



Behavior Management, ADHD & LD: Back to Square One

Est. Time: 1 Hour

Objective

Learn about and discuss some issues surrounding classroom behavior management, inclusion, and ADHD and LD.

Scenario

Rachel and Leanne were expecting another great year co-teaching a combined third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade class with equal numbers of general education and exceptional education students. Many students were returning from last year including Thomas, a fourth grader with learning disabilities and ADHD. When Thomas' mother developed significant health problems, his behavior regressed and the whole class suffered.

Rachel Moore and Leanne Reynolds were looking forward to beginning their second year co-teaching at Hidden Stream Elementary School. Both were experienced teachers. Rachel had taught third grade at Hidden Stream for five years and Leanne, new to Hidden Stream last year, was certified in behavior disorders with six years of experience as a resource teacher for students with learning disabilities. Rachel and Leanne shared a combined third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade class of twenty-eight children with equal numbers of general education and exceptional education students.

Last year, the two teachers successfully implemented a class behavior plan that accommodated all of their students, including those who had difficulty with self-control (see Leanne and Rachel's Behavior Management System, p. 5). Their plan consisted of a five-step system that was represented by five different colored cards for each child, displayed on a wall chart. Children began the day with a blue card signifying good behavior. If a rule was broken, offenders would get a verbal warning and their card would be changed to yellow. If they continued to be off task, they would be asked to go to a safe space (an isolated desk) where they were given a chance to refocus and continue their work. At this time their card would be changed to orange. Another infraction changed their card to purple and they were sent to the Think-Tank, which was a designated area of the classroom. Before they could return to their seat, students were required to write down the rules they had broken, better behavior choices, and how their behavior had impacted the class and themselves. This log was signed by the teacher and student, and at the end of the day, it was sent home for parental signature. Continued acting out or being off task resulted in a red card and a phone call to parents. As a last resort, if the behavior persisted, students were sent to the office with an official behavior referral, which the principal handled.



Behavior Management, ADHD & LD: Back to Square One

Est. Time: 1 Hour

Scenario [Cont.]

It was rare for most students in the class to get beyond the purple stage. Leanne and Rachel modified the class behavior plan occasionally for individuals with special behavioral needs. When necessary, they used a “Choices Chart” designed to monitor good choices, such as going to the safe space without a fuss, and bad choices, such as disrupting the class while in the Think Tank. The teachers also talked with the student after each consequence to encourage appropriate choices. Students needing further modifications were given extra incentives, such as having lunch with the teachers, based on the number of positive choices they made during the day. They were also given an extra warning at each step in the behavior plan.

Thomas, a fourth-grader identified as having learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), was returning for his second year in the class. His pediatrician had prescribed Ritalin last year to improve Thomas’ ability to focus in the classroom. Both teachers believed that the medication had helped. A year ago, Thomas had entered the class two grade levels behind academically and displayed a number of disruptive behaviors such as loud angry outbursts, chair kicking, pushing, hitting other students, running from the classroom, hiding, and noncompliance. Even with the behavior plan modifications, he often reached the red card (call home step) and occasionally office referrals were necessary. Rachel and Leanne implemented the Choices Chart with Thomas in an effort to engage him in thinking about and monitoring his own behavior. The sheet went home with Thomas every afternoon so his parents could also monitor his progress. By the end of the year, many of his disruptive behaviors were under control and he was being weaned from the chart. He also had advanced one and one half grade levels academically.

Although both parents were involved in supporting the behavioral consequences, their approach to discipline differed. His mom, Angela, took a more nurturing approach whereas his dad, Chuck, was a strict disciplinarian. Thomas’ younger brother, Timmy, a second-grader, was already ahead of Thomas academically. Chuck felt that if he rewarded Thomas for what he considered to be poor behavior or effort at school, it would give Timmy the idea that he didn’t need to work hard either. Angela tried to work with each boy individually, rewarding the achievements of both relative to their abilities.

As the new school year started, Rachel and Leanne were hopeful that Thomas would continue to make progress and that his old behavior chart would no longer be needed. By the end of the first week, however, they were shocked to find that Thomas’ behavior had regressed to the point that he was talking baby talk and sucking his thumb. He was also more defiant, yelling at his teachers when he disagreed with a class activity or direction. He quickly progressed through the steps of the behavior plan to the red stage.



Behavior Management, ADHD & LD: Back to Square One

Est. Time: 1 Hour

Scenario [Cont.]

Rachel and Leanne decided it was time to call Thomas' mother.

Although Angela was concerned and had noticed the babyish behavior at home, she was recovering from surgery. Thomas' father had been handling the day-to-day household tasks as well as managing the boys. Angela attributed many of Thomas' problems to her husband's different style of discipline. Thomas was dealing with more negative consequences than usual because his dad was not as patient with him. "I'm really sorry that he's acting like this," Thomas' mother said apologetically. "We'll definitely talk to him, but, honestly, Thomas' behavior is not our biggest problem right now. I know how difficult he can be, but, please try to bear with us until I'm feeling better."

As Rachel and Leanne reviewed the conversation, they agreed that much of Thomas' acting out was due to the upheavals caused by his mother's surgery. Perhaps, if they could just carry the load for a while, things would get better as his mom's health improved.

Unfortunately, things went from bad to worse. Thomas made loud animal noises during a lesson, kicked a chair, and belligerently yelled at Leanne when she directed him to his safe space. Both teachers decided to bring out the Choices Chart they had used the previous year. Back to square one, Leanne thought as she discussed the change of plans with Thomas.

"Thomas, Ms. Moore and I are thinking that it might be a good idea for you to use your chart again this year. You seem to be having more trouble remembering the class rules and the chart really helped you last year. What do you think?" Leanne said to Thomas as they sat together in the Think-Tank.

"You said I didn't need that baby chart anymore," Thomas bellowed indignantly. "I don't want to carry a dumb paper around all day! No way!" he roared as he ripped up the chart and stormed from the room. Later that day, Thomas and another student had to be separated after a fight broke out, with both exchanging angry punches and kicks.

The teachers began to wonder how much longer they could maintain a patient, accepting attitude with Thomas. All of his disruptive behaviors were taking a toll on the other children in the class. Didn't they deserve a positive learning environment as well? How long could Thomas be allowed to act out so openly while the other students were expected to follow more stringent rules?

"How come Thomas didn't get in trouble for running out of the room this morning?" asked Sara when she sat down next to Rachel on the playground during recess.



Behavior Management, ADHD & LD: Back to Square One

Est. Time: 1 Hour

Scenario [Cont.]

“He gets away with doing really bad things that we can’t do,” Julie added as she joined them. “And you sat with him at lunch because he was good for a little while, but we are good all the time and you don’t sit with us.”

Rachel began to explain for the tenth time that day why Thomas’ situation was different from theirs. Although they had accepted this concept last year, it was not sitting well with the students in the class now. Thomas had become more open and bold in his defiance of the rules. He actually tried to get to the red stage so he could call his mother on the phone. Even the threat of a visit to the principal didn’t deter him.

After school that day, Rachel reflected on what the girls had said at recess and how much dissension Thomas was creating in the classroom. All of the children were beginning to resent the special treats Thomas received for his small periods of positive behavior.

Rachel shared her thoughts with Leanne about Thomas and the rest of their class. “Yes, he’s definitely put a kink in our system,” Leanne replied. “I don’t know how we can continue to address Thomas’ needs in the classroom and give the other children in our class a fair, consistent environment that is conducive to learning.”

“What are we going to do?” both teachers asked at the same time.



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Est. Time: 1 Hour

Leanne and Rachel's Behavior Management System

Our goal is to build self-esteem, have positive classroom management, and increase motivation for higher academic achievement.

Guidelines:

1. Treat others the way you want to be treated.
2. Treat personal and school property with respect.
3. Make school a positive and safe environment.
4. Come to school prepared to listen and learn.
5. Choose positive actions and accept responsibility for the consequences.
6. Help everyone feel capable, connected, and like an important member of the class.

Incentives for Appropriate Actions:

1. Daily: Terrific Tickets
2. Weekly: Surprise Sack Drawing
3. Quarterly: Team Celebration

Consequences for Inappropriate Choices

- Step 1: Verbal Warning (**Yellow**)
Step 2: Safe Space (Opportunity to regain control) (**Orange**)
Step 3: Think Tank (Time to reflect on actions) (**Purple**)
Step 4: Phone Call (Student calls parent) (**Red**)
Step 5: Removal from Classroom (Discipline or guidance)

Our classroom management system consists of colored cards for each consequence level. Every student has a clear pocket, which is numbered for confidentiality. All students start the day on blue, which means a great day. Each time a consequence is given, the student is asked to move the card at the front of the pocket to the back, thus revealing the next card and color. Every consequence is a different color, which allows us to see at a glance where everyone stands.

Modifications made for individual students with special behavioral needs would include conferencing after each consequence to encourage appropriate choices. Some students also have a "Choices Chart" that is designed to monitor their good and bad choices throughout the day. These students are given extra incentives based on the number of positive choices made. The extra incentives include having lunch with the teachers, visiting office staff, extra recess for the class, and helping the teachers at the end of the day.



Behavior Management, ADHD & LD: Back to Square One

Est. Time: 1 Hour

Questions/Discussion Topics

1. How did the teachers modify the class behavior plan to address Thomas' disruptive behavior?
2. Why do you think Thomas' behavior regressed? What other types of external factors could influence a student's behavior in the classroom?
3. Considering Thomas' reaction to the reinstatement of the Choices Chart, what other adaptations might the teachers explore to modify his behavior? Do you think an inclusive placement is still appropriate for Thomas?
4. How can a teacher balance addressing individual student needs with meeting the needs of the larger group in the classroom? What do you think the teachers in this scenario should do to address some of the other students' concerns about the differential treatment Thomas is receiving?



Behavior Management, ADHD & LD: Back to Square One

Est. Time: 1 Hour

★ What a STAR Sheet Is

A STAR (STrategies And Resources) Sheet provides you with a description of a well-researched strategy that can help you solve the case studies in this unit.

Discussion Points

- Factors that influence behavior
- Inclusion vs. pull-out models of instruction
- Addressing behavior problems
- Promoting acceptance of students with disabilities

What the Research and Resources Say

- Four basic categories that are generally used to explain human behavior include biological, environmental, psychological, and spiritual. Teachers need to pay particular attention to those explanations of behavior that are supported by research and that offer teachers some possibility of control. The two categories of environmental and psychological explanations for human behavior are particularly relevant to teachers. Both of these categories are supported by scientific research and offer teachers the greatest opportunity for influencing change (Kauffman, Mostert, Trent, & Hallahan, 2002).
- There is strong support from research indicating that students with mild disabilities should receive most of their education in regular classrooms. However, inclusion needs to be supported with individualized support and accommodations that may include short, well-designed, and intense pull-out placements (McLeskey, Hoppey, Williamson, & Rentz, 2004).
- In comparing a pull-out instruction model to an inclusion model, Rea, McLaughlin, and Thomas found that students with learning disabilities placed in inclusion classrooms received higher grades, performed as well or better on standardized testing, had no more behavior problems than students in the pull-out model, and attended school on a more regular basis (Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002).
- Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) are useful tools that should be used to determine the cause of behavior problems as well as identify replacement behaviors that serve the same function as the problem behavior, but are more appropriate (Scott, 2002).



Behavior Management, ADHD & LD: Back to Square One

Est. Time: 1 Hour

What the Research and Resources Say [Cont.]

- Reverse peer tutoring has been shown to be effective in reducing behavior problems in inclusive classrooms for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Reverse peer tutoring involves a student with a disability tutoring a student without disabilities. Benefits include:
 - A change in status due to placing a student in a prestigious role
 - Strengths instead of weaknesses become the focus of intervention
 - Students are motivated by the activity itself, thus eliminating the need for tangible rewards
 - Both the tutor and tutee influence one another in a positive manner
 - Classroom behavior improves due to a change in an antecedent, not due to a consequence
 - Behavior changes due to involvement in meaningful activities thus motivating teachers to emphasize using creative instructional strategies instead of consequences (Tournaki & Criscitiello, 2003)
- The curricular modifications of including class-wide student choice and high-interest activities have been shown to reduce disruptive behaviors in inclusive settings. In addition, these modifications were successful in addressing behaviors that had not been responsive to class-wide behavior programs already in place (Kern, Bambara, & Fogt, 2002).
- Strategies to help promote an inclusive learning environment include:
 - Teaching students about disabilities and how these disabilities impact behavior
 - Providing disability simulations
 - Encouraging social interaction through such programs as peer buddies, lunch mates, or study partners
 - Teaching respect for students with disabilities and tying this teaching into bullying prevention (Klotz, 2003).

Keep in Mind

- Instructional strategies such as cooperative grouping and peer tutoring help promote the value of everyone in the classroom.
- It is important to involve parents when designing possible behavior interventions.
- Teachers should build upon any potential strengths that students may have.



Behavior Management, ADHD & LD: Back to Square One

Est. Time: 1 Hour

Resources

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- Kern, L., Bambara, L., & Fogt, J. (2002). Class-wide curricular modification to improve the behavior of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders, 27*, 317–326.
- Klotz, M. D. (2003). *Inclusion of students with disabilities: Strategies for teachers and parents*. National Mental Health and Education Center.
- McLeskey, J., Hoppey, D., Williamson, P., & Rentz, T. (2004). Is inclusion an illusion? An examination of national and state trends toward the education of students with learning disabilities in general education classrooms. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 19*(2), 109–115.
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- Scott, T. (2002). Removing roadblocks to effective behavior intervention in inclusive settings: Responding to typical objections by school personnel. *Beyond Behavior, 12*(1), 21–26.
- Tournaki, N., Criscitiello, E. (2003). Using peer tutoring as a successful part of behavior management. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 36*(2), 22–29.