

Design Project:

Max

Megan McVannel

CEP 802

Dr. Oka

December 5, 2014

## Case Summary

Max is a first grade student in my (Megan McVannel's) first grade class this school year. He is six years old. In Max's class, there are twenty students. I am the only teacher present in the classroom. Mrs. Wolf is an aide in our room for approximately forty-five minutes each afternoon. Additionally, the school assigned Max an one-on-one aide from 9:15 – 10:00 each morning to help him get focused and organized each day.

Currently, the classroom is set up with four tables, and one individual desk, which is called Table 5. Earlier in the school year when I noticed Max being distracted by the other students at tables and distracting other students, I presented him with the choice of sitting at Table 5 and he chose to. This table is close to where our document camera is located so I can frequently check in on Max.

Our classroom is very small. The four tables take up the majority of the floor space. Because of the lack of square footage, chairs are often bumping into other chairs and students work in close proximity to one another.

Because of the nature of first grade being busy and the students being active, the décor in the classroom is calming, filled with light colors such as blue. This also helps create a calming feeling in the room visually because it is so small, but has to be filled with all of the items necessary for first grade.

The class moves to different areas of the room throughout the school day. The tables are main area in the center of the classroom, but there is a reading rug located in the classroom library in the back corner of the room where we gather to

read. In the front of the room, the students often gather on the rug to workout activities on the whiteboard or participate in our Classroom Meeting.

### **Motivational Assessment**

Max is often busy throughout the school day. He struggles with motivation during seatwork times throughout the day. While other children are able to sit in their chairs for short, manageable periods of times for lessons or work, this proves to be difficult for Max. This is shown through the noises he makes and his body movements such as touching nearby things around the room, leaving his seat, sliding his desk around and at times, even falling out of his chair. He seems to avoid his work and is so busy with off-task behavior that he often does not even seem to notice that he is not working at all.

Max is hyperactive, but has proven to be very capable of first grade academic expectations. There are moments where he can completely focus and produces above standard work! In discussions I have had with Max, he expresses his dislike for trouble and his like of being home, where he claims he does not get into trouble.

I have spent ample time meeting with adults involved in Max's home and school life learning more about Max and discussing strategies that may help him become successful both in and outside of school. Max's mother has expressed similar concerns expressing that his behavior at school reflects his behavior at home. Our school's social worker and members of the Students Support Team have made observations of Max's behavior. One noticeable trend between many of the observations has been that it has been a struggle to pinpoint what motivates Max. Different rewards and consequences have been give to Max since school has began,

many of which Max's reaction has been impartial too. Max has been given rewards such as positive notes home, trips to the treasure box when he fills up his "Focused Fred" cards, positive emails home, money earned toward the classroom store and breaks for work completion to work with connecting cubes. His mom also provides rewards at home to reinforce positive behavior at school. Most of these have shown little fruition as if his attention is so fogged by other things that he can't maintain it long enough to focus on rewards. The two that have proven to be most effective are working toward a reward note home from me and now, from the suggestion of our Student Support Team, more frequent breaks (a break per activity he completes) outside of the classroom that calms him down. Taking a break with an iPad has proven to be something he enjoys.

Max is also responsive to working one-on-one with adults he has formed a positive relationship with. I have worked hard to form a positive relationship with Max and his family letting him know that I believe in his academic abilities and his ability to show great behavior at school. Max now feels comfortable working with me one-on-one, which proves to be more beneficial to him than working in front of the class. He expressed to an adult from our Student Support Team that he gets embarrassed when he gets in trouble in front of his peers, aligning with Deborah Stipek (2002) explaining students would rather act out or not try instead of being embarrassed in front of their classmates (p. 2-3). I have worked hard to try to remind Max of how academically capable he is and how capable he is of following expected behavior. Max also works well with the one-on-one aide he has been assigned for forty-five minutes each morning. She too treats Max as a smart and

capable student instead of a troublemaker or failure. Both of us take time to explain to Max what we are doing and why we are doing things. Working one-on-one gives Max the chance to express what he knows in a safe way that he is comfortable with instead of in front of his nineteen peers.

Two of the most important observations I have made about Max when it comes to his struggle with his motivation during seatwork times are when he completes his seatwork and how he completes his seatwork. While most of the students in my class are able to get started on their seatwork when directed and complete it during a period of time, Max does not function like this most of the time. Max will typically either start seatwork before or after he is supposed to, depending on what he is doing and thinking at the time. His pacing is different than most of the students. If he works independently, he typically takes longer to finish his seatwork, and once he is started, he does not want to stop to finish later as many students are capable of doing. Max prefers to finish it in one setting. Second, I have observed that Max likes being artistic and doing things such as building with his hands. Instead of writing, he prefers to draw and loves to draw his answers and have his artwork displayed.

### **TARGET Analysis**

Here is an analysis as to how the *TARGET* model, according to Wentzel and Brophy (2014) is being incorporated into Max's classroom during his seatwork times (p. 30-31).

Task: According to the model, students should receive a variety of tasks. Although I try to incorporate a variety of tasks throughout the school day, even

during periods of seatwork such as reading, working with manipulatives, writing, and crafts, the first weeks of school consist of more paper and pencil tasks and independent work for students due to the fact that we are required to give pre-assessments in our district, along with multiple benchmark assessments. These tasks have been laborious for Max and he has not been able to complete the activities, especially the assessments when they have been no problem to complete by his classmates. When I show Max that he is off-task and hasn't completed the task, he either says he has or still doesn't on multiple occasions. Now that we are moving past all of the assessments, we will be able to have more variety in our seatwork.

Authority: Max is typically always given choices to help him succeed throughout the day. As I am learning more about Max, I am able to offer him more choices that I feel may appeal to his interests. For example, if we are working as a group, there are times when he needs quiet time to decompress, so I allow him the choice to finish any seatwork he may not have completed while the class was working or another quiet choice activity, or he may join us as a group. Typically, Max chooses to work independently away from the group. I try to incorporate students' inputs into activities. For example, I will often have two activities and let the class vote on the activity or let the class vote on how they will complete an activity. Additionally, I try to incorporate students' interests into the activities we do throughout the school day. At the beginning of school year, I spent a lot of time getting to know my students and try to create a safe and strong classroom community. I learn a lot about my students' interests through conversations we

have had and observations I have made. For example, I know my students love movement. I try to incorporate a lot of movement into the school day through our activities and taking brain breaks. I have learned that Max especially likes to move and have given him privileges to get up and move even more frequently than the rest of the students by taking breaks to walk to the office and make “deliveries”. Max has come to learn that I have to trust him and his decisions in the hallway for him to do this. Max enjoys having choices and he knows that if he does not make a good choice, a consequence will follow.

Recognition: Max has work hanging on the board in the front of the classroom. When he completes something he is proud of, whether with me or with another adult who he may work with, we hang it with a magnet on the board. I use this as a reminder of what he is capable of, and when we discuss his behavior and choices, we refer to the work and discuss how we want to always produce pieces like that.

Grouping: Students sit in table groups in our classroom. There are either four or five students per table. Max was too over stimulated at a table with other students and would often mess with the other students around him. He now sits at a table (which is a single desk) independently. As time has progressed, I have given the option to Max if he would like to stay at his table or to move to a table with other students. There have been times where he has chosen to stay but there have also been times where he has chosen to move back. When given the choice to move back, we discuss the expectations of this. Unfortunately, Max has not meet those expectations and has become too over stimulated by the students around him each

time, so I have had to move him back to sit independently. When students are assigned to work in a group or with a partner, I often assign Max a partner who I know will work well with him and offer guidance to Max instead of fighting with Max or working without him. There are other times where I will work with Max or an aide will work with him.

Evaluation: The first several weeks of the school year consisted of district-wide evaluations through pre-assessments and benchmark assessments. Pre-assessments occur before new units of study while the benchmark assessments typically occur three times per year. We are now at the end of many units where students are showing growth through post unit assessments. In addition, I meet with students to read with them and I constantly evaluate as I walk throughout the classroom during work time. When I do collect assignments from students, I give feedback – both showing students' strengths and areas where improvement is needed. Students are then given opportunities to fix and redo their assignments helping them master the skills instead of just practice them.

Time: Max is typically given more time to complete an activity in class because it takes him longer than the majority of students. I also shorten many things because he is not able to complete the activities even in the extended time given and finds tasks that are too long overwhelming. Often I plan for activities that progress over several days or weeks. Many of our activities do not fit into a 30 or 60 minute class period and we work on them for days. Our classroom is filled with ongoing projects.










### **Motivational Intervention**



After considering aspects of the above assessment of Max's behaviors and needs, I have come to understand that Max has not valued his previous experiences with education. Max does not understand why he has to do certain activities and behave a certain way in school and Max's previous school experiences have given Max the impression he has to mold his learning preferences to match the adult's in charge. The goal I have in this plan is to help change Max's perceptions of school through helping him understand the value of what is offered to him at school and also help Max take more control of his own education.

### **I. Creating Goals**

First, I want to pinpoint the areas Max already values versus the areas he does not yet value so I know where I can help Max. Max will be given the following questionnaire.

Task Value Questionnaire First Grade			
<i>Fill in the face according to how the questions make you feel.</i>			
1. I understand the value of reading by myself.			
2. I understand the value of picking out just-right books.			
3. I understand the value listening to a book when it is read-aloud.			
4. I understand the value of practicing addition.			



5. I understand the value of practicing subtraction.



6. I understand the value of writing.



7. I understand the value of learning about rules at school and in the community.



8. I understand the value of Science experiments.



9. I understand the value of working in my Science journal.



10. I understand the value of illustrating.









11. I understand the value of using neat handwriting.



12. I understand the value of listening.



13. I understand the value of working alone (independently)

		
14. I understand the value of working with others.		
		

Once I am able to better pinpoint the areas of learning Max does not value, I can work to help Max value his role in school and the activities he is to participate in. Goals and conversations about goals will be heavily used with Max and his classmates. I have already started implementing Learning Targets into the classroom which explaining learning goals and how students will meet the goals. Additionally, daily individual goal setting will be done with Max to help him meet the Learning Targets. Wentzel and Brophy (2014) point out the importance of goals for students (p. 233-234) as they draw students' attention and focus to the point of the task at hand. This is important for a student like Max because he came into school this year with his mind made up that school is not for him. Learning Targets have allowed us (Max along with his other classmates) to have rich conversations about why students are participating in lessons and what they will gain from them. Max loves applying skills he learns – just not the work that goes into acquiring them – but Learning Targets put all of these pieces together for Max so he can see how the work leads to the skills he acquires.

This will be taken a step further to fit Max's needs. Max will have an individual conversation with his one-on-one aide or me. The value of the Learning Targets will be discussed and will be applied directly to Max – why he thinks they

will help him. We will focus mostly on the tasks he does not value yet. Wentzel and Brophy explain, "You can induce appreciation for a topic or activity by explaining why students should value it," (p. 87). Additionally, Max will be asked to pick one skill he could work on to help him meet his goal during seatwork time (for example, getting started right away, raising his hand to share ideas or ask for help, staying in his seat, etc.). Max can draw or write this goal in the goal notebook that will be given to him. At the end of his morning work time with his one-on-one aide and with me at the end of the day, Max will check in and we will discuss the importance of the day's goals and if it helped him meet the Learning Target and the value he gained from the Learning Target. The notebook will be a good way for him to create a toolbox of behaviors that help him meet Learning Targets and are obtainable goals for him during seatwork time.

## **II. Control**

The next part of the plan will help Max meet his need for self-determination. Stipek states other theorists, "People naturally want to believe that they are engaging in activities by their own volition-because they *want to* rather than they *have to*," (p. 126). Because Max does not yet always see the value in his activities, allowing him to discover this on his own terms should help increase his intrinsic motivation. Since the beginning of the school year, I have been trying to gradually release control to Max. This allows him work in a way that makes the work and they way he is working most valuable to him. Stipek

Stipek discusses the value of giving "students as much discretion as they can handle," (p. 187). One thing Max likes to do is work within his own time frame. Max

either finishes work faster or slower than the rest of the class (usually slower) and his focus is lost when I do not meet his need for this. I am working on given Max the choice of working within his own time frame. This ties into the importance of Max's individual goals because he needs to understand the value of starting and completing assignments on his own and knowing what to do once he is finished if I am not available to get him started.

A daily menu will be given to Max. Max has the opportunity to complete the activities on the menu according to his own discretion. This means that Max will be allowed to pick the order of the activities and the amount of time he is going to use to complete the activities. It is important to note that because this is individualized for Max, activities can be designed according to his interests and needs (such as shortening an assignment so it does not over stimulate him).

This daily menu will be discussed with Max when his aide or I meet with him each morning to discuss his goals. Where activities allow, Max can come up with the way he would like to complete them such as through writing, illustrating, or building a model. Wentzel and Brophy explain the importance of skill variety, "Workers tend to enjoy jobs that include a variety of tasks that provide opportunities to use a variety of skills, but not jobs that involve constant repetition of the same task. Students show the same preferences," (p. 91). This also allows for the creation of more activities that tie into Max's interests and give him more opportunities to help in the planning and creation of his tasks. Students can use their interests and prior knowledge to make connections to the new skills they are being introduced to (Wentzel and Brophy, p. 90-91). Daily meetings are important to meet the needs of

Max due to the fact that he is young and active meaning each school day is brand new to him!

### **III. Class Wide Participation**

Although Max will have individual goals, it is important that he knows he is still part of the classroom community. He will continue to be present during full class discussions of Learning Targets and other goals, even if he is working on his own goal. Additional, Max will have the choice to participate in full class decision-making opportunities such as voting. The great thing about Max using his own goals and making his own choices is at any point, he can chose to work along with the rest of the class.

### **Expectations and Conclusion**

Max has already shown gains this year by beginning some of the things mentioned in these strategies. He is learning to value school more and his mother has even shared that he now likes school. The adults who work with Max have worked hard to work in accordance to his needs and interests. As the design plan fully goes into affect, I hope that the research provided by both Stipek and Wenztel and Brophy proves effective for Max. I have taken pieces that have already been effective with Max and I am working on pinpointing them further to his need and making them more individualized for him.

Although there have been great gains with Max, he is not always consistent with his motivation. It is my hope that helping him become more internally motivated with help with this consistency as he will not be dependent on rewards or other external factors as he has been in the past at school and at home.

It is important to note that further work will be done with Max and the Student Support Team at our school. Max is currently being monitored by a pediatrician for his hyperactive behavior and is prescribed a low dose of medication to help with this. Members of the Student Support Team also are trying to eliminate other factors that may hinder Max from being successful in terms of academics and behaviors at school and home.

Although I cannot change possible medical diagnoses on Max's behalf, I can help him in terms of motivation, especially if he is struggling in other areas. This plan is designed to help Max as he is right now and his current devaluing of seatwork at school. If other factors are determined and Max receives the help that he needs, I hope that this plan will also strengthen in helping Max! By allowing Max to foster his need for control and a deep understanding of why he is participating at school, I hope Max's motivation will align with the academic and behavior potential he has already shown this school year.

## References

- Stipek, D. (2002). *Motivation to Learn: Integrating theory and practice* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Wentzel, K. R., & Brophy, J. (2014). *Motivating students to learn* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Routledge.