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Case Study Summary and Reflection

Introduction

Throughout the duration of this course, I have discussed an intense journey. This journey is one that I have embarked on in regards to my past, present, and future teaching, learning, and inquiring. I not only have gained personal knowledge on how to address certain children with challenging behavior problems, I have expanded on the strategies and tools I previously used and have implemented many with one specific case study student. As teachers, we come into our profession with the understanding that "each student is an individual with particular personal qualities, interests, and needs" and we as teachers "have also had to contend with problem students who require special management and motivational handling that goes beyond what is needed for the class as a whole". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 1, 4) Through this course and its offerings, I have come to realize that the observation and implementation of one specific challenging student can push us to new levels of thinking and approaching a variety of such students. In this reflection one will find the detailed description of the particular student I chose to work with, the stance I held when encountering his behaviors, the many detailed changes that were engaged in and the effectiveness of each, a critique of my very own practice, and lastly, how my professional stance has changed through this intervention.

Description of Particular Problem:

When reflecting on the work of this case throughout this course, it is important to start from the very basic beginning in which one can focus on the background as well as the type of behavior my case study child exhibits. John (alias to protect name) was a student that came late into our classroom. Having been moved from the Kindergarten room back down to my Pre-Kindergarten classroom, he was a new arrival that all of my students we excited about. It quickly became apparent that John displayed

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forms of hostile behavior. As one was able to delve deeper into the situation is was clear that he showed not one form of hostility, but all three forms that were discussed in the Brophy text (hostile-aggressive, passive –aggressive, and defiant). John would quite frequently "intimidate", "hit and push", "damage property" (of all types), "antagonize" other students, and become "easily angered" at any given moment. (Brophy, 2003, pg. 171) Not only would he display these hostile characteristics, he would (over time) continue to show signs of "control" issues, he would be "subtly oppositional and stubborn", "frown", "grimace", emitting a "posture with arms folded", and would frequently "do what the teacher said not to". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 201, 227) It became obvious very rapidly that this child had many issues that were alarming and unsafe for not only the children around him, but to himself as well. These issues being new to our classroom, it was evident that a different approach was needed and I was going to have to display the ability to "go the extra mile in working with [this] problem student". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 7)

As any outsider could clearly see within the classroom, this behavior was affecting the rest of the children with a high level of frequency. The regularity and severity of his outbursts were particularly consistent throughout each day. John displayed these characteristics of a hostile-aggressive, passive-aggressive, and as a defiant student in nearly faultless intervals every five to ten minutes. When these behaviors would regularly manifest throughout the day, again he "commonly [was] augmentative with adults (and children), frequently lost [his] temper, swore, often got angry, was resentful, and easily annoyed by others". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 233) The frequency of his behaviors was starting to harshly affect the thoughts and feelings of my other children in which they started to no longer "feel safe in the classroom". (Tomlinson, 2004, pg. 22) At this point during my short, but abundant teaching career I had come to the conclusion that I had no experience with children who displayed these issues and "hostility and aggression are among the most serious problems confronting teachers and also among the most difficult to handle effectively". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 176)

Equally important as the description of his behavior and the frequency of the occurrences, one must take note of the manifestation of this within the classroom. As discussed early, John was new to our class in late October, 2010. His Kindergarten teacher had recommended (as well as his administrator) that he be moved to a Pre-Kindergarten classroom. The reasoning behind this decision was the lack of social development in relation to appropriateness within the Kindergarten classroom and the reality that "he was falling behind academically in comparison to his surrounding classmates". It was then suggested that the slower pace of the Pre-Kindergarten curriculum along with the additional time

spent on social development would be a better placement for this child. For the first two weeks within his new surroundings of the Pre-Kindergarten room, he was a very quite student, adjusting to his surroundings, and learning the flow of the classroom. However, after a few weeks within our classroom he quickly started to develop the behaviors as discussed previously. These were all traits that we had been briefed on, but never actually saw being displayed up until now. As his behavior increased in severity, I quickly involved his mother in a conference to gain more knowledge on the situation and it became prevalent that he came from "a home where similar emotions and behaviors are modeled" (due to an emotional impaired sibling) and he was "undersocialized" with the manifestation resulting from his behaviors being "poorly monitored and inconsistent discipline". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 179)

Professional Stances When First Working with Case Study Student

When first encountering this child and his "very different combinations of personal attributes and behavior patterns", I held a few stances in relation to keeping the "authoritative" teaching style I so truthfully believed in. (Brophy, 2003, pg. 1, 15) Drawing from the discussion regarding stances, I have always accepted and was confident in my ability to display "patience and determination" with most situations that arise within my classroom. (Brophy, 2003, pg. 22) As John displayed his hostile, defiant, and passive-aggressive behaviors, I have always taken a step back and assessed the situation before making any rash decisions. As he "persisted to test the limits", it was always my role to "convince these students that they will be required to fulfill their responsibilities", but at the same time I would make it clear that I would "work with them to improve one step at a time". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 22, 23) With John, although hard at times, patience and determination was something from the very beginning that I strived for.

A second stance that I consider a strong aspect of my teaching is my ability to constantly model desired behaviors. John came into our class with minimal skills on how to socialize and interact with other children. From the start, it was my goal to help model these behaviors not only with John, but with his entire class as well. These are the times when any teaching professional needs to "practice what [they] preach by modeling the ideals that [they] want to verbalize". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 23)Previously, I understood that children needed modeling to be completely successful with socialization and school as a whole, but developmentally, my younger students needed this to learn how to act in a classroom, seeing that this was the very first time many of them have encountered such a concept. Specifically, my

students needed instruction on "politeness and good manners, friendliness and helpfulness, and consideration for the rights and feelings of others". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 23)

The last stance discussed in Brophy's philosophical discussions on socialization that I have encompassed from the day I set foot in a classroom was the aspect that teachers need to "set the stage for effective student socialization work" in which one will need to apply "the management principles involved in establishing a classroom as a successful learning environment-a well-managed classroom". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 10) I have constantly prided myself on my organization skills and my ability to create a space that is conducive to learning and the developing independence that I would hope my children will develop as the year progresses. The goal and stance of my classroom setting has always been to establish a room that "works automatically, without much teacher effort devoted to management". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 10) Although when looking at the varying stances one can have, these were the three most important stances I held true to. This is not to say that I did not value or use any other, but these stances are my strengths and with the development of the case (and one will see later in this discussion) many stances emerged and became stronger when encountering my case study student.

Description of the Changes Made

Due to the complications of the behaviors demonstrated by this child, it was evident that multiple changes were required. In order to provide some well needed assistance, a few simple interventions were implemented first. As discussed previously, modeling was one of my strengths in which I provided opportunities for children to see how conversations and interactions should occur. However, due to the situation of moving grade levels drastically, I held a different level of modeling geared toward the upper elementary grades. To reach the needs of my younger children, I decided to revamp my modeling style in which I delved deeper into the actual "modeling process": "the teacher models the task which speaking aloud", then "the student performs the task under the teacher's instruction", followed by "the student performing the task while verbalizing self-instructions aloud" and then "while whispering", and finally "the student performs the task under self-guidance". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 35) This step-by-step account of successful modeling is an almost immediate implementation that I was able to use effectively with John.

A second simple intervention that I was able to implement on the first day of experimentation was that of "pulling aside the student privately" to discuss matters of behavior. (Brophy, 2003, pg. 21)

When showing respect for the situation in this manner this gives you as the "authoritative figure" the ability to "question the student to determine his or her awareness of the behavior and the explanation for it" and then you can "make sure that the student understands why the behavior is inappropriate and cannot be tolerated". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 21) I have come to realize that this in turn shows respect for the child and in return, they can have a more private conversation in which they can reveal aspects of the situation one may have not released in the first occurrence.

The next two additional strategies reflected upon are interventions that took more time and were more in depth in their development. The first strategy design that looks simple on the surface, but requires a deeper concentration is that of praise. This strategy came directly following the previous two strategies discussed. Although praise is "perhaps the most basic of all influences on student behaviors", one must have a regimented system of praise to reach specific children (including my case study student). (Reavis, Sweeten, Jenson, Morgan, Andrews, Fister, 1996, pg. 59) The first aspect I explored in regards to praising John was to "catch [him] being good" on regular intervals every five to ten minutes. (Brophy, 2003, pg. 39) Although this seems labor intensive, slowly it was perceived that "effective praise is genuine" and with "spontaneity and variety" in combination with "specifics of the particular accomplishment", John began to develop behaviors that were positive and these precise behaviors were able to diminish for longer periods of time. (Brophy, 2003, pgs. 28, 30) One specific structure implemented with my case study child was that of the "I-Feed-V" rule, that refers to "immediately, frequently, enthusiasm, eye contact, describe the behavior, and variety" (Reavis, Sweeten, Jenson, Morgan, Andrews, Fister, 1996, pgs.60, 61) With this concept in mind and implemented fully, John has had longer periods of time on task and cooperating with others and I have been able to "gradually reduce it [praise] to levels that are considered normal within a classroom setting". (Reavis, Sweeten, Jenson, Morgan, Andrews, Fister, 1996, pg. 62)

The last strategy focused on for this case study was the most intensive intervention that I have tried with this student thus far; the "homenote" system discussed in both the Brophy and Best Practices texts. It should also be noted that with the breadth of knowledge gained through this course, these are just the beginning of many strategies I have interest in exercising within the classroom. As I have become familiarized, the homenote system is "one of the most effective techniques for improving a student's motivation and classroom behavior" in which "simply a note, periodically completed by the teacher, that assesses academic and behavioral progress…is sent home for the parent(s) to review, apply consequences, and sign, and then is returned to school". (Reavis, Sweeten, Jenson, Morgan, Andrews,

Fister, 1996, pg. 29) With these specifics in mind, one can truly implement a system of their own that matches the needs that their student would benefit from. With keeping in mind the supportive relationship factor, "set the stage for effective problem solving with parents by developing collaborative relationships", I was able to develop a simple note for John to take home in his folder each and every day. (Brophy, 2003, pg. 49) The note simply consisted of a smiley face, an "ok" face, and a sad face, in addition to a line where I was able to jot down a note about the day in general. His mother would receive the note, apply the consequences or rewards at home, and return it the very next day. Never implementing such a strategy, it was brought to light how powerful this intervention really can be when in partnership with the parents. Due to the successes in the development of this system, "a well designed homenote system can produce durable changes in motivation and behavior" which is exactly the outcome in this case. (Reavis, Sweeten, Jenson, Morgan, Andrews, Fister, 1996, pg. 35)

Effectiveness of the Interventions

When discussing the effectiveness of the interventions, one can truly see the success briefly mentioned in the section above. However, a more in depth look at the success will lead to explorations of possible advances in the future. In regards to the interventions (four discussed previously: modeling, private conversations, praise, and homenotes), it was as if these strategies were almost "too good to be true". As I started with the first simple strategies and worked on adding in a few more at a time, we encountered weeks of success between John, I, and the rest of the class.

I will admit that the praise strategy was that hardest to keep up and although I managed to complete my goal of regular praise, it was labor intensive and I had to put many reminders throughout the room. In regards to the homenote system, each note was always returned next day and the consequences and rewards were dealt out a home each and every night (as well as consequences and rewards at school). Due to the fact that "problems can occur even with the best programs", I was astonished by the positive results I was gaining with this child on a daily basis with the cooperation and support from his mother. (Reavis, Sweeten, Jenson, Morgan, Andrews, Fister, 1996, pg. 33) With these strategies instantly succeeding with this child, it seemed that many aspects discussed in the Tomlinson text had fallen into place within my classroom. Due to the "suggested modeling and expecting students to exhibit a reasoned, nonaggressive approach", aspects such as feeling "safe in the classroom", "one's

personal growth", "a new sort of fairness", and "mutual respect" were all prevalent on a daily basis due to the multiple interventions. (Tomlinson, 2004, pgs. 22, 23)

As teachers come to expect, children have downfalls and setbacks. However, in this case, it completely blindsided me. I had become so wrapped up in this child's growth behaviorally and socially that when John had a major setback, I was emotionally shaken by the results of one single regression during a day weeks ago. From the moment John walked down the hallway, I could see a change in his posture and facial expressions. It seemed as though he had regressed to his old behaviors demonstrated just a few weeks ago. As he stepped into the classroom, he was again representing "hostile-aggressive, passive-aggressive, and defiant" characteristics. (Brophy, 2003, pgs. 171, 201, 227) I had seen such a quick success with this child that I had assumed he had "moved past these behaviors". Emotionally and physically distraught, I contacted his mother as soon as school was out. During our discussion she revealed information regarding the fact that John's father had returned the night before of which he had not seen him in three years. After hearing this news, I was upset with myself to forget how malleable children are and how the simplest aspects can affect a child in such powerful ways. Leaving the conversation I had a positive outlook on John's future within our classroom and it brought the harsh reality that setbacks are inevitable and "the goal of differentiation is to make certain that everyone grows in all key skills and knowledge areas, moving on from their starting points". (Tomlinson, 2004, pg. 42) With the perception that these behaviors had been removed, I had been setting not only myself up for failure, but for this little boy as well. When a student has made growth, tremendous growth, we as teachers just need to start back from where they currently are and help these children with their setbacks.

Critique of Interventions and Practice

After reflecting over the past course of action in regards to my case study student, there were many aspects that I accomplished in a sound manner. The first concept that I believe I carried out entirely was the conception that I provided a wide variety of strategies for this child as well as many children within the classroom as a whole. As discussed throughout the continuation of this course, it is evident that "combinations of complementary strategies probably will be more effective than any single strategy" and similarly "comprehensive treatment packages that combine several elements are more likely to be effective that treatments based on a single approach". (Brophy, 2003, pgs. 389, 185) I was

extremely luckily in the fact that I was actually able to implement strategies during the duration of this course and not only one strategy, but four in regards to my specific case study student.

An additional success that I achieved through this case was one that I am particularly proud of. As I started working with this child more as my case study, I will admit that I had grown very frustrated with this student and his actions within school. It became harder each day to put aside his behaviors and enjoy the student in turn being able to reach him better. Although I had these exasperating feelings, I remained persistent and was actually able to build a strong bond with John. Through these strategies and interventions I was able to gain "acceptance of the individual, but not all of his or her behavior". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 23) By accepting the child I also was able to "reach out to [this] aggressive student by building closer personal relationships with [him]" and "trying to resocialize [his] attitudes and beliefs, and helping them learn better methods of coping with frustration and resolving conflicts". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 187) As noted before, this was one of the most important facets of this case. Sadly, I am one to hold feelings inside and dwell on the past, this case study has provided the opportunity to go beyond such trivial ideas.

The last important concept that I believe I had great success in was the ever-important "consistency factor". As soon as a plan was in place for John, it was incredibly significant in my facilitating to keep consistency amongst interventions, strategies, and the implementation process; "you must be consistent with them, very consistent in the way you deal with their misbehavior. By being consistent, by staying in control of yourself, I think it's a starting point and perhaps the child can begin to have some respect for you". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 229) John, coming from a household with little structure and consistency, needed a place to gain that opportunity and in his school setting (especially in regards to his defiant traits) it is suggested that there is "structure and clarity about expectations". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 234) So from there on out, it was my personal goal to set up a structure for success (involving multiple strategies) and consistency sticking to what was expected of the child.

When discussing the successes of both the interventions and practice, one should note the changes possible if implemented within the near future. Although different situations could always have been approached in diverse ways, there is one specific aspect I would have altered had I have done this case over again. I would have made sure to have engaged in more one-on-one discussions with John about his decisions and his specific choices of behavior. This was the one facet of my many interventions that I found extremely hard to incorporate. With sixteen children who are all developing socially and behaviorally, I think it is imperative to have these discussions and modeling time in order to develop. As

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we all know, teachers have minimal time and it is a constant battle of time management to fit all of our daily activities in. The perfect strategy and yet the most challenging to find time for is to "take the student outside the room and sit down with him on a one-to-one basis and talk to him about his behavior". (Brophy, 2003, pgs. 173, 174) Finding the time to actually sit down with a child is hard in my classroom where there is one of me to go around and multiple issues happening frequently. As discussed in the sections above, pulling aside a child privately within the classroom was easy for me as the teacher, but I wish I was able to investigate deeper with each child who needed assistance. One last change that is directly related to this one-on-one discussion time involves another method that would save time in a busy classroom, "suggest things like writing down or drawing a picture of what is bothering them" and possibly "show it to the person who is bothering them, or to someone". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 175) I think this strategy could help solve issues of time and yet it still provides for the child to tell his/her story.

Professional Stance at the End of Intervention

As one continues to develop a clearer understanding of the interaction between the child I have so specifically outlined, the last crucial pieces of information on my personal inquiry are the professional stances I have worked on and gained insight on as well as the changes made in my own previous stances. The first stance discussed in the Brophy text that I truly focused on in regards to my case study student is that of "Projecting Positive Expecations". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 23) When taking into account the different ideals that make up this critical stance, one can expect that as teachers we must "treat students as basically good people who want to do the right thing and whose lapses are due to ignorance or forgetfulness". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 23) As this position was revealed, I knew that I had a difficulty accepting the student for these facets. I often times grew very upset and took his actions too personal. So, this has been my personal mission to hold these truths about John. I have been able to put past these notions and feelings and actually have been able to "avoid treating [him] as if [he] was inherently evil or under the control of powerful antisocial impulses" (although this seems rash, when caught in the moment it is hard to continue thinking through his actions as if they were not on purpose). (Brophy, 2003, pg. 23) Through this stance I have been capable of "emphasize guidelines for more appropriate behavior rather than personal criticism" and I have been able to realize that he "needs adults' help in learning to do the right thing". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 23) Although never imaginable, I have been able to

accept this child for his behaviors and realize that without help from an outside force (myself and school associates), he would have continued to spiral into worse behaviors.

Another stance that directly ties into the previous one discussed delves into the deeper issues of understanding and accepting the individual, "Acceptance of the Individual, but Not All of His or Her Behavior". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 23) At the beginning of my intervention, I had a very difficult time accepting this student in lieu of his behaviors. This is something that I was ashamed of when investigating my case with this student. It's not to say that I did not enjoy this student, but his behaviors in school made it harder to understand where he was coming from and how I was going to continue my practices within the classroom. His behaviors brought on a completely different experience than I had ever had within any classroom (due to his hostile of aggressive behaviors). As I began to work with this child in a more in depth perception, it occurred to me instantly that I was going to have to reradiate and modeling that aspect that "all of [my] students should know that they are accepted as individuals and welcomed as members of [my] class, but also that certain behaviors are inappropriate and will not be allowed". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 23) Deciding to working on this stance of my professional teaching, I used our first ten minutes of class to build relationships with not just my case study student, but my entire class as well. We now meet for our daily "Morning Meeting" to discuss the day, play games that build community and relationships, and share our thoughts and feelings. I have also used this time to model behaviors that I see the whole class demonstrating or even just a few students (including John). This piece of our day has allowed me to realize that I am capable of accepting each and every student within my classroom, but it is also ok to express that certain behaviors are inappropriate.

The last socialization feature, involving stances, has changed my thinking completely from where I started in the establishment of this venture. As I discussed formerly in this reflection, I felt as though I had a vast grasp on the stance involving "Patience and Determination". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 22) This case study student has given me a new outlook on how "patient" and how "determined" one must be when encountering children who display severely challenging behaviors. I have truly had to view John as "not yet able to control his aggressive impulses because he has not learned strategies for doing so". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 195) It was hard to accept that part of his behavior was a developmental stage and further more I had to keep calm, cool, and determined with his outbursts and remind myself and this student "that aggression would not be tolerated" within our classroom for the safety of my students as well as John. (Brophy, 2003, pg. 195) Lastly, I have had have more patience and determination that ever in regards to seeking out and implementing "ways of handling emotional pressures and heading off loss

of control" as well as assisting my case study student in being successful in these matters. (Brophy, 2003, pg. 235) One can see that throughout this still emerging journey, I have developed stances previously hard to accept as well as elaborated on stances that were already held in high regards.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Overall, this course and my intense work with one specific case study student have provided a wealth of opportunities, knowledge, and growth. The rich discussions, informative and implemental texts, strategies, and tools have all allowed me to think through my current professional position and alter it in ways never imaginable. Coming into the profession of teaching, one must continually reflect upon their practices and open doorways to new learning and be ready to accept that "problem students need special help that goes beyond application of research-based management principles". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 19) I can only promise to myself that I will continue to help my case study child grow and develop as a social learner within my classroom, I can only dream to continue this desire to reach all children, especially children displaying challenging behaviors and "thus go the extra mile in working with problem students". (Brophy, 2003, pg. 7)

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