

The Case of Johnny:

ABC Final Project

Megan McVannel

CEP 832

Professor Mousouli

Professor Oka

November 17, 2013

Problem Identification

Johnny (I will refer to him by this name) is a current first grade boy who is very shy. I have several red flags brought up by his shyness. Johnny struggles academically and I don't know if his shyness is holding him back from communicating his academic needs to me and others. I have to make sure I check in with him whether we are working together as a group or he is required to work independently because he will not do anything to express his lack of understanding. He also takes little initiative to get started independently unless individually directed to do so. Sometimes I wonder if he has trouble understanding directions - he does receive speech and language services - and cannot communicate his struggles. The Speech Pathologist works with Johnny on his speech and language skills, seeing him for two different skill sets.

Johnny's shyness also worries me in terms of his interaction with his peers. I have seen Johnny interact with the people who sit around him. Those interactions usually include the other students helping him or telling him what to do. The other children this child interacts with are children who are assertive and tend to get in trouble or who are immature. Johnny is almost eight, a year older than most students in his class will be turning this year, and I am worried that his shyness is leading him to interact with peers who are not as mature as him. He tends to follow the leads of children, even if it causes him to get in trouble.

Disciplining him directly is hard because it seems like this child could break.

Johnny comes from a large family. He has a sibling in high school, two other siblings at our school including a sister in fifth grade and a brother in

second grade; he has a younger brother in Kindergarten and several other younger siblings. His parents are warm and caring people. Johnny's mother stays at home, and his father works for a landscaper in the summer. Johnny's family is a lower income family. It seems that his family is as involved as they know how to be. I have taught Johnny's sister who is in fifth grade and his second grade brother. Johnny is different from his two siblings I know. He is quiet like his sister, although she is much more outgoing than Johnny, and Johnny wants to be correct like his more outgoing, older brother.

Johnny lives in a small community. Many of the school families receive free or reduced lunches. The families are warm, but many do not understand how to be involved in their children's education or struggle to as many children come from broken families or single-parent homes. There are also many children in our school being raised by guardians.

When I work with Johnny, I always try to be warm and take an extra measure to engage this student. When I help him get settled into the classroom in the morning, I try to directly make a point to ask how he is doing and give him reminders of the tasks he is supposed to do to get his day going. He gives short responses, such as "good" almost every morning when I ask him how he is. He has yet to really engage in any conversation with me even when I ask him other direct questions.

As mentioned, I try giving Johnny many cues. With it being so early in the school year, I am still trying to figure out what is a result of shyness, academic struggles or language struggles. If I directly model something, he tends to be

able to follow along, but when he is expected to take initiative in activities that have become routine to many of the students already, I try to check in with him to make sure he has accomplished the tasks. Often times he waits for these cues.

He is typically very compliant with me when following directions and when I give him individual cues, but has already been noncompliant to other adults in supervision positions this school year. For instance, an adult gave him and another boy, a young student in the class, directions to go into the gym one morning for indoor recess. The other boy he was with refused and so did Johnny. I was not there, but in knowing the two children, my guess would be that because Johnny is so timid, he was following the lead of the other child. When the adult came and told me about the situation, she mentioned how he seemed scared when she was talking to him.

When I am teaching a group of students, I try to keep Johnny as engaged as possible by using his name as a cue. He sits close to where I usually give a lesson, therefore I can see if he is on track or not because he otherwise does not express this. Sometimes I will ask students how they are doing and I almost always include him in this, even if it is a reminder that he needs to get started or try an activity. Because he is so shy, I try not to call on him to answer in front of his peers unless he volunteers to do so. I don't want him to feel embarrassed or afraid to share with the class. Yet I can see that he needs boosts of confidence, so I almost always try to call on him to share when he volunteers too. This usually works well as he waits until he is confident in his answer.

I made an interesting observation of Johnny during my initial observations. I don't want Johnny to become discouraged in school, but I had to keep in for recess for a few minutes one day this week so I could help him complete an assignment. Johnny was very compliant to do so and put his incomplete assignment on his desk as soon as he was told to do so. This assignment was part of the Daily Language we do each day. Students were required to put three names in alphabetical order. There were two problems.

The first we did together as a class, circling the first letter in each name. Then we used a pointer and the alphabet line above our white board, moving across the line until we came to the first letter in one of the names. Students were then easily able to identify which name came first in alphabetical order and write in on the provided line on their papers. We followed the same procedure for the remaining two names.

When it came time to come to the second problem, I asked students to work with the student sitting next to them at their tables and try this. Each student has a letter line on their desk-plate and they could also use the one above the whiteboard. Johnny's partner was able to complete this task but Johnny was not.

When Johnny was asked to finish this activity with me, I noticed he also was not able to complete the first problem we did as a class. We worked through both of the alphabetical order tasks together. I had him go back and first circle the first letter in each name. I then showed him how to look at his letter line on his desk plate. I reminded Johnny we were going to figure out which of the first

letters we were going to see came first. He was able to say stop when I came to the first letter. Johnny was able to look at his paper and write down the correct name. We were able to do this two more times with the two remaining names in the first problem. Although he could go through the motions of this activity, I still do not feel that Johnny has comprehension of what we were doing and why. He did not seem to remember why we were looking for that letter on the letter line (that it was the first letter of a name).

The second problem he was originally asked to do with his neighbor was more difficult for Johnny. The three names started with letters that were farther down in the alphabet. When we got to the first letter on the letter name, I had to remind Johnny of the three letters we were looking for and ask him which one my finger had come to. Then he was able to say and write down the name. Johnny was able to then figure which came first of the remaining two letters and write the remaining names.

I was proud of Johnny. I can see that he is able to do tasks when I break them down for him and work with him individually. He has the skills. My concern is that Johnny did not understand why we were doing this. After we circled the first letters in each name, I am not sure if he knew why we were looking for the letters on the number line. But at the same time, he may have but is just so shy that he doesn't show his knowledge and understanding. This observation allowed me to see that Johnny is feeling comfortable and safe in the classroom. He was very easy to work with and willing to do so. He wants to do well, he just doesn't have all of the tools to do so yet.

Understanding the Problem

To observe Johnny, I used the “Frequency of the Behavior” form for each observation. Over the course of the school week October 14, 2013 - October 18, 2013 I observed the frequency of Johnny’s off-task behavior of not being in “listening position”, specifically not looking at the teacher/speaker at appropriate times and another student’s off-task behavior of not being in “listening position” at the same time. This student’s name is Jack and he is also a first grader in my class.

The first observation took place on October 15, 2013 from 9:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. The class was participating in a Science discussion about a previous day’s observation of cloud clover. During this activity, Johnny was not in listening position four times. Each time, Johnny was looking elsewhere instead of at the teacher or speaker. Jack was not in listening position two times during this activity.

The next observation took place on the same day, October 15, 2013. I was able to observe Johnny and Jill while another teacher was in charge of the class. Johnny and Jack were participating in their weekly Writing special. The class remains in our classroom for this special. This observation took place from 12:45 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.

The class was asked to sit in their seats and listen to a poem read by their special’s teacher. After the poem, the class discussed it. Jack was not in listening position five times. Jack was not in listening position one time.

When the activity switched during the class' Writing special, I stopped filling out the "Frequency of Behavior" form, but continued to observe the class.

The students were asked to do an independent writing activity based-off of the poem that had been read and discussed. Several minutes into the activity, the writing teacher moved Johnny to a different table in the room because he was "off-task", either talking to other's sitting in his desk group, or not working on his writing task. From there, Johnny was expected to continue working independently. Johnny was required to go to the writing teacher's classroom during his recess due to not completing his writing.

A third observation was made and recorded on October 16, 2013. I observed Johnny and Jack from 1:00 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. during Daily Math time. The class participated in a discussion to answer five Daily Math questions. Johnny was off-task and not in listening position two times. Jack was marked as one time. This was a very interactive time during the day. Students participate in discussions about the five math problems and discuss and use strategies to complete the problems together. Johnny is gaining more confidence in Math, so I make a point to have him come up and demonstrate strategies and get him involved in the discussion by asking him what he thinks.

The behavior is occurring most frequently when Johnny is inactive or not participating in an activity to discussion. He shies away from being involved when he does not understand or when others are taking the lead. For example, in a class discussion, if another student or a teacher is presenting, Johnny does not stay in listening position with his eyes on the speaker - leading to other

behaviors. Additionally, if Johnny does not understand content or material, he does not stay on task.

The behavior occurs least frequently if Johnny is working in a small group with a teacher or one-on-one with a teacher. If Johnny can be spoken to directly and in a way that he understands, he loves to participate and try. He tries very hard with guidance and support.

The behavior typically occurs when an adult is not working closely with Johnny, either in a one on one or small group setting. Johnny's eyes and attention will wonder whether he is sitting at his desk during a full group discussion or sitting on the carpet during a time of discussion, a read aloud or full class activity. The behavior is least frequent when Johnny is able to obtain more individualized attention or when he is independently working on an activity he understands.

When the behavior occurs, Johnny can be alone or with other children. When Johnny is alone, he will often sit quietly gazing off somewhere that is not on task. When Johnny is with other children, he again can either be gazing off elsewhere or goofing off with other students. Most of the time, Johnny stays to himself, but during less structured parts of the day, Johnny can goof off with others near him when he is off task.

Johnny responds well to interactive settings. If it is interactive to where I can assist him, even in a full class setting, Johnny does well. He does not focus as well when I have to address the entire class and it is a time where there is less interaction and more listening. He also does not work as well with peers

when there is no assistance from an adult. Johnny will get off task when working independently quite often if he is not guided by an adult or partner.

When looking at the data from the “Frequency of the Behavior” forms, it is evident that the target behavior occurred with Johnny more than his peer, Jack.

During the first observation done during a Science discussion, the ratio of Johnny’s target behavior to his peer Jack’s was 4:2. The second observation during the class’ Writing special showed the ratio of Johnny’s target behavior to his peer Jack’s as 5:1. Lastly, during the observation during Daily Math, Johnny’s off task ratio to his peer Jack’s was 2:1. Johnny’s peer Jack is another peer who is not a benchmark academically.

This data shows me that Johnny needs more interactive activities and guidance from an adult or other assistance. If I need to have a class discussion or an activity where active listening is involved, this may need to be done in small groups where a teacher can assist Johnny more than he or she would be able to in a full group setting. Reminders may be needed for Johnny as to where his eyes should be and how to stay in listening position when it is required of students.

Plan Development and Implementation

Johnny is a shy/withdrawn student. According to Brophy (1996), “Zimbardo (1977) portrayed shy students as follows: They speak softly, are more reluctant to volunteer, do not initiate interactions with the teacher, spend more

time at their seats than other students, tend to obey and not get into trouble, and rarely are selected for special errands or duties,” (p. 381). During observations, Johnny rarely initiated a conversation with an adult and usually interacted with peers when his peers came to him or were already interacting with one another. I observed that Johnny rarely gets into trouble, unless he gets frustrated and aggressive or he is already off task and students around him are goofing off. He is a very polite and respectable student. He is kind and gets upset if he does get into trouble. Brophy also states referencing Zimbardo, “Their [shy/withdrawn students] unwillingness to ask for help and their sensitivity to being evaluated may cause them to perform poorly even when they possess the skills needed to succeed,” (p. 381). This became a huge concern with Johnny. Once I learned more about him, I understood that I need to frequently check in with Johnny to see how he is doing because he does not ask questions or for assistance as he does not initiate conversations. Johnny also seemed to be fearful of critique because he only volunteered when he was positive of an answer - if he did volunteer and is not sure, he caught himself and said, “Pass”.

Brophy (1996) suggests a strategy that I found to be successful early on with Johnny stating, “Enhance self-esteem and confidence,” (p. 383). My plan with Johnny became to focus on praising him to build his self-esteem. When Johnny made an attempt, either a correct attempt or incorrect attempt, his efforts would be praised.

Plan

During large group discussions, where Johnny's target behavior is most prevalent, Johnny will be mentioned to gain his attention. I will also call on him even when his hand is not raised when I know he has the skills necessary to participate in a discussion. I will guide him if needed. Anyone coming into the classroom should make a special point to call on Johnny when he does participate, but also when he does not and guide him so he knows he is capable of being part of our class discussions.

I will assign tasks to Johnny, even though he rarely volunteers. I will make a point to have him help with errands or classroom jobs.

During activities where students work with partners or small groups, Johnny will be paired with students who are more outgoing than he is, but who are not assertive. These students love to help other students be successful.

Johnny may need gentle guidance when working with peers.

I have already discussed with Johnny's mother and older brother who is in Second Grade about working at home. I have asked his older brother to assist Johnny with work at home and help him practice his First Grade Sight Words.

Johnny's Title One teacher then suggested that Johnny could help his younger brother in Kindergarten with his work.

Implementation

The first two weeks proved interesting for implementing the strategy. Johnny was absent the first two days of the period as he was sick. The end of

the two week period was filled with Halloween and no school. Since Johnny has been back in school (15 school days total during four implementation weeks), I frequently checked in with him. Each morning, I made a special point to check with Johnny to see if he had the materials he needed to begin the day (students need their Home Binders in their desks, notes and homework turned in, Morning Work, and pencils sharpened). This is a crucial time to be prepared as it prepares students for the rest of the day. This is also a time where Johnny would previously sit unsure many times.

During “Read to Someone” time, I paired Johnny with a more outgoing and confident student. This student encourages and helps Johnny. Previously, Johnny may avoid the task or be off-task if he was paired with another weaker reader.

Throughout Language Arts, our class spent time building words from individual phonemes or blends. Students were required to sit on the rug and participate looking at and manipulating sounds in a pocket chart, and say phonemes and words. I gave Johnny a chance to become comfortable with this activity by letting other students participate and model first. When I noticed that Johnny was losing focus, I called on him even though he did not offer his participation. Johnny fully participated in this activity and remained engaged as it gave him time to practice.

Johnny was given opportunities to run errands for me. These errand runs require Johnny to go to various parts of the school. At first, because Johnny is so shy, I sent him on these errands with another student who is more outgoing

than Johnny, but is also struggling within the classroom structure. Johnny and his partner have been careful at following the directions of the assigned task. Johnny did so well, I even sent him on errand runs alone as the implementation weeks progressed.

Plan Evaluation

First of all, this plan has helped all of my students as I find myself checking in more with my students. Johnny has helped me realize how important it is to do this with the entire class. My students are only First Graders, and they often need reminders. School is still very new to them and I believe now is the time for them to form habits that will help them be successful for the rest of their school careers.

I am also seeing Johnny as a more mature student than I previously had. I see that he is shy, but he wants to be successful and he wants to use the strategies he has learned. He just needs reminders and others to be confident in him to get started. I see that Johnny has many skills, but he shies away from using them when he doesn't immediately think of them. Once he is given a reminder, he will use the skill and work at the task at hand persistently. I am also seeing that Johnny has the potential to pay attention to a lesson. His mind will wonder, but if I redirect him, he is very willing to comply.

Johnny has been receptive to every part of the strategy that has been implemented. The most difficult part of implementing the strategies was just the lack of time with absences, holidays, and no school. The most effective things

have been checking in with Johnny and calling on him, following with praising his efforts. When Johnny is prepared, he is much more willing to participate and stay on-task or in listening position. It seems that he is being setup for success.

Johnny has also been successful at staying in listening position when I directly check in with him by calling on him when he offers his participation. Also, I have been making a point to call on Johnny to participate even when his hand is not raised when I know he has the ability to be successful. He tends to stay in listening position after these bouts of participation - it seems as though he needs to physically go through the motions of the activity to stay engaged afterward.

Praise is very important. Even when Johnny is incorrect, I praise his efforts and lead him through the process of correcting himself instead of giving up on himself. He becomes more confident in his abilities through this.

I have also learned that Johnny continues to stay in listening position even when giving an incorrect answer or way of solving a problem if I praise him and then continue to lead him through the problem. Johnny loses listening position if he is incorrect, I praise his efforts, but then go on to another student. When observing this, Johnny went back to being off-task 3 times during the week. Johnny never went back to being off-task immediately when I continued to lead him to a correct method or response.

The biggest problem with the strategy is pairing him with students, which at times is also very successful. I have to be careful when selecting students for Johnny to work with. When students are too assertive and outgoing, Johnny becomes very passive and goes back into his shell or he becomes frustrated and

irritated and wants the student to back off - which he makes known. Also, if Johnny is paired with students who are outgoing, but low academically, Johnny and the students seem to get off-track. If I have to call the group to attention, it takes a while to get Johnny and his group into listening position because they are already so off-task.

I have had to make adjustments to pairing Johnny with students, but pairing Johnny with a partner is getting more successful. By the end of this week, Johnny actually led the discussion between him and a new partner I paired him with. He is gaining more confidence in his abilities and showed this through the group work!

Johnny's mother and I communicate through his Home Binder that goes home with Johnny daily. His mom has been good about checking it each night and Johnny brings it back to school daily. Activities that Johnny should work on at home are sent home in the binder. I also sent an Absent Folder home with Johnny once he returned to school from being sick. One concern I have is there is no evidence that Johnny is the one who completed the work. Instead, the activities that were sent back to school were in his mom's handwriting. My concern is that instead of helping Johnny at home, his mom instead does the work for him.

Professional Stance

When I first began this project, I did not consider giving Johnny the responsibility of tasks such as errands. I guess I always assumed that my more

outgoing students would enjoy them more as many of them involve talking to adults in the school. I now see and understand that letting Johnny accomplish these tasks shows him that he is capable and that I believe he is which has built his self-esteem and confidence.

When I praise Johnny, I make sure I praise every attempt and effort that he makes. I know that Johnny is capable and it is important that he also knows he is. I did not realize the importance of leading shy/withdrawn students through the thought process after an incorrect attempt as it helps their confidence when they finally see they are capable even if it takes several attempts.

As a professional, I realize that I am very compassionate about students who are shy/withdrawn. It is easy to overlook these students because they are not sharing all of their knowledge, but are also typically not causing many issues in the class on a daily basis. There were times it was hard to think about what I needed to do to help Johnny at all times throughout the school day because he rarely draws attention to himself. But throughout the process, I see why I chose Johnny because I think it is so important to help these students, as I did at the beginning, because I see how they can remain in the shadows and slip further and further behind.

References

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