A Behavior Plan for a Student with Autism

An Action Research Project

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A Behavior Plan for a Student with Autism

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ABSTRACT

This case study was about a 6th grade student who had autism and was attending Lydia Hawk Elementary in Lacey, Washington. The researcher of this case study created a team of people and behavior management plan to help the student over come his negative behavior. The team consisted of the researcher, school physiologist, the principal, the one on one assistant and the parents of the student. The behaviors were charted by the researcher as they occurred. The negative behaviors included; hitting, biting, pulling hair, touching and using bad language. As a result of the behavior management plan the negative behaviors decreased. The behavior management plan involved; a one on one assistant, a highly structured and predictable environment, with low levels of stimulation, high levels of teacher support, provided visual schedules and preparations for transitions.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

<u>Background for the Project</u>

The rights of students with disabilities were

significantly strengthened by the passing of

desegregation and other federal laws specific to the

human rights of individuals with disabilities. The

passing of the laws contributed to the inclusion of all

students in public education and other community

environments. Turnbull, Turnbull, and Wehmeyer (2006)

described "Third Generation Inclusion" to embody three

overarching characteristics. The first focused on

placement, presuming student presence in general

education classrooms. Second, it was concentrated on

what curriculum was used to facilitate student-learning

and the adaptations that were made to curriculum that

enabled access. Third was the emphasis on instructional

practices that promoted inclusion. These included

differentiated instruction, developing

family/school/community partnerships, and collaborative

teaming and teaching. This meant all students, like the

one examined in this case study, who was diagnosed with

autism.

For a child with autism, life could be very hard.

Autism has affected many people throughout the world. A

news release by from Alison Singer in February of 2007
provided statistics on the prevalence of autism
spectrum disorders in American children found that one
case in every 150 8-year-olds confirmed that the
condition was more common now than it was just a decade
ago. People who were effected by autism were effected
differently and therefore, there cannot be a one size
fits all method to help each person affected by autism.

One side effect of autism might be a behavioral
disorder. Alison Singer,Senior Vice President of the
nation's leading autism advocacy group, Autism Speaks,
said, "she didn't need the Center of Disease Control
(CDC) statistics to know that more families were
struggling with the behavioral disorder that goes along
with autism."(Singer, 2008 p.2)

Autism in itself can be hard to deal with, but it
was made even harder when the child had behaviors that
were unmanageable or inappropriate. As an educator, one
needed to see the world through the eyes of that person
with autism and then teach him to function in our
culture as independently as possible. While educators
cannot cure the underlying cognitive deficits of
autism, by understanding them, educators can design

educational programs effective in meeting the challenge
of this unique developmental disability.

Statement of the Problem

An autistic student was having behavior problems
in the classroom. Therefore, a behavior management plan
needed to be in place to reduce negative behavior and
support positive behavior. If the student did not learn
how to behave in a social environment such as school,
the student would not be able to learn nor have social
relations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find the best
behavior management technique to help a student with
autism and behavior problems. This study explored many
different behavior management styles, which helped
decrease negative behavior and supported positive
behavior. As a result, this paper developed a behavior
management plan to support a student with autism and
behavior problems.

Delimitations

The researcher collected data Monday through
Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:20 p.m. from September through
December during the 2007-2008 school year. The project
took place in the researchers Developmental Delayed
classroom in Lacey, Washington.

The people involved include: the parents of the student in the case study; the researcher; the student in the case study; and the school psychologist. To achieve positive behaviors, each person involved had a major roll in the case study.

The project required a behavior management plan. The behavior management plan was developed by the teacher, school psychologist, and the parents of the student. The behavior management plan was also altered as seen needed.

All materials used were related to the behavior management plan. The data was taken in a log along with a chart that tracked hair pulling, hitting, and time outs. The other materials used supported the behavior management plan. These included a time out chair, stickers, money, and a treasure chest.

Assumptions

The assumptions in this case study were as followed. The author took notes that accurately described the behavior the child. The child wanted to be more productive in class. The way that the researcher felt as a result of the behavior of the student was probably the best clue to understanding how the student was feeling. Last, was that the team made a difference to the behavior management plan.

<u>Hypothesis</u>

The hypothesis for this research projects was, as the student's behavior management was implemented, the student's behavior improved. By applying an appropriate behavior management plan the child did spend more time related learning.

<u>Significance of the Project</u>

The purpose of this project was to provide a factual base of information regarding an autistic student who needed a behavior management plan. The behavior management plan included a combination of techniques.

It was important to establish a behavior management system because the student was disrupting his own learning and the learning of others, was hurting others, and was unable to follow directions.

When this student first came into the class the student was physically aggressive. The student pulled haired, bite, kicked, screamed, used profanity, and threw him self on the floor. This occurred at random times throughout the day and seemed to be for attention or out of aggression. After two month of aggressive behaviors the student started to become sexually aggressive. The sexual aggressive behaviors included; touching other people inappropriately, the student

grabbed the butt and chest. The student also tried to expose private areas and would wet himself when in trouble.

This project made a difference with the student by giving him a way to express himself, a consistent routine, and clear expectations and guidelines. By having the following, this student was able to manage himself and his behaviors, understand the meaning of consequences and choices, and work independently.

This project made a difference within the school by giving this student consistency, follow through, and a behavior management plan that anyone in the class could follow. By having a plan in place, this student knew what was expected of him, the consequence and rewards he would receive for negative and positive behavior. It also allowed this student to feel successful and be a successful learner at school and at home.

This project made a difference at this student's home by allowing him to have consistency between home and school. The behavior management plan reflected similar techniques that were also being used at home.

Procedure

The following procedures were implemented to conduct the case study of a student who has autism with

behavior problems. These procedures were established by the team and the researcher.

First, the researcher obtained permission from the principal. Second, the researcher set up a meeting with the school psychologist, parents of the student in the case study, and the researcher. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the student's behavior and to create a behavior management plan to be used throughout the study. The behavior management plan included 11 different techniques that the researcher used to help the student. A few of these techniques included; a timeout, a highly structured environment, a highly predictable environment, low level of stimulation, high level of teacher support, a one on one assistant, visual supports, perpetration for transitions, and a reward system.

Once the baseline was set, the researcher took a daily log on the student's behavior. The daily log included notes on the behaviors seen throughout the day and any insight the researcher saw or wanted to try the next day. Along with the daily log, the researcher informed the parents of the progress being made or not made, and anything that needed to be done at home on a daily basis.

The behavior plan was followed every day, making needed changes as seen through the daily log. Data was also kept on hitting, hair pulling and time outs. The purpose of this data was to see if there was a pattern or if there was a decline in behavior throughout the year.

The data was taken daily on a sheet of paper with the date and time the behavior occurred, and columns that stated hair pulling, hitting, time outs, and other. When the student did one of the following, it was recorded by whom ever observed the behavior.

Definition of Terms

autism. Autism was defined as a brain development disorder that impaired social interaction and communication, and caused restricted and repetitive behavior, all starting before a child was three years old. This set of signs distinguished autism from milder autism spectrum disorder (ASD) such as Asperger syndrome.

developmentally delayed. Developmentally delayes was defined as a student who exhibited the following: (a) Below average intellectual functioning; and (b) Potential for measurable achievement in instructional and employment settings.

negative behavior. Negative behavior meant the following: hair pulling, biting, hitting, using curse words, kissing people, and engaging with others to antagonize them.

positive behavior. Positive behavior meant the following: working independently, sitting when asked, following directions, using language to express feelings, and playing appropriately with peers and adults.

so what test. An informal test applied to the maladaptive and target behaviors to determine whether or not the behavior change was necessary and appropriate. A negative behavior or undesirable behavior passed the So what? Test if it met the criteria for being maladaptive. A positive or desirable behavior passed the So what? Test if it was shown that the change in the student's behavior was result in the weakening of the maladaptive behavior and was in the student's best interest.

Acronym

ABA. Applied Behavior Analyis

ACLU. American Civil Liberties Union

ASD. Autism Spectrum Disorder

CDD. Childhood Disintegrative Disorder

CSE. Consequent stimulus event

DD. Developmentally Delayed

DSMIV. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Metal Disorders

PDDNOS. Pervasive Developmental Disorder

PECS. Picture Exchange Communication System

TEAACH. Training and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children

CHAPTER 2

Review of Selected Literature

Introduction

The topics that were picked helped formulate the
researcher's rational, behavior management plan and
idea of how to help the student. (a) understanding
autism, (b) behavior management, (c) identifying and
specifying behaviors, (d) programs that work, (e)
working with teams and (f) summary.

Understanding Autism

When dealing with autism, one must first
understand the meaning of autism. When conducting this
study autism was known as a complex neurobiological
disorder that typically lasted throughout a person's
lifetime. It was also known for being a part of a group
of disorders known as autism spectrum disorders (ASD).
To explain to a child what the meaning of autism was
one might tell them, "it was a condition that affects
the way some people's brains works." (Sabin, 2006,
p.17) Sabin explained in terms that children can
understand that people with autism were wired
differently form the other people. This meant that
their brains work differently. "As a result, they might
not act or behave like everyone else all the time. They

are not dump or wrong, they are just different in some

ways" (Sabin, 2007, p.17)

It had been found by multiple researchers from the

autism society that one in 150 individuals had been

diagnosed with autism, making it more common than

pediatric cancer, diabetes, and AIDS combined. Autism

occurred in all racial, ethnic, and social groups and

was four times more likely to strike boys than girls.

Autism impaired a person's ability to communicate and

relate to others. "People with autism often find it

very difficult to communicate. It can be challenging

for them to understand what other people are saying.

They also find it hard to talk sometimes. Some people

with autism may not be able to talk at all." (Sabin,

2006, p.17) Autism was also associated with rigid

routines and repetitive behaviors, such as obsessively

arranging objects or following very specific routines.

Symptoms ranged from very mild to quite severe. "People

with autism do not like to be surprised; they feel much

more comfortable when things are predictable." (Sabin,

2006, p.28) People with autism like to have a schedule

or a routine so they know what they are doing every

day. They do not like it when things change or surprise

them. "If their schedule has to be changed or if they

are surprised by something, they may get nervous,

upset, or frustrated. Sometimes they will try to make themselves feel better by doing something over and over again. For example, they might want to work on a puzzle, clap their hands or draw a picture. They many not want to stop doing this activity because repeating it makes them feel calmer. They also might go into a corner to be alone and quiet. Sometimes they might talk to themselves or make sounds to help themselves calm down." (Sabin, 2006, p.28)

Autism was first identified in 1943 by Dr. Leo Kanner of Johns Hopkins Hospital. At the same time, a German scientist, Dr. Hans Asperger, described a milder form of the disorder that was now known as Asperger Syndrome (ASD). These two disorders were listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSMIV), as two of the five developmental disorders that fell under the autism spectrum disorders. The others were Rett Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDDNOS) and Childhood Disintegrative Disorder (CDD). All of those disorders were characterized by varying degrees of impairment in communication skills and social abilities, and also by repetitive behaviors.

Autism spectrum disorders could usually be reliably diagnosed by age three. Although, new research had pushed back the age of diagnosis to as early as six

months. Parents were usually the first to notice unusual behaviors in their child or their child's failure to reach appropriate developmental milestones. Some parents described their child that seemed different from birth, while others described a child who developed normally and then lost skills. Pediatricians may initially have dismissed signs of autism, thinking a child will catch up, and advised parents to wait and see. New research showed that when a parent suspected something was wrong with their child, they were usually correct. If a person was concerned about their child's development, they should not wait they needed to, speak to their pediatrician about getting their child screened for autism.

If a child was diagnosed with autism, early intervention would critical to gain maximum benefit from existing therapies. Although parents may had concerns about labeling a toddler as autistic, the earlier the diagnosis was made, the earlier interventions could begin. There were also no effective means to prevent autism, no fully effective treatments, and no cure. Research indicated, however, that early intervention in an appropriate educational setting for at least two years during the preschool years resulted in significant improvements for many young children

with autism spectrum disorders. As soon as autism was diagnosed, early intervention instruction was recommended. Effective programs focused on the development of communication, social, and cognitive skills.

Behavior Modification

Behavior modification as described in this subheading was developed by and through Joseph Kaplan, Jane Carter, B.F. Skinner and Pavlov. Behavior modification played an important role when dealing with students who had behavior issues.

According to Skinner in 1938 behavior modification was "the systematic application of the principles of operant conditioning, such as positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, punishment, and extinction, for the expressed purpose of strengthening or weakening behavior." (Skinner, 1938, p.38) Kaplan and Carter (1995) defined operant as any voluntary behavior that produced an effect on the environment. Examples include walking, talking, reading, hitting, and hugging. Operant conditioning was a form of learning popularized by B.F. Skinner, which formed the basis of behavior modification. (Kaplan, 1996, p.40)

Operant behaviors are controlled by the central nervous system and the voluntary muscles. Operant

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usually occurred first and were later modified or maintained by the presentation of a stimulus. Since the stimulus occurred after the operant, it was often referred to as a consequent stimulus event (CSE). The term operant means to operate and operate means to produce an effect.(Kaplan, 1996 p.31)

Behaviors such as hitting or pulling hair, like that of the student in this case study produced an effect on the environment which either caused or maintained that behavior. For example, when this student hits someone, the effect might be having someone hit him back. This weakened the behavior because the person who hit back hit harder. This may not always be true due to the reaction of the first person and the reason why they hit in the first place. The student in this case study was hitting to obtain attention. The student received attention when the second person hit him back. When trying to weaken, eliminate, or improve a behavior, the researcher needed to look at the reason for the behavior. After that, the research needed to be determined if the operant or the behavior needed to be strengthened or weakened. Therefore, what type of reinforcement used with the behavior was decided. Skinner (1938) described

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reinforcement as the strengthening of an operant. There were two kinds of reinforcement: positive and negative. Positive reinforcement was the "strengthening of an operant by immediately following it with a designated reward or presentation of something a person likes." (Skinner, 1938, p.33) For example, if a person worked hard at their job and received something they liked for doing such as a paycheck, the result would be that the person continued to work hard. It could have than been said that the hard-working behavior was positively reinforced because it was followed by a reward and the person worked harder as a direct result.

Negative reinforcement was "the strengthening of an operant by immediately following it was the removal or avoidance of something the person did not like." (Skinner, 1938 p.33) An example of this was a student who refused to do his work and was told to complete it by the end of school or he would have to stay after. The thought of staying after was aversive enough to the student to motivate him to start working. One could say that the student's working behavior was negatively reinforce because it was followed by the removal or avoidance of something aversive to him, and it got stronger as direct result.

Another form of negative reinforcement can be a punishment. Punishment was described as the weakening of an operant by following it with an aversive CSE. An example of this would be if a student cursed in front of a parent and then got his mouth washed out with soap. If the consequence was aversive enough, it will weaken the cursing behavior.

Positive and negative reinforcement, along with punishment, were used in this case study. Positive reinforcement was when an event would follow the behavior with the presentation of a pleasing CSE. Negative reinforcement was when an event would follow the behavior with the removal of aversive CSE. Punishment was when one would follow the behavior with the presentation of aversive CSE. The combination of these helped eliminate negative behaviors and supported positive behaviors.

Identifying and Specifying Behaviors

One of the most critical components when dealing with behaviors was to decide whether or not an intervention should be done. In order to do that, a person first had to judge whether or not the behavior should be changed, and if a change was necessary, to target new behaviors.

Before the researcher could judge if a behavior needed to be changed, the researcher first needed to know what behavior needed the change. According to Kaplan and Carter (1995) described a behavior precisely was referred to as pinpointing. The best way to determine whether or not the researcher pinpointed the behavior was to apply the stranger test. "This means that anyone not familiar with the student could read your description of the student's behavior and interpret it the same way as you do." (Kaplan, Carter 1995 p.56) After the behavior was pinpointed, the researcher then had to judge the behavior. Judging the behavior meant that the researcher made a decision regarding the behavior change.

Next the researcher had to apply the So What Test (Kaplan, 1995, p.59) to the pinpoint to determine whether or not it was maladaptive and needed changing. For this, the researcher had to look for evidence based on past experience with the student or on data from direct observation of the student's behavior that indicated whether the behavior was interfering with his or another's personal, physical, emotional, social or academic well-being. If there was no evidence that the behavior was interfering, the process was aborted. If

there was evidence that the behavior was interfering, the behavior was considered maladaptive.

After the So What Test was applied on the pinpointed behavior, the researcher had to pinpoint the targeted behavior. Once the target behavior was pinpointed, the So What Test had to be applied again.

Once the target behavior was determined, the performance objectives for the target pinpoint were written. This included the behavior, the conditions under which the behavior was to occur, and the criteria that described how well the student was to perform.

Programs That Work

There were many treatments out that said would help cure or treat autism. What research showed was that there were no single treatment for children with autism but most individuals with ASD responded best to highly structured educational programs. Some of the most common interventions found were Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), and the school-based Training and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (TEAACH). For the purpose of this study the researcher looked into and modified many of these intervention tools to try and help the student become involved in his education.

The first intervention the researcher used was one that was familiar and had the most training in. This intervention called TEACCH came from a North Carolina program administered through the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, but had become known nationally and internationally.

Founded in the early 1970s by the late Eric Schopler, Ph.D., "developed the concept of the culture of autism as a way of thinking about the characteristic patterns of thinking and behavior seen in individuals with this diagnosis". (Mesibov, G.B., Shea, V., & Schopler, E. 2005 pg.3)

The Culture of Autism involved:

1. Relative strength in and preference for processing *visual* information (compared to difficulties with auditory processing, particularly of language).

2. Frequent attention to *details* but difficulty understanding the meaning of how those details fit together.

3. Difficulty combining ideas.

4. Difficulty with *organizing* ideas, materials, and activities.

5. Difficulties with *attention.* (Some individuals are very distractible, others have difficulty shifting attention when it's time to make transitions.)

6. *Communication* problems, which vary by developmental level but always include impairments in the social use of language called pragmatics.

7. Difficulty with concepts of *time*, including moving too quickly or too slowly and having problems recognizing the beginning, middle, or end of an activity.

8. Tendency to become *attached to routines*, with the result that activities may be difficult to generalize from the original learning situation and disruptions in routines can be upsetting, confusing, or uncomfortable.

9. Very strong *interests and impulses* to engage in favored activities, with difficulties disengaging once engaged. (Mesibov, G.B., Shea, V., & Schopler, E.,2005, p.21)

10.   Marked *sensory* preferences and dislikes.

The long-term goals of the TEACCH approach were both skill development and fulfillment of fundamental human needs such as dignity, engagement in productive and

personally meaningful activities, and feelings of security, self-efficacy, and self-confidence. To accomplish these goals, TEACCH developed the intervention approach called "Structured Teaching." The principles of Structured Teaching included:

1. Understanding the culture of autism.

2. Developing an individualized person- and family-centered plan for each client or student, rather than using a standard curriculum.

3. Structuring the physical environment.

4. Using visual supports to make the sequence of daily activities predictable and understandable .

5. Using visual supports to make individual tasks understandable. (Mesibov, G.B., Shea, V., & Schopler, E.,2005, p.21)

The TEACCH approach was a family-centered, evidence-based practice for autism, based on a theoretical conceptualization of autism, supported by empirical research, enriched by extensive clinical expertise, and notable for its flexible and person-centered support of individuals of all ages and skill

levels· The researcher felt that this intervention was easy to adapt and gave the student; visual expectations, understanding that promoted calmness, incorporated learning styles and was a great form of behavior management.

The next program that helped the researcher was Applied Behavioral Analysis.

> The principles and methods of behavior analysis have been applied effectively in many areas. For example, methods that use the principle of positive reinforcement to strengthen a behavior by arranging for it to be followed by something of value have been used to develop a wide rage of skills in learners with and without disabilities. (Autism Speaks, 2007, p.2)

Since the early 1960's, hundreds of behavior analysts used positive reinforcement and other principles to build communication, play, social, academic, self care, work and community living skills and to reduce problem behaviors in learners with autism of all ages. Some ABA techniques involve instruction that was directed by adults in highly structured fashion, while others make use of the learner's natural interests and follow his or her initiations. Still

others teach skills in the context of on going activities. All skills were broken down into small steps or components, and learners were provided many repeated opportunities to learn and practice skills in a variety of settings, with abundant positive reinforcement.

> The goals of intervention as well as the specific types of instructions and reinforcement used are customized to the strengths and needs of the individual learner. Performance is measured continuously by direct observation and intervention is modified if the data show that the learner is not making satisfactory progress. (Autism Speaks, 2007, p.4)

The goal behind using the ABA intervention was to enable the student to function as independently and successfully as possible in a variety of environments.

The last approached in the research of programs that work was PECS. This was a type of augmentative and alternative communication technique where the student with little or no verbal abilities learned to communicate using picture cards. The student used the pictures to vocalize a desire, observation, or feeling. The pictures could be purchased or could be made at

home using variety of images. Since some people with autism tended to learn visually, this type of communication technique was shown to be effective at improving independent communication skills, leading in some cases to gains in spoken language. According to John Whitehead (2005), PECS can help people with autism organize visually, understand instructions and can find clarity.

Working with Teams

The skills needed to be a good team member were not necessarily the same as those needed to work directly with students. Many teachers have never received any training on how to be a productive team member. With busy schedules and a range of students with a range of needs, teachers report having difficulty scheduling time to meet with support staff or to have developed curriculum ahead of time to allow for adaptations. "Having the opportunity for educators to touch base ahead of time and adapt curriculum may be the only way for a student with ASD to access the curriculum and successfully participate in classroom activities." (Gerlach, p.56)

To make sure that student was successful in the classroom it was important to collaborate.

Collaboration is the process in which people work together. Because our goals is to educates students with ASD in the least restrictive environment, it is necessary for educators and other professionals to work together to share knowledge and problem solve to provided better outcomes for students with ASD. There are two other terms that are often used similarly when describing how we work together with the variety of personnel that provide services to students with ASD teaming and consultation."(Hunt, Soto, Maier, Doering, 2001 p. 58)

Teaming was defined as, "a process in which educational team members work together to problem solve and who are committed to a common purpose and to achieving the mission of the team." (Gerlach, 2001 p.58) Consultation was defined as "a collegial, indirect problem solving process between a specialist and one or more persons to address concerns with attention to sharing the process and outcome." (Gerlach, 2001, p.58)

The collaborative process included sharing of knowledge and skills to create new methods for individualized learning, without necessarily needing to make distinctions between special and general education

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(Gerlach, 2001, p.204). Collaboration allowed team members to develop an appropriate program by sharing knowledge, ideas and expertise of team members. It provided for the integration of information across all subject areas, identified solutions to meet the educational challenges and provided and received support from other professionals. Last, it maximized team member's potential, strengths, and contribution.

The collaborative process meant that the team members met regularly. The team members worked together to develop supports and strategies to increase social and academic participation of the target student. The team would work together to achieve educational goals of students. The team also had to identify the roles and responsibilities and be flexible to take upon new roles and responsibilities to facilitate student learning (Giangreco, Doyle, 2000, p.34).

<u>Summary</u>

The focus of this chapter was to find research that would help the researcher establish a working behavior management plan along with a cohesive team. Each researched topic helped play a role in designing and implementing the behavior management plan. Not all of the researched items were beneficial but it gave the researcher an understanding of how to deal with the

problem at hand and gave the researcher a complete understanding of autism. Through this research a new understanding was found on how adapt and control someone who had autism along with a behavior problem.

The behavior management plan incorporated PECS to help him understand the schedule throughout the day. It incorporated the TEEACH method to help establish a working station just for the student.   The ABA method was used to help teach new ideas and skills. The combination of the three methods helped create the behavior management plan.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Treatment of the Data

Introduction

This research project incorporated several steps to help the researcher develop a behavior management plan to help a student who had autism and behavior issues. The case study method was used for this research project. Initially the researcher met with the parents and school personal and developed a plan that modified the student's behavior.

Methodology

The methodology used for this research project was established to be a case study approach. The reasoning behind this was that it allowed the researcher to gather information to help develop a behavior plan and then watch that plan play out over a period of time.

On September 27, 2007 a team was set up to help the student in this study get control of his behaviors. The purpose of this team was to develop a behavior plan that would help this student be a successful member in society.

On October 25th, 2007 the team met, looked over data that was taken and decided on behaviors that were targeted. Also, a behavior plan was put into place and

data were taken each time a negative behavior occurred by the researcher to see the progress that was made.

November 14, 2007, the team met went over the data and talked about what was working and what needed to be changed. At this time the team decided that an outside consultant needed to come in to look at this student and give suggestions and to see if what the team was doing was appropriate.

November 21, 2007 the consultant came into the classroom to observe. During this time the student exhibited all the behaviors the team wanted the consultant to see. At the end of the session the consultant suggested the team continue to do what was in place and that the student needed to have a one on one assistant that was assigned to work directly with the student.

November 22, 2007 the student got a one on one assistant that worked just with that student. Significant progress was seen due to this change.

December 3, 2007, the behavior plan was helping this student. The student still had occasional outburst but there was an improvement from the start of this process.

December 13, 2007 the student moved away, due to the fathers work and deployment. The parent moved onto

the military base and the school districts would not

allow the student to continue going to school in Lacey.

Participants

The student was a 6th grader who was 12 years in

age. The student was one of three children in his

African American family. Next were the parents of this

student. The parents of this student were both African

American and the father was in the military. Both

parents were in their late 30's. The school

psychologist, the principal and the researcher helped

with the process of developing the behavior support

system The school psychologist was involved to help

with the development of the behavior support system and

helped with communicate wants and needs along with

observations to the parents. The school principal was

involved with helping get extra support staff along

with communicating to school personal, and parents on

what was happening within the classroom. The

researcher was also the teacher of this student and it

was the researchers first year with the student. The

researcher had been teaching for three and a half years

and had been working with students who had been

diagnosed with autism in a specialized program. The

researcher's staff of four assistants were also

involved in working with this student. They all had

experience working with students who had some type of disability. Last, there was an outside consultant who came in and gave advice to the researcher and others involved with this student. The consultant had many years of working with students who had autism and behavioral issues.

Instruments

Data were gathered everyday Monday through Friday each time a behavior was seen through; researcher observation, behavior logs, outside consultant, a family journal, a time out chair with a belted strap, e-mail, a behavior contract, parent observation, a reward system, a set of consequences and data charts.

Procedure

The first step the researcher took was to notify the parents of the student who was having the behavior issues. A phone call was made along with a hand written note in the family notebook about the behaviors that the student was exhibiting.

Next, a school-based team was formed. The researcher established team composition. The team consisted of the researcher who was the teacher, the student, the student's parents, the school psychologist, the school principal, a behavior consultant, and the paraprofessional.

Once the team was created, the team defined the purpose and goals of the team. The goal in brief was to limit inappropriate behaviors by replacing them with more acceptable behaviors. Create a positive support plan and a behavior management plan. Last to create an environment when the student could feel safe and independent.

Next, roles and responsibilities of the team members needed to be developed, and defined clearly. It was the researcher's role and responsibility to make all data and observation sheets, help in the collaboration of the reward system and behavior management plan, keep in contact with the parents and the appropriate staff members, and direct all paraprofessionals who worked with the student in what they were suppose to do when work with the student. The research also had to collect all data and analyze and adapt when needed. The school psychologist was in charge of making sure all paper work was up to date, helped in the development of the behavior plan, talked with the parents about doctors and behavior issues and history and did observations. The school principal was in charge of informing school personal on what actions were being taken with the student and also came to all meetings regarding the student. The parents, were

involved in developing the behavior plan and the reward
system, they did classroom observations, kept in
contact with the researcher and attended meetings. The
paraprofessionals took direction from the teacher and
helped in delivering instruction to the student. Last
the private behavior consultant was there to observe
the student and give an unbiased opinion to the team
and to the district.

After making sure everyone knew what they were
suppose to be doing the team had to establish norms.
The team needed to set weekly meeting dates to go over
observations and data collected. The team decided on
every Thursday unless something big came up and the
team needed to meet sooner.

Once the team was established the behavior
management plan was created and put into place. At the
same time the reward plan which was part of the
behavior plan was put into place. Everyday observation
notes were taken along with data on occurrences of
behaviors.

Treatment of Data

There was no formal data taken, although there was
data taken on number of times a specific behavior
occurred within the day along with teacher observation
and a daily log of anecdotes the behavior and the

outcome. The purpose of this was to see if there was a decrease or correlation within in the target behaviors and the behavior plans that were in place. The researcher and team members used that data to determine if the behavior plans were working or if something needed to be changed to better improve the plan.

<u>Summary</u>

This chapter was designed to review the methodology and treatment of data related to the case study of the student and the behaviors that occurred while implementing the behavior management plan. The methodology used for this research project was established to be a case study approach. The reasoning behind this was that it allowed the researcher to gather information to help develop a behavior plan and then watch that plan play out over a period of time. All of the participants involved played a major role in the case study. Data were gathered everyday Monday through Friday each time a behavior was seen through; researcher observation, behavior logs, outside consultant, a family journal, a time out chair with a belted strap, e-mail, a behavior contract, parent observation, a reward system, a set of consequences and data charts. The procedure was set up by the team and followed throughout the case study. Last the treatment

of data was used to chart behaviors that was seen throughout the day.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of the Data

<u>Introduction</u>

This chapter was regarding the behavior management case study on in student in the fall of 2007. The purpose of this case study was to provide a factual base of information regarding an autistic student who needed a behavior management plan. The behavior management plan included a combination of techniques.

<u>Description of the Environment</u>

The project took place at Lydia Hawk Elementary school in the 2007-2008 school year. Notes were taken on the autistic student between Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:20 p.m., September through December. The case study took place in the researchers Developmental Delayed classroom.

The people involved include: the parents of the student in the case study; the teacher, who was also the researcher; the student in the case study; the school psychologist, the school principal a private behavior consultant and the paraprofessional that worked in the teacher's classroom. To achieve positive

results, each person involved had a major roll in the case study.

The project required a behavior management plan. The behavior management plan was developed by the teacher, school psychologist, and the parents of the student. Each party agreed to plan and support the behavior management plan and the changes that would be required.

All materials used were related to the behavior management plan. The data were taken in a log along with a chart that tracked hair pulling, hitting, and biting bad language and inappropriate touching. The other materials used supported the behavior management plan. These include a time out chair, stickers, money, and a treasure chest.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this research projects was, that as the student's behavior management was implemented, the student's behavior improved.

According to the data and the notes taken the researcher believed that the behavior management plan substantially changed the student's behavior. As the behavior management plan and rewards system were implemented there was a decrease in the negative behaviors. At the beginning of this study the student

was averaging a higher number of times hair pulling,
hitting, biting, swearing, and inappropriate touching.
As the plan was being put in place and was adapted
according to the observations seen the student
behaviors started to decrease and positive behaviors
were shown.

Results of the Study

This chart shows that during a 12 week period
there was a decrease in all behavior areas. Biting and
hair pulling were eliminated by the end of the twelve
week period. The other behaviors had a dramatic
decrease.

Table 1

Autistic Child Behavior

Week #	Number of times Biting	Number of times Hair pulling	Number of times Hitting	Number of times Touching	Number of times Bad language
1	3	4	6	4	7
2	2	3	5	6	5
3	1	4	5	2	3
Average of weeks 1-3	2	3.6	5.3	4	5
4	2	3	5	5	5
5	3	3	6	4	4
6	3	3	4	4	3
Average of weeks 4-6	2.6	3	5	4.3	4
7	2	3	5	4	3
8	2	3	6	3	3
9	1	3	4	3	3

Average of weeks 7-9	1.6	3	5	3.3	3
10	1	2	2	2	2
11	0	1	2	1	2
12	0	0	1	1	2
Average of weeks 10-12	.33	1	1.6	1.3	2

Findings

Given the analysis of the data and the testing of
the hypothesis, a number of findings become apparent.
As the behavior plan was in place along with the reward
system the students behaviors started to decrease and
be replaced by more appropriate behaviors like verbally
communicating feelings and asking questions.

In order to get the student to change his
behaviors the researcher first had to create an
environment that had low levels or stimulation, time
for transition planning, a place for a timeout, high
level of teacher support, a one on one assistant,
visual supports, a work area and a reward system during
week one. Once the environment was established the
behaviors were targeted and each time a behavior
occurred the punishment of a time out was given. Each
time the student was able to redirect or followed
directions the student was rewarded with a treat of
candy, sticker, money or a reward of the student's
choice. The treats where determined by the parents and

the researcher. These treats seemed to be the most rewarding for the student.

In weeks one through three of this case study the student spent on average 25 times in timeout for exhibiting a targeted behavior. By the end of this case study, weeks 10-12 the student spent on average 7 times in time out. By week 12 the student had figured out that attention could be given when the student was exhibiting positive behaviors such as working or following directions. The student also figured out that when the inappropriate behaviors were exhibited the student was going to go to timeout. By week 12 the student was able to put himself in timeout because he knew how he was supposed to act. It should also be noted that having a one on one just for this student allowed the researcher to monitor the students every move and allow for there to be no slack given when it came to his behavior.

Discussion

This case study turned out like the researcher thought it would. When working with similar students who have autism it helped when the student had a one on one assistant, and were placed in a environment that was highly structured, highly predictable, had low levels of stimulation, high levels

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of teacher support, provided visual schedules to reduce anxiety, provided preparations for transitions and had direct instruction in social skills. By placing this student in this type of environment a change in his behavior started to change from negative to positive. The one thing that the researcher had read about through research and saw in their own case study was that one must be constant otherwise what they are trying to accomplish or it will be harder.

Summary

This chapter was designed to analyze the data and identify the findings. According to the data, the behavior management plan helped decrease the student's inappropriate behaviors. Th erefore the hypothesis was supported. The findings showed that by having the student in a environment that was highly structured, highly predictable, had low levels of stimulation, high levels of teacher support, provided visual schedules to reduce anxiety, provided preparations for transitions and had direct instruction in social skills.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

<u>Introduction</u>

An autistic student was having behavior problems
in the classroom the student was attending. Therefore,
a behavior management plan needed to be in place to
reduce negative behavior and support positive behavior.
If the student did not learn how to behave in a social
environment such as school, the student would not be
able to learn nor have social relations. Therefore a
hypothesis was created for this research project. The
hypothesis was, as the student's behavior management
was implemented, the student's behavior would improve.
By applying an appropriate behavior management plan the
child would spend more time related learning. The case
study was conducted in the researcher's classroom in
the fall of 2007 at Lydia Hawk Elementary. Notes were
taken on the autistic student between Monday through
Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:20 p.m., September through
December 2007. The people involved include: the parents
of the student in the case study; the teacher, who was
also the researcher; the student in the case study; the
school psychologist, the school principal a private

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behavior consultant and the paraprofessional that
worked in the teacher's classroom.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to find the
best behavior management technique to help a student
with autism and behavior problems. This study explored
many different behavior management styles, which helped
decrease negative behavior and supported positive
behavior. As a result, this paper developed a behavior
management plan to support a student with autism and
behavior problems.

Next a hypothesis was created. The hypothesis for
this research projects was, as the student's behavior
management was implemented, the student's behavior
would improve. By applying an appropriate behavior
management plan the child would spend more time related
learning.

Then the researcher collected information that
helped establish a working behavior management plan
along with a cohesive team. The topics researched
included; understanding autism, behavior management,
reinforcement theory, identifying and specifying
behaviors, programs that work, and how to work with
teams. The topics that were picked were to help
formulate the researcher's rational, behavior

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management plan and idea of how to help the student.
Each researched topic helped play a role in designing
and implementing the behavior management plan. Not all
of the researched items were beneficial but it gave the
researcher an understanding of how to deal with the
problem at hand and gave the researcher a complete
understanding of autism. Through this research a new
understanding was found on how adapt and control
someone who had autism along with a behavior problem.

After the research was completed the behavior
management plan was put into place. The student was
given a one on one assistant and placed in a
environment that was highly structured, highly
predictable, had low levels of stimulation, high levels
of teacher support, provided visual schedules to reduce
anxiety, provided preparations for transitions and had
direct instruction in social skills.

Through this behavior management plan and a twelve
week period the student's behaviors decreased and new
behaviors were replaced. The student was able to
transition on his own and the student was able to
communicate frustrations to others.

Conclusions

It was concluded, that with a lot of support
including a one on one assistant and a behavior plan

with reward system, the student showed that there was a positive effect in the behaviors and life. The researcher felt the results would show more progress if there was more time to conduct this study. The extra paraprofessional, who served as a one on one was able to help the student control himself in a more acceptable manner although there were still outburst and a physical aggression. The behavior plan with the reward system gave the student consistency and at the same time held the student accountable for the actions the student exhibited.

As for the reward systems, the researcher felt that it was efficient at times but was not followed through at home. Also the way the reward system was set up the student could get rewarded on a day that he could have been horrible.

Last, this case study showed how students respond differently to reinforcement. Some students do not like the ideas of timeout's while others do not care as along as they are getting some type of attention. Also, every autistic student was unique in their ways, not one was alike therefore there is not a universal plan that can be put into place. Each behavior plan has to be created it fit that child's needs. When dealing with students who have severe behavior issues it was also

beneficial to work in teams. There were a lot more ideas to be shared along with the moral support given to one another when there was a team created.

Recommendations

The first recommendation for this case study is to have the student placed in a classroom with age appropriate peers. This might help eliminate the feeling of power and help protect others that are smaller than the student.

The second recommendation is for the student to have a paraprofessional with the student throughout the day. This way the student can receive positive and negative feedback at all times. Also the paraprofessional would be able to determine when the student is become over stimulated or starting to escalate and help the student deescalate before the student becomes out of control.

Last it is recommended that the student has an area that is just for the student. This area needs to be enclosed to keep out other distractions that might be going on in the classroom. The area also needs to have all support systems, such as the time out chair, rewards, work and PECS.

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