

My most challenging student is the one who does not try and would rather talk in class and make jokes than focus on the task at hand. This student in particular combines lack of content knowledge with classroom disruption. He just does not “play school.” His head is on a swivel, turning to whoever will listen to him or laugh at his jokes. His behavior leaks out of the classroom as he has a hard time lining up for lunch, turning in school forms, and making it to the bus on time - let alone getting on the correct bus. I know that this student does not have a great life at home. I do not believe he has a father figure in the house, and mom works late. His mother has him go to the boys and girls clubs when she cannot pick him up at the bus stop after school. This student is not without money. He plays in “pay” sports leagues and has multiple pairs of Nike shoes which always match the outfit that he is wearing. When I assign work, this student is a slow starter, and he does not ask questions when he does not understand. He shows up late to class because his “bus driver drives too slowly.” I have him for first block, but then he typically has a hard time getting to the next class. Throughout class changes during the day, he is always in the wrong place in the hall and is usually found talking to the same set of girls. All of his random behavior affects his understanding of the material being taught in my class and how I react to him.

The behavior that is most challenging for me is that this student never stops talking and disrupting; when the disruption runs in tandem with not turning in his work, it creates a perfect storm. This child’s sole contribution to my class is in jokes. He seems to be solely interested in the attention be it good or bad from his classmates or from his teacher despite the fact that his grades continue to fall.

I have noticed in trying to work with this student that I am part of the problem. Because of my teaching style, it usually takes me a little bit to notice the problem child. I am loud and do

not mind students talking out; my class is often loud and seems disorganized. In terms of my classroom “routine” – there seems not to be one. I have a hard time doing the same thing every day and thus not to have a routine has become routine. Reading Brophy’s Teaching Problem Students I note that this lack of routine in my class is part of the problem.

Along with having a constant routine Brophy stresses the importance of proper socialization of students. I already do some of the things that were mentioned in the book but I have never had the complete plan. I have worked on behavior modification and getting to the root of the problem, and I have even tried satiation on the most challenging students. I particularly liked what was said about gathering information and finding solutions. I have always believed that if a student is acting out, there is a reason why whether the problems stem from the child’s life at home or from a lack of interest in school or from a disability.

I do not have many routines in my room but students do enjoy my class. I have a classroom where there is always humor and a place for a student to stand out or hide as long as he or she wants to do the classwork. One of my strengths is that I can relate to most students. I have lived in many places around the world, like sports, read books, have children of my own, like science and can act silly. When I give myself ten minutes to dream, I can create very engaging lesson plans. To be successful with challenging students, I need to focus on my strengths of being able to relate to my students and to learn about them. I also need to be more consistent. I know that these strategies work on getting kids to work in class and to play by the rules.

As mentioned earlier, I have a hard time seeing the challenging kids at the beginning of the year. I also have a hard time getting in contact with their parents during that time frame. I find that the start of the year I spend all of my time responding back to parents who check their

kids' grades, look at my wiki, and have time to email me. The parents who are involved in their kids' education obviously take a great deal of time. The students who present the most challenges are the ones whose parents are not contacting me at the start of the year, and their students know this. I end up only talking to these parents when I notice that their students are not passing my class, and I invited them in to create a Personal Education Plan (PEP). The challenge for me is getting to the students' parents before the issue at hand becomes too big of a problem.

The student on which I am focus my ABC project will be called "Jeremy." Jeremy does his best not to be on task or to put the very minimum in while continuing to play. This would not be challenging by itself, but Jeremy has found a group of peers with whom to be off task. He spends our class time talking and playing, and when it is time to turn in work, Jeremy often has little to show for the day. Again, the challenge is not just with him as if in a bubble, but it is his influence on the group of students that Jeremy distracts that is the real issue. Jeremy's class is full of students who need every second of class time to understand the content. These students are low achievers but unlike Jeremy they care that they may get a low grade on the assignment. I spend a great deal of time making sure that they are up to speed and understand what was taught. It is the constant level of play by Jeremy and the distraction of the other students that challenges me. Jeremy's peers are missing out on instruction because of his negative contributions to our class.

In my class when I feel challenged by Jeremy, I feel very frustrated. I see the time that he has wasted in class, the people he has distracted, and the time that I now have to put in to make up for the lost instruction time. I am bothered about how much time I have to spend in dealing

with behavioral management issues with him when I could be putting that time into him learning the content or spending time with his classmates.

I have spent significant time over the weeks observing Jeremy in different environments. I have watched him in structured individual time, structured group work, and unstructured time.

This past week we took the Measure of Academic Progress Test (MAP test). Jeremy was not prepared for the test with the proper supplies even though he knew what was expected. He used the time just before the test asking for supplies from his classmates and as a time to walk around the room and socialize. Once we started the test he was able to sit through the test and not disturb his classmates. Yet, that was the only time Jeremy was able to sit and work without bothering other students in any of the classes in which I observed him. Later that week I had his class at the end of the day, and the whole school was finishing the day reading novels. During this time, Jeremy was constantly trying to talk and disrupt the rest of the class. He was unable to sit and read his book quietly alongside his peers.

As for structured group work, on Monday and Tuesday of this past week I had the students working on a group problem in class. Jeremy spent the whole time doing the minimum amount for work possible and focusing his efforts on socializing with the students in his group.

In transition time Jeremy is often not where he should be, and he spends the limited time between classes finding kids in other classes with whom to socialize. In the last two weeks Jeremy was always the last person to class, and often he was late.

From what I saw during the last two weeks, the Jeremy's issues are not occurring when he has something to do that he finds engaging. During the MAP test he was not a disruption,

and I assume that was because of the design of the test. The MAP test bases the next question on whether the student got the previous correct or not, so all the questions on the test were around his ability level. He is not distracting or distracted when time in class is very structured and others are on task.

I have noticed that Jeremy is on task when he is away from his group of friends and with people who can “play school.” Jeremy is very bright, social, and is willing to work with anyone. When he is actually working in groups it is with a group of people who are workers.

Jeremy has other strengths as well. He knows no strangers, and seems to be friends with everyone. I have seen him talk to most everyone in my class. Jeremy is very verbal and quick and I have begun to really enjoy being around him outside of my class because he will joke around with me and is very funny.

On October fifteenth, I used the Time Sampling Observation Form and focused on Jeremy’s off task behavior during a group work activity. I compared his off task behavior to two other of his peers. I picked one of these students because I knew he would not be a disruption and the other because I knew that he would be. The latter classmate, like Jeremy, has an ability to be off task. All three of these students are boys. Jeremy was off task ninety percent of the time. He found time to talk to other groups, dance, and inquire about two students who were using the computers in my room. When he was talking to his group he was talking to them about something unrelated to the assignment. The first peer worked in his group and was only off task ten percent of the time. The second peer was off task forty percent of the time. When my students do group work, it gets loud in my class, but most students are working, however.

On October sixteenth through the eighteenth, I used the Frequency of Behavior Form comparing Jeremy to the second classmate from the day before who was off task forty percent of the time. I looked for on task behaviors like silently reading before the announcements started and participating in class as well as off task behaviors like talking out in class.

In the three days that I followed Jeremy and his peer they both had trouble silently reading before school started. Jeremy only read for part of the time on one day, and his peer had a book out all three days but failed to actually pass the time reading on the last day.

As for participating in class, Jeremy was always an active member of all of the classroom discussions: raising his hand, putting forth suggestions and asking question when he needed clarification on an assignment. His peer only participated twice in the same time period.

Finally, as for talking out in class, this is something at which Jeremy excels. In the three day span, I witnessed him talking out in class sixteen times. He even interrupted one of my later classes, one that he is not in, when he was transitioning to the media center with his language arts class. This interruption was not used in the data

Jeremy is a very social student and is friendly with most of the students in his class. His off task behavior occurs the most frequently when he is in control with his time. He is off task when the class is silently reading, when working independently, or in groups. He is willing to verbally participate in a small group discussion, but when asked to be the writer for his group he refuses and disrupts the group. He is on task when we are in a whole group discussion because it is acceptable to speak out. He is also on task when I directly speak to

him and when all of his classmates are on task. He has never been a disruption during a test or quiz.

When the poor behavior is most frequent, there are multiple things going on in class. This is when the noise level is high and there are plenty of distractions. I frequently have my students working in groups, and I like to see different groups trying to solve the class work using different methods. This sometimes creates a chaotic classroom.

As stated above Jeremy is very social. When he is being disruptive, it is with a multitude of students. During that time period that I used the Time Sampling Observation Form, Jeremy talked to six different people. There are two types of people in Jeremy's life: his current friends and other friends whom he has yet to meet. Jeremy is most disruptive when he is with his close group of friends. The situations when Jeremy is more adaptive are when he is working on a task that needs less instruction, and when he is not in a group. He does participate in classroom discussions and will converse with me about math related topics. When Jeremy is allowed to be more vocal, he is always willing to share his insight into the classroom conversation.

One of the first things that I would like to begin using with Jeremy is a homenote. The homenote that I use, I call the "Green Sheet." It is a simple table that is printed on a green piece of card stock and given to the student. The student and classroom teacher are to monitor one classroom goal using the Green Sheet. For Jeremy, I would start with monitoring his yelling out in class without being called upon. Each class throughout the day, Jeremy would focus on whether he yelled out in class. At the end of the class he would ask the teacher for a signature and a comment telling his parents how he did in that class period. It is his responsibility to get

the Green Sheet signed by each teacher, and a missing signature would be treated as a negative comment for that class period. His parents will sign every night to show that they have seen the Green Sheet. If Jeremy makes it through a week with eighty percent positive comments he will be given a predetermined reward. This will go on until Jeremy and the teachers involved feel the behavior is non-existent.

The Green Sheet is used for many reasons. First and foremost, it is a tool used to increase the parent /school communication. "Collaboration with the home is also recommended if a behavioral contract is going to be used" (Brophy pg 271). Further, the hope is that the Green Sheet will also help Jeremy to self-regulate; to have him think about how he is doing in every class with one goal in mind on which he can keep focused. I have been in conversations with Jeremy where he tells me that he does not think he has done anything wrong. He thinks that he was "just sitting there" and his teacher singled him out. This class-by-class reflection will give Jeremy an opportunity to think about each moment in each class before he gets too far removed. Finally, the Green Sheet will give us more data about Jeremy. It will give us more insight into the time of day, the classroom, or the teacher where the behavior is most frequent.

I am also going to change up my teaching style. Brophy states:

One of the suggestions focused on the proper learning environment: seat these students near your desk but include them as a part of the regular class seating; place them in front with their backs to the rest of the class... surround them with good role models and encourage peer-tutoring and cooperative learning (Brophy pg 272).

My hope was to isolate Jeremy, but the makeup of my classroom and the large number of students does not let me truly isolate him. I will be able, however, to practically isolate Jeremy by putting him at a table with three other students who are not in his group of friends. These three are able to model proper behavior and help through group activities. Jeremy has been

moved to the front of my class where I have easier access to him and can work to control his actions. He talks to anyone around him so I have made sure that the people in his group are students who will be less inclined to get caught up in Jeremy's actions.

I am also going to limit the amount of time spent on a task. Brophy talks about when working with student that have a hard time keeping focusing, and he states, "The long term responses emphasizes such strategies as reducing concentration demands or provide more frequent physical movement breaks" (Brophy pg 287).

To help him keep his focus I am only going to ask the whole class to work on things for a few minutes before I redirect them onto something else. I am going to try to get my class moving around the room at least twice a week. The hope is that this movement and short tasks will keep Jeremy's focus on math. In these last two weeks I have worked movement into my lesson plans. I have given him the opportunity to walk around my room while working on his math.

I have not moved only Jeremy's seat in my class; I have moved all my students. Jeremy is the largest problem in my class, but he is not the only problem. He feeds off of other students, and he often yells across the room to others or to comment on their actions. Reworking my seating chart to limit his outbursts was in order. This new group of students sitting near Jeremy is a group with which he does not normally interact, and they are less likely to get caught up with his actions. I have also separated some other students in an effort to keep them all on track.

Lately when I can, I have tried to incorporate movement into my lessons. This is an attempt to meet Jeremy's need to move around. One of my lessons for last week had my students place fractions on a number line that I had hanging across my room. This activity

gave Jeremy the opportunity to be out of his seat and address the whole class in a positive manner. I made sure that the fractions that he was working with were ones with which he was comfortable to make sure that I would not lose a chance for positive interactions because he could not do the math. I made sure that Jeremy was one of the first students to present and then after half the class had spoken I gave him the job of permanently taping his classmates' fractions on the number line. This time out of his seat kept him engaged in the lesson.

Jeremy lost the Green Sheet almost immediately, so I have started an informal "home note" with Jeremy. I have started emailing his mother about both positive and negative events going on in my class. This started when the quarter was ending, and Jeremy was still missing one assignment. I emailed home asking for help to remind Jeremy to do the work and turn it in the next day. When his mom responded, I emailed her back talking about how well Jeremy did with fraction activities. I have emailed her five times in the last two weeks; four of the five have been positive emails. The one email that I sent home to talk about Jeremy's inappropriate actions in my class, I pulled him out in the hall before emailing to explain what I was going to write and why his action required me to email his mother. Jeremy's mother has been very supportive in her emails and says that she will talk to him about both the positive and negative comments.

I feel the emails home have their limitations. First I fear that I will not be able to continue this at the same level with which I started it. The Best Practices book discusses a teacher being the weak link and not following through with a note on a regular basis. I know this is one of my shortcomings as I - like Jeremy - am easily distracted and move on to the next shiny object all too quickly. By design, I made the email home notes very informal, and I

try to write them when Jeremy is on my mind. I hope that his actions become better so that I am not thinking about him every day.

I am also afraid that the “new” is going to wear off for Jeremy’s mother and that she, too, is going to lose interest in communicating with me. I know that his mom is not very active in Jeremy’s school life, and I am afraid that if I am sending too many negative notes home that she will stop being so supportive. I also do not like that the home notes do not include comments from Jeremy’s other five teachers as they are emails only from me.

Including movement into my lesson was fun for me and my students. It made the topic more interesting. It also helped some of my lower students, giving them an opportunity to move and work with their different learning styles. The problem with this is that all lessons do not lend themselves well to movement. There are some topics in math that require students to sit and work out a problem on their own. The test that we will take at the end of the year will not involve movement, and it will require Jeremy to sit for nearly two hours. Aside from teaching him math, I need to also train Jeremy for those conditions.

Finally, the seat change is merely a temporary fix. Jeremy is extremely friendly and social, and it will not be long before he gets to know the students around him and starts to distract them, too. No classroom is large enough that Jeremy would be unable to yell across it and soon I fear he will start that again.

If left to do this process over again, I would not do it exactly the same way. I feel that the relative isolation was effective. Jeremy working with students with whom he normally does not work helped him to model their behavior. The students were able to help Jeremy with math and this has paid off academically for Jeremy. Involving movement in the classroom and shortening

the time I am asking Jeremy to stay on task has been beneficial to him and the kinesthetic learners in the classroom. This is something I have been trying to do for years, and after working with Jeremy in mind, I have been able to focus on him and incorporate lessons learned more broadly. Finally, the formality of the Green Sheet was not successful because of the structure. It was too rigid for my own style and for Jeremy. As to emails, Jeremy's mother was very responsive to the positive emails, but I find this will likely not be sustainable. In the future, I would include an informal meeting at the outset with Jeremy so that we could discuss his goals to figure out what he thinks would help him to achieve his academic goals.