Behavior Intervention Case Study

(a) Problem Identification

AV is a 7th grade, male student. On his most recent report card, he earned an A in math, B- in science, C in social studies, and C in language arts. He does not have an IEP or 504 plan. His problem behavior occurs most frequently during whole-group instruction in social studies class. That is, he calls-out when the teacher is doing group instruction for the entire class. Social studies class is from 1:59-3:30PM on A days (block schedule).

According to his social studies teacher, AV has strong social skills, understands concepts well and can make connections between units. She said when he takes notes and pays attention, he does well on homework and tests. On his most recent report card, he earned a C in social studies, but she said he could easily have earned a B if he spent more time in class paying attention. AV reports that he really likes sports (both playing and watching), and likes being the “class clown.” It’s important for him to be seen as funny by his classmates. He also enjoys playing games, especially card games and paper football. His strongest academic subject is math.

AV’s problem behavior is best described as call-outs. That is, during whole-group instruction in social studies, AV blurts-out without raising his hand, including making non-relevant comments such as, “Redskins are terrible!” and “I’m hungry, when’s lunch?” The problem behavior data was collected using frequency recording during social studies (1:59-3:30PM) on 2/8, 2/10, and 2/12. Whenever AV called-out during class, the recorder made a single tally on a piece of paper. AV called-out 12 total times, at a rate of four call-outs per class period.

(b) Analysis of the problem

After reviewing the baseline data, interviewing the student, and speaking with his social studies teacher, the external function of AV’s behavior appears to be attention from classmates. Both the teacher and student agreed that the cause of the behavior is to receive attention from peers.

(c) Intervention

The end-goal replacement behavior is appropriate class participation, which includes listening quietly, taking notes when applicable, and raising hand and waiting to be recognized to respond. As a result, during social studies class, AV will call-out no more than 1 time per class period. To accomplish this, the teacher will use an “extinction” technique. That is, the teacher will ignore AV’s comments and continue teaching despite his call-outs, as his call-outs are of short duration.

Additionally, the teacher will use differential reinforcement of alternative behaviors (DRA) on an interval schedule (every 5 minutes). That is, the teacher will positively reinforce using a non-verbal signal (thumbs-up) once every 5 minutes if the student is
displaying appropriate class participation (as described above). The goal is to reinforce multiple behaviors to encourage AV’s positive behavior and decrease the number of call-outs.

Daily goal: If AV calls-out 1 or 0 times, he can chat with his peers during the last two minutes of class.

Stretch goal: If AV calls-out 1 or 0 times for five total days (not necessarily consecutive), he will earn his previously selected stretch prize. Examples of these prizes include: 15 minutes on a Friday to play paper football with his peers, and 15 minutes of playing card games with his peers. The allotted time (15 minutes) can be adjusted throughout the program to keep AV motivated.

(d) Evaluation

During social studies class (1:59-3:30PM) on 3/7-3/11, the student called-out 4 total times, at a rate of 1.33 call-outs per class period. Compared to the baseline data, AV decreased his call-outs per class period by 67%.

According to AV’s teacher, she did not make any changes during the implementation of the behavior improvement plan. She did say that she had difficulty using extinction initially, but after a few days AV’s call-outs began to decline and extinction became more normal. Unfortunately, while she stuck to the reinforcement schedule (reinforcing once per 5 minutes if AV displayed appropriate classroom behavior), she did not collect this data. The only data she collected was his number of call-outs per class period. As a result, there is no data to support that AV replaced call-outs with appropriate classroom behavior. She did say, however, that his time on-task had greatly improved.

Steps that will be used to help generalize AV’s positive behavior across settings include: Having all of his classroom teachers use extinction for his call-outs (some teachers were already using this technique), adjust to variable reinforcement schedule and fade cues, and implement a behavior contract for AV to self-manage his call-outs and promote appropriate classroom behavior.

Effect size (Cohen’s d):

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\text{Mean 1: 4} \quad \text{SD 1: 1} \\
\text{Mean 2: 1.33} \quad \text{SD 2: 0.577}
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\frac{(\text{Mean 2} - \text{Mean 1})}{(\text{Pooled SD})} = 2.92
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References:

