

What to Do About Raymond

Persistence in Problem Solving

Case Overview

Background

Teacher: Mr. David Burns
Experience: 7 Years
Class: 8th Grade Social Studies



Storyline

An 8th grade social studies teacher is challenged by Raymond, a student who habitually puts his head down on his desk during class time. Throughout the case, the teacher, David, tries repeatedly to change Raymond's behavior and engage him as an active class member. In his efforts to get through to Raymond and establish a more positive student-teacher relationship, David seeks help from fellow teachers, Raymond's father, and the assistant principal.

Star Teacher Function: Persistence in Problem Solving

Some key ideologies and behaviors that comprise this star teacher function are:

- ❑ Star teachers believe it is their responsibility to engage all students in learning activities.
- ❑ Star teachers persist in trying to meet the individual needs of all learners, including the reluctant or resistant student.
- ❑ Star teachers accept the reality that teaching inevitably means dealing with a wide array of problems and problem students.
- ❑ Star teachers are creative and persistent problem solvers who are relentless in their efforts to involve students in learning. One might say that they approach this challenge with "Wiley Coyote" determination and hope.

For a more detailed description of this function, see pages 21-28 in *Star Teachers of Children in Poverty* (Haberman 1995), which accompanies this series.

Other Topics and Issues

While the main purpose of *What to Do About Raymond* is to stimulate reflection on the star teacher function of *persistence in problem solving*, the case provides the opportunity for examining several other issues and topics as well. These include individualizing instruction, using student interests as motivational devices, classroom rules, student discipline, passive resistance in students, parent-teacher conferences, team or cluster approaches to professional problem solving, detention and suspension as punishments,

and characteristics of middle school children.

Scene Summaries and Question

Scene 1: A Day in October. David's American History Class.

Summary: David Burns is using the lecture discussion method to cover the prohibition era in American History. While most of the students seem to be responding to David, one student named Raymond is apparently having a hard time keeping his eyes open. Moments later, Raymond has his head on his desk and appears to be sleeping.

Custom Stop Point: You may want to pause the video right after Raymond is pictured with his head down on his desk. Ask participants, "What would you do if you were the teacher?"

Possible Questions:

1. What is your reaction to the manner in which David responded to Raymond's "sleeping" in class? What are your beliefs and practices relative to the question of touching students?
2. What other strategies might David have used in response to Raymond's apparent sleeping?
3. (TQ) If you were going to have a conference with Raymond, where and when would you meet, and what approach would you take?

Scene 2: Conclusion of Class Period.

Summary: At the end of the class period, David calls Raymond to the front of the classroom, where he attempts to engage Raymond in a discussion of why he is sleeping in class. Raymond responds that he has been "a little tired and stressed out lately" and that despite the fact that his head was down, he was listening. The conversation is brief and Raymond exits the room to join his friends, who are waiting for him in the hallway.

Possible Questions:

1. What insights, if any, did you gain about Raymond and the possible reasons for his sleeping in class?
2. What is your opinion of the way that David handled the meeting with Raymond? How might you have handled it differently?
3. (TQ) What other steps could David take as he attempts to better understand and ultimately help Raymond become a more engaged student?

Scene 3: Later the Same Day. Cluster Meeting.

Summary: At the weekly teacher cluster meeting, David raises the issue that Raymond is failing his class and therefore is not eligible to go on an upcoming field trip. David inquires as to how Raymond is doing in his other classes and quickly discovers that his experiences with Raymond are not isolated ones. The meeting ends with the suggestion that a conference be set up with Raymond's parents as soon as possible.

Possible Questions:

1. Did you acquire any significant information about Raymond as a result of this meeting. What, if anything, did you find particularly important?
2. What is your reaction to the fact that Raymond may not be permitted to participate in a field trip because his grades are too low?
3. Based on information acquired from the meeting, recommend a specific action or set of actions David should take in his efforts to help Raymond find success in school.
4. (TQ) If you were going to meet with Raymond's father, what goal or goals would you have for the conference?

Scene 4: Three Days Later. Conference with Raymond's Father.

Summary: Raymond's cluster teachers meet with Mr. Greene, Raymond's father, to discuss Raymond's academic progress and behavior. Mr. Greene reveals that he is a single parent and that regrettably he does not have as much time as he would like to spend with Raymond. It is clear that he is a very busy man who is somewhat uncomfortable with the meeting and with the teachers' request for his help.

Possible Questions:

1. If you were David, what would your response be to this meeting with Raymond's father? How would it influence your future work with Raymond?
2. How would you characterize Mr. Greene's verbal and nonverbal communications during the cluster meeting?
3. What are your feelings about the cluster or team approach to meeting with a parent to discuss a child's academic progress?
4. Were there specific things that the teachers did well in the meeting? Were there specific things that you would advise the cluster teachers not to do in similar meetings in the future?
5. (TQ) What should David do if Raymond puts his head on his desk again?

Scene 5: Two Days Later. Review for Unit Test.

Summary: As David is reviewing the material from the recent unit on the 1920s and '30s in American History, Raymond once again has his head on his desk. David responds by walking to Raymond's desk, where he grasps Raymond's shoulders and lifts up in an attempt to physically raise him up in his seat. Raymond responds by jerking his arm and making physical contact with David.

Custom Stop Point: You may want to pause the video as soon as Raymond is seen with his head down. He is the same seat and is wearing a white shirt. Ask participants, "What would you do in this situation?"

Possible Questions:

1. Did David make a mistake by touching Raymond and physically trying to rouse him?

2. (TQ) What should David do in response to Raymond's physical and verbal reactions to his attempt to wake him up? What should he not do?

Scene 6: A Moment Later.

Summary: David responds by asking the rest of the class to “get out their green books and turn to page 321.” He then asks Raymond to follow him to a private spot in the classroom where he reprimands Raymond and assigns him an after school detention. He then instructs Raymond to return to his seat and pay attention for the rest of the period.

Possible Questions:

1. What are your reactions to the manner in which David responded to Raymond's physical and verbal response?
2. How would you describe the reaction of other students to Raymond's behavior?
3. Did this scene provide any insight into possible motives for Raymond's sleeping in class?
4. (TQ) Do you think Raymond will show up for the assigned detention? Why or why not?

Scene 7: One Day Later. After-school Detention.

Summary: David interacts with two students at the end of the school day and then asks if either has seen Raymond. One of the girls responds that she saw Raymond get on the bus and that he said “he wasn't coming to the detention.”

Possible Questions:

1. What are the dominant feelings you have at this time about David? About Raymond?
2. (TQ) What would you recommend David do in response to Raymond's failure to come to detention?

Scene 8: One Day Later. Assistant Principal's Office, Conference with Raymond.

Summary: The assistant principal informs Raymond that Mr. Burns' has reported that he failed to serve an after-school detention. He then explains to Raymond that he is assigning him an extra detention to be served, in addition to the original one. Also, he makes it clear to Raymond that if he fails to serve either of the two detentions, he will be suspended from school for five days. After letting Raymond know that he will be contacting his home to let his parents know what days he is to serve the detentions, he dismisses him to return to class.

Possible Questions:

1. Do you support David's decision to refer the matter of the missed detention to the assistant principal? Why or why not?
2. What is your reaction to the assistant principal's approach to the conference? Specifically, what are your thoughts on the five-day suspension that will occur if

Raymond fails to serve his assigned detentions?

3. Will Raymond show up for the detentions? Why or why not?
4. (TQ) If you were David, how would you approach the detentions with Raymond? What goals, if any, would you have?

Scene 9: One Day Later. After-school Detention.

Summary: Raymond shows up for the detention, and David asks him if there is anything in his class that interests him. “Not really,” Raymond responds. David then tries to find out what interests Raymond outside of school and discovers that he “loves jazz.” David locks into this interest and asks Raymond if he knows when jazz originated. As the conversation continues, David proposes that Raymond do an individual study project on Jazz since it fits into the same time period they are studying in class. The scene ends with David dismissing Raymond and asking him to bring any jazz music and books that he has to tomorrow’s detention.

Possible Questions:

1. What is your reaction to the manner in which David handled the meeting with Raymond?
2. Do you support David’s efforts to engage Raymond by using his interest in jazz?
3. Is it fair for David to allow Raymond to earn extra credit and “bring his grade up” by completing a special project?
4. (TQ) Assuming that Raymond shows up for the second detention, how would you interact with him? What would your goals be for the detention period?

Scene 10: One Day Later. After-school Detention.

Summary: Raymond again shows up for detention in David’s classroom. Importantly, he has brought his trumpet and one of his father’s books on jazz. As the scene develops, David and Raymond negotiate the details of the jazz project, which is to include Raymond playing some jazz on his trumpet for the American History class.

Possible Questions:

1. What are your impressions of the meeting between David and Raymond?
2. What might have you done differently in the meeting?
3. (TQ) In your opinion, is David on the right track with Raymond? Why or why not?

Scene 11: Two Weeks Later. American History Class.

Summary: David calls the class roll for his American History class. After hearing no response when he calls Raymond’s name, he asks the class if they know where he is. One of the students says that she heard he was suspended. Immediately, another student adds, “Yeah, he got 10 days for cutting class.”

Possible Questions:

1. What are the dominant thoughts and feelings you have at this point in time?

2. What is your hypothesis about whether Raymond was making progress in David's class? Specifically, do you think Raymond was successful in completing the independent study project on jazz?
3. (TQ) If you were David, what would you do at this point in time? What would you do when Raymond returns to school?

What to Do About Raymond Video Case Transcript



Scene 1: A Day in October. David's American History Class.

David: All right, class, let's get in our seats. Class is starting. Thank you. Yesterday we talked just a little bit about prohibition. The word prohibition has a word at its root called prohibit. What does the word prohibit mean? Just the word prohibit, who can tell me?

Student #1: To stop.

David: To stop, yes that's the main part of it, to stop. Can someone expand on that a little bit? Carolyn?

Carolyn: To stop doing something that is against the rules?

David: Against the rules, that's right. There are rules or regulations, or even laws, that have to do with prohibiting something. So now, prohibition itself, what did that prohibit? What did they stop you from doing in prohibition? Dexter?

Dexter: Alcohol?

David: Alcohol, that's right. It stopped you from drinking or making alcohol. That's correct. Everyone has rules that they have to follow at different places, don't they? For instance, in my classroom, we are not allowed to chew gum. In my classroom, we don't sleep.

Class: *Laughing as David approaches and touches Raymond.*

David: Sit up....

Student: He always does that (*referring to Raymond having his head on his desk*).

David: I know. So things are prohibited here in class. Every place has rules. In prohibition, it was alcohol, the drinking of alcohol. Why didn't they want you to drink alcohol?



Scene 2: Conclusion of Class Period.

David: We'll talk more about all the people involved in prohibition tomorrow when we come in. We are going to talk about the "Drys" and the "Wets" and the G-men, the gangsters, and all the people. So, go ahead and gather up your things. The bell should ring in just a moment. *(Bell rings.)*

David: Ray, I want to see you a minute *(summoning Raymond to the front of the classroom)*. Son, what is the matter? Why are you failing asleep in my classroom? Are you getting enough sleep at home?

Raymond: Of course I'm getting enough sleep at home. I was just kind of tired today. I don't know why, but I'm just stressed out a little bit. You know I'll be straight.

David: You seem fine now.

Raymond: Yeah, I'm fine. Yeah, I mean I was just stressed out a little bit during class time, but then I just thought about it a little bit while I was paying attention to you. I thought about it just a little bit with my eyes closed, you know. I'm straight now. All right? All right? Catch you later.

David: All right, see you tomorrow.

Students: *(greeting Raymond as he exits the classroom)* What's up man? You skipping class today? What's up, Mr. Sleepy head?

Raymond: C'mon man, did you guys see him dis me like that, man? I just can't stand his class, man. He boring, I just don't ...

David: *(interrupting the hallway conversation)* Hey, hey, go to class. I'm not

writing you a pass get to class.

Student: Did you see the Knicks game last night?

Raymond: *(walking down the hall)* Yeah, that was sweet



Scene 3: Later the Same Day. Cluster Meeting.

David: I have the permit slips here for the field trip next week, and I have one from Raymond. His father signed it, but there's no way he is going to pass my class. He is not going to have the grade point average to go on this trip. Is he passing your classes?

Andrea: *(an English teacher)* No.

David: How about yours?

Marilyn: *(a science teacher)* No, he is not passing at this time.

Donna: *(a Spanish teacher)* Nope.

Enrique: *(a band teacher)* His work is unsatisfactory, but again he's very social in the class too.

David: I had another run-in with him this morning where he was just asleep in the class, and we're not talking long enough for him to have gotten that bored. It was just a few minutes into the class, and his head was down and he was asleep. I tried to talk to him, but I got no response. I don't know what to do.

Marilyn: On the days when we do labs, he gets more engaged. It may have something to do with the work being concrete or more activity oriented. On other days if we are having discussions or doing other things, he has real difficulty. He just can't seem to get engaged in what is going on.

Enrique: He works real well in one-on-one-type situations. But he doesn't do well in large groups or sectionals, and he is very inconsistent. There's no

discipline, and he's not doing his work at home.

David: So, it sounds like he needs one-on-one and something hands-on, like his trumpet.

Marilyn: How did he do last year?

David: He just barely passed 7th grade. He did make it through, and he is in 8th grade now, but he just barely made it.

Marilyn: So this is two years in a row that he's just not taken advantage of the potential that I think I see. I mean he seems to be a bright kid. He's just not using it. Have we ever seen his parents? Did they show up for open house?

David: No, but I know there is a father in the home because I've talked to the answering machine. I'll call again and see if I can get him in here sometime soon for a conference. We need to get him in here before the semester is over so he can get his grades up.



Scene 4: Three Days Later. Conference with Raymond's Father.

David: Everyone (*speaking to his fellow teachers*), this is Mr. Greene, Ray's father.

Other Teachers: Hi, Mr. Greene.

Mr. Greene: Hi.

David: Glad you could come today.

Mr. Greene: Thank you.

David: First of all, we want to let you know we think Ray is perfectly capable. He's a bright young man, and he can do the things we ask him to do. Our main problem is that he's not.

Donna: You've done a great job, you know. He is not really a discipline problem. He's well mannered. He's respectful. If you get after him, he doesn't get nasty with you, but he just needs a little something more.

Mr. Greene: I've been divorced for a number of years, and it is very difficult to be with him all the time. So, the one thing that I can say to you all, is try to leave Raymond to me at home, and you do the best you can with him here at school.

Enrique: He does real well in individual, one-on-one-type situations, but in group situations he doesn't do well because he just doesn't have the maturity to handle (*Mr. Greene interrupts at this point.*)

Mr. Greene: Are you blaming me for that? He has instructions from me. Now, as to whether he carries those instructions out, I cannot be there to be sure that he does. Now again, please don't have me repeat myself again. I am not there to help Raymond with some of the things that need to be done. This is where I am asking you to help me.

David: I understand that you are on a very tight schedule and I know we need to let you go. Maybe what we could do, we have a thing here called the "homework log" where we have the student write down what they are supposed to be doing for homework. Possibly you could check that homework log to see if he's done the work that he needed to do that day? And, then maybe you could sign off on it. Is that a possibility that you could do that for us? So that we know, that he knows, that he has to be accountable to someone other than just us. Because, at this point in time, being accountable to us isn't quite enough for him.

Mr. Greene: Well, I'll do the best I can, but I cannot promise you anything. Again, I am a very busy man, and it takes a lot to raise a child by yourself. So, I'll do the best I can, and that's all I can say right now.

David: Well, we thank you for coming in, and we're going to let you go now. We appreciate the time you've given us. Thank you very much.



Scene 5: Two Days Later. Review for Unit Test.

- David:** Class, in prohibition there were two main groups of people that were associated with prohibition, the “Drys” and the “Wets” that’s what they actually called themselves. The problem came because the “Drys” did not think anyone should drink. Why not? Why do you think they thought that no one should drink?
- Student #1:** They thought it was wrong
- David:** Yeah, they thought it was wrong. In what way did they think it was wrong?
- Student #2:** Because of their religious beliefs.
- David:** Right, because of their religious beliefs. So they wanted to extend their religious beliefs, their moral beliefs, to everyone else. They thought that everyone should be prohibited from drinking. So, the problem then came when the people who were the “Wets” rebelled against that. Ray, sit up please. *(David gently lifts Raymond by his shoulders.)*
- Raymond:** Get off of me. *(Ray reacts to David’s physical contact by swinging his arm out and lightly striking David.)*
- David:** Ray.
- Raymond:** What?
- David:** Sit up. You’re in class.
- Raymond:** Back on up, man. Come on.



Scene 6: A Moment Later.

David: You watch your mouth. Sit up.

Raymond: Man, what's so funny?

Class: *laughing*

David: *(Addressing the class)* Get your green books out and turn to page 321.
(Speaking to Raymond after taking him to a more private part of the room)
Listen, I want you to check your attitude at the door. You don't talk to a teacher that way. Now, you are in my classroom, and you're asleep. When you fall asleep, kids are paying attention to you instead of to me.

Raymond: That's exactly what I want them to do.

David: No one is going to be paying attention to you tomorrow after school when you come in here for detention. You have detention after school tomorrow, and I want you in class paying attention for the rest of this class period. Do you understand?

Raymond: All right.

David: Go sit down.



Scene 7: One Day Later. After-school Detention.

Student #1: Excuse me. I was absent a couple days last week. I mean, I guess you know that, but I'm worried that I might be behind.

David: Yes, you are. See this right here (*pointing to his grade book*) where you were absent, and everyone else has a grade. That is the report you were supposed to turn in. Have you been doing your report?

Student #1: I've been working on it a little.

David: Well, I want it tomorrow, or you're going to have trouble getting a good grade.

Student #1: Okay.

David: Have you guys seen Ray? He is supposed to be here for detention.

Student #2: He went home on the bus. He said he wasn't coming.

David: Okay, we'll deal with that tomorrow. Thank you.



Scene 8: One Day Later. Assistant Principal's Office.

Mr. Thomas: *(the Assistant Principal)* Ray, Mr. Burns has sent you down to my office. He tells me that you have a problem in his class and that he assigned you a detention that you refused to serve. Is that correct?

Raymond: Yeah, I guess.

Mr. Thomas: We talked about the problem, and he has decided that he will give you another chance. He's going to assign you an additional detention, which means you'll have two detentions. Do you understand? Okay? Now, when he gives you those two detentions, if you fail to serve either of those detentions, no further chances will be extended to you. You will automatically be suspended from school for the next five days. Understand that? Okay, is there going to be a problem with your serving those detentions?

Raymond: Uh, ... no, sir.

Mr. Thomas: Now, the teachers in your cluster have told me that they're concerned about your progress, and so I want you to serve those detentions without any problems, and I am going to start monitoring your progress in class. I am also going to call your parents and let them know you have two detentions. I will tell them what nights they will be and how long you will be here. I will also inform them that if you don't serve the detentions that you are going to be suspended for five days. Okay? What you have to do is buckle down and do the very best you can. Once your teachers start seeing that you're really putting forth some effort, they will bend over backwards to help you, to make sure you do what you're supposed to do. All right, I am going to write you a pass and send you back to class at this point. Okay?



Scene 9: One Day Later. After-school Detention.

Raymond: Mr. Burns, how long is this detention?

David: Ray, you're here until I find out what your problem is.

Raymond: I don't have no problem.

David: All right then, I have a problem with the way you are acting.

Raymond: I just be tired a little bit.

David: Okay, is there nothing in this class that interests you at all?

Raymond: Uh ... I don't think so.

David: All right, is there anything in life that interests you at all?

Raymond: Cars ... video games ... things like that and I love jazz.

David: Jazz? Okay, I can hook onto that. Mr. Thomas says that you play the trumpet. Is that why you like jazz? Do you know when jazz started? When it had its roots?

Raymond: I think maybe around... uh, the twenties?

David: Okay, well we're talking about prohibition in class. Do you know when prohibition was?

Raymond: No.

David: Twenties, thirties.

Raymond: Oh.

David: So, we're talking about the same time period here. Do you have any books on jazz, or music for jazz at home?

Raymond: Yeah.

David: Okay, why don't you bring in your music some of your jazz music, and any information on jazz and I'll bring in some from the library. Then why don't we have you help me out in teaching the class a bit? We can work together on getting something together for the class, and that way you can do it for extra credit and bring your grade up a little bit. That way you can do something you are interested in. All right, will you do that for me? Will you bring in those things tomorrow?

Raymond: I guess.

David: No, I don't want "I guess." Are you going to bring them in tomorrow? I am going to do some work here, too. I have to go to the library to get those things to help you out. I'm not going to do it all. Are you going to do your part?

Raymond: Yeah.

David: All right, tomorrow's detention might take a little longer then, so I am going to let you leave early today. Can you bring that stuff in for me tomorrow?

Raymond: All right.

Scene 10: One Day Later. After-School Detention.

David: What do you have there?

Raymond: My dad's books.

David: About jazz? That's great. You brought some music. You brought your trumpet. So, you are ready to go, aren't you?

Raymond: Uh huh.

David: That's good. If I had you, if I asked you to play some of your trumpet jazz music in class, would you do it?

Raymond: I guess.

David: You might have to practice a little bit. All right, what we are going to do is find something from the material you have, that you'd like to do a report on, just a short thing to give us a little background of how this fits in with the time period we are talking about, the twenties and thirties. I want you to search through right now as we are sitting here and find some things that have to do with those dates (*referring to the book Raymond brought in*). This looks like it is in alphabetical order, so find some things that have to do with the twenties and thirties so we can tie them into prohibition. I brought this book down from the library, and I'll do the same thing. Here's another one. Together we're going to work on this a little bit. You're going to do the writing. You're going to do the compilation of the whole thing. You'll put it together, but I'll help you. All right?

Raymond: Okay.

David: Let's get to work.

Scene 11: Two Weeks Later. American History Class.

David: Listen up while I call role. Dexter, David, Ray... Where's Ray?

Student #1: I heard he was suspended.

Student #2: Uh-huh, they gave him 10 days for cutting class. What's a matter, you knew it was going to happen.

David: Carolyn ...

Carolyn: Here.