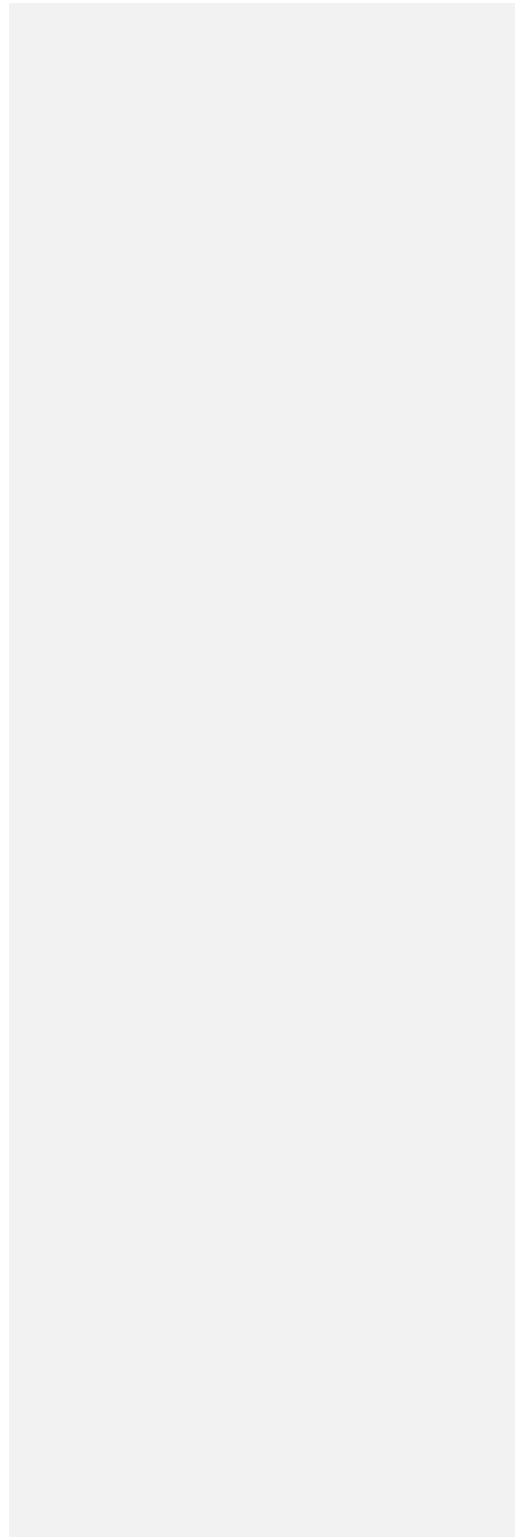


Changing My Amazing Son ~ Without Changing My Amazing Son

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## Abstract

As a parent, it can be hard to know how your child behaves at school. If you hear that your child is acting out, whether it's a comment on a report card or something mentioned in a parent-teacher conference, how do you know if it is a one-time problem or a serious behavioral issue? The behaviors I am targeting for my research project are **inattention and impulsivity**.

According to Brophy, J. (1996) *inattention* is described as an inability to “finish things started, doesn't seem to listen, is easily distracted, has difficulty concentrating on school tasks or sticking with play activities” and *impulsivity* “often acts before thinking, shifts excessively from one activity to another, has difficulty organizing work, needs a lot of supervision, frequently calls out in class, and has difficulty waiting turn in games or group situations” (p. 265). These *two* challenging behaviors are related in that Brophy listed them as two of three primary symptoms in ADD. Through observation, research, data collection, data analysis, strategy development and strategy implementation, my hope is to determine what drives my son's behavior, help him change his challenging behaviors; all the while, not changing who my son is as a sweet, amazing, big-hearted, funny, little boy.

My son is seven, and he is in second grade. At his last conference, his teacher suggested I have him tested for ADD. He is impulsive, a clown, “he loses focus very easily, and then starts talking to his neighbor, staring out the window, playing with his pencil, etc. He is a challenge because I can tell him to get back on task, but not two minutes later, he is off again. I have moved his seat to minimize distractions, taken all ‘play’ things away, and sometimes stand directly in front of him to get my point across of getting his work done.” (*His Teacher ~ 2012*)

His impulsive behavior has him rarely stopping to think before he acts, attempting tasks before he fully understands the directions, and doing random things to elicit laughs from his classmates, without considering the consequences. When the act yields an outcome he didn’t see coming, he demonstrates remorse; however, it doesn’t change the undesirable behavior.

His *impulsive* behavior often gets him into trouble in the classroom because he blurts out answers before the question has been completely asked, he has difficulty waiting for his turn, he is impatient and interrupts often, and what he says, typically comes without thought and zero filter. He is always acting before thinking or planning, seeking fun without thinking of consequences, which has, at times, resulted in destruction of property. His *inattention* has him finding it difficult to stay on task, he doesn’t follow instructions, he fails to finish things he has started, and his thoughts are always wandering.

These difficulties are the same for Brandon at school as they are at home; therefore, the challenges exist for me as his parent even more than they do for his teacher. His teachers will come and go, but I am his constant. He has an amazing spirit, which I don’t want to break, and he lives life the way we all should! However, his impulsivity and inattention are important self-regulatory abilities that he lacks, and are an integral part of his development. In these early school years, children are learning how to focus their attention on teacher/parent-directed

activities, interact appropriately with peers and authority figures, and follow rules. For me, as a parent, the situation causing the greatest challenge is his lack of impulse control and his capacity for maintaining attention/focus; ultimately, hindering his ability to learn and maintain a certain academic level (his level of work has dropped from September to present). When deficient in this area, he is at an elevated risk for a diverse range of behavioral, social, and academic problems in the future.

#### Professional Stance

As a parent, I cringe every time I receive another report regarding my son. My two older boys are perfectly behaved in school, and I hate that I now have ‘thee child’ that takes time away from all the other children. Since my student is my son, I’d like to begin with his teacher’s stance; however, ultimately, my focus will be on my personal stance and strategies. My son is going to have a different teacher every year, some will be good for him, some will be great for him, some may not have the best personality or strategies for him; therefore, I see it as MY job to get him to where he needs to be both at home and in the classroom.

From what I have learned through research, the age of seven is approximately when kids begin to calm down a bit. They begin to reason and concentrate, are more self-critical, lack confidence, and the impulsive behavior that was considered normal in young students, should soon be outgrown and they should begin alternative responses. I do recall my oldest son having the “inability to stay on task” label in second grade, and my middle son having the “impulsive” and “clown” behavior in second grade (Brandon being an unfortunate mix of the two). Since the two of them matured, I’m hoping to see maturity resolve this for Brandon as well, and his problem behaviors becoming less frequent. In the meantime, I must be diligent in working with my son, and his teacher, to minimize the distractions my son causes day to day.

My children attend a Catholic school, and it is my belief that it can be too structured for boys at this age. Additionally, I am aware that both second grade classrooms have groups of boys that are “out of control” and always in trouble ~ lending credence to the idea that the age of seven is when kids are only beginning to calm down a bit. The handling of these boys is consistent between the two teachers; and, in my opinion, just based on what I’ve learned from Brophy thus far, doesn’t work. Some of these behavior correction methods include: check marks on the board next to their name that add up, reaching a certain number, ultimately losing recess; sitting down in the principal’s office; detention; taking locker decorations down (magnets, pictures); and (the worst one yet) dividing the classroom in two groups ~ the kids that want to learn and the kids that don’t ~ which had the children by the end of the day referring to each other as good kids/bad kids. As Brophy points out, “Students who refuse to work on assignments usually are best handled by in-school or after-school detention during which they are required to complete the assignments. This shows them that attempts to escape responsibilities by refusing to work or creating diversions will result only in their having to spend extra time in school.” (p. 34) For Brandon, when recess is lost, he is sent down to the principal’s office, or he is given a detention; he is required to sit quietly and not do a thing. This, to me, defeats the entire lesson the punishment is meant to deflect. Additionally, “Consistent projection of positive expectations, attributions, and social labels to students is important in fostering positive self-concepts and related motives that orient them toward pro-social behavior.” (p. 20) I just can’t see how segregation in the classroom promotes ANY positive qualities in the students.

“Punishment reduces undesirable behavior by making aversive consequences contingent on that behavior. Its use should be minimized because (1) it is a stopgap measure that may temporarily suppress the overt performance of undesirable behavior but does not change students’ underlying desires to misbehave or the reasons why those desires exist, (2) it does not provide guidance to students by indicating what they should do instead, and (3) it causes problems of its own by engendering resentment and damaging your relationship with students. Brophy (p.32)

In my opinion, the professional stance taken in my son’s classroom is not effective; in fact, I believe these acts increase the challenging behavior. As we learned in the first two chapters, challenging behavior is one way that students tell us that school isn’t working for them ~ difficult behaviors in general, are ways that children communicate that something is wrong ~ Instead of words, the vocabulary consists of behaviors.

In this case, what I believe my son needs is an authoritative teacher. Someone with a high degree of warmth and support for students, someone that shows respect for the dignity of each student, their caring and concern, their support and enjoyment of students. The students need this warmth, along with a high degree of control, someone clearly in charge, setting firm limits, and letting kids know their expectations and where they stand. In my opinion, the teacher my son currently has would definitely be described as a rigidly strict “authoritarian” lacking three attributes of effective socializers: a sense of humor, a sense of support, and flexibility. The combination of high warmth and high control offered by an authoritative teacher produces a teaching style that is optimal for most “tough to teach” kids. These teachers are warm enough to permit kids to establish authentic, meaningful relationships with them and are firm enough to provide the structure that is foundational for these children’s adaptation. This combination also

promotes the development of self-regulation skills in students because the reasoned, “talk-it-through” approach to decision-making consistent with this style provides modeling and practice with these skills, which are often lacking in “tough to teach” kids.

With all that said, his teacher does bring certain strengths to the table. She is clearly in charge, sets firm limits, and she does let the kids know where they stand. There is a level of respect between them, because my son is really sad when he disappoints his teacher and really seems to like her. I’m doing my very best to see both sides, and our line of communication is wide open. When I mentioned that I thought removing recess from active boys that need to burn energy didn’t make much sense to me, she followed that up with, “give me another option... I don’t have another tangible thing I can take away from them.” When I spoke with her regarding the segregated classroom (she had already moved everyone back), she admitted it probably wasn’t the best idea, but said it was actually the most productive day this school year. If I were to situate myself on the home-school continuum, I would say our collaboration most resembles the school-HOME end of the spectrum, and I feel I am doing what I should be doing as a parent. Sometimes, the difficult thing for me is finding the balance and trying to see her side. However, I do need to be conscious of the fact that she has a classroom full of kids she needs to teach, and she is doing the best she can.

#### Personal Stance

Based on the attributes of individuals who are effective as parents, Brophy (1995) identified some general attributes of teachers that contribute to their success in socializing students. When I am dealing with my son and feeling challenged by his behavior, I notice several of these attributes that I possess, and some that I do not. In terms of what is not in place when I’m feeling challenged, I would have to say my *Ego Strength* and *Enjoyment of Students*,

*but within a Teacher-Student Relationship.* My *Ego Strength* seems to be all over the place depending upon my mood, or what has gone on in the day with all the children, etc. I am calm most of the time, but not always; sometimes, I'm so fed up that my tendency is to overreact. Additionally, my greatest fault in my stance toward my son is within the *Teacher-Student/Parent-Student relationship*. I enjoy interacting with my son; however, our relationship can definitely be too friendly which causes me to lose my identity as an authority figure. As important as it is to help Brandon make changes, I've had to take a long, hard look at necessary changes I need to make in my stance. I see it as my responsibility as a parent to help Brandon, and send him to school prepared to learn. Developing an effective stance will benefit us both.

#### Observation

Over the last few weeks, my personal stance with regard to helping my son at school has been to create a communication routine with his teacher, via daily emails, about what has happened in class, and the assignments that were given. At home, during a quiet moment, I ask him for HIS ideas about focusing better in class, and allow him to think about how he can pay better attention without letting his surroundings disturb him. Example... Is it better if you sit closer to the teacher? Should she move you away from certain kids? We are coming up with a plan together. Then I'm passing these ideas along to his teacher in the best possible, non-critical way. Additionally, I've tried the "*Teacher Praise*" strategy at home, and it has worked very well. Every day, I try to catch Brandon doing what he is supposed to be so I can praise him. I've implemented the I-FEED-V (or FEED-IV) rules, and my praise has been immediate, frequent, enthusiastic, eye contact (I get down on his level), descriptive (I describe the behavior I am pleased with), variety (I use a variety of praises so it doesn't lose its effectiveness). This strategy has been effective on every aspect of his home life from getting ready in the morning for school,



daily chores, etc. The area I have seen the most improvement in is his homework. What used to take forever to complete, he is diligent about doing, as soon as possible, without argument, in an effort to please me and gain more praise. It even rubs off on him when I praise his brothers for something I would like him to do (Vicarious Reinforcement), I see his wheels turning and his behavior begins to model their positive behavior.

What I have found, between school and home, are the problems Brandon is experiencing aren't occurring as much with him sitting closer to his teacher, my sitting with him during his homework, when he is well-rested, when there are few distractions, when he isn't hungry, and when he has an interest in what he is doing. Brandon NEVER seems off-task, or unable to control his impulsive behavior, when he is doing something that he is completely interested in. Finally, the greatest eliminator of his problem behavior thus far has been a direct result of the "*Teacher Praise*" approach.

What I have also learned in the last few weeks is that there are other issues causing Brandon's unacceptable behavior at school. Brandon is a large kid for his age, and because of it he seems to take a lot of insults from peers. Additionally, his oldest brother has a tendency to pick on him A LOT, which I am ALWAYS on top of; however, I did just think it was typical sibling behavior. As Dreikurs pointed out (Brophy p. 37), he believes that children have a strong need for belonging, and that those who have not worked out a satisfactory personal adjustment and place in their peer group, will strive to do so by pursuing one of four goals, one being the goal of "*Attention*," which I believe is why Brandon is a clown. He is an attention seeker that is disruptive and provocative, but he does not openly defy or challenge his teacher or me. His relationship with his brother, I believe, has left him feeling discouraged and inadequate. Also, he is compensating for feelings of inferiority by developing a style of life designed to protect self-

esteem. Dreikurs also believed that students become willing to abandon self-defeating goals and make more productive commitments once they develop insight into their behavior and its meanings. I'm going to try this approach today; however, he is seven and I wonder if it will be over his head. I did sit down with his brother and had a long talk with him about picking on Brandon simply because he annoys him. I explained to him that it is unacceptable that Brandon has to deal with this at school, and then come home to the place that SHOULD be a sanctuary for him, only to have to face it from a family member. Once he heard that his behavior could have impacted Brandon, and where he is with his behavior at school, the teasing has almost completely subsided. It has often been said that my son, Brandon, suffers from "High Self-Esteem" and most things roll right off of him... I'm beginning to think that he is, in fact, compensating for feelings of inferiority.

#### Data Collection

The data used in my analyses was collected over a one week period (Sunday through Saturday) from two different perspectives and two different environments: Brandon's classroom, with the help of his teacher, and at home. The targeted behaviors of inattention and impulsivity were assessed via an observation form I created that provided a convenient and thorough means of collecting data pertaining to when he is exhibiting his inability to stay on task, or when he has impulsive/disruptive behaviors. Additionally, we recorded when the behaviors occurred less frequently. The form included plenty of room for comments within each section on **Behavior** (i.e., Inattention or Impulsivity); **Antecedents** (i.e., What happened right before the behavior?); **Setting** (i.e., school, home, recess, lunch, etc.); **People** (i.e., were their other children around? Did the behavior occur before, during or after the children were around?); **Activity** (i.e., what was he involved in when the behavior occurred?); and **Comments** (i.e.,

general comments/observations that we felt pertained to the data collection). Between Brandon's teacher and myself, we were able to collect enough data to get a good feel for the various factors that may be influencing Brandon's behavior.

#### Data Analysis

After reviewing all the data, Brandon seems to exhibit Undifferentiated Attention Deficit Disorder (UADD) ~ students who display attention deficits but not hyperactivity. Although the UADD distinction no longer exists, it would seem that Brandon falls under the new classification ADHD subtype: the predominantly inattentive type.

Based on the criteria for symptoms of *Inattention* (DSM-IV), Brandon, in my opinion, displays the following:

**(a) Often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork or other activities**

Interestingly, this only seems to take place at school. When at home, Brandon's homework is 100% correct and very neat. He also pays close attention to the instructions. In school, his work has many mistakes, is not very neat, he doesn't read the instructions, and he has trouble completing his assignments. The difference here is that I stay on top of him and keep redirecting his attention back to his homework and his teacher doesn't always have that kind of time.

This behavior will interfere with Brandon's capacity to learn and possibly mask the fact that he has a problem with attention by appearing to have more of a learning disability. His grades are beginning to slip due to the incomplete assignments.

**(b) Often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities**

Brandon has problems with this specifically in getting ready for school in the morning. If I'm not standing over him to keep him on task, he'll put a sock on, play a game, check out his birds, put another sock on, check out his fish, pester his brothers, put his shirt on, go do something else, etc. His teacher experiences the same behavior at school. However, if the task or activity is something Brandon wants to do, he has no problem with focus or following through to complete the task.

**(c) Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly**

This is a problem both at home and at school. I can ask Brandon to do something, and it is as if he is completely ignoring me. I have to ask several times, and he finally responds when I get upset with him. This behavior is not as problematic at school as he seems to recognize his teacher's authority more so than mine.

**(d) Often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace (not due to oppositional behavior or failure to understand instructions)**

This is a problem for Brandon at home and at school. Again, if it is something he is not interested in, he is less likely to complete it. He can be given explicit instructions; yet, he does everything HIS way, right or wrong. Brandon is very smart and very creative.

**(e) Often has difficulty organizing tasks and activities**

Neither his teacher nor I have noticed much of a problem here.

**(f) Often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort (such as schoolwork or homework)**

Getting Brandon to do his homework or his schoolwork is like pulling teeth! I don't believe it is a failure to understand as Brandon has shown he is capable of getting 100% on everything. I do

believe Brandon doesn't seem to do well with regiment, as it doesn't come naturally to him. He finds it difficult to follow strict routines (he finds it irritating) and it is hard for him to not give into more natural impulses like to running and playing, and talking when he wants to talk. He can't focus on tasks that are not entirely enjoyable or stimulating.

**(g) Often loses things necessary for tasks or activities (e.g., toys, school assignments, pencils, books, or tools)**

Neither his teacher nor I have noticed much of a problem here.

**(h) Is often easily distracted by extraneous stimuli**

When other children are around, whether it is his siblings or his schoolmates, he is easily distracted. He is very social, and it is virtually impossible for him to work in group related activities. If the television is on at home, he simply can't get another thing done.

**(i) Is often forgetful in daily activities**

Again, Brandon isn't forgetful if the activity he is involved in is something he wants to do.

In terms of *Impulsivity*, Brandon blurts out answers before questions have been finished. This is exclusive to his school behavior, and isn't an issue at home. He does interrupt me frequently; however, all my kids had to be trained to not do that! His teacher indicated this is not a problem at school.

Brandon's inattention is most frequent when there is noise, when he is sitting directly next to another child, and simply when the stimuli around him is more interesting to him than doing something he doesn't want to do. If he is hungry, his ability to stay focused decreases as we noticed that he is better after lunch. This, however, could be due to running around at recess immediately following lunch. One interesting note was that if he is tired, he seems more low-

key and gets more done as he seems to interact less. However, when he is not tired, it is easier to get him to do things because he is more accommodating.

His impulsive behavior is more frequent when other children are present, and when the focus is not on him. We found that his behavior is geared toward provoking laughs and trying to gain peer acceptance; although, this behavior is present even when with his friends one-on-one where the relationship is already established. Immediately following any impulsive behavior, he looks to whomever he is with to gauge their reaction... are they laughing?? His impulsive behavior seems to be heightened when he is tired ~ he gives even less thought to the consequences of his actions.

It was really hard to distinguish between Brandon having ADHD or just being an energetic, normal seven year old. However, collecting data, and actually looking at it with relationship to the DSM-IV criteria, makes it hard to deny. There are still gray areas for me, though. Brandon's attention problems and impulsivity seem to occur at home and at school in multiple circumstances. Yet, he can sit through a two-hour movie, carry on focused conversations with adults, and sit through a very long board game such as Monopoly. When he completes his homework, the result is amazing; yet, he'll break crayons halfway through, turn them into mini nun-chucks, and swing them around. His impulsive behavior whether at school, at play, out shopping, during stories, etc., seems to always be tied to making someone laugh. Can it be that he just needs to mature into knowing when the "on switch" should be on, and when the "off switch" should be off?

### Strategy Selection

#### Reinforcement and Vicarious Reinforcement

To begin with, we will use reinforcement as the primary mechanism for establishing and maintaining Brandon's behavior. Every day, both Brandon's teacher and I will try to catch Brandon doing what he is supposed to be doing. We will implement the I-FEED-V (or FEED-IV) rules, and our praise will be *immediate, frequent, enthusiastic, eye contact, descriptive, variety*. This strategy is expected to work because Brandon is very motivated by praise and finds it rewarding. Ultimately, the desirable behavior will increase in frequency. Additionally, we will utilize vicarious reinforcement. His teacher will praise neat, complete, quiet work done by Brandon's peers closest to him, and I will carry this into the home by praising desired behaviors shown by Brandon's siblings when he is in close proximity. This will not only motivate the student/sibling who receives it, but also Brandon as he observes the delivery.

#### Contingency Contract

Contingency contracting involves conferring with the student about possible alternatives and then jointly drawing up a contract that specifies what the student will be expected to do in order to earn contingent rewards (Brophy p. 26). Brandon and I have set up a contract between the two of us; however, his teacher will administrate it. This contract will target neat, complete, quietly done schoolwork (earning points in each area). Additionally, Brandon will receive extra points for each day he doesn't "talk-out" and disrupt the class. Upon receiving a specified number of points, Brandon will receive some previously agreed upon reinforcer that has been chosen by him. By allowing him the freedom of choosing his prize, there will be more

motivation to follow the contract; ultimately, yielding a higher number of neat/complete/quietly done assignments, and a lower number of impulsive outbursts.

#### Behavior Awareness

The goal of this strategy is to increase Brandon's awareness of his behavior, its effects on his teacher and his classmates; ultimately, helping him develop self-control as recommended in Brophy (p. 291) Karlin and Berger (1972). Basically, I sat Brandon down and discussed with him the reality that his disruptions take away time from his teacher's instruction, making it difficult for the other kids to learn. I also impressed on him the fact that it turns off the other kids, and may be why he doesn't feel he has many friends. I explained that the other kids aren't going to want to play with someone that keeps getting in trouble because they don't want to get in trouble. It was a difficult conversation to have, as I could see that he completely understood and felt a lot of remorse. He asked me if this is why he doesn't get invited to birthday parties as frequently as his brothers. I just said, "It may or may not be the case; however, I am in this with you and we will work very hard on these problems together." We had this discussion on a Tuesday, and his teacher informed me by Friday afternoon that he had three perfect days! It has now been two weeks, and still good behavior with regard to him impulsivity. This certainly seems to have been a successful strategy with Brandon. When I picked the kids up on Friday, he was off playing with three other boys! Of course, it kept him from getting in the car, and seemed to irritate the parking lot attendants, but we'll tackle one thing at a time.

#### Tutoring

Given that Brandon's grades have dropped in some areas due to his sloppy, incomplete work, I thought it would be a good idea to try a tutor. The goal of this strategy isn't just to help Brandon, but a bit of an experiment for me. In the first chapter of the Brophy book, Brophy



identifies some attributes of teachers that contribute to their success in socializing students (p. 22). After reading these attributes, it occurred to me that Brandon's current teacher wasn't really a good match for Brandon. Now this isn't to say this is her fault as she is a fantastic teacher and did amazing things with my older two sons. However, in terms of Patience and Determination, Social Attractiveness, Flexibility, Acceptance, Enjoyment of Students, Ego Strength, Realistic Perceptions of Self and Students ~ She simply doesn't represent. Therefore, I contacted a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher, Brandon's potential teacher for next year, and asked her if she would tutor him. This particular teacher not only has all the attributes Brophy discusses, but she shows care and concern, she has a sense of humor, and she doesn't view Brandon as someone who is a threat to her classroom authority, but someone who is in need of socialization and developing self-control. He will be going to her once a week, and started this week.

*Fine Tuning the Learning Environment to Better Suit Brandon's Needs*

Finally, Brandon's environment for homework and schoolwork has been changed. At home, he has his own quiet place to do homework, without anyone else in the room. Additionally, Brandon's teacher has placed his desk at the front of his classroom, in close proximity to her, so the other children are at his back (removing any temptation to distract other students). His teacher is to his right, and there is a good role model to his left.

Finally, I don't want to discount the teasing that has been going on. We have called all the parents of the children that were teasing Brandon, spoke with the principal, and addressed it with Brandon's teacher. To the best of our knowledge, it has come to an end. This was important to me because I believe that sometimes attention/impulsive issues can be related to anxiety. A great example is Brandon doing impulsive things to make others laugh to gain peer acceptance.

Ultimately, I hope that with the strategies I have chosen, Brandon will mature, learn to stay more focused, and learn to manage his impulses. As we strive to reach that milestone, I'm hoping his confidence and self-esteem will begin to grow.

Strategy Implementation/Changes in Practice/Problems and Prospects/Updated Strategies

Reinforcement and Vicarious Reinforcement

Given that the success of reinforcement is heavily dependent on frequency, reinforcement is a constant, immediate thing. This is happening daily, coming from Brandon's teacher and myself, all day long. Thus far, this strategy has been highly effective, and will continue. Brandon's behavior at home has really changed probably more because of the vicarious reinforcement and the constant game of one-upmanship played between he and his brothers. He seems to feed off when I reinforce good behavior in his brothers, even more so than when I reinforce appropriate behavior with him. Definitely no changes necessary here!

Contingency Contract

Please see attached tracking form and contract that was implemented March 1, 2012. I designed the tracking form specifically to work with Brandon's contract and it includes three areas of focus: On time to class? Handed in assignments? Appropriate behavior? This strategy begins this week; therefore, in terms of results, we shall see. I'm guessing this strategy will be highly effective with Brandon.

Name: Brandon Karavite Week of: March 5, 2012 - March 9, 2012

Day	On time to class?		Handed in Assignments?		Appropriate Behavior?		Any Comments?	Teacher's Initials
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No		
Monday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Tuesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Wednesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Thursday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Friday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Additional Comments:

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I can do this!!!!

Brandon Karavite's Contract

I agree to: Be on time to class, Hand in my assignments on time (complete & neat), I will have appropriate behavior (consistent with the classroom rules) and not go to red, for a total of 15 days within the month of March.

If I meet these conditions by: March 31, 2012, I earn the following privileges: Dinner out, a trip to Zap Zone, and a Sleepover ~ all to take place with my best friend!

Exceptional work bonus (A complete month): An additional dinner with my mom to the Melting Pot ~ Just the two of us!

Signed: Brandon Karavite

Parent: Pam Karavite

Today's Date: 3/1/12

Deleted: Your recording sheet looks like it efficiently collects the data of interest without overwhelming the reporter. You have done a nice job developing the supporting forms and tools to maintain the integrity of the strategy plan and promote sustaining the plan even after the novelty has worn off.

Deleted: A very handsome young man!

Brandon chose the rewards tied to his contract, which should motivate him to succeed! “Appropriate Behavior” may seem a bit vague; however, Brandon is completely aware of what is expected of him, and what the classroom rules are. Exhibiting “appropriate behavior” throughout the day has been established between Brandon and myself as not going to “red” on the green, yellow, red behavior chart.

#### Behavior Awareness

This strategy yielded amazing results thus far. Although there hasn’t been another situation to present to Brandon as of yet, there have been ample opportunities to revisit this as reinforcement. Since Brandon and I initially had the conversation about his behavior turning off his friends, his behavior at school has improved dramatically. He has even been invited to several parties and a sleepover! This has been huge with regard to reinforcing appropriate behavior. I’ve gotten a lot of smiles when I remind him that his appropriate behavior earned him the acceptance of his peers... or, in Brandon terms, earned him parties and sleepovers! It is also worth mentioning that *Behavior Awareness* worked extremely well with Brandon’s oldest brother. After having the conversation with him about how his treatment of Brandon could be contributing to Brandon feeling discouraged and inadequate, and ultimately causing some of his problems at school, his treatment of Brandon has subsided quite a bit. It isn’t non-existent, but it is so much better.

#### Tutoring

Since Brandon began his tutoring a few weeks ago, we have made some wonderful progress. Brandon loves his tutor, and she is crazy about him. The very first session, she was able to zero in on why Brandon’s work is so sloppy and incomplete at school and so neat and concise at home. Brandon and his classmates have free time to read a book or work a puzzle

after completing assignments. Therefore, Brandon was blowing through his work, without concern for the quality, just so he could get to the free time. Seems so simple; yet, I never even considered this. His tutor explained to him the importance of the work he turns in, why it needs to be higher quality, how it effects his grades, and we are already seeing a difference in the quality he is turning in at school. Additionally, his tutor borrowed his journal from his teacher prior to our latest tutoring session. She gave Brandon a new journal and asked him to do some entries. Once again, his work was extremely neat; the sentences were complete (and made sense), etc. She then pulled out his journal from school and showed him the difference. He was shocked how different the work was. Again, she explained to him the importance of quality work and how it affects his grades. Brandon is always excited to go see her, and they have a connection that is really bringing him along in terms of improvement in his schoolwork. This strategy, in my opinion, is yielding some amazing results!

*Fine Tuning the Learning Environment to Better Suit Brandon's Needs*

In this area, I have made a change. What has been done at school and home to accommodate Brandon's difficulty with focus has yielded positive results. However, there was a missing piece. As things improved at school, focus seemed to still be a bit off in the morning. Brandon seems tired and unable to kick into gear. I believe he needs an earlier bedtime. Our boys all go to bed at 8:30 on school nights; however, I think Brandon requires a 7:30 bedtime. Since Brandon is such a big kid, I think it was lost on all of us that he is still only seven. He still requires more sleep than his older brothers. This change to his environment began this week, and we shall see how it works out. He is reluctant, and I may have to draw up another contract!

The strategies I have implemented with Brandon have all yielded positive results. The changes I've seen are amazing, and Brandon is a different child. These changes are all due to an intervention that included a handful of seemingly common sense strategies; yet, they eluded me. We have come along way; however, not without some necessary tweaks due to problems encountered in some of the strategies. To begin with, the contingency contract tracking form was not making it home at times. If Brandon decided he didn't like what the note said, he would throw it away. His teacher is now scanning the form and sending it via email to me directly. Additionally, the behavior contract caused some animosity at home, making things worse at times, between Brandon and his brothers. Just as Brophy points out (p.27), "some theorists oppose reinforcement in principle, viewing it as bribing students for doing what they should be doing anyway because it is the right thing to do or because it is in their own best interest." Turns out, Brandon's brothers had the same idea... why is Brandon being rewarded for behaving at school, when they do it every day for no reward? To help in this regard, I utilized the information given to Brandon during the behavior awareness discussion and spoke with his brothers about how they ARE rewarded every day. They both have lots of friends, are constantly invited to birthday parties, sleepovers, sporting events, etc. They seemed to develop even more empathy when I showed them a picture, drawn by Brandon, depicting his hurt feelings at school when he heard everyone talking about a party that he wasn't invited to. I also reminded them that, as pointed out in Brophy's book (p.37), some of Brandon's problems could be traced to his being constantly picked on by his brother's, making him feel discouraged or inadequate, and possibly "compensating for feelings of inferiority" by developing his own personal style designed to protect self-esteem. He has a strong need, like all children, to belong; therefore, striving to do so by pursuing attention, and/or displaying inferiority "in an attempt to gain

attention or special treatment.” His brother’s seem to have developed more empathy for Brandon and his plight, no longer questioning our methods to help Brandon along.

In terms of effectiveness, I think all the strategies together are what prompted results. With regard to the contingency contract, I still consider it to be a very effective strategy as Brandon is motivated by rewards, and has improved his behavior by about 50%. Brandon being able to choose his own rewards allowed him to get excited and motivated to achieve the goals set for him. Also, allowing Brandon to accumulate days of good behavior, in lieu of consecutive days of good behavior, gave him room to make mistakes without having to start over. I believe that consecutive criteria would cause difficulty reaching his goals; ultimately, being very discouraging for him. After all, one can’t be expected to climb a huge mountain the first time out ~ it takes several attempts!

In the end, what did I do well? What would I change next time? I learned more about what makes my son tick than I could have ever imagined, and I cared enough to take the time to do it. If I had to change anything, it would be to have jumped on this sooner. However, I really kept telling myself it was a maturity thing. I love Brandon’s spirit, and I wanted to help him without breaking that. He is a wonderful, funny, loving, big-hearted little boy; he just needs a little help learning when and where his behaviors are appropriate, if appropriate at all. Are my strategies feasible/realistic for use in everyday practice? As a parent, it should be of highest priority to ensure the success of your child in the future. In my opinion, it is far more difficult for teachers to implement multiple strategies as they have other children to teach; children that are able to focus, that are not disruptive, that deserve their attention as well. That is not to say that they shouldn’t do what they can to help every child; however, by the time one figures out what makes the child tick (and there may be a handful challenging children in the class), decide

**Deleted:** You have done an excellent job of using your data to formatively assess the effectiveness of each of the strategy components. Based on your evaluation, you were able to adjust the intervention in order to help Brandon better meet the demands of the classroom. This level of responsiveness demonstrates your comprehensive understanding of the many factors associated with the challenging behaviors and your willingness to individualize instruction ... all important lessons when approaching challenging behavior. .

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**Deleted:** Stressing the importance of incremental steps toward attaining a specific goal was one of the many strengths of your intervention plan. You did a particularly effective job at helping Brandon connect his effort and growing competency using coping strategies to his academic and social success. .



the best intervention (which may include multiple strategies), implement the intervention, the school year is over and they have moved on. Which may explain why I have frequently heard Brandon's teacher say, "I'll just be glad to get through this year with all the crazy boys I have in here." I have loved and appreciated every teacher my children have ever had, and they all have exceeded my expectations. I do not see it as their sole responsibility to modify my child's challenging behavior, I see it as mine, the parent, with some input from them. From a teacher's perspective, as much as we would like to see first hand the changes that our strategies have brought about, it may simply be that we have only improved the foundation for others to build on... and that is GREAT! So, would I recommend these strategies to a teacher? Absolutely! BUT... I would be more likely to recommend them to a parent that has a challenging, amazing child like mine!

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