IV. Implement the behavior change program

A. 1. Andrew already responds fairly well and respectfully to my prompts. I will continue to use positive reinforcement. Since the prompting technique is any teacher behavior that can cause a student to know how to exhibit a behavior correctly, I will continue to use this method to reinforce what I am already doing in the classroom with Andrew. In addition, I will continue to reinforce the other students in the classroom who raise a quiet hand so that Andrew can learn appropriateness by observation and imitation. Lastly, I will use a Token Economy, where a token can be exchanged for a variety of reinforcers at the end of the schedule.

A. 2. There are some reasons why I chose the above techniques. Positive reinforcement is unlimited and all students in the class can benefit. First, and foremost and because of the positive nature of the techniques, I believe Andrew will respond. Secondly, I was already doing some aspects of these techniques so will choose to keep those that are working, in place. With the new knowledge I have gained through the material, I can focus on these techniques, and not only work to strengthen them, but can improve on consistency. Finally, I already have some colorful reinforcers I can use, and this can provide Andrew with immediate feedback and could be a positive attention getter for him.

B. 1. To reinforce behavior I like in Andrew, I will tell him very specifically and directly, with eye contact, when I like what he is doing. During teaching time, I will model for Andrew using the following example. I will pose my questions to the class and follow those questions with the statement, “I am looking for someone who has a quiet hand raised.” Since I already know Andrew likes to be heard by his peers, I can assume he will do what he needs to do in order to be called on. Lastly, I will give colored tokens when I see Andrew exhibiting the correct behavior of raising his hand and being called on before speaking.

B. 2. This is the second year in a row in which I have had Andrew in my class. I am quite familiar with his placement among peers and know he has a creative and fun nature. Varying learning styles for Andrew is not always successful. Some days, he just does not have a successful day with his behaviors, most specifically, raising his hand to speak. When these moments occur, I want to be ready for them. The reinforcements I chose can replace Andrew’s inappropriate behaviors with appropriate ones. With a successful schedule, they can decrease the probability of inappropriate behaviors. They are versatile and easily integrated into the school day and curriculum, can be individualized or used with small groups or whole class, and are inexpensive. I chose the above reinforcements so that Andrew and I may, together, have the opportunity to experience successful school days both academically and behaviorally.

C. 1. I will reward Andrew with a reinforcer immediately after the target behavior occurs. This short term continuous schedule is to be applied during the first stage of the behavior change project. It will occur in the form of different rewards. I will use positive reinforcement when he raises his hand before speaking, or token rewarding as soon as the correct behavior presents itself. Getting a reinforcer every time will be the best way to teach Andrew his new behavior expectations.

C. 2. Since this schedule is designed to be most often applied during the initial stages of a program, I feel it will be beneficial for Andrew and me. Though inconsistent and unfocused, I have already tried to do some continuous reinforcement with Andrew previously. For this reason, with the newly acquired knowledge of the subject, I would like the opportunity to implement it correctly and consistently. In addition, with having only a forty minute class period, it will be practical and fairly easy to manage and maintain. This schedule, according to the text, gives a high rate of response. It will allow me flexibility within the classroom environment. For the time frame in which I will be implementing the behavior change project, and because Andrew’s behavior is not what I would label severe, I feel this is an appropriate schedule.

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# V. Evaluate the result

A. The behavior change project proved successful. The target student increased the amount of times in which he raised his hand during Language Arts lessons over the given time period. In the observation stage the subject rarely raised his hand before speaking and during the implementation phase, he clearly increased his hand raising behavior before speaking during a lesson.

B. The data collected is shown below in graphic form.

Observation Phase

Raises Hand Does Not Raise Hand Percentage

2/7 0 111 0%

2/8 1 1111 20%

2/9 0 111 0%

2/10 1 1 50%

2/13 0 1 0%

Totals 2/14 – 14% 12/14 – 86%

Implementation Phase

2/14 111 1 75%

2/15 11 1 67%

2/16 111 1 75%

2/21 1 1 50%

2/22 11 0 100%

2/23 1111 0 100%

Totals 18/23 – 78% 5/23 – 22%

# VI. Evaluation and conclusion

A. Though it was a lot of work to keep track of, I had a great experience completing the behavior change program for Andrew. The results of the project are clearly shown in the data which was collected. In a ten minute time period from 10:10 to 10:50 a.m. over a period of seven days, the amount of time the student raised his hand and did not raise his hand to speak was charted and evaluated using a percentage. During the observation week, the student portrayed the following: out of 14 times in which the student could have raised his hand, he did so on two occasions, which left twelve occasions in which he did not raise his hand to speak. This resulted in 14%. During the implementation phase of the program, and with the use of reinforcers, the student exhibited the following: out of 23 times in which he was given opportunities to raise his hand to speak, he did so on 18 occasions resulting in 78% accuracy, proving the program to be successful. It was really neat and fun to watch the student receive his verbal and physical rewards. Because he is very likeable I enjoyed being a part of this activity in which he clearly showed enjoyment.

B. There are some guesses that can be made as to why my behavior change project proved to be successful. Primarily, I increasingly became a firm believer in the consistency factor. Positive reinforcement is something I have always used in the classroom and I believe I am genuine so I think this was already a built in trigger for success. Secondly, the student I chose to observe is already a likeable, respectful student. It does not take much to bring him back to attention. Thirdly, our school has small class sizes. For Andrew’s class of 16 with few academic needs, I feel well-equipped and focused to be able to handle behavior types of situations. Lastly, Andrew has been going to school with these same peers since Preschool. Even though he may not exhibit it in the moment of an inappropriate behavior, he does take care with how his peers view him and he responds to that. Many guesses could be factored in as to the success of the project, with the above being a few.

C. This is the first time in my teaching where I have actually participated in implementing a behavior change project. I questioned myself on several occasions during the process. Once I could clearly see the data and figure the percentages, it all seemed to fall into place. A couple concerns I had were the number of questions I was asking during the teaching phase. For next time, I think I should make a point, for example, to plot out the number of questions I might ask the class, so there can be plenty of opportunities for success. I don’t think I factored in the need for asking many questions due to the fact that I am not always going to call on my target student. Something else I might do differently is to try to be a better planner. Even though I did this project for a class and a deadline, for the future it would be a good idea to sit with my calendar and be a good planner before I launch a new plan. I would have liked to have more data, which was the original plan. Lastly, I would look a little closer into the use of Token Economy. While I used it in this project, I felt I could have started to lose focus. Next time, I may want to try only one or two tasks for increasing desired behaviors.

D. I really learned a lot from doing this class project. One recurring word that seems to creep into many of my paragraphs is, first and foremost, consistency. I cannot stress this word to myself enough in my school day. This has always been an area of struggle for me and yet it seems to show itself in most aspects of life. Without it, no doubt, it is tough to be successful. It truly was key in this project’s success and I am fortunate to have been coerced along the way. Another aspect, which I have previously mentioned, is the use of Token Economy. I think in my teaching career, I have always enjoyed rewarding kids in one way or another, either verbally or with physical rewards. The down-side to that is that I have never really been consistent. So, I think I’ve used the Token Economy idea, but really didn’t implement it to the degree in which it resulted in long-term effects. Also, I never realized that a schedule of reinforcement is a big part in getting results. It was new information to learn that you should choose different ones for different tasks. Lastly, another important piece of information I learned is that you only should focus on one behavior at a time. This was a great realization for me during class one evening. In struggling with consistency, and focus to begin with, I felt this idea of identifying many, but only choosing to focus on one behavior at a time, to be rather calming. I came to the simple realization that all along, it has not only been rough for me, but for the student as well, if a teacher expects to fix too many behaviors at once. The focus and consistency of this project allowed for success in both my student and me.