

Case Study

Student Age: 5
Disability: Autism
Grade level: Pre-school

Emily Stewart
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The student that I am observing for the case study plan I will call “Joey.” Joey is a five-year-old boy who has autism. Joey has emerging verbal skills as he speaks mostly in one-word requests, however he will occasionally put together up to four word sentences. Joey engages in behaviors such as hand flapping and making a “growling” type sound when he is over stimulated. Joey also likes to take a collection of toys or objects such as books of figurines and line them up in rows. Joey has good large motor skills, however his small motor skills are still emerging. For example Joey has trouble using a scissors and eating utensils. Joey has some sensory issues especially with different textures and smells. For example he does not like getting things on his hands such as paint or glue and he is also sensitive to different smells. One of Joey’s greatest challenges is socialization skills as he often engages in side-by-side play and rarely interacts with other children. He often has trouble sharing with other children and because of his lack of language will take things away from other children. Joey is not aggressive in nature and does enjoy being hugged and tickled. Joey also enjoys using the computer, reading books and doing puzzles. Joey strengths include his memory skills and his ability to read site words. Joey’s parents have dreams for Joey that includes him being able to live independently or semi-independently and become an active member of society. Joey’s mother would also like him to learn more verbalization skills and be able to communicate verbally. His parent’s would also like Joey to be able to get a job someday and believe a job using a computer may be best because of his strong ability and interest in using a computer.

Joey is currently included in a general education pre-school class and is accompanied by an aid. The pre-school is called Small People Preschool and is a half-day program. The room has three adults including one teacher, one teacher’s aid, and Joey’s aid. The pre-school has twenty-one children in the class. The pre-school consists of different classrooms in which the students are grouped by age. The class Joey is in consists of four to five year olds who are entering kindergarten in the fall. The school as well as Joey specific classroom is clean and is full of good materials. The school has a “motor room” that all classes have access to, as well as an outdoors play area. The classroom is arranged in centers and also has a group area on a carpet. There seemed to be a sense of community in the classroom as student were always working with other students and helping each other out. I noticed several children helping Joey as they completed an art project together. Joey’s parents report having difficulty getting Joey included in a pre-school program. This pre-school was the third program that they tried. His parents main goal in having Joey in an inclusive pre-school is to prepare him for the upcoming kindergarten year in which it will be the first year Joey is included in the public school setting. Previous years he had been in the Pre primary impaired classroom at the intermediate school

district (ISD). The pre-school program at Small People consists of the children coming in hanging up their coats/bags and finding a spot on the carpet. The students then look at the calendar and the weather and dress the "bear" for the appropriate weather. Then two children (this is rotated) share show and tell. Then the teacher demonstrates how to complete the art project that they will do that day. The teacher then allows the student to play at the centers, which include areas such as science, art, music, etc. The Students are allowed to pick which center they would like to play at, however only four students can go to a center. Throughout the play time the teacher calls over about four students at a time and has them complete some type of project. After all students have completed the art project then the students go back to the carpet and the teacher reads them a book and sings songs with them. The last activity that is done is snack time and quiet time looking at books until it is time to go home.

Joey is not provided with speech, occupational, or physical therapy at this pre-school setting. His parents provide all of these therapies outside of school. Although he does not receive these services at pre-school his teachers incorporate a lot of large/small motor activities as well as opportunities to practice speech and hear others speaking.

Joey's aid assisted him throughout the afternoon, however tries to be as least intrusive as possible. She will rotate around the room and assist other children as well as Joey. For example during group time at the carpet the Joey's aid will sit amongst the children (not necessarily next to Joey) and will monitor all students and assist any students that may need help. The teacher and students came up with a variety of things to help Joey in the classroom. For example when the children line up to wash their hands before snack it is known that Joey goes second in line because he has difficulty waiting in line. Nothing is said, but all the children know that Joey goes second. At circle time it was reported that Joey has difficulty staying on the carpet and tends to wander away so the aid will provide Joey with a picture of him sitting at the carpet to act as a visual cue as to what is expected of him. Joey is a visual learner and pictures seem to help when they are used in the classroom. Joey is also able to get the extra support when completing the art project of the day because this is done in small groups of children of about four so Joey is able to receive additional support if needed. This seems to work because the other students are able to receive extra support also if it is needed because of the small group instruction and Joey is not singled out as the child with a disability. As stated before Joey has some sensory issues including not liking certain textures including glue and paint. The teacher allows Joey to use clothespins to hold onto the sponge when the class sponge paints so Joey does not get the paint on his hand. The teacher makes several adaptations such as this in order to accommodate for Joey's sensitivity to sensory issues. As stated before Joey is a visual learner and the classroom he is in accommodates his learning style. For example all the materials in the classroom are located in the different center areas on shelves. On each shelf there are pictures of the materials that are located on that part of the shelf. This helps Joey to return materials to the appropriate place in the room. The classroom teacher also provides the class with a picture schedule of the sequence of events that will occur that day at school. This was originally only done individually with Joey because transitions are a difficult thing for him and visual cues helped that to go smoother, however the teacher decided that all the students could benefit from having a picture schedule so therefore it was made in to a class activity. This classroom is also very music orientated in that the teacher sings songs with in learning all the time. For example the students were learning about colors and the teacher had a song about each color. The classroom teacher also sings a "clean up" song when it is time for the children to clean up and a good-bye song when it is time for the children to go home for the day. Joey responds well to

music. It was noted by his parents that at the first pre-school he attended one problem that came up was that Joey did not clean up when it was time. At this pre-school he independently will clean up in the classroom when he hears the clean up song.

The instructional strategies in the classroom seem to be effective for Joey as well as the other children in the classroom. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is definitely being applied in this classroom. The teacher uses all addresses all areas of multiple intelligences in her instruction. She specifically does activities that involve musical and spatial intelligences, but all intelligences are addressed. Joey's mother believe Joey is learning a great deal from this classroom because the teacher uses music and pictures and a key component to her room and these are both things that enhance Joey's learning.

The teacher also did a pretty good job of creating the community feeling in the classroom although on a few instances I saw were this could be improved. For example I observed a child backing away from Joey when Joey started pointing at his shirt which has a picture of "Bob the builder" on it. When Joey starting getting closer to the child the child started to back away and avoid Joey. In seeing this incident I would recommend that the teacher engage the class in a variety of activities that would help build the feeling of community in the room. Activities that involve all the children and force them to interact and work together to solve a problem would be useful in this particular situation. I would also recommend that the services of a speech, occupational, and physical therapist be brought into the classroom to work with Joey in particular but also with all the students. At the young age of four and five I noticed several children who could use assistance with small motor coordination as well as speech services. Joey specifically has problems with fine motor skills and could benefit also from additional speech therapy (in addition to his sessions outside of school). As a last recommendation I would recommend to get rid of Joey's aid, not because she is not a good aid but because I feel she is unnecessary. It seems that the classroom teacher and the teachers aid are able to provide enough support to all the children in the class including Joey that Joey's aid is really not necessary.