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SPED 790

M3 Major Assignment: Sensory Strategies

Bobby is a 12-year-old 7th grade middle school student. He enjoys music, particularly the all-girl band the tUnE-yArDs. He really enjoys playing video games and likes playing games on his mobile phone. He spends a lot of time on his phone either playing games or using different apps like Spotify and musical.ly. He says that he enjoys spending time alone and does not like being close to people. The cafeteria especially bothers him because of the noise and how much people move around. Bobby says he has a hard time in math class and will play on his phone when he does not understand what is going on. Teachers report that he seems to be more motivated to work with those who he has developed a relationship with.

Bobby’s math teacher describes that he often shreds paper in her class and makes a mess of paper around his area. It’s possible that this behavior is the result of a sensory need that is not being filled. Bobby often has a hard time understanding what is going on in his math class, so he could be shredding paper as something to do since he does not understand what is going on.

Bobby describes that he does not like people touching him. He does not like people in close proximity or when people bump into him. He especially says that the cafeteria is difficult because of the noise and the movement of all the people. The paper shredding could be the result of anxiety from being in close proximity to people. It could also be the result of some kind of tactile input need. The shredding could give some tactile sensation that Bobby likes since he does not physical touch.

I believe that Bobby falls into the Avoiding sensory pattern most predominantly. Bobby has a low threshold for sensory inputs like noise and touch. When he experiences these things, he tends to shut down. He may go off on his own or he may pull out his phone and play a game he likes. He tends to avoid others. A behavior observation during PE reports that he often wandered off from the group. These all suggest that Bobby has a low threshold for these sensory inputs, but engages in behaviors that help him avoid those uncomfortable feelings.

I think three appropriate strategies for Bobby that are listed in Dunn, 2014 are removing other work materials from the work surface, identify work and play areas with space away from other students, and use trips to the bathroom or errands to give student a break from intense environments. I think all three of these strategies are age appropriate for Bobby and address his uncomfortableness with the proximity of others. Removing other work materials from the work surface will allow Bobby’s work space to be uncluttered and will not provide him with materials to shred. Identifying a work space away from other students gives Bobby distance from others so that he can focus on his tasks and not be bothered by anyone infringing on his space. Giving Bobby errands or breaks would be helpful for creating an appropriate reason for Bobby to leave the room if he is feeling overwhelmed.

In order to collet data to see if removing other work materials from the work surface is effective, I would use momentary time sampling. Every 5 minutes the teacher would record whether or not Bobby is engaging in paper shredding behavior. Baseline data would be collected with Bobby having whatever he wanted on his desk. Then data would be collected with a clear work area. The data would show if removing other work materials from the work surface is effective.

In order to collect data on Bobby having an identified work and play area with space away from other students, I would also use momentary time sampling. Every 5 minutes the teacher would record whether or not Bobby is engaging in on task behavior. For baseline, data would be collected with Bobby seated in his current seat. Then, Bobby would be moved to a separate work area and data would be collected on his on-task behavior in that setting. We could then compare whether or not Bobby’s on task behavior increases when he has a separate work area.

In order to collect data on giving Bobby trips to the bathroom or errands for breaks, I would use frequency recording to record the number of breaks he takes and frequency recording to record how many pages of work he completes. For baseline, I would collect how many pages of work he completes without a break. Then, I would implement breaks and record how many breaks he is taking and how much work he is completing using frequency data. This would allow us to see if breaks increased Bobby’s productivity.

I thought this assignment was useful for having to think through potential sensory issues for a student and potential antecedent based intervention solutions that could be used to help the student. Sometimes I find it hard to think of sensory causes for behavior and how that might affect a student’s performance, but this allowed me to practice these considerations. I think that I will definitely use the profiles that Dunn, 2014 lists in order to help me think of what solutions may be most effective based on a student’s sensory needs. Something I felt confused about though, is how there are no EBPs for sensory issues, and I think that might be something to add to this assignment. May some kind of consideration about how there are no EBPs for it and what that means for things we should target first before we attempt to address sensory issues.

References

Dunn, W. (2014). *Sensory Processing: Identifying Patterns and Designing Support Strategies*.

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