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CEP 802: Developing Positive Attitudes Towards Learning

Final Design Project

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Revised Motivation Case

Who is the Learner?

To protect the identity of my student I have assigned them the pseudonym Aiden. Aiden is a second-grade student. He attends a private, catholic school in the city of Chicago. Aiden performs on grade level in the core academic curriculum. He is an energetic eight-year-old that is well-liked by his peers and the teachers at the school. Aiden is frequently in the center of a group of children telling jokes and seeking ways to make his peers laugh.

What Does the Learners Motivation Issue Look Like?

While Aiden is well-liked by his peers and previous teachers frequently describe him as charismatic and charming, Aiden's sparkle in his eyes while interacting with peers quickly fades when required to work independently on an academic task. During peer interactions, Aiden is naturally funny and seamlessly brings smiles to the faces of those he is interacting with. However, when the social aspect is impossible, Aiden tries to make classmates laugh or attract attention and frequently receives redirection.

What leads me to believe that this is a motivation issue is that when we begin to notice this behavior from him, I check in with Aiden to make sure that he understands the assignment's directions and see that he has started. Since most of the time, he can explain the directions to me and has the correct work, I know that he understands the task. In addition, his behavior from the playlot to the classroom makes me believe that Aiden feels energized and motivated when his peers are fueling his confidence. During times when working independently, Aiden frequently shouts out answers or questions. However, when working on group work, neither of these behaviors is present, which leads me to believe that Aiden is motivated by peer interaction.

What is the Learning Task?

The setting where I see this learning behavior is when Aiden must complete independent work, specifically during our daily math block. These are typically mid-topic check-ins, end-of-unit assessments, or personal reflections. The goal of these tasks is to see what information the specific student understands or what content may need to be retaught. The expected learning behavior during these times is a voice to self. This means students are more than welcome to whisper read to themself or whisper their answers while they write, as I understand that helps some learners. Students are just not able to converse freely with peers during this time.

Other Comments

We are only a few weeks into the school year, but this is a behavior that we have been keeping anecdotal notes on. In the coming weeks, we are also planning to complete an on and off-task behavior analysis during work time that is independent and work time that allows students to interact with one another and compare that data between the two events.

<u>**Revised Motivational Assessment**</u>

The Learner, The Task, and The Motivational Problem

<u>The Learner:</u> Aiden is a second-grade student at a private Catholic school in Chicago; he is eight years old. Aiden has continued to bring a radiant light and energy into our classroom daily. Over our first three and half months, I have gained insight into Aiden's academic abilities and interests outside the classroom. On our beginning of year iReady reading and math diagnostic assessments, Aiden scored a percentage that places him two points above where we would like for students to enter second grade. Considering the challenges of last school year, this is higher than where we expected students to enter this year. However, his diagnostic scores fell in the average to slightly above average scores compared to his peers in our school building.

A few weeks into the school year, we were made aware of a family situation that had occurred. While legally I cannot go into detail about the situation I can share that Aiden's father is not legally allowed to see him or be within a specified distance at any time. I learned about this occurrence when reaching out to mom to set up a time to talk with her about some of the changes that we were noticing in Aiden's classroom motivation and behavior. It was shared with us that Aiden knew his dad was sick and he would not be able to see him for a while. We were informed that Aiden did not know any specifics about what had occurred with his father.

At the age of twenty-six, I could not imagine being told my dad was sick and I would not be able to see him, but not be given any detail, so I could not imagine the fear and questions Aiden had. While this did not excuse the changes in Aidens motivation to participate in classroom activities it did change my ideas on how we could restore Aiden's passion for discovery in the classroom.

The Task: In second-grade students spend more time learning through group work and independent assessment than prior grades. While this change takes time each year for students to adjust to, typically by week three or four they have a strong understanding of the routines and procedures of the work time. Our math block presents the longest period of work time that is not based on teacher instruction.

We follow a center-based approach to our daily math instruction between the two second-grade classes. We begin each unit with a pre-assessment, based on these results students are grouped into below level, on level, slightly above level, and exceeds the standard. Students in the highest group and lowest group stay in my room for math each day while the other two groups are in the other second-grade room.

During our math block, students begin as a whole group. During this, five to ten-minute portion of time students quickly review the lesson from the prior day and are introduced to the concept of that day's lesson. Students then split off into three possible centers: teacher table, independent practice, prior learning. Students in the below level and on level groups always begin at the teacher table and receive in-depth lessons on the topic of the day. Students in the other two groups begin at prior learning. Both groups visit with the teacher before completing the independent practice center, which is used as an exit ticket. Rotations are 10 minutes each. During this time students who are not at the teacher's table are to ask peers when they need guidance or have a question. While the room students are in may change every few weeks, the procedure and management are identical in each classroom.

The Motivational Problem: Aiden's motivational challenges are not limited to a specific content area. The motivational obstacles are heightened during independent tasks and during special classes. Aiden's motivational challenges and the behaviors that accompany them are non-violent and are typically actions that draw attention towards himself. Since the motivational problem is present throughout the course of a day I decided focusing on the period of time during our day where his actions are most prevalent would allow the greatest insight and opportunity for change.

Preconditions

Out of the seven preconditions, I confidently believe that five are met. In addition, I believe that the remaining two preconditions were present, but they required me to take a deeper look into our classroom management to uncover. Therefore, I do not believe that I can count them as successful preconditions towards the learning environment.

I believe that our classroom is a supportive environment. In our classroom, students have several different choices for seating options. We have a full flex seating classroom, and students pick their seating choice as they see fit and are free to change when they would like. We have enough seating that students do not have to "fight" for a preferred seating option. Our classroom expectations are also evident. During our first week of learning this year, students and teachers worked together to write a classroom constitution. Each student had the opportunity to share what they felt was important for our classroom to make them feel safe. After the final constitution was drafted, students signed the bottom. We re-read our constitution every Monday morning, and when it appears that students may have forgotten.

The classroom also supports appropriate challenges. Students are continually assessed, both formally and informally. During all independent learning activities, there is an on-level, below-level, and above-level option. Students do not know which activity is at which level or the learning tasks are at different levels. Having three different options allows for easy differentiation. If a student is struggling with a task, I can quickly switch out their activity. If they fly through a task, I can have them complete the task at the next level.

The next precondition that is met is monitoring. Students in the classroom are continuously being assessed, both formally and informally. On their desk, each student has a pouch that contains green, yellow, and red cards. While completing an assessment or any independent work students can adjust their cards to show their level of understanding. Green shows the teacher they are feeling confident and need no assistance, yellow shows they are a little confused and would like to keep trying independently but to come back and check soon, and red means I am very confused and would like teacher support. Every Monday students review the use of these cards and each assignment has a brief reminder to have their cards show

if they need assistance. Students also complete the end-of-unit assessments bi-weekly. These assessments are based on our curriculum. However, all students are given a second opportunity. When they turn it in I will encourage them to double-check their answers or they can use their notebooks to look back at similar work we have done.

The environment also allows for responsive instruction. While we have a schedule and a plan for each day, I fully understand that I am teaching eight-year-olds. If I see one morning we are extra sluggish or tired I will typically move our math to the morning which is a more hands-on period of our day that gets the students up and moving. I also will put their social-emotional needs above a lesson plan any day. If there is an event going on in the world, or in our community, and questions arise we will stop and talk about it. I believe kids will not learn when their minds are in other places. Instead, I will gladly move a lesson later in the day or later in the week if there is something needed to be done or talked about to make sure each of them feel safe, valued, and loved.

Our school is required to post the learning objectives in the room. However, I believe that if something is going to be on the walls of the classroom it needs to be an aid to the students. For this reason, I count the precondition of meaningful objectives as met. At the start of a new unit, we take time to look at the "I can" statement and work to understand its meaning. We look at the vocabulary that is used and we work to make meaning of those words and apply them to previous skills learned, upcoming skills learned, and real-life situations. When others walk into our classroom and ask what we are learning, my students are able to tell them a specific skill we are learning, in their own words, and walk them through their thought process as to why we should be learning it.

The two preconditions that I believe pose areas for growth are individual and collaborative goals and teacher expertise. While I have goals for our classroom and each student, I cannot say that 100% of students could identify our classroom goals or their own learning goals. Discussion of goals frequently occurs in our classroom but not in direct correlation with the term goal. I believe moving forward using this term while having these discussions will help students find purpose and motivation. I also do not believe that teacher expertise has been fully met as I am only a fourth-year teacher. While I have learned a lot and have had many meaningful experiences, there is still room for learning and growth on my part.

Approaches

The initial approach that I planned to use with this student was a token economy. While my hope was this would lead to an increase in his motivation I also held hope that this would address his behavioral challenges. My intention was to give Aiden a chart to collect stickers. He would be rewarded a sticker when caught being on task, helping classmates, and following the agreements of our classroom constitution. After collecting a predetermined number of stickers, Aiden would then be allowed to select an item from the treasure chest in our classroom. He would then start the collection of stickers over again to receive another reward. After a certain amount of time, the number of stickers required to select a prize would increase.

While the premise of the token economy is similar to what I have been doing with our whole class "Deal or No Deal", a significant difference is the reward that Aiden is receiving. After learning about the recent changes in Aiden's home life, it is clear that what motivates Aiden's actions and behaviors is his desire for an adult's undivided attention. For example, Aiden and I talked during recess one day about how much I care about him and how I will be there for him no matter what. We also talked about how he is not the only student when we are together as

a class, and I have to give my attention to him and his other 21 peers. While Aiden understood, his body language made it clear he did not like that. Thus the new reward was discovered.

Aiden and I broke our daily schedule into twelve different sections to remember a "block" of our day. During each block, Aiden is allotted three redirects. If Aiden completed a block of the day and had not used his three redirects, he gets a checkmark for that block. At the end of the day, if Aiden has eight, she gets to add a marble to a jar. Every five marbles, he gets to have his lunch with me, or he gets to have fifteen minutes of another adult's undivided attention, with their approval. We started with three redirected and only eight checks to help Aiden reach five marbles quickly, encouraging buy-in. Eventually, we will decrease the number of redirects and increase the total number of checkmarks.

Aiden is extrinsically motivated by his desire and enjoyment of an adult's undivided attention. By setting the redirects high and the checks low to start, we are also increasing Aiden's belief in himself and how he can accomplish this easier and has helped him buy into this approach to increase his motivation. While he does say that he has an enjoyment of school and learning, he does not show a passion for participating in work in order to learn more. He shows motivation to participate when it will grant him the attention of an adult.

I recently took Aiden out of music class, a special class he has mentioned is a time that he does not enjoy. I took this one-on-one opportunity to get to know Aiden more like an eight-year-old kid and not as my student. Through this time I learned that Aiden loves Minecraft and has advanced to a new level recently. I learned that his sister is his best friend and together they love taking their dog on walks. I also asked Aiden how he thought this school year was going so far. Aiden expressed the year in school has not been too bad. He talked about how much he loved our science unit on plants and animals and that he would like to learn more about

Bengal Tigers. When asked what his second-grade goals were his response was truthfully heartbreaking. He explained that he wanted to learn all he could possibly learn. He wanted to read so many chapter books and learn how to solve the hardest math problems. When asked why he explained if he could learn all of these things he would be able to show his dad soon and hopefully that would make his dad feel better. This helped me to see what Aiden's learning goals were motivated by. He expressed though that he was worried his dad would be sad to miss him learning these things and sometimes he wanted to skip school so he could learn the information later on.

Target

There are many features of TARGET in place, as it was a guiding tool in helping me develop the approach that I have been using. The task that Aiden is completing is at an optimal level of challenge. This is evident as he has achieved the task, receiving eight checkmarks, 92% of the time. While that may seem high, he has used both redirects 97% of the time. This lets me know that while he still sees success overall, the individual blocks of time are still providing enough of a challenge where if I were to decrease the allotted number of redirects by even one, Aiden would see a significant decrease in achieving his eight checkmarks.

Aiden also worked closely with authority, me to select the rewards and set up this token system. When creating and blocking out the day, Aiden selected the clipart image for each block that he felt best represented he and the class would be doing at that point of the day. Aiden and I also talked about how to select the correct number of checkmarks and redirects. He also knows that at any time, he can let me know that he feels ready for a challenge, and we will evaluate the allotted redirects and the total number of checkmarks.

Aiden also receives recognition each day, regardless of if he met the eight checkmark goals. We keep each day's schedule in a binder and look at it together. Then, at the end of the week, I seek out opportunities to praise. For example, last week, Aiden received a checkmark for each Writing block. When we reflected on his week together, I made sure to point that out to him and correlate that observation with the fact that he was also one of the first students to correctly complete the week's writing project because he was so focused and on-task.

Another area where I have empowered Aiden to take control of his learning is with grouping. We do a lot of group learning and flipped classrooms. Aiden loves to lead the class and join in group conversations, but I have noticed that Aiden has days where he struggles to show kindness and control anger when working with other students. Aiden and I talked about this, and he explained that when things at home are not going well, it is more challenging for him to work in a group. Due to this, I allow him to decide if he wants to work independently or in a group, no questions asked. He trusted me enough to tell me how he was feeling; I trusted him to decide what grouping style would help him learn best.

When introducing this token system to Aiden, he was hesitant because other students would not be doing it and did not want to stand out. I explained to Aiden that so many students in our class are being evaluated differently than their peers already, and nobody even knows. Aiden and I discuss that every student in the classroom is different, and we are all going to need different things during the school year to help us grow. Aiden and I look at his daily and weekly growth together and talk about what he felt proud of and a goal for the next day or week. We only talk about him, not him compared to a peer.

When thinking of time during the day, we sat down together and broke our daily schedule into twelve logical blocks based on clear transitions. This block schedule closely mirrors our

daily schedule posted on the wall, which we frequently reference throughout the day, and allows Aiden to visualize where we are at on his block schedule that he has a copy of in his folder.

Conclusion

Based on my analysis, the critical way Aiden is motivated is by receiving praise and undivided attention from an adult whom Aiden respects. He also is motivated to learn so that he will be able to teach his dad the next time they are together. One thing I would like to continue to evaluate and have more precise data on is when Aiden is receiving his redirects during each block. While at the moment, I know I do not mark down the specific time of the redirect, so when looking back, I cannot recall. I would like to know this information in order to try and avoid having to use a redirect. For example, if he frequently loses a redirect halfway through a block, I could ask him to deliver something to another teacher or send him on a special errand at the "usual" time a redirect is given. This would also allow him to feel heightened importance throughout the day - boosting his confidence and self-esteem. Therefore, one change I will seek to implement this week is the addition of tracking during the block he loses his task.

Aiden shows that he enjoys school and that he loves to learn and enjoys being with his peers. However, through talking with Aiden and his mom I was able to see how his social-emotional learning is impacting his academic learning. As I move forward in working to help Aiden I am aware that I will need to help him find a way to feel connected to his dad and connected to being in the moment in our classroom. As I brainstorm interventions and new approaches to implement I will ask for assistance from our school counselor. I also will not be continuing with the token economy approach. Right now it is apparent that Aiden needs a little extra support as he is lacking that from other areas.

Proposed Motivational Intervention(s)

Proposed Motivational Strategies

I plan to use the TARGET model to help Aiden use his extrinsic motivator of adult attention to fuel his intrinsic motivation to learn all that he can this year in order to show his dad. This intervention will not be class-focused and will solely be something that Aiden and I are working on. Since the task I completed the majority of Aiden's observations in was math, that is where we will begin to apply this intervention.

To begin I have worked with the other class so that whichever math group Aiden falls in he will stay in our classroom for math each day. It became evident that his environment outside of school lacks consistency. When he is within the walls of our classroom I want to provide him the consistency that he needs to feel safe.

Through talking with our school counselor we also decided that helping Aiden understand his emotions and their validity is important, but we need to help him understand appropriate and not appropriate ways to express how we are feeling. Each morning, Aiden completes a check-in on Seesaw that asks him how he is feeling, what he is excited for in the day, and maybe what he is nervous about. It also has a video each day for him to walk that introduces in a kid-friendly way a new mindfulness technique. These range from hot cocoa deep breathing and other breathing exercises to simple yoga, and even teaching him how to complete self-affirmations. Aiden has a list on his desk of these mindfulness techniques and when he begins to feel unmotivated, frustrated, or upset he is able to take his card and step out of the classroom and complete one of the practices. Aiden has really flourished with this and has used it in specials several times and helped a friend who was starting to yell at others find a way to refocus by taking deep breaths.

The final intervention I have implemented is a digital portfolio. Any time Aiden completes a task in class, draws a picture, finishes a project, or is proud of an assessment he is able to take a picture of it. He then uploads this to a digital portfolio we have made and he can voice record a message for his dad explaining what the work is and what he was learning.

As previously mentioned the TARGET model is being met in our daily classroom environment. In order to help Aiden see each aspect in a kid-friendly way I reconfigured some aspects. Since Aiden expressed his interest in Bengal Tigers I have tried to find at least one activity each week that teaches him more about the animal. His reading group last week was based on tiger habitats and it was the most participation he has demonstrated in his group to date. I also take time weekly to check in on tasks that are enjoyable. Students can fill out a google form each Friday that lets them pick their favorite activity from the week and one activity they do not want to do again. We talk about how selecting a test is not a reasonable selection and so far students have provided great feedback. To provide continuous recognition we now have a shout-out wall. Any time during the day students can write a shout-out to a peer who they see showing kindness and leadership to others. During our Friday closing meeting, the shoutouts get read and students get to hang up their shoutouts. The aspects of group, evaluation, and time have remained the same as before.

Rationale

My reasoning for keeping Aiden in our room for math at this point is to allow him a sense of consistency and a safe environment. While the other teacher is just as qualified to aid him in his work, Aiden expressed that he sometimes feels overwhelmed in the other room since he is sitting in another kid's seat and he does not know all about the room. While eventually, our goal

will be for Aiden to use his speaking and listening skills to ask for help when in the other room, I believe that he first needs to find the confidence that he is capable. To help him do this we will keep his math group in our room until Christmas break and we will then re-evaluate. Having him in our room also allows for me to monitor the progress he is making on completing his work independently and working to refocus when he may feel his motivation decreasing.

I wanted to create a social-emotional check-in for Aiden because his home life is constantly changing. Some nights he is with mom, other nights aunt, other nights a babysitter. Depending on where he stays or who he is with impacts him. One place causes him to come to school tired, when I know that he was with that person the night before I immediately begin by having him do something that will allow his body to feel a little rest. Sometimes that means he does not do morning work that day and puts his head down. That fifteen minutes of rest can be all that he needs to feel better until we get into the day's learning. I also wanted to help him understand that he has every right to be sad, or scared, or angry. Those are his emotions and they are valid. However, we have to work to help others know how we are feeling in an appropriate manner. This is a skill kids are not always taught, but is of high importance.

Lastly, I believe the digital portfolio to be the intervention of greatest importance. Prior to introducing this to Aiden, I reached out to his mom and discussed the idea with her. Together we decided this would be an incredible way for Aiden to feel like his dad was not missing all of the exciting events of his school year. While Aiden's dad will not have access to this at the moment, Aiden is recording and posting to it in a manner that mimics a journal. When his dad does see it, Aiden will be able to feel like his dad was present at the moment when Aiden was filled with the joy of that moment's learning.

Results

Since having Aiden in our classroom for math each day he has displayed a shift in his motivation to complete a task. When given his center work he quickly begins, whereas before he would walk around the room and find many reasons why he was not able to get started. Aiden has also taken on the role of helper. When students from the other room have a question about where pencils are or how to complete something they frequently find their way to Aiden who eagerly informs them. Seeing this drastic change in just math is encouraging. It shows that while it may seem little to an adult, feeling safe can change the outlook of a child.

Having Aiden complete morning check-ins has been the most informative for me, but also the most challenging. Some days Aiden comes after morning work is completed. Some days there is an error with technology that makes it a frustrating process. As we continue this year I hope to find a simple and consistent way for Aiden to complete these check-ins. As mentioned in a previous section, the mindfulness techniques to help Aiden understand his emotions and communicate them in a beneficial way has really benefited him. He will ask to take a break when he is getting angry and will then take his card into the hall and work to refocus. I have also heard Aiden talking with peers about how something they did made him feel, why he did not like that, and asking them to please not do it again. This is a huge gain! While we still have moments, like everyone, where we forget to stop and think before we act - they are far less frequent than previously.

The digital portfolio has become a major motivator for Aiden. Knowing his dad will get to see all of his hard work and all he is learning this year has encouraged Aiden to always do his personal best. He has slowed down on assignments, he always double-checks his work, and he has found a sense of personal pride and self-belief in his own ability. At the end of some weeks, Aiden has asked to look through his work on his digital portfolio. When he does this he has

oftentimes made comments about his own growth. Pointing out older work that has what Aiden calls "whoopsies". In conclusion, I am incredibly proud of Aiden. We are just beginning week three of these interventions and the progress is outstanding. As we continue through the year, I look forward to adjusting these interventions and expanding my knowledge of the impact of motivation to learn, and seeking ways to help other students.

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