

Behavior Change Project

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Operational definition

Giselle is a nine-year old girl in 4th grade who is in a general curriculum classroom with sixteen other students. Giselle exhibits challenging behaviors that includes aggression towards her peers, taunting her teacher and peers, not working on task, leaving her seat without permission and destroying property. These behaviors stem from an imbalance between classroom expectations and her academic abilities. Giselle's test scores show she is four years below her reading level putting her at a first-grade level. When she is asked to do a lesson from her textbook, she sees how long the lesson is and claims that it is too difficult. The teacher and IEP team would like to decrease the disruptive behaviors that Giselle does in the classroom.

Antecedent

An antecedent refers to the triggers or environmental factor that occurs before a behavior. In this case, Giselle being given a long and difficult assignment, lack of choice in tasks, and given assignments that are above her reading level is what is causing her problem behaviors.

Consequence

The consequences following her problem behaviors are Giselle avoiding completing her tasks, gaining attention from her peers and the adults in the room, redirection, and given an easier task to complete.

Hypothesis

Giselle's problem behaviors such as aggression towards peers, taunting her teacher and peers, not working on task, leaving her seat without permission and destroying property are used as an escape from doing tasks that are too challenging/hard for her given her current reading level and for gaining attention from her peers and teacher.

Deficit

Giselle is demonstrating a skill deficit. Her reading skills and ability is four years below grade level which makes her assignments too hard for her. Giselle lacks the fundamental and foundational skills that helps her to complete the tasks she is given. By lacking these skills, it triggers avoidance behaviors causing her problem behaviors as well.

Replacement Behavior

After observing Giselle in the classroom, the team, concluded that Giselle would talk back to the teacher less if she had more choices, her appropriate behavior would increase if the assignments were modified to fit her needs, and observed how much attention the teacher gave her. A replacement behavior which is a “part of an intervention plan as a substitute for unacceptable behavior that is established through teaching, prompting, and reinforcement”, (Scheuermann et al., 2022) will be used for Giselle to limit her problem behaviors in class. The replacement behavior for Giselle will be to ask for help when tasked with a difficult assignment by raising her hand or a cue card. This should decrease her task avoidance and address her attention-seeking behavior as well. Decreasing her task avoidance will allow Giselle to communicate her needs for support and task modification respectfully and appropriately. Decreasing her attention-seeking behavior will allow her to gain attention through positive actions rather than disruptive ones.

Data collection

The data collection too that would be appropriate to use to monitor Giselle’s problem behaviors would be frequency recording. Her teacher will track how many times and how often Giselle engages in problem behavior during the teaching of each subject, (math, history, science, language arts). By collecting data, the teacher will have a better idea of exactly how many times during instruction Giselle engages in these behaviors before implementing the replacement

behavior. The teacher will need a tally counter or a teacher to count every time Giselle leaves her seat or refuses/avoids a task. Using a tally counter is discreet but quick to record data without having to stop instruction time. A stopwatch will also be needed to record the time intervals in which she is actively engaging in her problem behaviors. Lastly, a frequency data sheet will also be needed to record the data collected. For example, there will be a column for the date, time, target behavior that was observed, the tally count and any notes that were taken.

Evidence based interventions

Two evidence-based interventions that will be implemented to support Giselle and her replacement behaviors will be Functional Communication Training (FCT) and visual supports. Functional Communication Training will teach Giselle how to appropriately communicate her needs for example, requesting help, how to express her frustration and asking for a break instead of acting on her problem behaviors. According to research, “by teaching children to request help, we were able to improve their chronic behavior problems that were being used to escape from tasks...similarly children that were taught to appropriately ask for adult attention, behavior problems that were being used to get attention improved significantly”, (Durand & Moskowitz, 2015). Visual supports such as choice boards or visual checklists will help clarify expectations for Giselle and reduce frustrations. Implementing visual supports, “may produce a predictably format for tasks organization”, (Zimmerman et al., 2020). Visual supports allow for Giselle to already know what to expect and what comes after a task without getting caught by surprise if she didn’t hear or understand the first time. When combined, FCT and visual aids create a supportive system that teaches Giselle how to communicate appropriately and effectively, fosters independence and promotes positive change in behavior.

References

Durand, V. M., & Moskowitz, L. (2015). Functional Communication Training: Thirty Years of Treating Challenging Behavior. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 35(2), 116-126.

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