

Motivational Design Project for John

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Learner

John is a kindergarten student, who attended voluntary pre-kindergarten last year so he has had previous exposure to a classroom setting. He had behavior issues in his pre-k class. In speaking to his pre-kindergarten teacher, she depicted John as a sweet and focused child who started off the year on the right foot. However there was another student in the classroom with major behavior problems and John in turn mirrored these behavior, and would even say "I'm acting like ____." She also expressed see many off task behaviors, and difficult sitting still. He liked the attention he got for his misbehavior. I asked her how she motivated him to do the right thing or make good choices; she told me that he spent a lot of time in the office. So I asked her again, and she really didn't have any answer of how she motivated him. She expressed that he was a social child that got along well with many of the students. She said that academically he did well with black and white, but he wasn't able to apply the information he learned. If you asked what was something that beginning with the letter 'A' he couldn't tell you but he know what the letter 'A' looked like. He is currently in a kindergarten class with 19 other students and his twin sister. His sister tries to compete with her brother for the teacher's attention. She also tries to tell him what he should be doing or do it for him. He is content with not completing his work, daydreaming, or singing to himself. The day begins with journal writing and in kindergarten; students are at the stage of writing where they copy in order to practice letter formation. John doesn't even attempt to make an effort to complete any portion of the journal entry, he instead spends his time taking off his shoes, losing his pencil, falling out of his seat, or talking and distracting his

neighbors. He is only able to complete some of his journal with the use of a highlighter, that is used to write the whole prompt so that he may copy it however he is still the last one to complete his journal. He struggles to complete any task that involves handwriting and repeatedly insists he “can’t.” In kindergarten we are learning how to write either a letter or a number every day so this provides John a significant hindrance. Even when it is stressed that his writing doesn’t have to be perfect, he just needs to try that is all. John usually ends up with pencil scratches or blank pages. The rest of class is able to copy the prompt from the board, because we are so early in the year they don’t have to add to the prompt or answer a prompt. They just have to illustrate a picture to match their journal prompt.

John loves the computer and is constantly drawn to it, even when it is not his turn. He is easily distracted even when the task doesn’t involve writing. When he is removed from the group to be sat alone, instead of being able to complete his work he finds other ways to be a disturbance such as smearing glue all over the wall. On the classroom behavior chart there are three levels, John is almost always at the bottom of the pond. John gets in trouble in a variety of locations specials, lunch, hallways, and during academic time. He seems to be the most volatile when he is asked to do something that he thinks is too difficult. Instead of trying he begins to act in destructive ways one time even stabbing himself with a pencil. Every day John’s behavior is communicated to his mother. She explains that she sees the same problems at home with completing homework and staying focused. In order to provide more opportunities for John, he was moved from whole class three level

behavior system to a five-leveled individual behavior chart. However, at the end of most days he is still at the bottom of the pond, which means no stamps to show his mom and another melt down.

John loves to please the teacher and enjoys the attention he receives when he has to hold the teachers hand or sit next to the teacher because he is unable to behave. He reminds the teacher of things and runs up if the teacher forgets to hold his hand when walking to specials or lunch. He tries to help by shouting out the answers or trying to correct the behavior of others by physically touching or shouting at them. He constantly wants verbal affirmation that he can complete the assignment or that the assignment is easy. If not verbally stated by the teacher he shouts out "that's easy?" But when he is asked to move his frog, he gets so frustrated that he shuts down and he has to be removed from the room.

A month and a half into school, John was moved from my room to another classroom because we were over class size. He was moved to a room with 12 other students, I felt that he would be able to get more one on one attention from the teacher. I tried to make this a fresh start and the smoothest transition by working closely with the new teacher. I also expressed my thoughts to John's mother about separating him and his sister. She agreed and thought that it was worth a try, since they spend so much time together outside of school.

Setting

The instruction is taking place in a large kindergarten classroom. The room contains five computers, a large carpet, a small carpet, five hexagon tables, a kidney table, and a small rectangle table. This is the table where John sits so that he has direct vision of the screen where I project all of the whole group lessons. This desk allows John to sit with all of the supplies he needs and extra supplies, but also is a distraction free zone with nothing other than a supply caddie. The room also includes hands on materials, a library, a building center, blocks, and a coatroom. This is where John takes breaks when he gets upset and needs to cool off.

Observation Summary

I conducted two observations within the school day. The first observation was an informal observation conducted during reading centers. During reading centers, one group is on the computers, one group is at my table, one group is at the cut and past table, and another group is at workshop jobs which are centers that are all around the room. John's group was at workshop jobs. I was running my table but when the students were reading their books I was able to observe the interaction of John during workshop jobs. The students had just rotated to their last center. John chose to go to letter jars with a partner Jeff, an ELL student. They were asked to take the letter jars N and P and sort them into 2 piles. They needed further instruction, he seemed to be helping his ELL partner during this 20-minute rotation they focused heavily on the skeleton, then played with the skeleton. The ELL

student told John that isn't what they were supposed to be doing, but then got sucked in to playing instead of sorting. Then they sorted the pictures into the jar and I thought they were finished and ready for me to check their work but they proceeded to dump the jars again. They then begin to fight over the pictures, I then asked them over to my table for some guidance and refocusing and realized they had grabbed the S and T letter jars. I decided since they had started with these jars and struggled to complete. Then they moved back to the table and shouted out and wanted clarification on every picture. We ended centers because it was time for lunch, they were asked to go back to this center tomorrow so that I could help them with it.

The second observation I conducted was during math time, since I would be providing instruction I decided to film John using my iPhone. This way I would be able to not only reflect on John but also reflect on my actions. The video begins with paper and pencil lesson on more and less after we had done a whole group lesson on the carpet. I started by giving a story problem and the direction were to put down your pencils and listen to the story, immediately John begins drawing on his workbook. I then removed his pencil because during math on Tuesday he stabbed himself with his pencil. Then I asked everyone to draw a toy car but if you couldn't you could draw a circle instead. He immediately shouts out I can't. I then had someone help him and answer what to do if he can't draw a car. The whole time that I am giving instruction he is drawing on his paper. When we turned the page, he shouted out train and hugged his book. I then explained that this was a cube train

and that we are going to count it and make a cube train that has more cubes. Then I took his pencil away, he began to draw on his book with his finger. I returned his pencil so he could write the number and his cube train, he proceeds to eat his eraser and then shout out I can't make a cube. When I ask him if he had finished his train, he gets to work writing this cube train. Then while I am checking everyone else's work he still chewing away at his eraser. When we get to the end of the lesson he begins to flip ahead in his book, I take this opportunity to explain the importance of more and less because if we don't know more and less then we can't do addition and subtraction. John ignores me and continues flipping through his book. At the end of the lesson John brought me his workbook, which was incomplete and had been scribbled all over. I then had to help him complete the lesson one on one.

Motivational Analysis

When examining the chart in Appendix 2A in Stipek (2002):

√	Pays attention to the teacher
	Begins work on tasks immediately
	Follows directions on tasks
	Maintains attention until tasks are completed
	Completes work
	Turns assignments in on time
	Persists rather than gives up when work appears difficult
	Works autonomously
√	Volunteers answers in class
√	Test performance reflects skill level demonstrated on assignments
√	Seeks help when it is needed
	Asks for help that will enable subsequent autonomy
	Is not upset by initial errors or difficulties
	Enjoys challenging work
	Works intensely
	Asks questions to expand knowledge beyond immediate lesson
	Engages in learning activities that are not required
√	Is reluctant to stop working on tasks when highly engaged

	Engages in learning activities after assignments are completed
√	Appears happy, proud, enthusiastic, and eager
	Strives to improve skills, even when performing well relative to classmates
	Initiates challenging learning activities on own
	Works hard on ungraded tasks.

(p.252)

From this checklist it is encouraging because John is eager to learn and is highly engaged when it is something he enjoys. I think that John struggles with fine motor activities such as drawing and handwriting as soon as he is asked to use a pencil; he automatically shouts out “I can’t!” I am currently using short-term goals such as telling him what he gets to do next after he completes his work. It works occasionally if he is on task. It is clear through observation and experience working with John, that he suffers from writing anxiety. I decided to alter the mathematics anxiety scale on p. 203 of Stipek’s Motivation to Learn to see John’s anxiety about writing. I altered the wording as well made it more grade level appropriate so that a kindergartener could understand. It was clear after giving John the scale, that John has high writing anxiety. According to studies, Stipek (2002) states, “writing anxiety reflects some of the same dynamics that explain general achievement anxiety.” (p. 203) It is clear that males are more likely to have writing anxiety. This scale showed that I need to work on reducing John’s anxiety by “making sure that students have the prior experience and familiarity they need to complete the writing task.” (2002, p. 204) John clearly needed help with preprocessing, he needed help with “reducing anxiety and increasing performance among students who have difficulty learning new material.” (2002, p. 205) When examining the TARGET model it is clear that my classroom reflects more of a traditional classroom. When looking at the (T)ask,

it is clear that the material that is being presented isn't being related to John and his life. The prompt is the same for everyone and might not appeal to John and his interests. It is clear that John should have probably been copying letters for letter formation practice rather than copying a journal prompt that asked him to complete the prompt. While differentiation is taking place there needs to be more thought put into tasks and the relevance to the students and especially what John likes. My classroom needs to share authority and it is clear that my approach to authority is more traditional. I try to recognize progress and effort, however I want to make an effort to be more aware of recognition such as small accomplishments. John is currently doing most of his work independently and removed from the group at a table by himself, which doesn't represent the Grouping aspect of TARGET. Work needs to be taking place in a more cooperative, hands on, and interactive environment. Evaluation is very traditional in the classroom; writing is done in a more of a testing type environment, which might account for John's additional anxiety when it comes to writing. The kindergarten classroom is set up more like the TARGET approach when it comes to timing, students are always allowed for extra time and students can come back to their work to complete it at a later time.

Conclusions

John is motivated by attention from the teacher, he loves to do well, and make his mom and teacher proud. On the days where he gets all his stamps, he is so excited to show his siblings and mother. John is also motivated to use technology such as

the computer and ipad. So far the use of praise and technology has been somewhat successful. I think that I need to be more routine and regular about using the strategies that work to motivate John to do his best. I am planning on meeting with John's mother to conference and discuss his background, what his interests are, what he likes to do, and what she does at home to motivate John to do things he doesn't want to.

I think that John's problems stem from a lack of motor skills, need for attention, and an anxiety when it comes to writing. I know that John doesn't have a father and he has to share time with his twin sister and older brother to gain his mothers attention. I think that he acts out to get the attention he craves. John is able to achieve satisfactory grades if he isn't asked to write. But if he struggles or has a difficult time answering a problem he shuts down, and his anxiety takes over, he usually has to complete his exam later one on one with the teacher. John struggles in kindergarten because not only does he find the academic standards difficult, but also his behavior gets in the way of his being able to learn.

- **Motivational Intervention**

When creating the motivational strategy I utilized the TARGET framework in order to create the best environment for John to succeed within the classroom. According to the creators of the TARGET framework provides "an opportunity to affect their students' motivation by creating a classroom environment that elicits adaptive achievement goals." I will be focusing on improving John's motivation in

the area of writer's workshop. In hopes that if John is able to improve his behavior and academics during writers workshop that he will be able to improve his overall behavior within school and even with the help of his mother the improvements can be seen at home as well. Stipek (2002) stated it perfectly when he said " children's early experiences in school put them on a pathway that becomes increasingly difficult to change. Children's school performance as early as kindergarten is highly predictive of their performance much later."(p.18) I worry that if early intervention isn't in place John will head down a track with "serious and life-long implications."(2002, p.18)

Task

John will now be provided a choice of tasks when he is asked to come to writer's workshop instead of a journal prompt like everyone else. He will be offered a variety of tasks such as labeling, illustrating, sentence completion, cartoon writing, story completion, etc just to name a few. I will also include his interests in technology, Angry Birds, and sports within the writing period. I want him to have all the benefits of enjoying what he is doing and learning because Stipek (2002) states "studies suggest the advantages of material that is personally interesting come from increased attention, use of effective learning strategies, and positive affective states." (p. 139) I will include John's interest in technology as part of his choices. I will provide him with the choice of the ipad or my computer; the ipad will be used for John to practice his letter formation during the beginning of the year. The computer will help with letter recognition and typing sight words early in the year.

I needed to provide John with more opportunities to practice copying, letter formation, and letter sounds relationships. These kindergarten pre-writing skills will help John feel more confident in his writing. I will provide him with writing activities that are “self-paced which can be helping to highly anxious students, especially those who are achieving poorly.” (Stipek, 2002, p.205) Instead of John worrying if he will finish in time with the rest of the class, he will be aware the he has the option to stop, take a break, or finish him writing another day. I also want to provide John with explicit instructions that are in the form of pictures on his desk about how to get started and what to do if you get stuck. First get your journal, get your pencil, start writing, etc. Then if you get stuck, look at your planner for idea, ask a friend, take a break, finally ask the teacher. This will provide John with some strategies to overcome his anxiety. The strategies such as “knowing the new material and demands for performance will be regulated according to the student’s own mastery should relieve some anxiety.”(Stipek, 2002, p. 205)

Authority

In order to share authority, I want to sit down with John and conference about appropriate behavior and what it looks like at writer’s workshop. I want to use his ideas to create some task cards for his table so that if he gets off task he can look at what it looks like to be on task, what it looks like to ask for help, and what to do when he gets frustrated.

I also want to utilize John’s interests when it comes to writing. “Studies have shown that when students read text related to their interests, they comprehend it

and process the information at a deeper level than when they read text unrelated to their domains of interest.” (p. 139) He will be able to channel his excitement about sports and technology into his schoolwork and hopefully the excitement will seep into other areas of his academics. Studies have also shown “the advantages of material that is personally interesting come from increased attention, use of effective learning strategies, and positive affective states.”(p.139) John will hopefully pay greater attention because he will be able to share his ideas about what makes him excited.

Recognition

Brophy (2010) stated “rewards are more effective for increasing the intensity or duration of effort than for improving the quality of performance. They support learning more effectively when there is a clear goal and strategy,” (p. 137). By implementing this reward system, the group is trying to improve the duration of effort, in order to get John to complete assignments. I will provide John with recognition in the form of rewards, the rewards will be provided in the form of time on the ipad. Brophy (2010) also stated “the effects of rewards depend on what rewards are used and how they are presented,” (p.131). I will be clear what the reward is and how John can get the reward. I want to have a rubric that is posted in John’s journal; it will have stars that he is recognized for his accomplishments and a bigger star at the end of his paper. This rubric will be based on John’s strengths and weaknesses. When I conference with John then I can provide him with things to work on and ways to improve. However I always want to start our conference on a positive note, pointing out John’s strengths that I saw in his journal.

Grouping

John will have a buddy/peer writer that will be his go to person for help and support. I will train this student so that they understand the difference between helping and doing and how to be positive and encouraging to John. I think while writing is quite an independent task, I think that John should have the opportunity to work within a cooperative group to complete writing projects such as thank you card, lists, illustrations, etc. According to Stipek, “students tend to find cooperative learning groups more enjoyable than working independently.” (2002, p. 182) In addition to cooperative grouping, I want John to be able to choose who he works with and choose the writing activities. “Students are most motivated when they are given choices and have some control over their academic work.”(2002, p. 187) Some examples of how John can make choices in the classroom “choice in their work partners, the materials they used, and how to complete the activity.” These choices most pertain to small group, when John is working independently he will have choice of what to write about based on his interests.

Evaluation

Because of John’s anxiety with writing when looking at the grading process of writing should be more of a process not a grade/test type of environment. Stipek (2002) states, “giving students opportunities to correct errors can also alleviate anxiety. Students can be allowed to correct their own papers in some situations.” (p.206) In addition, Stipek (2002) states “Permitting students to improve written

products before a final grade is given will also alleviate anxiety”. (p.207) John can use his rubric to improve his writing or use the help of his buddy where they can collaboratively work on refining John’s writing. Because our school district does require grades, I want to base them on “effort, improvement, and achieving a standard, rather than on performance.”(Stipek, 2002, p. 284) I will be able to show this to John by modeling to them how I try, fix, edit, and working towards a standard. I try to show my students after they write how I write and tackle a prompt. I try to lead by example to show my students the importance of writing but also how it can be a fun activity that isn’t always tied to an evaluation.

Time

Because of John’s anxiety it is important that there are no time restraints placed on him when he is taking part in writers workshop. Stipek (2002) states “when students were pressured for time, the high-anxious students took twice as long to do the problems and made three times as many errors as the low-anxious children.”(p. 208) This was clear when John was trying to write he would see everyone else finishing up and then get more frustrated and his work would get sloppier and sloppier. By providing John the option to take breaks from his writing or to finish it up later in the day, will provide him with the freedom that “relaxing time pressure improves the performance of high-anxious students.” (2002, p. 208)

Rationale

For “some students, anxiety debilitates performance in achievement settings by interfering with learning and retrieving previously learned material.”(Stipek, 2002, p. 194) This was the case for John; writing had become so overwhelming that he wasn’t even able to copy a prompt from the board. I think that by focusing on John’s anxiety in relation to writing he will be able to become more confident in himself. This will also prevent John’s off task behavior. Stipek (2002) states, “most students who are highly anxious in achievement situations have low perceptions of their academic competence.”(p. 194) John gets so anxious that he immediately shuts down and insists that he can’t. By observing John and giving him an anxiety scale, I found that his problems arose from a lack of basic skills such as letter formation. As I dug deeper and looked at the prerequisite skills John needed to complete his journal and found the skills in which John was deficient in were causing him anxiety. In addition by utilizing the TARGET model within the classroom, I think that not only will John benefit from this new approach but also all the students will benefit from a new outlook. The TARGET approach allows for John to be in control of his education and make choices that will best suit him. While he is taking the lead in his education, I will be able help him at conferencing time to make better choices and discuss with him the effects of the choices he made during writers workshop. By focusing in on John during writing time, many of the strategies utilized during writing time will help John be successful throughout the day.

Expected Outcomes

While John isn't currently in my class, if I was able to implement the above strategies I would start with collecting started a work sample from John and also get a completion rate of how much writing John is able to complete, whether this is done with or without help, and the percentage of prompts to the percentage of prompts completed. This data will help me make choices about the intervention and a measure to gauge the effectiveness. I would want to graph the pre-intervention data so that I am able to compare the data to 3 weeks into the intervention to see if John is being successful or if the intervention needs tweaking. I think that completely changing the approach that I have taken with John by utilizing the TARGET approach will give John a sense of ownership in his education. He will feel empowered by his knowledge not beaten down by his anxiety. Once we overcome his anxiety, the use of John's interests will tap into the enthusiasm he has and channel it into more positive products. Through the use of these strategies to lessen anxiety and appealing to his interests, hopefully John will be able to begin to enjoy school, feel proud of himself, and the work he accomplishes.

References

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