

Daily 5 - Trouble Shooting Supporting the Barometer Child

The number one question we hear regarding Daily 5 is what to do about students that struggle with behavior. You know the students we're talking about, they don't seem to have the ability to stick with their Daily 5 choice or build stamina. The majority of our students, when given clear instruction on how to be independent (using the 10 Steps to Independence) will learn to self-manage in no time. However, we all have one or two students (some years even a few more) who struggle with their behavior for a variety of reasons. Children, who come to school without the intuitive skills to learn to be independent, may require extra tools or different instruction to build their stamina at a pace that enables them to be successful.

This video is the first in a series regarding "Trouble Shooting Daily 5, Working with Kids Who Struggle with Independence." It features some of our favorite Trouble Shooting Tools being used with Alise, a second grade student who has a very difficult time staying in one spot and reading the whole time. Her off task behaviors are inhibiting her ability to grow as a reader.

As you watch this video clip, you will see the tools we often use with at risk children of all ages. We provide these tools to help them learn to become independent: Square yards of fabric in a variety of textures; Sand timers of various lengths; Kinesthetic materials the student enjoys (for example: play dough, a small bag of pattern blocks, legos or other manipulatives).

Prior to this video, the teacher had been noticing that Alise struggled to stay in one spot and read the whole time. The class was getting more and more frustrated with her constant disruptions of their Daily 5 choices. Most importantly however, this bright little girl was getting very little practice time, which was resulting in lower than expected reading improvement.

The classroom teacher had already done the first layer of Trouble Shooting The Daily 5: "Reflecting on the Teaching Practice." This means she took a very reflective and honest look at herself first. This process involves asking the following questions:

Did I teach The 10 Steps to Independence explicitly? Did I visually keep my eyes and body away for the barometer child? Did I consistently use a respectful voice level and tone? (No sharp tongue?)

Once she could answer yes to all three questions, she moved on to the second layer of Trouble shooting: Group Dynamics

After noticing Alise's consistent inability to elicit the behaviors on the I chart, the teacher gently told Alise, in front of the whole class, "I noticed you were having a difficult time staying in one spot and reading the whole time." Just saying those words helped alleviate her classmate's frustration that perhaps the teacher had not noticed Alise's behavior (as if she could miss it!). She then invited Alise to stay in at recess with her to practice the correct behaviors. This was not

really an invitation, but the message was delivered in such a way that there was no detection of frustration, judgment or anger in the teacher's voice. As teachers, when we eliminate inappropriate tones of voice, we help create students who will be more tolerant of others and talk to each other with similar respect. Once children hear a teacher talking with a disrespectful tone of voice, it gives license for members of the class to do the same.

When we ask kids to stay in at recess to practice, they do just that; practice the exact behaviors that are preventing the child from being successful. We practice for a short amount of time since these are typically the students that desperately need running around at recess in order to be successful the rest of the day. In this case, while she was inside, Alise was asked to read the whole time and stay in one spot for just two or three minutes.

Since the second layer of trouble shooting with Alise didn't have the impact we had hoped for, we moved to Layer Three, "In Class Extensive Support." We provided Alise with the extra tools to help support her building of stamina.

Joan does three things with Alise to help her begin to build stamina a little at a time. First, she has Alise choose a piece of fabric that 'feels good to her,' for sitting on. By providing a visual and physical location to sit, highly kinesthetic and distracted children are much more likely to stay in one spot. We typically place the square yard of fabric against a wall so children have a place to lean against as well.

Next she talks with Alise about reading the whole time. Since Alise is not able to focus and sustain reading for more than about 1 minute at a time, she gives Alise her second tool, a 1 minute sand timer, which gives her a visual cue of how long she must push herself to read without stopping. Thirdly, Joan gives her a very small container of play dough, one of Alise's favorite things. Alise reads until the sand runs out, flips the timer, plays with the play dough until the sand runs out, flips the timer, reads again, etc. The play dough provides a kinesthetic, but quiet break for Alise, and she gets back to reading after a minute, practicing the behaviors the correctly.

Once Alise has had time to work with these materials, we introduce a second timer, this one with a bit longer time. We mark the new timer with a "B" for book. She then uses the "B" timer for reading from her book box, while the other timer continues to be play dough time. Alise continues to practice with the timers until we see she is able to comfortably sustain independence with the new, longer timer. Then we increase the "B" timer length again.

By slowly increasing the length of time she is reading, interspersed with kinesthetic brain breaks, students like Alise are able to build stamina at a pace that works for them.