Reducing the Frequency and Duration of a Six-year-old Child’s Crying during Transitions

Jessica Servis
Managing Behavior
I Introduction

Mikayla is a six year old female in a resource room five days a week for writing, reading and math. The student attends a full day from 8 a.m. to 3:00. The student’s verbal IQ is 79, performance IQ is 63, making her full scale IQ 70. The student’s academic functioning level is on a kindergarten level and she is in the first grade. She is classified Specific Learning Disability (SLD).

II Subject and Setting

The student begins the day in a first grade regular education classroom. At 8:15 she is pulled to the resource room located at the opposite end of the school grounds for reading until 10:30. She is instructed in a room with three other students whom are classified for various things. She then transitions to the lunch room for 30 minutes. She is picked up from the lunch room by her homeroom teacher and then met in the classroom to be pulled by the resource teacher again for writing and math. She then transitions back to the first grade classroom where she spends the remainder of the day except for specials. Mikayla is transitioning approximately 9-11 times in a school day.

The target behavior occurs more in the morning and on days with a modified schedule. The crying also occurs more in the morning, during the initial separation from mom. The behavior also tends to occur when new information is presented.

III Baseline Data and Data Analysis

Baseline Data
The behavior was measured by an ABC analysis and a functional assessment. The data was collected over six days from 8am to approximately 12:45 daily. The behavior observed was crying. Crying is when the student had tears running down her face and began sobbing. The behavior was consistently preceded by a transition or a change in the student’s schedule.

The data collected showed the perceived function was to communicate with the teacher and as an emotional release of anxiety and frustration. The actual consequence was an oral reprimand each time. The data shows an ascending trend at the beginning of the week and a descending trend at the end of the week in transition. The data did not show a pattern for a change in the student’s schedule, since it was unexpected.

From the data, one can conclude the student should be taught several skills. The first skill to be taught is to ask for help, the second is how to make a complaint, and the third is how to express your feelings.

Data Analysis

The behavior of crying appears to serve the function of soothing anxiety and meeting the human needs of safety and belonging.

IV Behavioral Objective

Given social skills training, pre-correction plus praise, and an on level curriculum, Mikayla will cry no more than three times if appropriate for the duration of 12 weeks ending June 14, 2007.

V. Intervention

There were four strategies used in the intervention; social skills, curriculum, pre-correction plus praise, and a change in placement. Social skills streaming and pre-
correction plus praise will be the short term intervention for the behavior. Change in curriculum and placement will be the long term intervention used over the next few years.

Mikayla will be taught the social skills of “Asking for Help” and “Knowing Your Emotions.” The social skills will help reduce the anxiety of new material being presented throughout the school day. It will also help her to understand her feelings and express them. The curriculum change is from a grade level program to a direct instruction program Language for Learners that teaches on the student’s academic level. The curriculum was tested. The date collected showed an increase in attention and response.

The last intervention changes Mikayla’ placement to a self–contained classroom which limits the number of daily transitions she must make. The placement takes place in the fall of the 2007-2008 school year.

VI. Results

Mikayla is still learning the steps of “Asking for Help.” She has been using the skill in my classroom and in her homeroom class. I am currently working with Mom and Dad to transfer the skill into life especially in the home. Once she has master the first skill, instruction will begin on the second social skill. Pre-correction plus praise is the reinforcement being used with the social skill and with the transitioning. By reviewing the procedure for transition with Mikayla and then praising her verbally and with a sticker chart for success, she can now successfully transition based on a week without crying.

VII Reflections and Recommendations for the Future
The intervention was very successful. The behavior of crying decreased to zero times per week. It took longer than expected to teach the social skill and have transfer into the home. For the future Mikayla will be placed in a self-contained classroom, using a direct instruction curriculum for math and reading. Her teacher next year will use a behavior modification plan based on pre-correction plus praise. She will continue to learn one social skill per month for the next two years.