

Fred's Story

Fred lived with his family and attended his neighborhood school in a suburban community in Oregon. Fred was seven when he was hit by a car—an accident that left him with reduced use of his right leg and arm, difficulty speaking, and even more difficulty learning. Fred's learning and behavioral challenges continued through elementary school and into middle school.

By sixth grade, Fred frequently misbehaved at school. When presented with a complex or difficult task, Fred would frequently whine and stomp his feet. When particularly frustrated, Fred would run out of the room and, on several occasions, left the school grounds without permission. After Fred threw a typewriter through a classroom window, his principal considered asking the district to place Fred in a special school for students with severe behavior challenges.

Fortunately, his teachers and family asked behavioral researchers at the University of Oregon to help them design a new behavior management program for Fred. The team analyzed possible reasons for Fred's problem behaviors, including identifying environmental events (e.g., transitioning between class periods) that triggered his outbursts. The team also planned how to positively reinforce Fred for displaying appropriate behavior in different situations at school.

Fred's new behavior management program had several interrelated components, including:

- **Academic Instruction.** Fred was provided an adapted curriculum for his academic instruction. For example, Fred learned functional skills, such as reading lunchroom menus or shopping at a nearby grocery store. Fred received individual (one on one) tutoring. He also received integrated academic instruction in small groups of students, including instruction with both special education and general education classmates.
- **Self-Monitoring Strategies.** Fred was taught specific strategies to help him resolve difficult social situations. For example, Fred learned how to (a) interact properly with his peers, (b) tell his teachers when he was frustrated, and (c) initiate self-imposed "breaks" rather than becoming violent. Fred's teachers recorded data on the frequency of his use of (and his success in using) these strategies in different school environments.

Over time, Fred's behavior management program led to the creation of a social network to support Fred. Key members were Fred's mother, his special education and general education teachers, and his middle school principal. The network coordinated systematic positive reinforcement and support for Fred in displaying appropriate behavior at school and home.

The last two years of middle school were a great success for Fred, his teachers, and his family. Fred continued to progress in each academic subject. His behavior also improved. For example, the number of classroom disruptions requiring the principal's attention dropped from 40 episodes in seventh grade to only four minor events in eighth grade. Best of all, as Fred learned to monitor and manage his own behavior, he began displaying a renewed interest in learning. Fred entered high school with a newfound pride in himself and what he could do independently.