

CASE 3

Two Wells Make a Dam

Allyson Wiath is a pleasant, happy fifth-grade child for most of the day, except during math class. During this time she often becomes frustrated, particularly with math word problems.

Allyson (or, "Ally," as she is called) receives special education services in the emotional disturbance (ED) program. Math is the only area that she receives special education services, and she receives these services in a collaborative math class. For Ally, math is a subject that has long tormented her, along with two other children in the class: Tasha Turner and Freda Wallace.

Yesterday's math word problems frustrated her to such an extent that she ended up throwing her books at the wall in a fit of rage and taking a swipe at her classroom nemesis, Tasha. The first problem that she encountered looked like this:

Question 1: The movie, *China's Population*, has a running time of 48 minutes. Mr. Glass wants to have a 25-minute discussion after the film and wants to finish the class by 2:10 p.m. What time should he start showing the movie?

"What do I care when the movie should begin," Ally quietly said to herself. Ally then wrote down $48 + 25 = 73$. She then added 73 minutes to 2:10 and came up with 3:83. When the fifth-grade collaborative teacher, Grace Cooke, came by, she exclaimed, "Ally, my dear, what have you done? How can you have a time of 3:83 p.m.?" Tasha, who was sitting next to her, giggled with joy when she overheard what Ally had done. "Shut up, or I'm gonna give it to you," was Ally's response to Tasha's chuckle. By the time Mrs. Cooke could tell Tasha to mind her own business, the two were yanking at each others' clothes and raising their hands ready to begin a full-fledged fight. "Stop it! Both of you!" bellowed Mrs. Cooke as she moved between the two girls. Tasha relaxed her grip on Ally, and Ally sat down. "Now girls, let's try to get along nicely," demanded Mrs. Cooke. After a deep sigh, Mrs. Cooke began explaining to Ally where she had made her mistake. Just as she finished, Silas Hillard, the ED collaborative teacher, walked in the room. "Sorry, sorry, sorry, I'm late but I have had a heck of a day," Mr. Hillard began explaining to Mrs. Cooke. "That's okay. We just almost had a problem, but it seems to be resolved," Mrs. Cooke replied. After a quick retell of the problem, Mr. Hillard moved next to Ally to help her with her math.

Ally wasn't the only one in the class who had a difficult time completing word problems. It seems that both Mrs. Cooke and Mr. Hillard were not very adept at teaching students how to solve word problems. For Mr. Hillard, math was actually his weakest subject area, and Mrs. Cooke was not much better.

No sooner had Mr. Hillard and Ally solved the first problem together when tensions arose again because of the second word problem:

Question 2: Sally spent \$2.35 on lunch. Bert spent \$.35 more than Sally. Gary spent \$.20 less than Sally. What is the total amount that they spent?

"Great! Kids with lunch money," Ally said as she read the problem. "Now, now Ally," said an animated Mr. Hillard. "Let's see where we begin with this problem." As he stretched out his arms, rolled up his sleeves, and jotted down numbers on a piece of paper, Mr. Hillard actually looked as if he knew what he was doing. He then wrote down the answer and walked over to the teacher's guide only to find that he has done the problem incorrectly. "Well, well, let's see how to do this," he said to himself as he scratched his head and wet the tip of his pencil. "My grandmom says two wells make a dam," Tasha whispered to Freda as the two chuckled. Finally after his third attempt, Mr. Hillard came up with the correct answer. "Okay Ally, let's walk you through this one," said Mr. Hillard as he sat down next to her. "And you be quiet," he yelled over to Tasha when he saw the smirk on her face. As he began to explain to Ally, he stumbled a number of times when telling her what number to add to what. Finally, he showed her his paper and said, "Just copy this down. This problem is too hard for you anyhow." Between Ally's low frustration level and her teachers' poor teaching, it was no wonder that she continued to struggle in math until the end of the school year.

Discussion Questions

1. From the case, what skill(s) would you target for remediation? Or what skill(s) would you target for further assessment?

2. In the classroom, choose a skill area, and decide what modifications and/or supports could be used to help Ally.
3. Outside of the inclusion class, choose a skill area, and decide what remedial technique(s) and/or strategy(ies) could be taught to Ally to strengthen a weak skill area(s).
4. If you taught this student a strategy or technique outside of the inclusion/collaborative classroom, what could you do to ensure that it generalized to her classes or other settings?
5. How would you monitor progress on the skill(s)? Describe how and when you would monitor progress.
6. When teaching math word problems, what could you do to aid student understanding in this area?

CASE 4

Too Much Dividing at Once

Vladimir Sheshenski is a sixth-grade student at Colonial Ark Middle School (CAMS). CAMS takes in students from three area elementary schools and is one of the largest and most crowded middle schools in the state. As such, most new middle school students often feel lost once they enter the doors of CAMS. However, Vladimir, or Vlad for short, was a tough young guy from the urban streets and wasn't going to let anyone tell him what to do.

Vlad was identified as ED, although his elementary school teachers claimed that all of his problems were strictly behavioral. He had caused numerous behavioral problems for all of his past elementary school teachers, and his CAMS teachers had already been warned by his fifth-grade teacher, Julius Duncan. In fifth grade, Vlad has been in a number of fights with both teachers and other students. His academic skills were less than stellar, especially his grades in mathematics which was a subject that he hated the most. Often Vlad came to school angry and full of rage.

At CAMS, Swazi Perkins, the inclusion teacher and the sixth-grade teacher, Lizzy Snead, had worked together over the past 2 years. Mr. Perkins teaches three collaborative classes with Mrs. Snead and also works with students in small groups in his resource room. Besides Vlad, Mr. Perkins is responsible for seven other students with disabilities. All of his students spend all or most of their day in Mrs. Snead's collaborative classes. Typically, Mr. Perkins spends his mornings co-teaching and his afternoons working with students individually or in small groups in the resource room.

From Vlad's paperwork, Mr. Perkins was able to determine that Vlad was identified 4 years ago as ED because of excessive talking, fighting, and disrespect of teachers and other authority figures. He also found out that Vlad's slightly lower IQ of 87, along with the aggressive behavior, might be his biggest problems with school. Because of this, Mr. Perkins decided to break down tasks into small manageable parts so that Vlad would not become frustrated, and provide lots of practice with these parts and lots of reinforcement for working appropriately. Mr. Perkins also noticed that Vlad has a lot of difficulty when given too much work at once and that Vlad has to get his anger under control if he is to ever make it in the world.

In math, when Mrs. Snead and Mr. Perkins examined some work samples, they found that Vlad knew most of his math facts but had performed poorly on fifth- and sixth-grade math skills such as multiplying and dividing multi-digit numbers, adding and subtracting fractions, and

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