

## **TE 803 – Student Case Study**

Second Semester 2013

Student – Chloe

### **Step 1 - Proposal**

Throughout the course of the 2012-2013 school year, I have built strong relationships with my students and have made connections with them that make for more productive and well-behaved students. Some students, however, are just simply difficult to connect with and their low performance and behavior in class is evident of this. On the other hand, there are students in which I have built a strong relationship with, yet they still have low performance in class and their behavior continues to be disruptive. One of these students is named Chloe. Chloe and I have great conversations, she is a generally happy person, she cares for others, and she rarely shows any dislike for being in school. Chloe is an interesting case to me. Typically, I see students with bad behavior as the ones that do not want to be in school, show no respect for others, and are often angry and mean individuals. Chloe is different.

Chloe has a couple major issues with behavior that I would like to focus on overcoming in this case study. First, she is extremely talkative. Chloe will talk with any student that is sitting next to her. My mentor teacher and I often joke that she would be talking to a brick wall if that were the only thing near her. This talking is very disruptive. While she is not one to yell across the room, Chloe likes to talk to her neighbors at a normal indoor conversation noise level. When she strikes up conversations with her classmates next to her, they will most likely join in. At this point, both Chloe and her neighbor are oblivious to the lesson at hand and are distracting the students around them. Although, she does not mean to be a bother to other students in the class. This leads into the other problem that Chloe possesses, general disinterest. Chloe completes her work about 85% of the time. The quality of work, however, exemplifies her constant talking. The work is often partially done, is the bare minimum quality, and shows little interest in the material in general.

I feel that the problems Chloe exhibits are interconnected and by working to overcome one will help fix the other. I want to use this case study to focus on a student that is at the brink of falling behind in class. Chloe is on edge of a below average grade and if her actions in class are not fixed now, they could easily become worse in the years to come.

## **Notes from Class Input**

Isolation

Sit her next to non-talkers

Record how she talks

## **Hypothesis**

Differentiate instruction to meet the needs of her and others like her. Provide a hook that gets her interested.

Motivation

Seat her next to people that will work with her on work but will not talk.

## **Focuses**

Low test grades

Class work and homework grades slipped at the turn from MP1 to MP2

Poor Behavior

## **Step 2 - Hypothesis**

Based on my review of related literature, the student's stake in her behavior, and my own behavior, I have developed three hypotheses that can explain the behavior of my student, Chloe. By developing these hypotheses, I can better explain the behavior of Chloe, and can thus, curb the misbehavior and help her to excel in social studies.

Hypothesis #1: Chloe struggles with test taking and preparation skills.

The second semester is nearly two weeks in. There have not yet been any summative assessments this semester, and the class work assignments are low in number. I, therefore, chose to examine Chloe's grades from the first semester. One of the largest trends I noticed was continual low achievement on summative assessments. From vocabulary tests to the district level tests, Chloe performed at a low level. Because these scores are not isolated, I am led to believe that a problem lies in her test taking and or preparation skills. To get Chloe back on the right track, it may mean more involvement by me during the period before the test. By utilizing techniques to help her study and take tests, I can assist Chloe in performing higher on her summative assessments.

Hypothesis #2: Chloe has lost her motivation for social studies because of a lack of differentiated instruction that caters to her learning needs.

In continuing to examine Chloe's first semester social studies grades, another trend became evident. This trend is a slippery slope of poor class work assignments from the beginning of the semester to the end. During the first marking period, Chloe submitted assignments that were completed fully and showed good to excellent understanding. As the semester went on, however, and the second marking period began, Chloe's work began to slip in completeness and quality. My hypothesis to this problem deals with motivation. Marzano writes about the relationship between motivation and achievement. "If students are motivated to learn the content in a given subject, their achievement in that subject will most likely be good. If students are not motivated to learn the content, their achievement will likely be limited." Chloe's behavior in class, in terms of her talking, is a visible indicator of a lack of motivation. This behavior exemplifies the self-system theory of Marzano because Chloe is prioritizing some goals over those of her social studies work. The behavior has appeared to become worse and worse with time. At the same time, her grades are slipping. A slip in motivation levels can come from a number of factors. While there are some that I may not be able to control, including family or personal issues, I can have an impact on motivation in the classroom. It is quite possible that I have not differentiated my instruction enough to meet the needs of Chloe. It is also possible that my hooks are not catching Chloe in the excitement of the material.

Hypothesis #3: Chloe's performance in social studies is directly related to the students she sits near and interacts with in class.

Students have had assigned seats for the entirety of the first semester. Around the end of the first marking period and beginning of the second, each seat was moved. Chloe went from sitting by a student who seldom talked and was virtually never off task, to a student who is constantly off task. Having a new classmate to sit near could have drastically altered Chloe's performance. The new student sitting next to her, Sara, may be influencing her by talking to her more or creating a distraction in many other ways. Lemov has written on the implementation of engaging techniques that "will constantly draw students into the work of the class and keep them focused on learning." If I am not providing an engaging lesson, students such as Chloe are more likely to latch onto the distractions surrounding them.

#### Works Cited

Lemov, Doug (2010) *Teach like a champion: 49 techniques that put students on the path to college*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

### Step 3 - Analysis

Thus far, my case study on my student, Chloe has been proposed and analyzed. While continuing to observe Chloe, I have also worked alone and with fellow colleagues to develop plans of action that will help to curb the behavior and instill a sense of motivation within her. The following are two plans of action that I feel will be most beneficial to act upon.

The first plan I have developed involves differentiated instruction that will meet the learning needs of Chloe, while also allowing the other students to learn in their preferred manner. This method involves giving students the opportunity to choose among various options to complete an assignment. In turn, students have a greater motivation to complete assignments. Marzano states, in *Motivation*, that, "Allowing students to work on long-term projects of their own choosing encourages motivation." Chloe is one who talks quite frequently and about topics that do not pertain to the lesson at hand. By giving her a choice on how to complete an assignment, I hope to turn that constant talking into something that is about the lesson at hand, and is thus beneficial to the both her and the class.

By allowing Chloe, and the rest of the class, to choose how they would like to go about learning material, I am helping to engage, not only Chloe, but also the other students around her. In addition, I am allowing for Chloe to utilize what she is strong at, talking with her peers, and put it to good use by talking with them about the assignment. Students, such as Chloe, have the opportunity to work with their peers, while others can use their artistic ability, read, write, or perform, etc. Differentiated instruction has the ability to be beneficial to each and every student.

On the other hand, there are some drawbacks to this plan of action. First, giving Chloe the option to interact with other students could possibly backfire. She may simply use the opportunity to talk even more with her peers about this and that not related to the topic at hand. As a result, it has the potential to get other students off task because Chloe is speaking with them about non-related things. In terms of the lesson itself, it can be difficult to allow for choice each day. That means more planning, more oversight, and more grading on a day-to-day basis. More work for me means that I have a greater difficulty narrowing in on areas students need improvement individually and as a class.

The second plan, that I have developed, involves a simple seating change. This plan is not to seclude Chloe from the other students, but instead place her near the students that are most engaged and interactive in the lesson. Instead of secluding her, as I have attempted recently with no results, I will put her in the middle of all of the action. I am encouraged by this plan of action, because I feel that students are greatly impacted by a seating change. In *Love and Logic*, Fay states that, "from my observations it seems there is some kind of magic involved when we change where the kid is placed." It is my hope that the engagement will wear off onto Chloe, and instead of trying to talk with her peers near her about unrelated

topics, she will participate in the lesson and will be part of meaningful conversations related to the lesson.

The benefits, in this approach, are not only for Chloe but also for her peers. By becoming more engaged and increasing her participation in lesson, she is adding valuable input into the lesson and class assignments. So, while she learns the material better, her fellow classmates are also benefiting by hearing what she has to say.

On the flip side, this move could also backfire. It is possible that the opposite could happen and Chloe's unrelated talking could wear off onto the classmates around her. In this case, the students who were more engaged and interactive in the lesson at first would now be distracted and possibly off task. In turn, no one would learn the material at hand.

Given the two final plans of action that I have developed, I have made the decision to continue my case study with plan two. To begin this plan of action, the first step is to make the decision on which students Chloe should sit near. Right away, three of my most engaged and intelligent students come to mind. It helps considerably that Chloe has no problem getting along with any of her peers. It also helps that three students are not ones to get off task. If Chloe begins to speak with them at an inappropriate time or about unrelated material, these are the students who will completely ignore her.

After moving Chloe, I will observe and assess how the change of seating has gone. I will do this in multiple ways, including day-to-day observation of her talking and attention to work, the impact on the classmates around her, and the quality and understanding exhibited through her assignments and assessments.

It is my hope that this change will be beneficial to all of those involved. Too often, I feel that teachers are quick to move students away from their peers, when the fact of the matter is, students can improve greatly, behaviorally and motivationally, when seated next to the right classmates. By putting this plan into action and making observations and assessments, I would like to see this statement hold true. I firmly believe that Chloe is an A student, not one in fear of falling behind. This plan will hopefully bring that out in her while being great for the rest of the class as a result.

#### Works Cited

Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

*Teaching with Love and Logic: Taking Control of the Classroom*, by Jim Fay and David Funk. Golden, CO: Love and Logic Press.

#### **Step 4 – Final Evaluation**

This leading teaching period has been a quite hectic one for me. I enjoy what I am doing so much in the classroom, yet sometimes it is difficult to keep track of all that is going on, not to mention the Michigan State work that I must complete and the once looming job search that I completed. With all of this going on in my mind at once, I needed to remind myself for that 3<sup>rd</sup> hour each day, keeping tabs on the progress of Chloe was vital to achieving any results from this case study. When, met with 130 students per day, it was sometimes difficult to not have other focuses in the classroom. All the same, I implemented two plans of action in order to curb the talkative behavior of Chloe and for her to be a better learner overall in the classroom.

The first plan of action involved differentiated instruction in my lessons. By giving Chloe, and the other students, more avenues for learning the material, I was helping cater to a variety of learning styles. Chloe learns best by interacting and conversing with others. In the last month, I included cooperative learning whenever possible, whether this was a simple converse with your partner or a lesson long activity of working alongside fellow classmates. Chloe seemed to truly benefit from this new and more frequent structure to the lessons I was teaching. I watched her learn from others as well as teach them what she knew. At the same time, however, Chloe did not always make the best decisions. When I put her in a group to work, she did great! When she chose whom she wanted to work with, she was completely off task and did not learn from the lesson. This is an important thing to learn as the class proceeds to the last quarter of the year, both for Chloe and the rest of the students.

The other plan that I implemented was a seating change for Chloe. To stop her talking during class, I had previously moved her to a spot in which she was isolated. While she became a bit more quite, I wanted to see her using her talking to a benefit. I wanted Chloe to be active and involved in the class. After speaking with Jason during step 3, I realized that moving her near students that were on task and in tune with the lesson daily was the best option. At first, this move was not a good one. Chloe still continued to talk. However, she began to realize that the students around her were not talking back as much as she would like. This helped Chloe to not only quiet down, but to also clue into the lesson on a daily basis.

I am very happy with how this case study went. I feel as though Chloe, with the help of my plans of action, truly made some ground in improving her behavior and learning the daily material. Her grades have steadily increased and she has become quite a bit more active in daily lessons. I am happy to see this growth in Chloe, with only minor setbacks! I will continue to use what I have learned for the remainder of the school year and I hope to see her behavior and grade only improve further.

## Works Cited

Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

*Teaching with Love and Logic: Taking Control of the Classroom*, by Jim Fay and David Funk. Golden, CO: Love and Logic Press.