Danielle McLean

Design Project

CEP 802

“I didn’t Get It”

**Motivation Case:**

Michael is in a Pre-AP Biology class and often does not complete his homework and class work. Since Pre-AP classes are not mandatory, he has had opportunities to drop the class if it is too challenging, and he has decided to remain in the class. He will often come to me as I am collecting the homework and tell me that he didn’t do the assignment because he didn’t know what to do. I have tutoring before and after school several days a week and my students know that I do not mind if they stop by just to ask quick homework questions. Even assignments with very clear directions or assignments where the answers were able to be found in the textbook or in notes seem to give Mike “trouble.” When the students are working independently on assessments in class, Mike is often busy examining his pencil, staring off into space, or drawing pictures on his paper rather than working to complete the assignment. Whenever I ask him to begin his work he says “I already know how to do this and I want to do it at home.” If I ask if he needs help, he says “no.” I usually try to encourage Mike to try a problem, and he reluctantly does. He seems to know the answers but will not work on any more problems after I have moved on to another student who needs help. Mike also has not come to any tutoring before or after school to ask questions about the assignments that he says he didn’t understand. When I ask him why do does not come to tutoring, he claims that he rides the bus and cannot make it. I have several other students who ride the bus and are able to come to tutoring, so I know he is just avoiding coming to tutoring. I am becoming very confused because he tells me he understands everything then turns around and says he could not do his work because he didn’t know how to do it. He makes no attempt to ask for help during class or outside of class.

When students work on labs or other group activities, Mike just sits there and watches everyone else. He does not contribute to the group unless the teacher or another student tells him he has no other choice. Mike often sits and watches his group answer questions on their lab sheet and he just tries to copy answers from other students in the group when they are done rather than try to help come up with the answers. He says he knows what he is doing but will not attempt to complete his work or contribute to the group. It seems that hands on activities would entice him to participate, but he still chooses not to be a part of the activities. Because he does not contribute to group work, many of his classmates view him as lazy and do not want to be in a group with him. Whenever work is due, he acts like he could not complete the assignment because he didn’t know how, even though he has had opportunities to ask the teacher and classmates for help.

Mike is usually not a behavior problem in class. In fact, he is very quiet and tends to try to avoid attention. He seems to get along with several other boys in the class and usually sits with them when they are allowed to choose their own groups. He still does not do his work even when he sits with his friends. The teacher often overhears Mike telling his friends that this class is too easy and that his grade is an A, and he doesn’t even turn his work in. While Mike puts forth a great deal of effort making others believe he is knowledgeable, my goal is to help him actually become knowledgeable. This self-defeating concept that he exhibits, known as impression management, is prohibiting him from learning (Stipek p. 75-76).

In reality, Mike’s grades are very low because he never completes his work and most likely never studies for tests. Although he says he already knows everything, his test and quiz grades are also very low. After seeing his low test scores, he goes back to telling me that he didn’t understand the material. Mike still has not shown up for any tutoring that has been scheduled with me. At this point in the year, it does not look like Mike will be able to pass the class. Mike’s parents have been contacted but do not seem concerned that he is failing and is not doing his work. I have asked them to arrange for him to attend tutoring so that he can get caught up, but they do not seem to agree that he needs to come for extra help. They have also told me that they will not let him switch out of Pre-AP biology. They are convinced that the kids in the regular biology class will be a negative influence on him both behaviorally and academically. It seems that Mike and his parents are avoiding the fact that he needs to change his habits to transfer to a less advanced course.

**Motivational Assessment:**

1. Mike is a high school freshmen boy in a Pre-AP biology class. He acts like the class is easy when his friends are around then he acts like he is clueless when an assignment is due, and he has not completed it. My theory is that he feels threatened by the classroom with thirty advanced and very driven students who are all very determined to achieve good grades. He feels like he has to compete with the other kids in the class and is afraid that if he asks for help, other students will think he is dumb. Mike does not do his work because he claims he already knows the material and brags to his friends about how high his grade is even though he does not do his work. When assignments are due and he does not have them done, he tells me that he didn’t know what to do. He is failing the class despite several attempts by the teacher to help him. His parents will not let him move out of the pre-AP class into a regular class. It seems that the student is in over his head but doesn’t want his “smart” friends to know he is struggling. His parents are also not helping to situation by denying that he can’t handle the more rigorous class.
2. It seems that a few basic needs are not being met. I have made numerous attempts to help him in a discreet way or even outside of class where his classmates would not know that he is asking for help. The student does have friends in the class but does not appear to feel safe and accepted. He feels like other students are judging him based on his ability, and he feels like he must lie so that they think he is doing well. It appears that his esteem needs are not being met and that he is not confident at all. This is a large factor in his grade being low. He is so intimidated that he refuses to even attempt assignments for fear that he will struggle with them and be perceived as unintelligent by his classmates. The teacher needs to find a way where she can place him with students whom he feels comfortable with or in another setting where he does not feel threatened if he makes a mistake. His parents also need to come to terms with the fact that Mike’s problems need to be addressed before he fails the class and has to repeat biology.

I am guessing that Mike would be motivated by good grades. He seems to avoid work in order to avoid feeling like he failed. He brags to friends about high grades and appears to be proud of himself when he talks about his make-believe A’s. If I could show him that he is capable of really getting good grades, he would feel more confident and be more willing to complete assignments. The teacher, student, and parents need to make an agreement about tutoring where he can come in and work one on one without feeling like he has to compete with and be judged by his classmates whom he views as smarter than he is. Hopefully, Mike will slowly gain confidence and will attempt his work and begin earning good grades.

1. TASK:

Tasks in class are often done in groups or are some form of lab or hands on activity. This should engage students and prompt them to be involved in the learning process. Instructions are always clearly written in their lab activity outline. Part of our pre lab and post lab discussion is tying the lab to larger concepts in the class. Activities that are not lab or group activities are directly related to class discussions, notes, or the textbook and can be done as long as the student is willing to put forth the effort to do the assignment.

**Authority**

Students are usually allowed to choose their groups to work in for group activities and they are allowed to choose their own science fair topics and other project topics. Students are often asked to share their input in class and can put their own personality into assignments. I also try to allow students to help with classroom duties like passing out papers or keeping score during review games. Even if they do not have the highest grades in the class, this allows them to feel like they play a role in helping the class run smoothly.

**Recognition**

Students are recognized both publically and privately for achievements. When students do a good job on an essay question, they may be asked to read it out loud to the class as a good example of work. They also get individual feedback, verbal, and written, on their papers. I also try to praise students for simple things like turning in their work or for a high quiz or test grade. Students are also recognized for helping classmates or helping me out during class.

**Grouping**

Group work is designed to be collaborative rather than competitive. Students often have to work together to set up an experiment and come to a conclusion. Students also have the opportunity to choose their own groups so that they can be with students they feel comfortable with. Occasionally, I choose groups just to change the dynamics of the groups and to avoid behavior issues. Mike is usually allowed to choose his groups so that he is comfortable in his group.

**Evaluation**

My district requires students to be able to re-do assignments and re-test. Students can do one re-test per nine week period, although Mike has never taken advantage of the re-test policy. In addition to tests, students are given various types of assignments to show what they know. I do a variety of book assignments, short answer questions, group and individual projects, discussion about demos, labs, visual aids/video clips/animations, and a small amount of note taking and lecture. If re-teaching needs to take place, we usually do it as a large group, but I may ask student to do a jigsaw activity or some other activity where they take ownership of the topic.

**Time**

I do not always have class time to give students who need more time. Our curriculum does not allow us to take extra time, but students usually have opportunities to take work home or come in before school to finish. They also know that they can come in before or after school to get help if they need it. Unfortunately, Mike does not take work home and finish it, and he does not come to tutoring unless he is forced to.

**Motivational Intervention:**

**Step 1:**

I will first conduct an informal interview with Mike in order to better understand his self-efficacy beliefs in order to develop a plan to help him. I would like to know what his opinion of his grades and abilities are. This will allow me to see if my opinions about why his performance is so low are accurate.

Questions that will be asked:

1. Do you think you are capable of earning higher grades in this class?
2. Are you concerned with how you are viewed by your classmates?
3. Would you act differently if you work with different students on assignments and projects?
4. Would you like to earn better grades?
5. Why do you think your grades are low right now?
6. What do you think will happen if we do not address the problems you are having?
7. Do you have any reasonable ideas for a solution?

**Step 2:**

The teacher will listen to the student in a non-judgmental way and interpret the student’s comments. The teacher should also refrain from making recommendations at this point. This will allow the student a chance to be heard without a fear of being judged and without the teacher’s ideas influencing his thoughts. This allows the student to have a bit of authority and control over the situation.

**Step 3:**

Mike and I will choose a few specific problems to address and isolate his excuses for not coming to tutoring or completing his work. I will try to ask probing questions that get to the bottom of why the Mike is using these excuses instead of doing his work. Once he realizes why he is avoiding work, then he can better understand how to fix his avoidance behaviors.

**Step 4:**

Mike will connect each excuse with a realistic natural consequence. This will give him a little control over the situation and will ensure that he sees the reason for the consequences set in place. This will also prevent him from feeling like he is being dictated to; he will have control over the consequences he receives. I will help ensure that these consequences are enforced when he does not follow through with our plan.

**Step 5:**

I will also ask the Mike to come up with solutions for each problem that he identified and then discuss them with him to clarify a solution for each problem. Mike needs to be accountable for keeping track of his success. If he tracks his grades and sees his grade improve, he may be more inclined to continue to turn in work as he gains confidence. We will develop a plan for him to monitor his grades by logging each grade he receives in a data table. At the end of each week, we will assess his progress. Hopefully, he will see his grade increase and he will gain motivation to keep improving his grades.

**Step 6:**

I will need to help Mike monitor his progress and enforce the consequences that he chose for each action. Together, we will need to come up with a plan for regular tutoring sessions. Each unit builds on prior knowledge from the unit before, so tutoring would help to catch him up and build confidence. I will also strive to deliver material in a way that plays on his interests. If I am not able to do this during class, hopefully, I will be able to during tutoring. Ideally, the parents will also be involved in the monitoring of the plan and will help to enforce the tutoring schedule. Mike will also be given the option to choose his own groups for group activities so that he has students that he feels comfortable working with. Mike should also be encouraged to set short term goals prior to beginning a task (Brophy, p. 113).

**Step 7:**

I will continue to monitor and follow up with Mike and give feedback and recognition for the work he completes. I will check to see how he feels about the system, see if there are any changes that need to be made and make sure the student thinks it is effective. It is important for me to give feedback and recognize Mike’s success. According to Brophy, “Efficacy training involves exposing students to a planned set of challenges and providing them with modeling, instruction, and feedback” (p. 112). At the beginning of class activities, I will work one-on one with Mike to model the steps necessary to complete the activity. During this time, I can provide performance feedback as he works. In this case, private feedback and recognition is ideal so that he does not feel embarrassed; however, it is essential to give feedback and guidance. Since I am not able to evaluate mike differently than the other students, he will need to learn how to adapt to evaluation standards. This is most likely a plan that Mike and I will continue until the end of the year.

**Rational for the Plan:**

I feel this strategy will be effective for a number of reasons. It addresses most of the aspects of the TASK framework, especially the “authority” aspect of it. I want mike to take control and understand why he feels the way he does in class and understand what he can do to earn better grades. Since Mike is so concerned about how he is perceived by his classmates, this will allow him to improve his grade and not draw attention to the fact that he is seeking help. Mike will also be forced to stop making excuses and take responsibility for his learning. Brophy discusses that the “confrontational strategy” in which the teacher works with the student to avoid excuses and takes steps to improve their situation is more effective than making assignments easier to make the student feel more confident (p. 118-119). Mike will also be put in somewhat of an authority position and will be able to set his own goals and strategies to accomplish tasks. He will also be asked to verbalize these goals and strategies and will receive feedback to emphasize his success and his prior performance (Brophy, p.113). Hopefully, these strategies will be tools that Mike can use in order to be successful in school.

**Outcomes:**

Since starting this plan with Mike, about two weeks ago, I have seen a hint of improvement. He at least has started to complete more work in class. I still have to encourage him to start on assignments, but he is better about trying to work on them after I have moved on to help another student. We agreed to meet for tutoring after school one day a week. He showed up for tutoring one time, but then did not show up the next week and went back to making excuses about why he was unable to make it. The consequence Mike identified for missing tutoring was to call his parents and schedule a make-up session and to schedule the next tutoring session with them agreeing to the time. This way, he can’t use the excuse that he didn’t have a ride home. I will be curious to see if he shows up for our next session. There has not been a significant improvement in test or quiz scores yet. We have noticed that his daily grades have improved slightly. When he inputs his grades into his spreadsheets, there are fewer zeros than there were the first week. I am assuming that this will not be an overnight fix and both of us must be patient. I would also like to see more involvement from his parents so that he has support at home too. When Mike called them to schedule tutoring with them, they sounded irritated that we were bothering them with calling. I also talked to a few of his other teachers to see what they had to say about Mike’s grades in their classes. It seems that he is still failing his others classes, but several of his teachers said that he has been making more of an effort to complete work in class. I am encouraged to see that although we have a long way to go; Mike is making an effort to improve his grade.

 “Children see that competencies are valued and rewarded in school and elsewhere, their own sense of self –worth becomes partly based on their perceptions of their intellectual competencies” (Stipek, p. 75).  Mike needs to boost his confidence and stop trying to avoid work in order to fool people into thinking he is competent in class. I would like to see Mike increase achievement so that he does not need to fool anyone. Ideally, I will be able to teach Mike that school is not only about getting good grades and looking smart. I want him to appreciate the value of learning and of being proud of the knowledge he gains. If the plan works, I will be able to show Mike that he is capable of doing well in school and having fun while learning. The plan will allow him to take control of the situation and do it privately so that his classmates will never know.

References:

Brophy, J. (2010). *Motivating students to learn* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Stipek, D. (2002). *Motivation to learn: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc.