Case Study: Alex’s Story

# Navigating the Middle School Maze – Alex's Story

## Student Profile:

* Name: Alex
* Age: 12 years, 9 months
* Grade: 7th Grade
* School: Summit Ridge Middle School
* Primary Language: English
* Relevant Background: Alex is an energetic and outgoing student who has historically done well academically in subjects that allow for hands-on learning and movement. He has no formal diagnoses, but teachers have consistently noted his high energy levels and occasional difficulty staying seated or refraining from calling out. In 6th grade, minor behavioral issues began to emerge, primarily around peer interactions and adhering to classroom norms. This year, in 7th grade, these issues have escalated, leading to increased disciplinary referrals and peer complaints. His parents describe him as "exuberant" at home but acknowledge he can be "a bit much" for others sometimes. This case study is part of an initial evaluation for Special Education services due to concerns about his increasing behavioral challenges impacting his learning and the learning of others.

## Observed Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Needs:

Observations from multiple school staff (science teacher, history teacher, PE teacher, cafeteria monitor, school counselor) over a 5-week period reveal several consistent patterns in Alex's social-emotional functioning:

1. Difficulty with Impulse Control and Emotional Regulation (Excitement/Frustration):
* Observation: Alex frequently calls out answers without raising his hand, interrupts peers and teachers, and struggles to wait his turn in discussions or activities. When highly excited or frustrated, he may blurt out inappropriate comments, make loud noises, or physically move around the classroom or common areas in a disruptive manner (e.g., drumming on the desk, tapping feet loudly, wiggling excessively). He often speaks before thinking.
* Impact: Disrupts classroom learning, leads to disciplinary actions, and creates friction with peers and teachers.
1. Challenges with Respecting Personal Space and Social Boundaries:
* Observation: Alex often stands too close to peers or adults during conversations, touches peers' belongings without asking, or engages in overly physical play (e.g., playful shoving, tapping) that is not reciprocated or desired by others. He struggles to interpret non-verbal cues that indicate discomfort or a need for personal space.
* Impact: Leads to peer complaints, social rejection, and misunderstandings, hindering the formation of positive relationships.
1. Limited Active Listening and Perspective-Taking in Conversations:
* Observation: Alex often appears to be waiting for his turn to speak rather than actively listening to what others are saying. He frequently jumps to conclusions, misunderstands instructions, or misinterprets social situations because he hasn't fully processed the verbal or non-verbal information from others. He struggles to follow multi-step verbal directions if there are distractions.
* Impact: Impedes effective communication, leads to misunderstandings, and affects his ability to learn from instruction or engage in meaningful social exchanges.
1. Developing Self-Awareness of His Impact on Others:
* Observation: Alex often seems unaware of how his high energy, loud voice, or impulsive actions affect the emotional state or comfort of others. When peers express frustration with him, he often appears genuinely surprised or defensive, stating, "I was just playing!" or "I didn't mean anything by it!"
* Impact: Hinders his ability to adjust his behavior for different social contexts and makes it difficult for him to repair social ruptures or build trust.

## Educational Impact:

These SEL needs significantly impact Alex's ability to:

* Successfully participate in collaborative learning activities without disrupting peers.
* Follow classroom norms and instructions, leading to reduced instructional time.
* Form and maintain positive peer relationships, leading to social friction and potential isolation.
* Independently self-regulate his behavior in various school settings.
* Access the general education curriculum in areas requiring sustained attention, active listening, and appropriate social conduct.

## IEP Goals

Given the observed needs and their educational impact, the following are IEP goals focusing on Alex's social-emotional learning. These goals would be supported by specific services, accommodations and/or modifications, and would inform individualized instructional design as needed.

Identify measurements that could be used for monitoring this goal and connect the goal to SEL standards from the resources provided.

### Goal 1: Impulse Control & Classroom Participation

* Need Addressed: Difficulty with impulse control (calling out, interrupting).
* Goal: By the end of the IEP period, during whole-class instruction or small-group discussions, Alex will utilize an identified strategy (e.g., raising hand, waiting for a pause, counting to 3) to gain attention or respond, limiting unprompted call-outs/interruptions to no more than one per 15-minute interval, in 80% of observed opportunities, as measured by teacher tally charts.
* Measurement:
* SEL Competencies:

### Goal 2: Respecting Personal Space & Boundaries

* Need Addressed: Challenges with respecting personal space and social boundaries.
* Goal: By the end of the IEP period, Alex will maintain appropriate personal space (approx. arm's length) from peers and staff during conversations and transitions, and will refrain from touching peers' belongings without permission, in 4 out of 5 observed opportunities, as measured by teacher and support staff observation checklists.
* Measurement:
* SEL Standard:

### Goal 3: Active Listening & Conversational Skills

* **Need Addressed:** Limited active listening and perspective-taking in conversations.
* **Goal:** By the end of the IEP period, during peer or adult conversations, Alex will demonstrate active listening by making eye contact, refraining from interrupting, and appropriately responding (e.g., summarizing, asking a clarifying question, building on a peer's idea) in 3 out of 4 observed opportunities, as measured by social skills group checklists and teacher observation.
* Measurement:
* SEL Standard:

### Goal 4: Self-Awareness of Impact on Others

* Need Addressed: Developing self-awareness of his impact on others.
* Goal: By the end of the IEP period, when prompted by a teacher or peer regarding a social interaction that caused discomfort or disruption, Alex will identify at least one way his actions impacted others' feelings or the situation, and suggest one alternative positive behavior, in 70% of observed opportunities, as measured by guidance counselor and teacher anecdotal records.
* Measurement:
* SEL Standard: