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As a teaching assistant in a classroom following the TEACCH methodology for two years now I have gained a plethora of insight to behavior management techniques and approaches as well as analysis. On a daily basis I am evaluating behavior, motivations, reinforments and consulting coworkers on possible interventions for various kinds of behaviors. One thing I have learned is that it must be taken into account that interventions cannot be generalized across the board. What works with one child with Autism will certainly not apply to all. While some may view this as a frustrating factor, for a special education teacher this is a daily challenge. It is important to keep informed about resources, data collection and analysis as well as best practices like the DEC recommendations.

I feel that having a well-managed classroom is vital to effective instruction and safety in the classroom environment. There should be clearly identified and revistited rules that can be revised as the school year progress when new and sometimes unforeseeable scenarios arise. The rules should have an identified expectations and the counter of good consistent behavior should be acknowledged and reinforced. I do not support “time out” or harsh consequences, however all rules need to have a reason for existing and without a purpose and consequence there will be a reoccurring disregard for them. I am particularly uncomfortable with yelling and excessive physical contact. I feel that if is present in a classroom it is a clear indication of poor behavior management. Yelling in particular serves as a very telling sign of frustration and is truly only a temporary and ineffective fix in any situation. Ultimately, yelling to regain student attention or reestablish order becomes habitual and a learned behavior for the teacher. There is a difference between a stern or firm voice and screaming or yelling.

During an interview with my cooperating teacher we began to discuss the behavior management techniques in place in her classroom and she expressed disappointment in how little she has to help with behavior issues. She feels there is a disconnect in the manner in which the current traffic light system is managed as well as the caught being good checks because the general education teacher tells the students who have already earned a check that she will take it away. The rules are that once a check or reinforcement is earned is the child’s not to be removed because of a later behavior. The disconnect between the two teachers method of implementation has made the effectiveness of the strategy almost obsolete. The children do not readily acknowledge the check system and the “prize” is so far into the week and the threshold for earning one so high that the students who need that reinforcement never achieve it and those who are consistently good do not earn as many checks as they should if all of the students are on the same criteria because they would earn a prize every single week.

Additionally, she understands that some of her staff is undertrained in their behavior management knowledge but she is unable to supply sufficient support because they do not meet for team meetings and more often then not her suggestions come at a time she is already frustrated and does not present them in a particularly respectful manner. The teacher has jumped at the chance to implement a behavior management strategy I suggested, however the paraprofessional expected to help implement the intervention is not consistent or very patient with the process. The particular strategy is to help a nonverbal student in the class with frequent other directed behavior attend lessons and activities more independently as well behave more appropriately in the. The student has a first then card with real photographs and an image of the timer that he is already familiar with as a signal for a reinforcement between the first then icons. The student references his first icon, attends the outlined activity for 5-7 minutes and once the timer goes off he is allowed to attend his “then” activity which is a preferred table top for 3 minutes. In addition to helping the student be more independent he has become more aware of the class schedule and expectations of his behavior. The student was photograph standing nicely in line, sitting and attending during the lesson etc and these pictures paired with verbal prompts are serving as behavior indicators for the child. The paraprofessional becomes easily frustrated when the child does not immediately respond to a cue, not allowing for wait time, and immediately physically prompts. When the child has been given wait time in the past he has responded well to the visual supports. The teacher said she feels overwhelmed because she is managing the work load of two teachers by herself but that she knows the management strategies are effective, its all about finding the time to create them and finding the support in her staff to implement them effectively.