

ABC Project

The Case of Anna

“Testing Limits and Tantrums”



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Behavioral Issue

- Target Student – “Anna”
 - 5 year old Kindergarten student; attended a preschool for 2 years that reported similar behaviors
- Setting – Public Montessori school
- Problem Behavior
 - Extremely defiant; screams no at teachers and classmates, tells others to shut up; rolls eyes; very bossy; physically aggressive if students get in her way; unable to share
 - Defiant students “resist authority and carry on a power struggle with the teacher. They want to have their way and not be told what to do” (Brophy, 1996, p. 227). They resist verbally and nonverbally.
 - Tantrums – occur daily of many different levels; typically due to Anna not getting her way; occasionally result in the class needing to be removed from the room

Data Collection and Analysis

- **Methods**

- I collected data through observing Anna for 4 days and documenting her tantrums (these are what we need to get under control)
- I collected data on the description of the tantrum, when it happened, why it happened, what is going on when the tantrums are NOT happening, how long the tantrum lasts, and the “level” of the tantrum
- **Three levels of tantrums:**
 - **Level one:** pouty, kicks feet, screaming not involved; she’s just upset (usually lasts 1-2 minutes).
 - **Level two:** Anna gets significantly louder; stomping and kicking is combined (usually lasts about 5 minutes)
 - **Level three:** full blown screaming tantrum with kicking shoes off, stomping and throwing things (usually lasts up to 10 minutes and typically results in the rest of the class having to leave the room)

Data Collection

Behavioral Patterns

- tantrums usually occur during worktime; when she isn't getting her way or someone has the work she wants (activity dependent)
- trouble with transitions if she isn't prepared ahead of time (ex: clean up time)
- paired and small group activities are tough; she wants to be the boss
- tantrums DON'T occur when doing whole group activities or when it is something she wants to be doing (lunch, recess, gym, etc)

Date	Time	Intensity	Date	Time	Intensity
10/15	9:30am	1 2 3	10/17	10:55am	1 2 3
10/15	10:35am	1 2 3	10/17	12:15pm	1 2 3
10/15	12:15pm	1 2 3	10/17	1:30pm	1 2 3
10/15	1:00pm	1 2 3	10/17	1:45pm	1 2 3
10/15	1:15pm	1 2 3	10/17	2:40pm	1 2 3
10/15	2:15pm	1 2 3	10/17	3:20pm	1 2 3
10/15	3:05pm	1 2 3	10/18	10:15am	1 2 3
10/16	9:05am	1 2 3	10/18	11:45am	1 2 3
10/16	9:45am	1 2 3	10/18	1:30pm	1 2 3
10/16	11:15am	1 2 3	10/18	2:40pm	1 2 3
10/16	1:20pm	1 2 3	10/18	3:25pm	1 2 3
10/16	2:20pm	1 2 3	10/17	1:45pm	1 2 3
10/17	8:35am	1 2 3	10/17	2:40pm	1 2 3
10/17	10:15am	1 2 3	10/17	3:20pm	1 2 3

*** I added up the intensity scores for each day and divided by the # of tantrums to get an total average for the day (average of a 12 pt day for the data above; goal became to decrease to a 6 pt day)

Behavioral Strategy Plan

- **Goals of the intervention:**

- To decrease the amount of tantrums that Anna is having in one day by 50% (an average of a 6 point day) and build a positive personal relationship between Anna and I
- To increase the positive behavior (by using our home note system) within a month time period (have at least 2 “green” days a week)
- To decrease the level of tantrums to only one level three tantrum in a week’s time; minimize level two tantrums to level one tantrums or non-existent

- **Intervention Strategies**

- **Preparing Anna ahead of time for transitions (at least 5 mins)**
- **Velcro schedule** – Anna and I will take pictures of everything we do on a daily basis; laminate it and put Velcro on it. Every morning we will meet to “schedule” her day (including extra things like fire drills and assemblies). Anna will choose the works she wants to do and will incorporate work I want her to do. Once each work is completed, it moves to the “DONE” column
- **Home Note System** – Anna begins each day on green. She gets two warnings before moving to yellow and then to red (which means she must call home to report her behavior to her parents).
- **Positive behavior “tallies”** for the week. Each time Anna displays positive behavior in a situation, she receives a tally. Our goal is 5 tallies a day. If she reaches her 5 tallies for the day, her parents have decided to allow her an additional 10 minutes to stay up that night and play on the computer. If she ends up on red for the day, those minutes are taken away from her bedtime and she is not allowed on the computer.

Rationale

- **Intervention Strategies**
 - **Preparing Anna for transitions** - help Anna to feel like she isn't being surprised; continues to provide structure to her day; allows her to finish what she is doing or get to a point where she can comfortably stop
 - “defiant students need structure and clarity about expectations” (Brophy, 1996, pg. 234).
 - **Velcro Schedule**
 - “inviting and, where feasible, accepting defiant students’ suggestions about alternative ways for them to accomplish goals” may be something that could aid in improving the behavior (Brophy, 1996, p. 235).
 - **Home Note System (Red/Yellow/Green Chart and Positive Reinforcement Tallies)**
 - “A home note system is one of the most effective techniques for improving a student’s motivation and classroom behavior. [It] involves the school-to-home and back-to-school cycle because it informs the parents of their child’s progress and allows the use of consequences in the home that are rarely available to the teacher” (BEST Practices, 1996, p. 29).
 - Will help Anna realize that her parents and I are working together as team; will help with consistency from school to home
 - Will hopefully help build our positive relationship because we aren’t just focusing on the negative behaviors; we are celebrating the positive ones!

Strategy Effectiveness

- Changes in target behavior
 - Anna's behavior has changed immensely.
 - The amount of tantrums have significantly decreased (we have decreased to an average of a 5pt tallied day each week from beginning at a 12pt day average; we beat our goal!) Our personal relationship has improved immensely as well!
 - She seems happier at school and is beginning to form friendships
 - We both look forward to the beginning of each day!
 - Red/Yellow/Green Behavior Chart/Home Note
 - Our goal was 2 green days a week and we are having between 2 and 3 each week. Parents are also seeing improvements at home!
 - Positive Tallies Home Note
 - Our goal was 5 positives tallies a day and we are averaging between 4 and 7 per day. We just began this strategy but it seems to be getting better everyday!
- Recommendation of strategy?
 - I would absolutely recommend these strategies to be used simultaneously. The red/yellow/green behavior strategy began to work considerably better when combined with the positive tallies. Anna and I were able to draw more attention to the positive behaviors; which is the kind of attention I love to give her!
 - I would definitely encourage you to make sure parents are an integral part of this process. Without her parents and their consistency at home, I don't feel that these strategies would have been as successful

Professional Stance Prior to Intervention

- **Strengths in maintaining and effective stance**
 - Tried to remain positive and optimistic – “every day was a new day!”
 - Determined – it was my mission to help her succeed in improving her behavior
 - Continued to try and find enjoyment with Anna and form a positive teacher-student relationship
- **Weaknesses in maintaining and effective stance**
 - Very frustrated; found myself yelling a lot; felt completely defeated
 - Impatient and distant; defensive; engaged in power struggles daily
 - Took her behavior personally
- **What caused me to shift out of an effective stance?**
 - When Anna would involve other students in her tantrums (hitting, yelling, etc); when it was just her and I, I was able to stay calm
 - Tantrums – especially the ones that were so disruptive (level 3) that the entire class had to leave the room; made me completely lose my patience

Professional Stance Post Intervention

- Changes in professional stance (Brophy, 1996)
 - **Patience** level grew drastically; was able to remain calm for longer amounts of time.
 - **Personal teacher-student relationship** – has improved considerably too; we laugh and play together more; I have found much enjoyment in our time together
 - **Social attractiveness** – when my behavior changed, I noticed that not only Anna, but the rest of the students, seemed to like me more and smile more often
 - **Firm but flexible** – not all things need to be a battle; but I remained firm on things that were important to her success
 - **Modeling** – began to show her behaviors that I wanted to see from her; she saw me using tools to calm and relax myself; she used them too
- Suggestions for maintaining an effective stance when faced with challenging behavior (Brophy, 1996)
 - Always try and **remain positive** and remember that every day is a new day and things will get better; don't take it home with you; leave it at the door!
 - Allow yourself relaxation time to regroup; **take time for yourself**
 - **Model** the positive behaviors you want to see; if you are angry and yell, how can you expect them not to yell?
 - **Change will not happen immediately; it takes time and practice.** There will be many “ups and downs” along the way! Be patient and stay positive!
 - Remind yourself that **this is not a personal attack on you.** There is a function for this behavior and the sooner you figure out what it is, the sooner you can replace it with a more positive one. **Don't give up!**

References

- Brophy, J.E. (1996). *Teaching problem students*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Jenson, W.R., Rhode, G., & Reavis, H.K. (1994). *The tough kid tool box*. Eugene, OR: Pacific Northwest Publishing.
- Reavis, H.K, Kukic, S.J., Jenson, W.R., Morgan, D.P., Andrews, D.J., & Fister, S. (1997). *Best practices: Behavioral and educational strategies for teachers*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.