

CASE STUDY OF JACK

****Note:** I use the terms “we” and “us” throughout the paper, because I worked with another teacher in the room, and it was a team effort with other faculty members and my administrator in working with Jack.

The Situation and Problem

At the beginning of the course I felt that Jack was a student with hostile, aggressive, and defiant behaviors, but have come to find that he not only has aggressive and hostile behavior but also low achievement. Jack is a student in my first grade classroom who the whole school knows as “the boy who doesn’t want to come to school”. He was a new student to our school and he seemed to be adjusting well, after many warnings from his previous teachers at his old school that he would throw tantrums and they would have to barricade him in the classroom to prevent him from escaping. Besides learning about Jack’s behavior problems we also learned that he repeated Kindergarten, was below grade level in Language Arts, and was immature for his age. We were pleasantly surprised when Jack didn’t show any of the behavioral problems and was open to reading and writing for us. However, we realized it was the calm before the storm.

After about two months in the classroom Jack started missing days of school and when he would come in he would simply sit under a table and not come out. When he would sit under the table, the other teacher and I would try to get him to come out by explaining the day and all the wonderful things we would be learning about. Jack could sit under a table or his desk for hours, but if it was time to go to a special class or do something fun, such as using manipulatives in math, he would run out and participate in the activity. It was difficult because we didn’t want him to think this sort of behavior was acceptable, but we were thrilled he was engaged in some of the lessons. We would talk to Jack together and explain that his behavior was unacceptable and his job at school was to follow the directions of all his teachers and do his best learning. When we would talk to Jack he seemed as though he knew the right things to say and that he understood his behavior, however, I don’t believe that he was truly sorry for his behavior and I feared that it would spiral out of control. Jack seemed to work well with his peers, but would pout if he didn’t get his way or couldn’t work

with a specific friend or partner. It was almost as if he controlled us and knew we didn't want him to disengage and that we would give him his way to prevent a meltdown.

His behavior of going under desks or tables, and disengaging increased for a few weeks and the time he would spend under the desk or tables seemed to be more than the time he was participating in lessons and engaged in academic activities at school. We decided to create a behavior chart for Jack about our expectations and the rewards and consequences for him. At the end of each hour Jack would report to either of us and if he participated in the activities cooperatively then he received a green face, and if he decided to disengage he received a red face. Through conversations with Jack we found out that he loves video games and his favorite cartoon was Pokemon, which helped us to decide that a reward would be Pokemon stickers at the end of the day. This helped for a couple weeks, where he wanted to be successful, but eventually he resorted back to his old ways from his previous school. We felt like we were making an impact and progressing, but then when we saw his old ways, we felt like we fell backwards.

One day Jack's mom brought him into school, and he was clinging to her and didn't want her to leave. We explained that it was time for the school day to start and tried to give him a job of passing out papers or cleaning the board as a way to make him feel important, however when his mom left, he went to run after her. He screamed, kicked, and bit us when we tried to hold the door shut. Since there were two of us in the room I held the door, while the other teacher, who was trained in restraining, did a restraining hold on Jack. This began to happen every day and each morning became increasingly more aggressive and hostile that the principal and school psychologist came to our room every morning and would have to take him away after an amount of time. At the end of each day, the four of us would meet and discuss the events and create a plan for the week and how it was progressing. His behavior is still occurring and there are some weeks that are better than others. We have set up behavior plans and charts for him as a way for him to keep track of his behavior, and we have partnered with the parents where they are continuing the efforts from the classroom into their home. There are now consequences at home for Jack, where after conversations with the parents, it seemed there was a lack of consequences or responsibilities for Jack. After a month of Jack's increasingly aggressive behavior, his mother informed us that she had taken him off ADD medication, because she felt he didn't need it and didn't agree with the doctor's diagnosis. We traced back the date that she took him off the medication and it correlated with the

time that his behavior started becoming an issue. With this piece of information, we suggested that she talk with his doctor about his behavior and continue with the rules and routines, and the rewards and consequences at home.

Jack's problem manifested in the classroom and affected the other children. Thankfully we have two teachers in the room, where one can deal with Jack and the other can teach the other students as if nothing is happening. When Jack would leave the room with the school psychologist when his behavior lasted more than 40 minutes, I would explain to the class about his behavior and how we all needed to work together to remind and model for Jack the proper ways to come to school, how we learn, and follow the rules throughout the day. I asked the students to help Jack if they saw him not following the rules or assignments, and many times the students would tell Jack that everything was okay and that he should do his work. It felt good to see the class come together to help one student.

My Professional Stance at the Beginning

At the beginning, when everything seemed to be spiraling out of control with Jack, I felt as if he was extremely stubborn. If he wasn't participating in activities or lessons, but would jump up to get in line for recess, I would explain to him that he was not going to recess, because he didn't do any of his work from the morning. I realized that I was giving him punishments, but without any opportunities to earn rewards. My professional stance was to provide consequences for his actions, but didn't make him aware of the consequences until after he had recovered and decided to engage in the school day again. Brophy explains that defiant students argue and get into power struggles, which is where I found myself and it was somewhere I didn't want to be (Brophy, pg. 227).

I was using some effective strategies when Jack was not shutting down, by praising him when he exhibited positive behavior and was participating in lessons. I modeled the positive behavior for Jack and praised other models around him, and I instructed him during our conversations after his shutdown of the positive behavior that he needed to use and what to do when he was feeling upset (Brophy, pg. 20). By instructing Jack about his behavior and acceptable behavior in the classroom, I explained my expectations and how important it was for him to turn his behavior around so that he could participate in the school day and learn the important information in order to move on to

second grade. The modeling and instruction approach were effective for Jack for a few weeks, but the success was short lived and we had to think of new approaches.

Another professional stance that I found to be helpful was through private conversations with Jack about his behavior. If he didn't follow the directions or rules I would ask him why and how it made him feel. It made him take responsibility for his actions and then talk about why he did it. This allowed me the opportunity to teach him how to manage his feelings and what to do when he is feeling upset (Brophy, pg. 38). It was important for me to explain to him that it's normal to feel upset about something, but it is important to handle it in the right way. I asked him how he may make others around him feel when he slams his desk or chair into the wall, and how it affects the classroom learning environment. When Jack was having a good day, I would have a conversation with him to praise him and talk about his interests, as a way to better understand him. The private conversations with Jack helped us build a personal relationship, which is something I try to do with all of my students as a way to build a healthy community of learners.

My professional stance was that I couldn't give up on the student, no matter how frustrated and hopeless I felt on some days. I worked with the school psychologist, my administrator, and other teachers in the building as a way to gain advice and new strategies that might help Jack become socialized into the classroom. Also, communication with the parents was instrumental so that we could all work and use similar strategies to help Jack socialize back into the school day. When there was a really bad day with Jack, my administrator would hold meetings with the school psychologist, the other teacher, and me in order to discuss what went well and what didn't, and where we were going to go from there. It was extremely important to have the support of my faculty members and the progress with the parents as partners.

Description of Changes Made for the Student/ Intervention

In order to socialize Jack back into the school routine I started with reinforcement as a way to motivate Jack to participate in the school day and to come to school properly. We used mostly positive reinforcement such as material, social, and activity rewards. First we set up a behavior plan for Jack and listed the expectations in his language on each week's chart, so that he understood what we wanted from him, and we listed his rewards for being successful and his consequences for

the negative behavior. On the first behavior plan we worked with the smiley faces for each hour of the day; however, when we realized that the bigger issue became his inability to come to school in a positive way, we had to change our strategy.

Our change in strategy was a new behavior plan that was strictly related to his entrance into the classroom, and each day he came in the way he was supposed to he received a smiley face, and the days that he kicked, screamed, and ran for the door he received a sad face. At the start and end of the day he was explained of the expectations. When he received three smiley faces he could get extra computer time as an activity reward, and out of desperation of my principal she offered him a McDonald's lunch with a friend in her office as a social reward. The rewards seemed to interest him and were seen as positive reinforcement (Brophy, pg. 25). However, when Jack failed to come to school properly, he had to stay after for 15 minutes (something arranged with his parents), and at the end of the week if he didn't have the target number of smiley faces, his parents took away the video games at home. This negative reinforcement seemed to be effective with Jack, because he did not like his video games being taken away, and strongly disliked staying after school when his friends were running out the doors and at home playing. During his after school sessions we would talk with him about his behavior that day, asked him how he felt, and what he was going to do differently. We made him practice walking in the school doors and going through the morning routine, and showed him how he was capable of doing but had to start showing us in the morning. We tried to use the positive reinforcements and used contingency contracting as a way to confer with him about what he could do differently in order to earn his rewards at the end of the week (Brophy, pg. 26). Since Jack really liked computers, he enjoyed coming back to the classroom to play on the computers when he received happy faces on his charts. It was important for us to continue to find new reinforcements and rewards for Jack, because it was easy for him to get bored with them.

Despite the possible rewards and reinforcements, Jack was still having trouble coming to school most days of the week. The other teacher and I decided that we needed to have a long conference with the parents for them to come in and talk with us and Jack about his behavior, and an action plan. We felt with Jack's defiance that it was important that we all get on the same page as a way to discuss how we could turn Jack's behavior around. In many cases of defiance, there is something going on outside the home that the parents could provide insight with (Brophy, pg. 233). The

conference helped us learn that the mother was passive with Jack and let him do whatever he wanted, which led us to help her with some strategies that she could use at home. During the meeting we explained to Jack's mom that she needed to set clear boundaries and set her expectations and make them explicit to him; if Jack didn't follow the rules she had to stay calm and provide decisive consequences with him and follow through with them (Brophy, pg. 234). We explained that we follow similar rules at school where we have a structure set up with rules and routines, expectations with rewards and consequences, and instruction on ways that the students can handle their behavior. The mother seemed nervous about implementing the strategies, but explained that she would do her best.

In order to help Jack come to school successfully, we started having his parents bring him to school 15 minutes early so that he could help us with some morning work, and give him time to adjust without all the other students being around. This seemed to peak his interest and has been working so far for us. That is not to say that there are days that he doesn't come to school with a meltdown, but they have become fewer and less intense. We are also using two behavior charts, one about his arrival to school and the second chart breaks down each hour of the day and his behavior throughout the day. I thought he might get them confused and would be overwhelming, but he keeps track and knows which rewards and consequences go with each. His behavior about his arrival is on an index card by the door, and his daily chart is in his folder. This helps him keep track of where they are and how he needs to improve. As exhausting all of the strategies and approaches are, they have been necessary as a way to help Jack become successful in being socialized into the school setting so that he can move on and do his best.

Effectiveness of the Intervention

I believe that the interventions were effective even if they were short lived successes. I think so far the most effective intervention has been with Jack coming in early with his brother to help me sort papers and pass them out, or clean the board, or write the date down for me. I believe it makes him feel as if he is important and has a responsibility. Even though the responsibilities have helped Jack it has not gotten rid of the entire problem. I fear that if he shows successes at home that the parents will relax their expectations of him and fall back into their old routines. However, I try to

only think of the present and the positive steps we have taken to socialize Jack into the school setting again.

At first the interventions with stickers seemed to work for the first couple weeks, but then they were boring to the student and he resorted back to his disruptive behavior. The McDonald's lunch with the principal was something that he enjoyed, but it only happened once and was at the climax of all his behavior and trying out the interventions. What seems to be working best for him is coming in early during the morning to help out his teachers and the extra computer time, and not having to stay after school when he comes in properly.

When Jack comes to school and helps me out in the morning, he walks down with me to get the kids and we talk the whole way down. Once we are in the classroom he does his work and follows the routines. There are some days where Jack will disengage in the middle of the day if he doesn't want to do something, but we work through those circumstances as they come. When he shuts down during the day, I remind him of his behavior chart and how he came to school properly and has been working really hard to receive his computer time during recess and a pick out of the treasure chest at the end of the week. Sometimes the reminders help him snap out of his behavior and re-engage in the activity and other times he just needs time to be left alone.

Jack's behavior has changed with the way he comes to school, but he still has a few minor behavioral issues during the day. He may go to the school psychologist once a week, which is a drastic change from every day! We are thrilled with his progress, but realize that we cannot give up now. The interventions must be ongoing in school and at home in order for them to have long term effects and impacts on Jack and his school day. The days have become less stressful for us and for the other students. The students that sit around Jack help him keep perspective of his behavior if they notice that he is having issues and encourage him to do the right thing.

Critique of the Interventions

This whole process of socializing Jack has been a learning experience for me and the rest of the faculty that has worked with us. My principal, who has been an administrator for over ten years and in the teaching field for at least 30 years, explained that she had never dealt with a student like Jack. Strangely, her words comforted me in that we were all in the same position of trying to help Jack

and all had to draw on our previous experiences with similar children. I feel that what worked well and helped us achieve some success was our willingness to find new strategies and interventions, and to not allow or tolerate his behavior. There were many days where we were all exhausted and felt like we were out of ideas, but then we would band together and realize the big picture that this couldn't continue every year. If we didn't solve the problem, it would continue and potentially get worse.

Another part of the intervention that I think we did well was working together as a team with other faculty members and our administrator in finding the root to the problem and searching tirelessly for solutions. The school psychologist and principal would come to meetings and share information they gathered from talking to his previous teachers and teachers from other schools and what advice and suggestions they had. Also, I would talk to my university professors and explain the situation and ask for feedback or advice they may have. By exhausting all of our resources we were able to use a variety of interventions and found a couple that worked for the student.

The communication with parents was another part of the intervention that I attribute to Jack's success in socializing more into the classroom. It took some coaching and work to get the parents to open up to the various strategies and the approaches they needed to take at home, but they eventually accepted them. Through the parents' acceptance as our partners in their son's socialization into the school environment shows that they care about his education, and want to help be a solution to the problem and not an enabler to the problem. Many times the parents would argue and blame each other for Jack's behavior, but it was almost therapeutic for them to realize that changes needed to be made at home for Jack's best interest. We communicated with Jack's parents on a daily basis through phone conversations, his behavior chart, and personal conferences. Jack's home life seems to be moving in a positive direction in terms of his behavior and the setting up of rules and routines for him. It is extremely important that in any behavioral situation with a student that there is open communication with parents in order to gain insight into the child's situation and provide ideas to help the teacher find solutions.

I believe that the interventions worked because we were constantly changing our approach and strategies when something was no longer effective for Jack. However, what I would change next time is to get a solid list of plans together to use, because many times we seemed to just throw

something into the mix and hope for the best. Also, sometimes I felt as if we were giving Jack too much power in that he might be behaving a certain way on purpose to see if he could get better rewards! We kept using more rewards that interested him and using social aspects of including friends into his rewards, which is something he responded positively to. However, I feel that there were too many things happening at one time, but we weren't able to foresee what would happen or how the interventions would affect or not affect Jack. Also, I think I would change how I handled Jack's shut downs in the beginning, because I would talk to him, then sometimes ignore his behavior in order to move on to the next lesson. This may have manifested his behavior to become more vocal and defiant. Despite the successes and some of the failures, it is important to reflect on the interventions and take note for what could work with similar students, and what I would change or do differently in the future.

Professional Stance at the "End" of the Intervention

At the end of the intervention with Jack, I noticed that my professional stance of thinking that he was just a stubborn student really changed in how I realized that it stemmed from the home environment, and lack of rules and routines in his household. I worked on this stance in order to be more effective with the student, because the more I conversed with Jack, the more I found out about his home life and that there was little parent supervision. By listening to the student I learned about his interests, what he finds fun in school, and what can frustrate him in the school setting. I took the information from the conversations and tried to incorporate them into my lessons as well as into the rewards for him. Getting to know your students on a personal level is extremely important in finding solutions to behavioral issues.

This whole experience has helped me change my attitudes, thoughts, and behavior as I have focused on effective socialization with my student. I felt that I had a good attitude towards my students before, but this course and applying it to my student have helped me further develop my professional stance with my students. Before I used to get into arguments and power struggles with my students, where now I look at the big picture and what the actual problem is. I address the problem immediately rather than letting it continue throughout the day, and address it privately with the student instead of in front of the class. My attitude has changed from the way that I would

blame the student and felt that they had control over every aspect of their day, but realized that many times the student doesn't realize his behavior is not acceptable and how others around him perceive his actions. It was important for me to model the correct behavior and how I deal with my frustrations with the students as a way to show the student what he should do. I feel that not only socializing Jack and teaching him about his behavior has impacted his learning, but it has also taught me how to work with students similar to him and made me aware of my attitudes and thoughts about my students. This experience has allowed me to reflect on the strategies and what was effective and ineffective, how to work with faculty members and the importance of partnering up with parents in socializing the student back into the classroom.

REFLECTION OF COURSE

I found this class extremely beneficial and I came into the course very interested in the content given the diverse teaching environments I have been in. Even though I have mostly urban experiences, it was nice to hear from other teachers in the course that they were seeing similar behaviors in their suburban or rural settings. This proved to me that these behaviors are not only found in urban areas, but in every environment!

The Brophy book was very insightful and actually contained strategies and approaches that were practical and could be used in the classroom. I liked how the class was broken up into the different parts of the book, and correlated with our discussions. The discussions were very insightful and it helped to have a diverse group to help bring different insights into the group discussions. I think next time I would want more than two other group members as a way to hear about more experiences in the smaller group setting. However, I could see how having too many people in a group could be overwhelming to keep track of and respond to. Have just the three of us in a group helped us in really understanding each person's given situation. However, maybe four or five would be the optimal number of people to have in a group. It was good to divide the groups based on grade levels that we have experience in, and having the larger group discussions to hear about their experiences with their grade levels and teaching environments.

This course was extremely helpful in providing a broad and diverse range of strategies and interventions that could be used in the classroom. I am looking forward to starting a fresh year in

the next school year to implement the strategies from this class. I learned that it is important to have a strong foundation in my classroom management, and to really know your students on a personal level as a way to deal with any behavioral issues. By creating a personal relationship with students, you show that you truly care about them and want to socialize them into the school environment. I like that Brophy uses the term “socialize”, because that is our ultimate goal with our students.

Module 5 Group Work

Throughout the module our group worked well. I like how Haley responded more and thoughtfully our discussions. I would give her and Kevin each a high score for their participation in the group. We were lucky that we all worked well throughout the semester and were able to respond to each other in a timely and thoughtful way. I felt our discussions occurred at appropriate times and gave everyone time to respond and use the discussions in their reflections or case studies.