



### ***Watson Takes A Close Look At...***

#### ***Children Making Choices to Increase Positive Behavior***

When children experience a loss of control over situations, we as adults may witness an increase in “inappropriate” behaviors. When a student refuses to complete math problems, write sentences, or attend a speech session, the situation translates itself into “This is too hard and frustrating.” As we adults insist the task must be completed the student often finds himself “trapped”. He suddenly has lost control of a situation. The more “backed against a wall” he feels the more “acting out” behavior will occur. A simple solution is to give the student a small sense of control. To do this, offer the student choices within the trying situation. A few real examples follow:

- A. Student cries, hides under desk whenever it is time to complete designated math papers that are assigned per day in a folder. The teacher gives control of the situation by asking the student if he would like to change the order of the papers and the days to complete each one. The student chooses which one will be completed Monday-Thursday. The acting out behavior disappeared immediately and student and teacher achieve the same end result.
- B. It is time to go home and the student is crying because he wants to play with an item immediately. The teacher states that it is too late, it is time to go home and he cannot do this now; the crying increases. To use the strategy of choice- control the teacher then states. “When it is play time tomorrow, what will you choose to do?” The student stops crying and immediately replies. Then the teacher states, “Would you like to write that down so we remember? The student immediately says yes! The teacher then states, “Would you like to write that on paper or on the blackboard?” The student says ‘the board’ and can someone help him. This situation changed from an increasingly trying, and argumentative moment to a diffused and happy one.
- C. A student is coloring a picture. The speech therapist enters the room. The student looks up and continues to color. The teacher states that it is time to go to speech. The student refuses. Both adults attempt to have the student stop the task. The student becomes more adamant and loud in her refusals. The

teacher then uses the choice strategy. She states, “Would you like to keep your picture on the art table, your desk, or in my drawer to finish when you come back?” The student looks up, waits a moment, then states, “In your desk.” They place the picture in the teacher’s desk and the student goes to speech.

Although it may take a moment to think of appropriate choices, once you begin this strategy it becomes easier and very natural. And best of all, a potential trying situation for all involved becomes empowering and positive for everyone. So make your choice!

Additional ‘Choice Interventions’ with video vignettes can be accessed at [www.watsonliferesources.org](http://www.watsonliferesources.org) Enter ‘choice’ when searching.