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## Behavior Support Plan for John Smith

April 2004

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### I. Introduction

#### Problem Behaviors:

- John' problem behaviors are:
  - Hitting others—a strike with the fist or foot contacting another's body, usually over his shoulder, can be with either left or right side of body, intensity and frequency variable
  - Throwing/Swiping of objects—use of hand or arm to push items off of a surface, usually until the surface is cleared, intensity and frequency variable
  - Less frequently:
    - Pinching—whole-hand grasp to another person's hand, arm, or leg (exposed skin), can use either left or right hand, will endure until hand is physically removed
    - Biting—contact of his teeth to another person's arm or leg, usually only 1-2 seconds in duration, intensity relatively light (will not usually break skin)
    - Pulling hair—using his fist to grasp another person's hair, intensity light (will not usually pull, just hold), will endure until hand is physically removed
- The frequency of this behavior has bounced slightly over the past few weeks. There have been many different variables in effect that may have affected his misbehavior such as the return of his previous 1:1 classroom aide after a leave of absence, and the occurrence of various medicine trials at home.

#### Functional Analysis Conditions:

We first began tracking the above five behaviors in a descriptive analysis format, using the Functional Assessment Observation Form (O'Neill, Horner, Albin, Sprague, Storey, & Newton, 1997). At this stage of the assessment, our goal was to identify what situations might be setting the stage for Nick to misbehave and what events might be reinforcing his misbehavior. After approximately ten days of teacher data collection (with reliability checks with the first author), we found that the behaviors were occurring under an extremely large number of conditions. Therefore, a functional analysis was necessary to assess the more common conditions within which John misbehaved. The purpose of the functional analysis was to experimentally test which conditions and which events were truly controlling Nick's misbehavior.

Because pinching, biting, and pulling hair did not occur very often, we targeted only hitting and throwing/swiping for the functional analysis. There were 40 different conditions (all possible combinations of antecedents and consequences) under which the misbehaviors occurred. Any condition under

which the misbehavior occurred less than 10% of the time across those two weeks was eliminated. Sixteen conditions remained.

We conducted the functional analysis across all sixteen of these conditions on the first day, with each condition lasting five minutes. Two teachers conducted eight conditions each; condition “teachers” and the order of the conditions were kept random. Due to time constraints, we eliminated four conditions on the second day. Maintaining variables (for example, escape from task or receipt of attention) are noted next to each condition on the graphs. The top 12 conditions are described in the table below. Each row of the table describes the situation we set-up (the antecedent) and the events that followed any instance of either misbehaviour (the consequences). For example, in the first condition, we set up a demand situation for Nick. During this condition, when he misbehaved, we redirected his hands and paused the task for ten seconds. In the second condition, we set up a demand and when he misbehaved we ignored the misbehavior and paused the task for ten seconds.

<b>ANTECEDENT</b>	<b>CONSEQUENCE 1</b>	<b>CONSEQUENCE 2</b>	<b>CONSEQUENCE 3</b>
1. Demand	Redirect hands	Delay Task-10 s	
2. Demand	Ignore	Delay Task-10 s	
3. Demand	Ignore	Complete task- Hand-over-hand prompt immediately	
4. Alone (no attention)	Vocal “no”	Delay Task-10 s	
5. Alone (no attention)	Ignore	Delay Task- 10 s	
6. Told “no” after request/denied object	Vocal “no”	Delay Task- 10 s	
7. Told “no” after request/denied object	Ignore	Delay Task- 10 s	
8. Demand	Ignore	Materials stay on floor	End Task
9. Demand	Ignore	Teacher picks up materials	Complete task- Hand-over-hand prompt immediately
10. Alone (no attention)	Ignore	Toy stays on floor	Complete task- Hand-over-hand prompt immediately

11. Told “no” after request/denied object	Ignore	Teacher picks up materials	Complete a task- Hand-over-hand prompt immediately
12. Materials out on table	Ignore	Teacher picks up materials	Complete a task- Hand-over-hand prompt immediately

Even though conditions surrounding “hitting” and “throwing/swiping” were originally arranged to separate the two misbehaviors, both misbehaviors occurred during most conditions; therefore, totals of both “hitting” and “throwing/swiping” together determined the percentages of misbehaviors during each condition.

After a few days of running the above 12 conditions, we noticed that Nick behaved quite differently when working with one staff member than he did with the other. Consequently, it was necessary to run each condition with each teacher in order to see separation patterns in the data and draw firmer conclusions. The top five conditions at that point were chosen and doubled so that each teacher ran that condition for five minutes per day. (The other seven were eliminated because misbehaviors were occurring less than 10% of the time during those conditions). An additional condition was added (number six, below) to test the effects of allowing John to obtain a desired item by means of hitting or throwing.

The six conditions were as follows:

<b>ANTECEDENT</b>	<b>CONSEQUENCE 1</b>	<b>CONSEQUENCE 2</b>	<b>CONSEQUENCE 3</b>
1. Demand	Redirect hands	Delay Task-10 s	
2. Demand	Ignore	Complete task- Hand-over-hand prompt immediately	
3. Demand	Ignore	Materials stay on floor	End Task
4. Materials out on table	Ignore	Teacher picks up materials	Complete task- Hand-over-hand prompt immediately
5. Told “no” after request/denied object	Ignore	Teacher picks up materials	Complete task- Hand-over-hand prompt immediately
6. Told “no” after request/denied	Vocal “no”	Honor request or give back toy	

object			
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**Summary of Findings from Functional Analysis:**

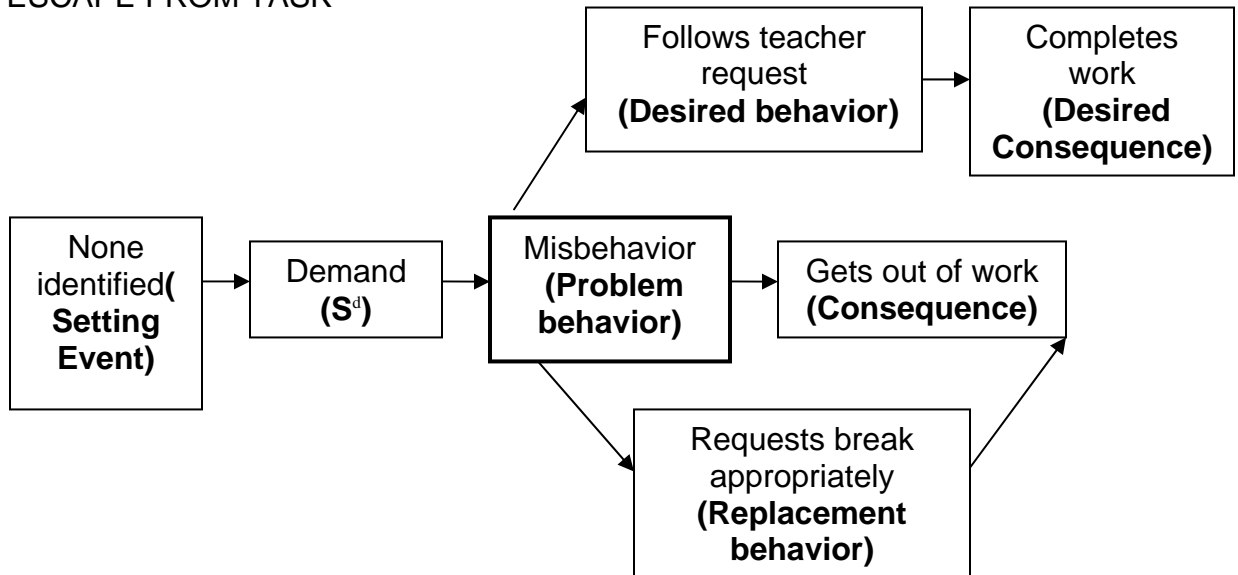
John' misbehavior occurs for several reasons:

- Escape from or Avoidance of a Task
- To obtain a desired item
- As a means of gaining attention from others

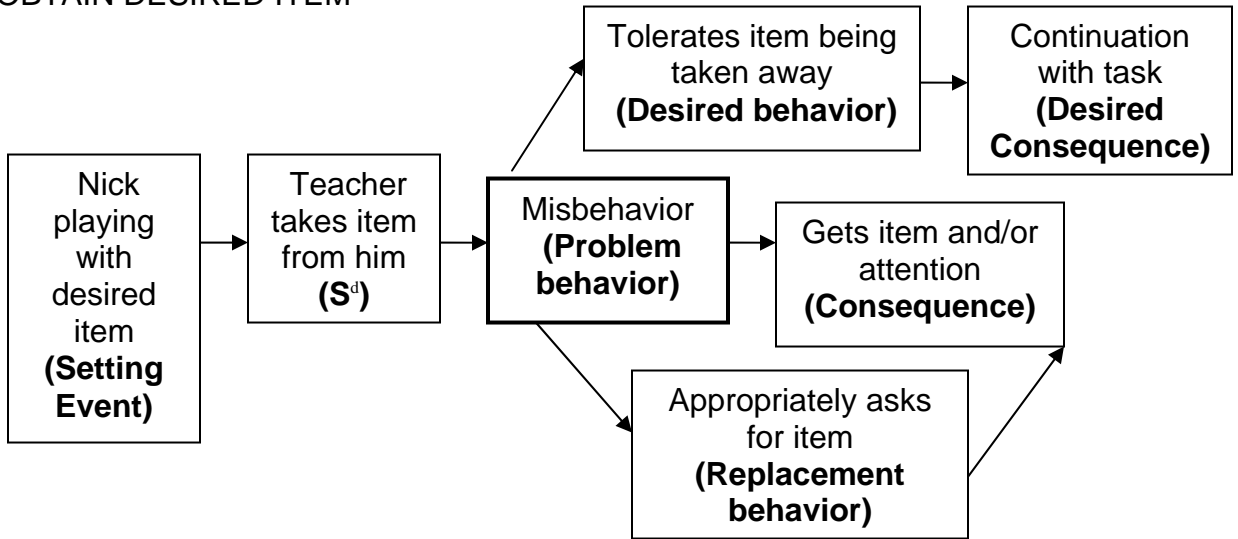
Escape from or avoidance of a task was overwhelmingly the primary function of John' misbehavior—hitting and/or throwing occurred reliably during every condition where the misbehaviors resulted in the task ending or pausing. In addition, these misbehaviors occurred and *escalated in frequency* when escape from or avoidance of a task was prevented (escape extinction), similar to the behavior pattern during an extinction burst, where the previously maintaining consequence is discontinued. This confirms our conclusion that John' misbehavior is maintained by getting out of an aversive situation.

The following two figures represent events surrounding Nick's misbehavior:

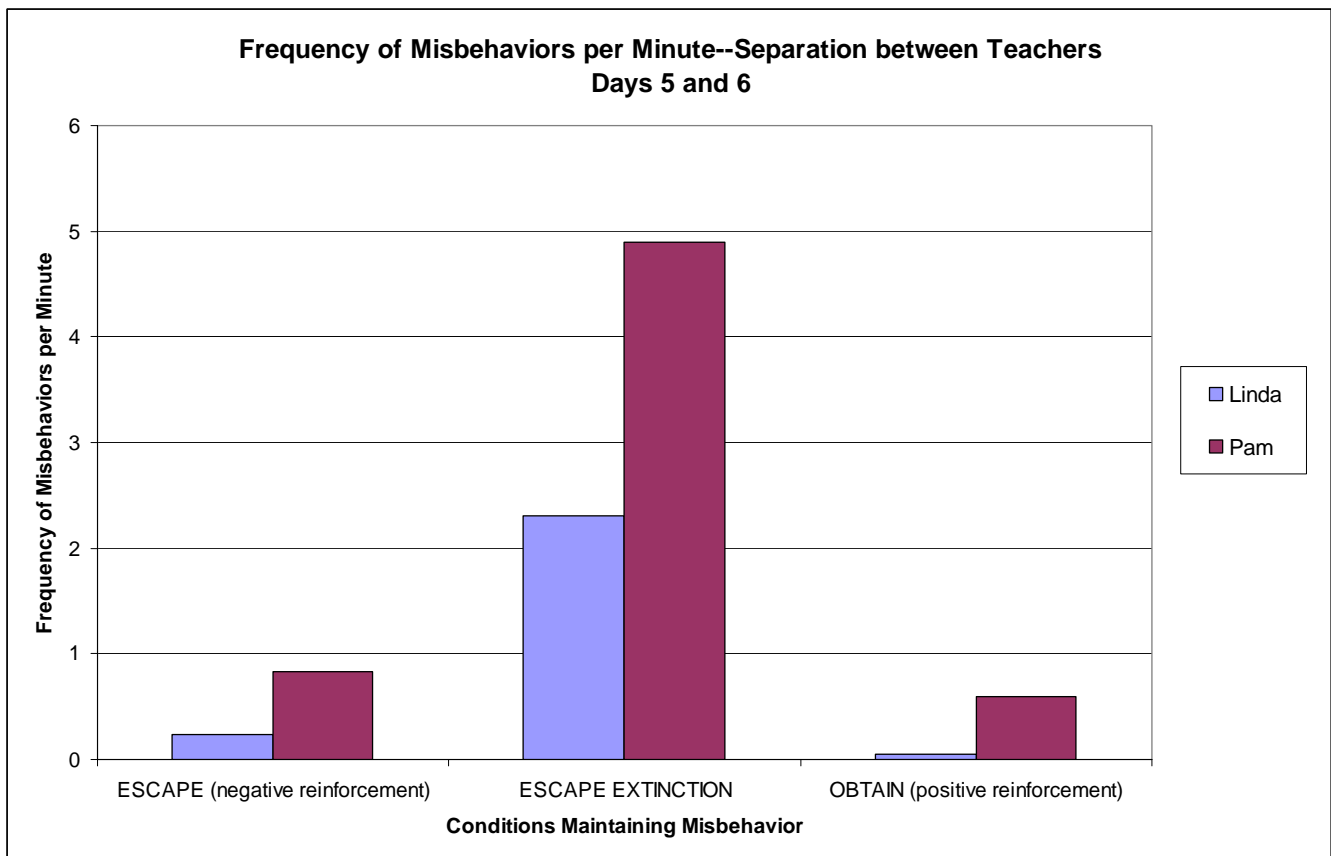
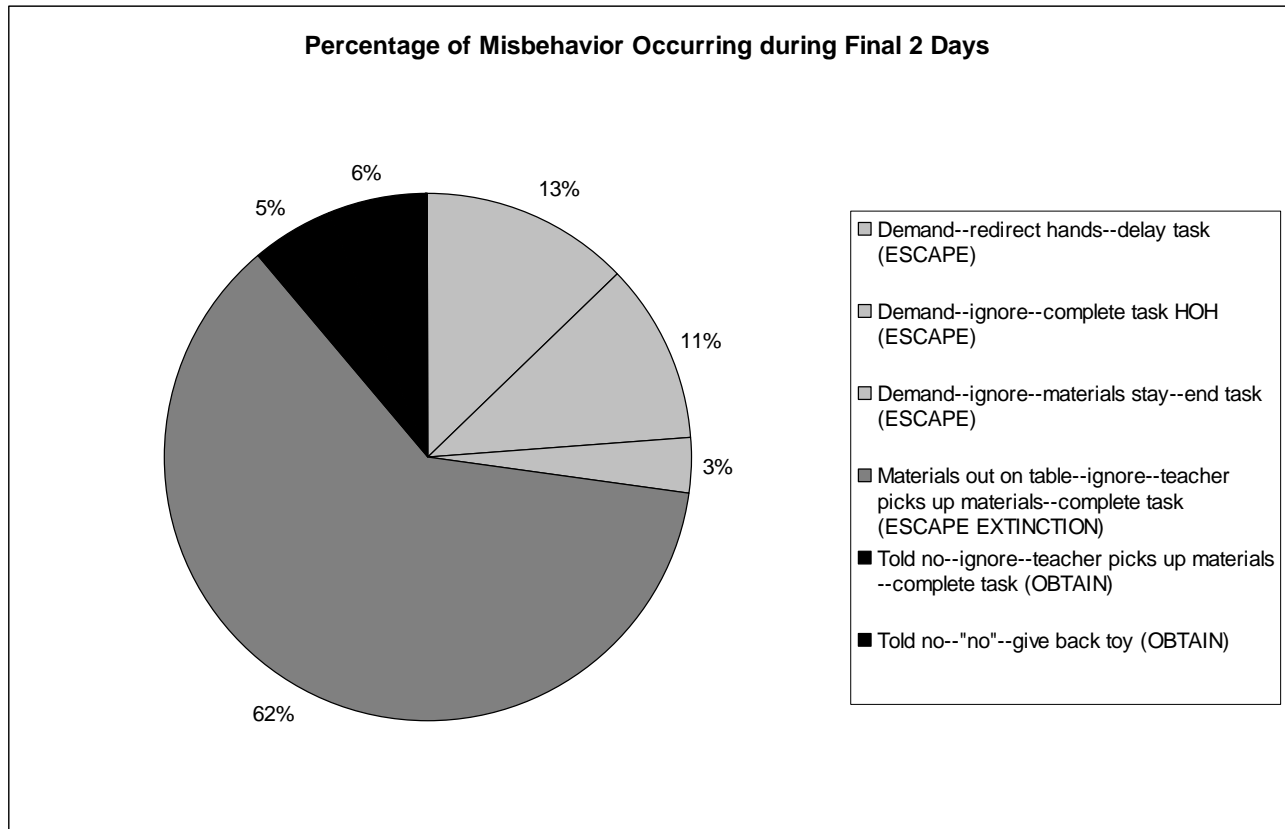
1. ESCAPE FROM TASK



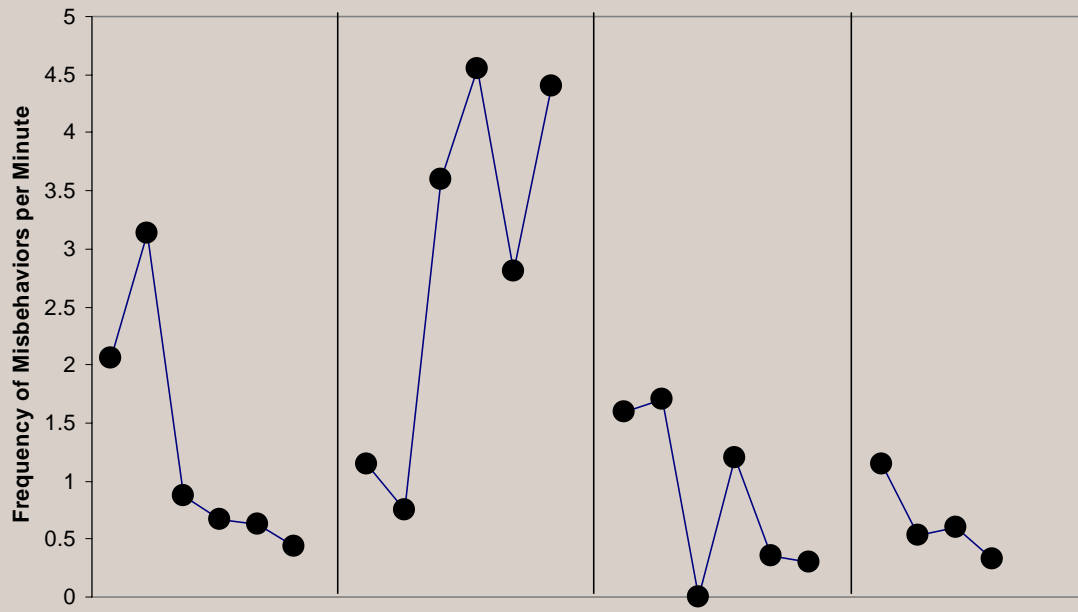
## 2. OBTAIN DESIRED ITEM



**Graphs:**



### Frequency of Misbehaviors per Minute



Days 1-6 of Functional Analysis across each Condition

## Summary Statements:

- John will hit his teacher and throw or swipe objects off of the table *when asked to perform several academic tasks*. He will also hit, throw, or swipe when task-related materials are placed on his desk in front of him, even before a demand is given.
- Occasionally John will hit others or throw or swipe objects to *obtain an item he wants*, or as a protest *when a preferred item is taken away*, especially when a work task follows.
- Sometimes John will hit others or throw or swipe objects *to gain attention or a reaction*. It is important to note that attention statements may appear to be “positive” (e.g., comforting statements) or “negative” (e.g., reprimands), but both types still serve as attention!!!

### **Overall preventative strategies:**

1. **CHOICE OF PROGRAM ORDER:** Have John choose the order of programs he works on during his teaching sessions. Each program should be represented visually with an “icon” and displayed so that he can see his daily choices. Take turns choosing programs, with the number of choices John makes depending on appropriateness of his behavior as it changes throughout the day. However, all tasks set out for Nick to choose must be done daily, regardless of their order. Make sure you do not do all of the most difficult tasks or programs consecutively. Interspersing easy tasks with difficult tasks will allow John to have a higher rate of success, which may prevent the problem behavior from occurring.
2. **TOKEN SYSTEM:** A token system for learning skills (especially “quiet hands”) should be in place, with a strong “payoff” for keeping his hands quiet (that is; no hitting, throwing, or swiping.) Tokens can also be delivered for completion of work tasks. Have Nick choose what he is working for, and place the icon at the end of a token strip. After a specified number of tokens for good behavior/task completion, Nick can receive a chosen item or additional small break. This will also help Nick’s teachers continue to recognize and reinforce “quiet hands” and hard work.
3. **FREQUENT REINFORCER ASSESSMENTS:** A brief reinforcer assessment should be conducted at the beginning of each day, or preferably, before each work period. Hold up a few items at a time and see which items John reaches for. Keep pairing items together until you have eliminated potentially “unwanted” items, leaving a few highly-preferred items to use as reinforcers for hard work and no misbehavior. This will provide more item novelty in John’ reinforcement system. Toy-specific pictures should be taken whenever possible.

4. **BREAK CARDS:** Give John a specified number of “free break” cards per day. At first he will have to be prompted to use these when slightly frustrated before hitting or throwing of materials occurs. You can also remind John through out session, “Don’t forget to ask for a break.” Especially reinforce independent asking!! He can use these at his discretion during a task, but once the “free break” cards are used up, breaks can only be delivered when specified by the teacher. At this time, he can engage in a preferred activity, but set a timer for a brief period of time (2-3 minutes per break). This will help him to not only learn to spontaneously request breaks, but also use them at discretionary times. During breaks, give him at least a 30 second warning before the break will be over.
5. **CLEAR EXPECTATIONS:** Provide very clear expectations before asking Nick to perform a task. These expectations should:
  - signal the start of the task
  - specify the response you are expecting from Nick
  - tell him how he should engage in that response (when appropriate)
  - state appropriate learning skills expectations (such as keeping hands quiet or materials on table)
  - specify the amount of time you will be working on the task
6. **FREQUENT BREAKS:** After every program (or even within the program if it lasts longer than 3-4 minutes), ask John if he’d like to continue working or if he’d like to take a break. If he chooses to take a break, he may not engage in a preferred activity. These breaks should be short (set a timer for about one minute.) During breaks, give him at least a 30 second warning before the break will be over. At this time, tell him what activity will next be taking place after the timer goes off.
7. **COMMUNICATION LOG:** Have Nick’s parents provide a description of medicine with dosages given to him each morning before school. Also, they should note any abnormal behavior patterns, such as lack of sleep during the night or sickness. This can be kept in a small communication notebook that can stay in Nick’s backpack and be used on a daily basis.
8. **SENSORY INPUT REPLACEMENT:** Provide “sensory breaks” for John throughout the school day. These may provide some of the extra stimulation and input John appears to crave, while also possibly providing appropriate alternatives/replacement behavior for seeking that input in an inappropriate fashion, such as hitting, throwing/swiping, biting, pinching, and pulling others’ hair.
9. **INSTRUCTIONAL TASK LENGTH:** Set time limits on instructional tasks. This will depend on the length of the type of tasks needed to be completed. Start by setting the timer for three minutes for a preferred

task, and two minutes for a non-preferred task. These time limits will only be in effect during the timer re-conditioning phase (phase 1). After this phase has been completed, the time limits will be raised during phase 2 (timing length to later be determined). However, our ultimate goal is to move to only performance-based timings so that Nick is benefiting maximally from instruction. This will probably begin during phase 3.

- 10. TRANSITION ANOTHER STAFF MEMBER TO BE JOHN' PRIMARY AIDE:** Someone without as much previous history with John may be more appropriate to work with him during the majority of the day. It may be easier to train someone with little or no teaching history with John rather than train Pam (his current aide), due to the large number of hours she has already spent with John and the tendency he has to engage in inappropriate behavior in her presence.

***Overall instructional strategies:***

1. Only provide the instructional cue one time before delivering a consequence.
2. Use discrimination and Mathetics ("Model-Test-Extend") error corrections (training to be provided, see below under "Additional Strategies.")
3. Use a most-to-least prompting procedure to request breaks.
4. It would be a good idea to bring back Nick's choice board with pictures depicting such feelings as hungry, sick, tired, or "too loud". These pictures should always be paired with the appropriate word so that John will begin to vocally state these feelings. It is best to teach these feelings when they are most obvious (for example, when Nick is yawning, the classroom is noisy). Always follow through with the appropriate consequence to his labelling his feelings (e.g., have him put his head down for a while if tired, give him a snack if hungry).

***Overall consequence strategies for problem behavior:***

1. If John is showing frustration during a task, prompt him to ask for a break. You can say, "Do you want to take a break or stay with this task?" Keep the length of the break short (approximately 1 minute), and set the timer. Let him calm down without additional teacher attention. He should not be allowed to engage in a preferred activity at this time.
2. As much as possible ignore all attempts to hit, throw, or when escalated, bite or pinch. Try to redirect these behaviors before they happen by

- redirecting Nick's hands or making sure there is nothing in reach that could break or get hurt when thrown.
3. Be extremely careful not to give John any additional attention (especially vocal, and physical when possible) for misbehavior!!! He feeds into this and enjoys the struggle. This will only increase the number of times he hits, throws, or swipes!!
  4. When blocking aggressive behavior is impossible, no extra attention should be delivered. If his misbehavior occurs and continues to escalate, ignore as much as possible and continue to follow through with the task at hand with a neutral voice tone and facial expression. Although it may be a struggle at first, John will learn that he cannot escape from a task by means of engaging in inappropriate behavior. If it is impossible to continue with the present task (due to materials being swiped onto floor), grab another task and immediately begin working.
  5. Do not allow Nick to have access to the desired item he is attempting to obtain. If he grabs it, provide a replacement statement, such as "You can *work* for (Ernie)." Provide it as a choice on the choice board at your next opportunity.
  6. If John has made a mess during an outburst, require him to pick it up (you may help him with this if needed). Wait until he is calm before having him pick up the items, but this must be done before any break is allowed.
  7. Implement a cost-response system, where after Nick hits, throws, or swipes, either a preferred item is removed from his possession, a preferred item is removed as a choice from his choice board, or a "break" card is removed from his token strip. Actual consequences to be determined—this possibly should stay variable so that not all of one item is taken away for the day at any time. Training to be provided.
  8. If you are ever in question as to what consequence to provide, ask yourself
    - Why is John engaging in this misbehavior?
    - If the answer is "to escape from what is asked of him," continue to follow through with your demand. Only after he has completed the task should he be allowed to take a break (unless it was appropriately requested).
    - If the answer is "to get a desired item", do not let him have access to that item at that time!
    - If the answer is "to gain attention", make sure to not deliver any additional attention for the misbehavior. Only deliver attention for appropriate behaviors.

## 9. STAY CONSISTENT!!!

### ***Overall consequence strategies for positive behavior:***

1. Always praise John for staying on task. Make sure he has a higher rate of reinforcement (one behavior-specific praise statement every 15 seconds) for working through something new or difficult calmly.
2. Use lots of reinforcement when John is calm and keeping his hands quiet!!  
Example: 5 tokens = an extra break card or high-preference toy.
3. ALWAYS reinforce spontaneous, appropriate requests for a break at first, including when he says, "Done". Once Nick learns how to do this appropriately, the number of times you honor this request can be reduced (as we don't want him to ask for and receive a break every 2 minutes!)  
The number of breaks should be reduced when John' misbehavior has decreased substantially and he is requesting so often as to interfere with teaching.
4. Always praise John when he attempts to get your attention appropriately. Especially reinforce vocal statements that John uses to gain your attention.
5. ALWAYS reinforce quiet hands and hard work!

### **III. Additional Strategies**

1. Toleration of “no”:
  - Hold and/or play with Nick’s preferred toys and reinforce “quiet hands” when he refrains from hitting or swiping.
2. Transitioning exercises:
  - Work on walking past full bookshelves and reinforce “quiet hands” when Nick refrains from swiping objects off of the shelf.
3. Timer re-conditioning:
  - Use the timer to signal the end of “work” time as well as the end of “break” time.

## IV. Teacher Training

Training is necessary primarily on the following components:

- How to implement each recommendation listed above (see table below)
- How to deliver clear expectations
- How to implement Mathematics and discrimination error corrections
- When to prompt break requests
- When to decrease number of breaks offered
- How to reduce attention delivered during inappropriate times
- How to notice Nick's appropriate classroom behaviors

Behavior Support Plan recommendations should be implemented in a sequence of three phases.

Competency Checklists will be provided for each phase (see next page for Phase 1 checklist).

These checklists will be developed so that the teacher is fluent in practice in one phase before proceeding to the next phase. Currently, we suggest that in order to proceed to the next training phase, the teacher must be able to implement each step in the Behavior Support Plan across three consecutive sessions as noted by an outside observer.

Training criteria for Phases II and III will be determined following Phase I.

The following table specifies training needs as of this time:

<b>WHO?</b>	<b>WHAT?</b>	<b>UNTIL WHEN?</b>
John's aide	Implement steps in Phase I of training protocol	All steps are implemented across three consecutive training sessions
John's aide	Implement steps in Phase II of training protocol	All steps are implemented across three consecutive training sessions
John's aide	Implement steps in Phase III of training protocol	All steps are implemented across three consecutive training sessions



