



EXPLORATION OF ACCOMMODATIONS, MODIFICATIONS, AND  
DIFFERENTIATION OF INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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**Signature Page**

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This Internship paper has been examined and approved.

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### **Abstract**

Current federal education legislation requires that children be educated in the least restrictive environment possible, which means that most students with disabilities spend at least part of the school day in the general education classroom. As student with disabilities spend more time in general classrooms, general education teachers need an ever-increasing set of skills to deliver instruction in a meaningful way to students with disabilities, as well as the other students in the classroom. Teachers may need to differentiate their instruction and use various modifications or accommodations to assist students in meeting the standard objectives. This study was conducted in the form of an internship in a public elementary school. The purpose of the internship was to observe, use, and evaluate accommodations, modifications, and differentiation techniques used to instruct students with disabilities in the special education classroom. Some accommodations, modifications, and differentiation techniques can be easily implemented by a general education teacher in the classroom. Others require significant funding or the support of additional personnel to implement. The general classroom teacher collaborates with other professionals and selects appropriate techniques, proven to be successful through current research or through professional classroom experience, to instruct students with disabilities.

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## Part I: Introduction

### Purpose of the Internship

Since the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) in 1975 and subsequent amendments and reauthorizations in 1986, 1990 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), 1997, and 2004 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act), many general education teachers regularly observe an increased number of students with disabilities included in their classrooms (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2006; Rothstein & Johnson, 2010). Prior to 1975, students with disabilities were generally educated in exclusive settings, such as a segregated school, a resource room, or a special education classroom for a large part, or all, of the day. However, beginning with the EAHCA in 1975, and continuing today with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), legislation requires that students with disabilities be educated in the *least restrictive environment* (LRE) and, to the greatest extent possible, participate and receive instruction with typical students in general education classrooms [The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, 20 *U.S.C.* §1412(a)(5)(B) (1975); Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 Regulations, 34 CFR §300.114(a)(2) (2006)]. Currently, more than half of students with disabilities (53.6%) ages 6 to 21 do receive most of their education in general education classrooms; they receive service outside the classroom for less than 21% of the school day (U.S. Department of Education Services, 2010).

With the *least restrictive environment* provision in the IDEIA, general education teachers increasingly serve as the primary educators of students with disabilities. Between 1996 and 2005, the percentage of students with disabilities educated in the

general education classroom for the majority of the day increased by 7.9%--from 45.7% in 1996 to 53.6 percent in 2005 (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). General educators now see more and more students with learning problems and behavior problems in their classrooms, therefore taking on more of a specialist's role as they identify students, evaluate and assess student learning, study curriculum, and then adapt, modify, and differentiate instruction (Sindelar, 1995). Consequently, general educators are stretched and challenged to consider and address the needs of a potpourri of students, including students with disabilities, students without disabilities, English language learners, students with giftedness, and students from diverse cultures (Tomlinson, 2003).

To help students achieve academic success, educators need to consider the multiple intelligences and learning styles of their students when setting up a classroom, designing and delivering lessons, and assessing learning. Educators may need to make adaptations or modifications to the curriculum and use differentiation techniques to address the academic and behavioral needs of all students. Voltz, Sims, and Nelson (2010) advise that just physically including students in the classroom is not enough. "The power of inclusion lies in how educators respond to individual differences" in students (p. xii). Inclusion of students with disabilities in the classroom "calls for divergence in terms of strategies used in teaching" (Voltz, Sims, & Nelson, 2010, p. xii). Teachers carefully select a variety of strategies so that all of their students can achieve similar learning outcomes and reach common standards.

Many general education teachers receive little or no exposure to theory and practice in meeting the needs of students with disabilities, and they are generally only required to complete one or two courses in special education (Wolfberg, LePage, &

Cook, 2009). In 2004, Olson reported that only fourteen states require general education teachers to take courses in special education before receiving a teaching license (as cited in Wolfberg, LePage, & Cook, 2009). General educators benefit from training and experience in a special education classroom using scientifically proven methods and receiving professional guidance in order to acquire new skills transferrable to a general education classroom. An internship in a special education classroom in a public school provides a professional experience and exposure to different types of disabilities.

In my teaching career, as a general education teacher and remedial reading and math teacher in parochial, religious, and private schools, I have encountered and seen an increase in the number of students with disabilities in the classroom. In addition, typical students enter a given grade with varying states of readiness and/or mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills. Therefore, I sought to deepen my knowledge and expertise in the instruction of students with differing needs through participation in a Masters in Education program. Though I completed several courses in the area of special education as part of the program, I saw value in obtaining hands-on experience in the instruction of students with disabilities through an internship in a public school education classroom under the professional guidance of a special education teacher. The purpose of my internship was to observe, use, and evaluate accommodations, modifications, and differentiation techniques used to instruct students with disabilities in the special education classroom in order to build my repertoire of skills for working with students in my own classroom.

### **Importance of the Internship**

I conducted the internship at a public elementary school in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, in the Wauwatosa School District from September 1, 2011, through the end of the first semester. I spent a minimum of 15 hours per week working with students with disabilities, primarily students in third and fourth grades. The lead special education teacher at the school served as my mentor during the internship.

Throughout the internship, I kept an anecdotal journal to document my observations and experiences in the special education setting (See Appendix). Though I documented a wide array of experiences during the internship, a large part of my journaling focused on the varied accommodations, modifications, and differentiation techniques I observed and used with the students. Of great interest to me was why educators choose particular methods for students, whether students showed progress after the adoption of the methods, and the nature of the progress the students showed.

### **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this Internship Project, the terms are defined as follows:

**Accommodations.** Alterations in the way tasks are presented that allow children with learning disabilities to complete the same assignments as other students (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2006)

**CompassLearning Odyssey.** An online K-12 learning program based on current research that assesses students' strengths and weaknesses, prescribes differentiated instruction and practice activities, and provides teachers with customizable reports that help guide continued instruction (CompassLearning, 2010)



**Differentiated instruction.** Instruction that tailors content to an individual student's needs, modifies instructional methods to address student learning characteristics more appropriately, and adjusts learning products or assignments based on an individual student's skills and ability levels (Voltz, Sims, & Nelson, 2010, p. xvii)

***Franklin Talking Dictionary.*** Interactive speaking dictionary with an automatic phonetic spell corrector, a handwriting demonstrator, a rhyme finder, word-building games, and a vocabulary word list builder (Franklin Electronic Publishers, 2012)

***Handwriting Without Tears.*** Handwriting program that uses playing, singing, and building of letters to help students develop skills needed to print words, sentences, and paragraphs and to help students develop the ability to transition to cursive (Handwriting Without Tears, 2012)

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA).** Federal law (PL108-446) that mandates a free, appropriate public education for every child or youth from age three to age twenty-one regardless of the nature or severity of the disability the child may have (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2006, p. 27)

**Individualized Education Program (IEP).** A written educational plan that specifies a student's current levels of educational performance, annual goals, and short-term instructional objectives; prepared by a team that includes the student's parents, teachers, and, if appropriate, the student (Lewis & Doorlag, 2003, p. 443)

**Least restrictive environment (LRE).** To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational

environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily [Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 Regulations, 34 CFR §300.114(a)(2) (2006)]

***Measure of Academic Progress (MAP).*** Adaptive achievement tests in Mathematics, Reading, Language Usage, and Science that are taken on a computer. The computer adjusts the difficulty of a test to the student's performance so each student sees different test questions. The difficulty of each question is based on how well the student has answered the questions up to that point. As the student answers correctly, the questions become more difficult. If the student answers incorrectly, the questions become easier (Northwest Evaluation Association, n.d.).

***Modifications.*** Instructional or test adaptations that reduce learning expectations or affect the content in such a way that what is being taught or tested is fundamentally changed (Crawford, 2010)

***Read&Write GOLD.*** An application toolbar that provides literacy support in windows applications. The application includes a dictionary, a spellchecker, a word predictor, a calculator, and an audible voice that reads document text (Synapse Adaptive, n.d.).

***Special education.*** Specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability [Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 Regulations, 34 CFR §300.39(a)(1) (2006)]

***Specific learning disability (SLD).*** A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or

written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia [Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 20 *U.S.C.* §1401 (33)(A) (2004)]

***Words Their Way.*** A developmental instructional program that has students work with hands-on level-appropriate word sorts in order to improve their understanding of the written language (ELL Tool Box, n.d.)

## **Part II: Literature Review**

### **Specific Learning Disability**

Children with specific learning disabilities (SLD) have a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written. The disorder may appear as a limited ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations [Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 20 *U.S.C.* §1401 (33)(A) (2004); LD Online, 2008]. Children with SLD are unable to achieve adequately for their age and do not meet state-approved grade-level standards even when provided with scientific, research-based intervention (Rothstein & Johnson, 2010). The term specific learning disability includes conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. It does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, or of mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage [Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 20 *U.S.C.* §1401 (33)(A) (2004); LD Online, 2008]. More children are diagnosed with a SLD than with any other disability. Students diagnosed with SLD qualify for special education services under the provisions of IDEIA. In 2007-2008, more than 2.5 million children in the United States, 5.2% of the total enrollment in public schools, received services for a specific learning disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

### **Special Education**

IDEIA defines special education as “specially designed instruction,” or instruction that is adapted “as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child” in its “content,

methodology, or delivery of instruction” [Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act of 2004 Regulations, 34 CFR §300.39 (2006)]. Special education is to “ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the education standards...that apply to all children” [Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act of 2004 Regulations, 34 CFR §300.39(b)(3) (2006)]. Students sometimes need adaptations, or changes, in what and how they are taught, where and how they work at school, what materials they use, and how they are assessed. Adaptations in special education take the form of accommodations and modifications that are individualized, or differentiated, to address the individual challenges and strengths of students (Salend, 2008).

### **Differentiation**

Differentiation is an approach to teaching in which teachers plan strategically in order to meet the needs of all of their diverse learners in an inclusive setting (Broderick, Mehta-Parekh, & Reid, 2005; Chapman & King, 2003). Teachers provide a variety of ways for students to acquire content, to process and make sense of ideas, and to express what they learn (Bender, 2008; Salend, 2008; Tomlinson, 2001). Teachers provide a welcoming learning environment in which they encourage students to ask questions, allow students to make mistakes in the process of learning, teach students that different is acceptable, and expect students to learn and grow (Tomlinson, 2001; Tomlinson, 2008).

Teachers modify the curriculum or content of what they teach for different students based on the interest levels, learning styles, strengths, and challenges (Tomlinson, 2001). Teachers select a variety of presentation methods, technological supports, resource materials, manipulatives, multi-modality activities, graphic organizers, and student groupings to facilitate student processing, or “sense-making,” of the content.

They scaffold instruction by gradually reducing teacher assistance and prompts as students become independent in producing desired skills and products, provide additional instruction in areas where students experience difficulty, and challenge students who quickly master skills (Bender, 2008; Lewis & Doorlag, 2003). In addition, teachers offer tiered assignments at varied levels of difficulty to differentiate the process that students use to achieve understanding of a concept and the product that students create to demonstrate their learning (Tomlinson, 2001).

In a differentiated classroom, multiple, flexible groupings of students work on a variety of tasks at the same time. Teachers choose and adjust the groupings to accommodate student abilities, interests, learning modalities, strengths, and challenges (Tomlinson, 2001). For example, a teacher accommodates varying student abilities by having one group participate in mini-lessons in order to review key concepts skills they have not yet mastered, while other students, who have already shown competence in the same concepts and skills, may be working individually or in small groups with resource materials to extend their understandings and to carry out the agreed upon objectives in their learning contracts. In another scenario, a teacher accommodates different learning modalities by having several students work individually with computer software to practice a math skill, while another group listens to a song that teaches the same skill, while yet another group uses math manipulatives to complete a specified task. In a third scenario, a teacher accommodates student interests and learning modalities by having one group of students respond to their reading by participating in a literature circle discussion, while another group responds to their reading through journal responses, and still another group responds to their reading by illustrating story events.

In a differentiated classroom, the teacher assumes that students have differing needs that are constantly changing. The instructional decisions made by the teacher are driven by assessment, both diagnostic assessment conducted before instruction begins to gather information about what students do and do not know, and on-going assessment that is carried out throughout the learning process (Lewis & Doorlag, 2003; Tomlinson, 2008). The teaching in a differentiated classroom is not static, but evolutionary and changing. The teacher works to make sure students get what they need “in order to grow and succeed” (Tomlinson, 2001, p. 23). Though there is variance in the presentation of information, acquisition of knowledge, and the demonstration of learned skills, the ultimate goal is a commonality in understanding for all students so that all can meet specific learning standards (Tomlinson, 2008).

### **Part III: Journal**

#### **Introduction**

Throughout my internship, I observed and used a great variety of accommodations, modifications, and differentiation techniques for the instruction of students with special needs. The bulk of what I observed was accommodations used to enable these students to complete the same tasks or activities as the other students. I also saw that some modifications were made to the curriculum content in some subject areas, and differentiation was used class-wide to target the different levels of the students in reading and math.

#### **Accommodations**

In each of the classrooms, the teachers used a Smartboard, an Elmo projector, and a wireless classroom microphone. The Elmo projector allowed the teachers to display, share, and discuss textbook pages, worksheets, manipulatives, or student work with the class. The Smartboard enabled the teachers to supplement their instruction by sharing relevant webpages and interactive Smartboard activities with the class. The microphones were originally purchased when a student who was hard of hearing attended the school, but a number of the teachers continued to use them—wearing the microphones themselves, or passing them to students when students had answers to share in class. These technological devices served to keep the attention of the students during instruction. In addition, a student with vision deficits was able to participate in class more fully because he could see materials displayed on the Elmo project and Smartboard. (Appendix 9/01, p. 33; 9/02, p. 34; 12/15, p. 117)



The reduction of assignments was a frequently-used accommodation. Some of the students were unable to focus long enough in order to complete large assignments, while others would become overwhelmed when faced with a whole page of “difficult” work. The staff regularly highlighted only a portion of the math problems on a page for the special education students to complete, asked the students to study only a limited number of spelling words, or expected the students to copy down only a portion of the notes on the board (Appendix 9/09, p. 40; 9/12, p. 42; 10/07, p. 64; 10/11, p. 67; 10/12, p. 69).

A number of accommodations were used to assist two students who struggled with the fine motor control needed to write. A staff member often acted as a scribe whenever the two students needed to complete a written assignment or copy down information the teacher wrote on the board (Appendix 9/07, p. 37; 9/20, p. 48; 10/03, p. 58; 10/31, p. 83; 11/7, p. 89; 12/19, p. 119). Sometimes the two students used the computer to type spelling words or a writing assignment, though typing was actually laborious for both of these students due to a number of factors: age and experience with typing, spelling difficulties, vision deficits, and/or attention span (Appendix 9/07, p. 37; 12/12, p. 114). During math, a staff member would rewrite math problems in larger print on a white board or large grid paper for the students to complete (Appendix 9/29, p. 56; 10/07, p. 64; 10/31, p. 83; 12/6, p. 110). On homework pages, the students would circle or underline answers, or just write a letter (ex. P=proper noun and C=common noun) instead of writing out the complete answer (Appendix 10/17, p. 73). The students were given extra wide-lined paper to use when writing spelling words, practicing manuscript, or completing writing assignments (Appendix 10/07, p. 64). One of the boys used a slant

board when writing, and he was given pencil grips to use, but he preferred not to use the pencil grips (Appendix 10/07, p. 64). This same student used *Handwriting Without Tears* to practice his manuscript writing, and he was more successful with writing his letters if he was able to trace over letters written by the teacher with a highlighter or written in dot form (Handwriting Without Tears, 2010) (Appendix 9/12, p. 42; 9/21, p. 49; 9/22, p. 50; 12/19, p. 119).

One of the students at the school has vision deficits. His desk was always placed right at the front of the room, about six feet from the Smartboard, although he would frequently walk right up to the Smartboard to read his teacher's morning message (Appendix 9/13, p. 44; 9/21, p. 49). In math, staff members would rewrite problems for him in a larger size or would highlight key words that he needed to focus on in the book. To assist with addition and subtraction, the student used either an enlarged hundred chart or a large classroom chart that was hanging on the wall (Appendix 9/15, p. 45; 9/22, p. 50). Since he had difficulty moving a counter or his fingers in a straight line on a chart, the staff discussed creating an L-shaped cutout for him to use on his multiplication chart when solving multiplication facts (Appendix 11/30, p. 106). When working on the computer, he had difficulty finding the keys on the keyboard and seeing the text on the screen (Appendix 9/09, p. 40). He used a large print keyboard when typing, and during computerized assessments, staff members would read text for him, as allowed on certain sections of the test, in accordance with his individualized education program (IEP) (Appendix 11/02, p. 87; 11/04, p. 88).

In addition to many of the accommodations already mentioned, several other accommodations were used to assist students with attention deficits, learning disabilities,

or cognitive disabilities. The children were seated strategically in the classroom, either away from distractions, or in a location that was easily accessible by a staff member who would be assisting them (Appendix 9/14, p. 44; 9/15, p. 45; 9/16, p. 46). When the students needed to copy information from the board, a staff member would write just the key words (a reduced number of words) on a mini white board and place it on the student's desk so the student could copy the information (Appendix 12/6, p. 110; 12/19, p. 119). For one fourth grade student, staff members created cue cards (index cards with key math terms defined and illustrated) for him to use as he worked on his math homework (Appendix 9/12, p. 42; 9/13, p. 43). The third grade classroom had a classroom set of Franklin Talking Dictionaries available for students to use when they struggled to spell words (Franklin Electronic Publishers, 2012). When typing a writing assignment, the students could use the spelling prediction box in the program *Read&Write GOLD* which would offer a whole list of possible spellings after a student typed just a few letters of a word (Synapse Adaptive, n.d.) (Appendix 12/12, p. 114). Finally, for the students who had difficulty staying focused in order get their ideas down on paper during writing time, a staff member would have the student state a sentence and then would draw a line on the student's paper for each of words in the student's sentence (Appendix 11/07, p. 89; 11/21, p. 102).

### **Differentiation**

The two third grade teachers worked cooperatively in order to differentiate their math instruction for mixed abilities in their classrooms. Before each unit in math, they pretested the students on the skills that would be covered in the unit. Then, on a daily basis, the teachers would divide the students into two groups, based on how each student

performed on the skill topic for that day. One group consisted of students that needed more instruction or review of a certain skill, while the other group had already mastered the skill and needed to be challenged with more difficult math concepts. The two third grade teachers also utilized a lot of cooperative activities or games so that the students could help and learn from each other (Appendix 9/09, p. 40).

The teachers used strategic questioning—asking lower-level questions or rewording questions—to include the students with disabilities and to help the students be successful in answering questions in class (Appendix 11/15, p. 96). In some instances, when even lower-level questions stumped a student, the teachers gave additional hints or encouraged the student to ask a friend for help. After receiving the additional hints, the student could still participate by giving the correct answer.

The special education teacher differentiated the learning objectives for each of the students in a small reading group by writing out an objective for each of them (Appendix 12/22, p. 122). For example, she wanted one student to focus on fluency and another student to focus on reading through the end of each word.

School-wide, the students spent at least an hour a week on the computer completing learning tasks in reading and math through the *CompassLearning Odyssey* program (CompassLearning, 2010). The program automatically differentiates the learning tasks for each student based on the student's assessment scores. The program also creates reports for teachers, who can then decide to alter the tasks a student needs to complete, based on the student's current performance (Appendix 11/01, p. 86).

**Modifications**

All of the students with whom I worked received an individualized list of spelling words from *Words Their Way* each week (Invernizzi, Johnston, Bear, & Templeton, 2008). The lists were chosen for them based on the results of a Primary Spelling Inventory from *Words Their Way* and their own achievement in previous weeks. With some direction by a staff member, the students each highlighted ten words of their choosing on their respective lists to study for that week (Invernizzi, Johnston, Bear, & Templeton, 2008) (Appendix 10/10, p. 66).

The students with disabilities in the third grade room received most of their reading instruction through a pull-out group. At the beginning of the week, they did participate in the whole-class reading and discussion of a story. The classroom teacher displayed the pages of the text on the Smartboard, the students listened to an audio recording of the text, and the class discussed the main comprehension skill for the week (Appendix 12/15, p. 117). For the rest of the week, the students with disabilities read stories and worked on phonics and vocabulary at their own reading levels. The lower-level texts that the students with disabilities used coordinated with the texts used in the regular classroom so that they studied the same comprehension skills as the rest of the class; however, the students with disabilities worked on these skills at a simplified degree of difficulty. In addition, my mentor pulled the third graders out several times a week to do guided reading and word work with them through the *Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention* program (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009) (Appendix 10/14, p. 72). At the end of the week, though the students with disabilities participated in a weekly reading assessment to assess the skills they acquired during the week, they received different tests

that were leveled for their reading abilities and covered the phonics skills and vocabulary that they had studied during the week. Since the tests were still difficult for the students to complete on their own, the staff would further assist them by reading portions of the story and/or questions, or they would direct the students to take turns reading portions of the text out loud for the group (Appendix 10/18, p. 74; 11/11, p. 94).

Though the majority of the observed modifications took place in reading, a few modifications were made in other subject areas as well. Two students—the third grader with vision and motor control difficulties, and the fourth grader with autism—did not participate in cursive instruction, but instead practiced manuscript writing (Appendix 9/21, p. 49). The fourth grader with autism, in addition to other accommodations, received some modifications to the math tasks that he needed to complete. For example, to assist the student with the completion of word problems or complex problems, a staff member would write out the number problem he needed to use to solve the problem, rather than expecting him to first determine how to solve the problem and then do the computation. The third grade student with cognitive disabilities received math instruction apart from the rest of the class, and she used alternate math curricula and materials because she possessed significantly lower skills in math than her peers.

### **Other Techniques**

A number of the students had, along with their primary disabilities, comorbid symptoms of behavioral or emotional disorders. The staff at the public elementary school was challenged on a daily basis to find effective techniques to use when working with these students to reduce the number and/or intensity of meltdowns by the students

Mini-schedules—either a list of tasks a student needed to complete, or a list of the activities that would take place within a class period—helped the students know what was coming next and what was expected of them in a given time period (Appendix 9/28, p. 54). When presented at the beginning of a class period, the mini-schedule served to eliminate fears of unknown expectations, set clear expectations of what needed to be accomplished, and helped the students monitor themselves. The students could refer back to the schedule to either cross off the completed task or to see what else they needed to complete before their next break (Appendix 10/11, p. 67; 10/18, p. 74; 11/01, p. 86; 11/17, p. 99).

For a number of the students, the staff members used daily behavior charts to track the students' success at exhibiting desired behaviors. The behavior charts were individualized to each student, addressing behaviors and including goals specific to each child. Students either earned rewards or lost privileges based on their success that day (Appendix 9/06, p. 35; 9/13, p. 43; 9/16, p. 46; 10/10, p. 66; 11/07, p. 89).

The use of extrinsic rewards assisted the staff in motivating the students to complete tasks or demonstrate desired behaviors. In conjunction with the mini-schedules or the behavior charts, the students were presented with the knowledge that upon completion of a task, they would earn a break or reward. The students had many activity options available to them in the special education classroom, including air hockey, a mini trampoline, the computer, remote control cars, puzzles, games, toys, books, a swing, ping pong, etc. Sometimes the students were rewarded with candy or snacks, stickers, or other trinkets (Appendix 10/14, p. 72; 11/01, p. 86; 11/15, p. 96; 12/12, p. 114; 12/16, p. 118).

At times, emotional/behavioral breakdowns were unavoidable, and the staff needed to utilize various strategies to calm the students. In most situations, the staff first moved the upset student to another location—the hallway, a back room, the special education classroom, or a “chill space” (Appendix 11/10, p. 93; 11/28, p. 103; 11/29, p. 105). If a student was unable to cooperate, additional support staff would be called to assist with moving and calming the student (Appendix 9/27, p. 53; 10/04, p. 59; 10/18, p. 74; 10/25, p. 79; 11/28, p. 103). When speaking with the students, the special education teacher referred to different levels of bodily symptoms and behaviors to help them understand the desired behaviors they needed to demonstrate in order to be calm (ex. “Right now, your body is at a five because you are throwing things and shouting. You need to bring your body down to a one or two.”) (Appendix 10/07, p. 64). The staff frequently used “if/then” or “when/then” statements (eg. “When you calm your body down to a one and sit in the chair for two minutes, then you may...”) (Appendix 10/10, p. 66; 10/18, p. 74; 12/13, p. 115). A couple of students had calming strategies lists that included a list of strategies they were encouraged to use when upset: taking deep breaths, counting to ten, squeezing hands, thinking of a favorite place, etc. (Appendix 10/20, p. 76; 10/21, p. 77; 10/26, p. 81; 12/01, p. 107). Through trial and error, the staff would discover unique activities that helped particular students calm down: reading quietly to a student, playing with a glitter stick or iPad, setting a timer, resting on a mat, moving to another location, or taking a break (Appendix 10/18, p. 74; 10/26, p. 81; 11/03, p. 88; 11/04, p. 88; 11/16, p. 98; 11/18, p. 100; 12/08, p. 112; 12/13, p. 115).



### **Part IV: Reflective Essay**

After completing my internship experience, I walked away with a myriad of techniques and strategies to consider putting into practice in my own classroom. Some accommodations, modifications, and differentiation techniques can be easily implemented by a general classroom teacher because they do not require lots of time, money, or additional staff to carry out. These adaptations and techniques include reducing assignments, allowing students to type rather than write assignments, providing larger grid paper or wider-lined paper, strategically seating students, and using individualized behavior charts for select students. The successful implementation of some accommodations, modifications, and differentiation techniques is dependent upon whether or not funding was available to purchase necessary equipment and materials: Elmo project, wireless classroom microphone, Smartboard, *CompassLearning Odyssey*, *Read&Write Gold*, and literacy intervention curricula (CompassLearning, 2010; Synapse Adaptive, n.d.).

Other accommodations, modifications, and differentiation techniques are not as easy to implement by a general classroom teacher alone without the support of other professionals. These adaptations and techniques include acting as a scribe, shadowing and assisting a student for the majority of the day, providing regular one-on-one or small-group instruction in multiple subject areas, creating modified assignments and tests, and handling frequent, large-scale emotional breakdowns by students. While, in a public school, classroom teachers have the support of many other professionals when working with students with special needs, a classroom teacher in a nonpublic school could very well be the person solely responsible for handling the needs of a child with a disability.

A general classroom teacher, who is responsible for an entire class of students at a given time, would find it impossible to shadow or provide one-on-one instruction to one student with severe emotional/behavioral disabilities, autism, or cognitive disabilities while instructing the rest of the class, unless there was an assistant available to help the classroom teacher (Appendix 10/13, p. 70).

Though inclusion is the ultimate goal for most students, some students with disabilities are still best served when receiving **some** pullout services. As the year progressed at the observed public school, and as the students' needs became more apparent, the special education staff increased the amount of pullout time for a number of the students (Appendix 9/19, p. 47; 10/19, p. 75; 11/14, p. 95; 11/16, p. 98). For several students, the increased pullout time was due to emotional/behavioral disabilities—the students were just unable to function in the classroom all of the time. For other students, the increased pullout time was because the students were working at a considerably lower level than the rest of the class and needed small-group or one-on-one instruction. On one occasion later in the semester, for various reasons, three special education professionals and I were all working one-on-one with students in the special education classroom at the same time (Appendix 12/7, p. 111).

The selection of the particular modifications, accommodations, and differentiation techniques to use for each student is not an exact science because each child is unique and does not necessarily respond to a given technique. Though the staff at the observed public school based their decisions on current research, professional experience, and informal and formal assessment results, they had to choose certain strategies or techniques to implement, and then they had to wait to see how a child responded. They

used frequent data-gathering activities and the collaboration and discussion of staff members to make decisions about how to best help a student and about whether current strategies were effective (Appendix 8/29, p. 32; 9/22, p. 50; 10/14, p. 72; 10/24, p. 78; 11/18, p. 100). The special education teacher used informal assessments, such as reading or spelling inventories, along with formal assessment results to determine students' academic levels. She worked with some of the students herself and frequently observed other students as they functioned in the regular classrooms. The special education staff diligently completed daily behavior charts for different students. For one particular student who struggled with an emotional disability, the staff recorded detailed notes—for each occurrence—the child's behavior, the antecedent to the behavior, and the strategies used to help calm him (Appendix 11/14, p. 95). When faced with the difficult challenges of helping another student, the special education teacher contacted and received help from District personnel (Appendix 11/22, p. 102), which included the temporary assignment of an additional special education assistant (Appendix 12/13, p. 115).

I found my internship to be a rewarding learning experience. The internship brought me into contact with students with a variety of disabilities that I had not encountered previously in my teaching career. After working with these students, I feel great admiration for them because they struggle greatly on a daily basis to learn, and they have to put their faith in a great host of individuals who assist them in their learning. In addition to the students, I had opportunity to work with and learn from professionals in many different areas of expertise. I observed how a team of players—classroom teachers, principal, specialty teachers, special education teacher, special education assistants, speech therapist, occupational therapist, social worker, and parents—

collaborates and communicates in order to educate and serve one child. I saw firsthand how the school staff often went way beyond that of providing academic instruction for the child to helping the child navigate and cope with physical, social, emotional, and behavioral issues. As I continue on with my own teaching career, I will frequently reflect back to my internship experience to draw upon the resources used and the knowledge that I gained of additional strategies and techniques to use when instructing students. For this reason, I highly recommend that all general classroom teachers, if given the opportunity, spend time observing and working in a special education classroom.

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## Appendix

Internship for Carrie Meyer

Use this document to keep track of the Internship Carrie is doing at Lincoln Elementary School in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. The document will serve as the journal Carrie will keep.

To help with determining who is writing, Carrie, please use regular black font, Mentor, please use blue or green font, and Dr. Spurgin will use red font. Thanks.

**\*\*Pseudonyms have been used for the teachers and students to ensure anonymity.**

3rd Grade Spec. Ed Students

Kenny--EBD, some ASD behavior

Darin--OHI, (ADHD, ASD characteristics, vision, motor skills)

George--OHI (ADD--Attention)

Susan--CD

4th Grade Spec. Ed Students

Bentley--ASD

Braedon--LD/OHI (ADD)

August 29, 2011

I attended the beginning-of-the-year staff meeting at Lincoln today. The principal shared WKCE and MAP (computerized academic test taken twice a year) test results for the students at Lincoln, as well as various news, announcements, and schedules. I met the three special ed. assistants and the speech therapist. In the afternoon, the special ed. team met with each of the classroom teachers who had students on my mentor's caseload. The special ed. team and classroom teachers discussed academic needs, behavior challenges, social challenges, strengths, strategies for addressing the students' needs, the use of technology, seating in the classroom, accommodations and modifications for each of the students.

August 31, 2011

Carrie had great questions and really wanted to be a part of our beginning of the year collaboration meetings. I think it was good for her to see the preparation that goes into planning for students with special needs. The importance of physical placement in the classroom, crisis plans, and behavior planning. All of these will continually be updated and modified throughout the year to accommodate the ever changing needs of our students.

August 31, 2011

I am pleased with the opportunity for Carrie to begin a school year to see what goes into the planning and preparation to benefit the child. I am also happy Carrie met with the various personnel in the school, the people she will be working with during the



internship. Thank you, Mentor, for taking the time to make Carrie feel welcome and part of the team.

Carrie, I can imagine the wealth of information you received on the initial day of meetings. I am sure you will have all the information stored in your brain in no time at all. So - bring it on!! After all, what is happening is for the children in your care.

NOTE: I am happy all of us can share this Google Document. I had everything in order when I met with you last Friday, only to find out everything was not in order. It took a bit to straighten matters out on this end. Thanks for your patience.

September 1, 2011

Today was the first day of school with students, and it went very well. We began the day by standing on the playground to welcome students back to school. I reviewed some of my mentor's notes about her special ed. students. Then a spec ed. assistant and I spent over an hour in the third grade room. Darin was absent, but I was able to meet George, Kenny, and Susan. We helped the students label their notebooks and folders. Susan needed constant direction, but was able to accomplish the task. Kenny didn't have all of his school supplies yet, but he handled it well. The classroom teacher redirected George (seated at front of the room) several times when he was off-task and staring in the wrong direction. After labeling, the students worked on a get-to-know you activity. They had to find classmates that fit the descriptions in the Bingo squares and ask them to sign their names in the squares. I worked with Susan quite a bit. She needed me to read the descriptions, and I prompted her with what to ask classmates. At first she remained seated in her desk, but she eventually took some initiative to walk around and talk to several different classmates. She was very excited to know that one boy had freckles and to understand what freckles were. She shared that news several times with people in the room. At recess time, I observed that Kenny was reluctant to leave the steps by the school door, but with some prompting, he followed the spec. ed. assistant and me as we walked across the blacktop to the playground. Eventually he began interacting with a few students and climbing on the playground equipment. Then I spent a short time in the 4th grade classroom as the classroom teacher was explaining classroom jobs and other procedures. This allowed me to observe Bentley (ASD) in his classroom setting for a short time, and my mentor introduced me to the class. My mentor and the special ed. team were excited that Bentley was so happy and excited when he arrived to school in the morning. He appeared to have a very good morning.

I was really fascinated with the Elmo Projector that the 3rd grade teacher used in her classroom. I can see how handy that could be for the teacher in modeling, or for students to share their work with others. It was also interesting that she used a microphone that hung around her neck. I observed how the students attended better when she had it on. It was difficult to hear her above the noise of the fans (no air conditioning), and outside noise. My mentor explained that several of the teachers have used the microphones in the past when they had hard-of-hearing students in their room, but they continue to use them.

September 1, 2011

From your description, you had a full morning. I really appreciated how you talked about each child, focusing on the positives. I can see you are willing to take the first step in developing a quality relationship with the children.

I am also pleased you had an opportunity to look in on the 4th grade and how Bentley was interacting in the setting with his peers. I look forward to how you work with Bentley in the future.

I am unfamiliar with the Elmo Projector. From your writing, I can see the device is quite motivational. Let me know how it works in the future.

Thanks for your entry. I know it takes time to write, but your entries keep me up-to-date with what is happening with your Internship.

September 2, 2011

My mentor was absent today with a sick child at home, but I was in good hands with the other team members. The 4th grade students began the day with the classroom teacher checking their agendas (assignment notebooks) for parent signatures. The spec. ed. assistant spent a few minutes helping Braedon organize a trapper keeper of sorts that contains lots of folders, notebooks, and other school supplies. His family requested that he use it, although the classroom team was concerned that it might not work well for him. Next the classroom teacher talked with the students about their school-wide behavior expectations (Abe's Way) and the procedures she would take for behavior incidents.

The class had its first math lesson. They did a textbook walk-through. The teacher uses the Elmo projector so effectively. She can lay any piece of paper or book on the projector, and it projects the image onto the Smart Board. Next, the teacher had the students do some basic addition problems, and they wrote their answers on their student whiteboards. When the facts included higher numbers, Bentley (ASD) attempted to figure them out using his fingers. The teacher moved through the problems rapidly, so Bentley didn't always have time to figure them out. Then he began glancing at his neighbor's board in order to write down the correct answers. The students were given an assignment to complete a page on which they had to figure out where to find certain information in the text and then locate the information. I felt it was a tricky assignment for the students, though they could work together to figure out the answers. During the work time, the teacher would frequently direct the students' attention to the Elmo projector, and she would go through some of the questions. I spent the time assisting Braedon (ADD/LD); he needed lots of prompts and guidance to answer the questions. Without the assistance, he was just sitting and not working. At the end of math class, the students needed to complete another paper that had some review math problems of different types. Again Braedon needed guidance to complete the problems and prompting to stay on task. He does not seem to know how to do double-digit addition or subtraction.

Bentley had a good morning. The spec. ed. assistant focused most of her attention on Bentley's needs. At times he would point and move his hand towards the table in the back of the room to indicate that he wanted the spec. ed. assistant to move away from him and let him do things by himself. It was good to see him happy and showing independence.

I spent 30 minutes in the 3rd grade room as they were filling out a Clock Buddies page. I worked with Susan (CD) and prompted her to speak to other friends to fill up the spaces on her sheet. After a while, she showed her own initiative to complete the task and seemed to understand that she needed to write her name on another classmate's page each time. She expressed concern a couple of times because a certain classmate was absent, but I redirected her attention to finding the next friend, and she was fine.

There are multiple classrooms for each of the grades in the school, but I noticed that all of the SPED students in a given grade were in the same classroom. I'm curious about the reasoning for that, whether it's based on personnel or because of the difficulty of scheduling support staff. I intend to ask my mentor about that.

September 3, 2011

I am really curious about Abe's Way as a classroom management tool. I looked it up on the Internet and all I could find is Adult Basic Education so I do not think that would fit the setting you described. Maybe you could explain Abe's Way a bit when you have time.

I am really pleased you worked with a number of children. I think Bentley will be a challenge for you but very rewarding. He appears he wants to learn, but will need lots of guidance. Keep me posted on how Bentley is progressing. Braedon is another challenge. When a child has ADHD, like Braedon, the attention deficit really interferes with his academic progress. The comorbidity between ADHD and LD is quite high, over 50% of the time. I really have empathy for a child like Braedon because he will always have trouble academically because of his attention issues.

From your description, the spec. ed. assistant appears to be another classroom teacher. I was a bit confused as to her role in the classroom. How all the adults manage to work in the same classroom should be interesting. I believe you indicated you pull children out of the classroom at St. Lucas to provide instruction. Could you do the instruction in the regular classroom? I wonder what that scenario would look like.

Have a great weekend. I am sure you have lots to do to get ready for your work next week. Make sure you take a little time to relax.

September 6, 2011

I can see how Braedon will struggle academically because his attention is often not where it should be during instruction. I helped him a little bit today again in math. They were working on identifying line segments, lines, rays. He needed a little reteaching and guidance to complete his work. Bentley acted very silly during much of the time that I

was in the room today. Today he wanted the spec. ed. assistant to sit next to him; whereas, last week, he often told her to sit at the back table. He tends to act silly during the instruction time of the math lesson when he is just supposed to be listening. At one point, he leaned into the spec. ed. assistant and “head-butted” her so that each of them had a light red mark on their heads. She moved to the back table for a while after he did that. Bentley has a mini-schedule/behavior chart for his day. The spec. ed. assistant gives him smilies for about 7 seven behaviors for each class. He received a frown face for “keeping his body to himself” and a couple of straight faces for “following directions” and “?” (can’t remember the other one) today.

I spent a short while in the 3rd grade classroom assisting Darin during a spelling test. He is a new student at the school, and this was his first day. He did not attend last week. The students took a spelling pretest this morning. I sat next to Darin during the test. He could not keep up with the pace of the test because he is easily distracted, he lacks spelling skills, and he has difficulty forming his letters. He completed about six of the sixteen words with lots of encouragement from me to keep him on task. He spelled “cat” correctly, but the other words had errors (4-5 letters in words). When he writes his letters, some of them are backwards, and many of them do not look like traditional letters. I think he needs his own spelling. He’ll probably need fewer words if he’s going to write them, or he may need to use the computer, letter tiles, or spell orally. In addition, he needs work on writing and forming his letters.

Abe’s Way is the name that the staff uses with the students for their PBIS program. A=Act Responsibly, B=Be Respectful, E=Encourage Excellence. I’ll have to get a brochure from the school that explains the program and send it to you.

The work that I do at St. Lucas is a pull-out program by design. It is a Title I program, so I work with up to 8 students in a group. At St. Lucas, the groups tend to be smaller because they don’t have such high needs in their classes. Some of the students really need the pull-out because they are way behind in their skills. Others benefit because they receive additional practice in reading or math. Title I classes do not take the place of their own classes; they are in addition. In some cases I have wondered whether it might not be the best practice to pull the kids out, depending upon their needs, because then they miss other subjects.

I can see you are getting right into the mix with your students. I think that is a great idea because you are a very fine teacher and have worked with children with the varying kinds of disabilities already.

I will be interested to see how Darin fits into the mix of the other students. From what you describe, Darin already knows the system and is asking for accommodations already. He may need the reduced loads and assignments. However, one has to be cautious he does not know the system so well he is playing it for all its worth. That said, if Darin needs accommodations, he should be given them soon so he does not quit or get too frustrated. He may be an interesting person to follow and see how matters work out for Darin, not only academically but socially as well.

Concerning Bentley, one wonders if the long weekend would have something to do with his behavior. If Bentley had an antecedent event which triggered his behavior, then he would naturally act out in class. Finding the antecedent would help in the future to head off behaviors before they arise. Did he spend time with another family member? Did he get enough sleep? What happened on the way to school? Did he have a problem with a sibling? Did he see something in a video game or on TV? I do not know the answer, yet knowing would be a big help to work on Bentley's behavior. If the etiology is unknown, then the teacher is working only with symptoms - very frustrating for the child and the teacher.

I also found Abe interesting. I would think Abe is a school wide PBIS model. The model is simple, yet broad enough to be utilized in all the classrooms.

Your role as Title 1 Teacher at St. Lucas should be interesting. I can see why you would have a pull-out program because of the group size. I hope you have a great time helping out at St. Lucas.

I appreciate your postings so I can keep up with your work. If you have any questions or a request for more information, please do not hesitate to ask in this document or contact me via email or phone.

September 7, 2011

I talked with my mentor a little about Darin. One of the things she suggested is using a timer when Darin needs to complete work to help keep him focused on his task. He is easily distracted and loves to talk. There are times when I talk to him directly and give him an instruction, but he is focused on something else he hears in the room, and tunes me out, intentionally or not, I'm unsure. Otherwise, he is the most happy-go-lucky guy. He often responds to his teacher, "Okay, Mrs. Thompson." He seems eager to please. After knowing him only for a couple of days, he already has given me hugs. My mentor and I also talked about using [www.spellingcity.com](http://www.spellingcity.com) with Darin for spelling or letter tiles for him to spell his words. Today he needed to complete a vocabulary crossword puzzle. Unfortunately, he only had a short time to work on it, and he works slowly because of distractions, so he only completed one word. He and I took turns writing the letters of the word in the boxes. The objective was to get him focused on the task and to reduce the amount of letters he had to write himself because of his difficulties with letter formation.

I worked with Kenny on his math today. He seemed overwhelmed when it was time to get started on his work. He is unable to read the questions himself, so that was part of the problem. He did well on the three "time" problems which was the focus on the lesson today. Then I suggested he work on the basic addition fact section. At first he said he didn't know how to do them. I got out some counters and demonstrated the first one ( $0+7=$ ), and that seemed to spark his mind, because then he completed the rest without using the counters. Next we worked on a word problem ( $14-7=$ ), and he asked for a number line. Since we didn't have one readily available, I drew him a number line. However, while I was drawing the number line, he used his fingers to figure out the problem. There were other sections on the page, but math work time was over before he

completed them. I asked the classroom teacher whether the page was homework, and she said that the students didn't have to finish it.

Bentley does have a difficult home life, so it would be interesting to know if there is a correlation. I'll have to make a mental note to think about his behavior on the first day of each week.

September 7, 2011

Your work with Darin is intriguing. He appears to have a good temperament and is at least willing to make the attempt. When a child is so distractible, learning suffers greatly. I have a sad part of my heart empathizing for a child who has little filtration in the prefrontal part of his brain. It is not that he can't pay attention; he is paying attention to everything. How confusing and maddening, yet he appears to be quite a willing person. I wonder if he has been tested and diagnosed with an attention deficit. From your description, he would be a good candidate for an attention disorder. Whatever can be done to help him focus will help with the attention issues. I would try self-monitoring strategies with Darin and see if he can pay enough attention to use such a strategy. A sticky note on the desk with happy faces he can fill in if he is on task comes to mind as a strategy to try. Metacognition strategies may also be helpful, such as the STOP strategy. S - stop, T - think, O - option (what are my options because I know I am in trouble), and P - plan (carry out a plan to readjust my behavior). I am happy you had a chance to talk with your mentor about Darin.

Kenny seems to have some strategies he can muster to help with Math. He asked for a number line and probably used his fingers to help with the problem. Good for him. The more strategies he can internalize, the more he will be able to utilize them for his Math problems. I think it is great he has some strategies to use so he is successful with his work. Success leads to more success. Encourage Kenny to use the various strategies to help himself, at least as much as possible. I am sure you will teach Kenny some of the strategies you have used in the past.

Concerning Bentley, I am sure his home life interferes with his learning. One has to empathize with the child whose home-life is chaotic and confusing. When so much baggage is brought from home, the ability to learn is greatly impaired. Keep me posted on Bentley's progress.

Hope your shortened week is going well. Blessings on your work and effort.

September 8, 2011

My week has been going well. It has gone quickly.

I was in the 4th grade room during Math today and observed Bentley having lots of difficulty listening and following directions. He was not following directions well, even with reminders. The spec. ed. assistant gave him quite a few sad faces on his behavior chart. Bentley had a calculator on his desk that the spec. ed. assistant eventually took away because it was distracting him, and he wasn't following directions. After that

happened, Bentley kept motioning to me to come over, and asked me for his “calc.” This was interesting because last time I was in the room, he motioned me away from him and preferred to work with the spec. ed. assistant. However, today when the spec. ed. assistant didn’t let him have the calculator, he wanted me to cover over to him. I did walk over once to encourage him to follow directions, but otherwise ignored his attempts at getting me to walk over. When he finished his math work page, I made a point of praising him and giving him a high five.

I pulled up a chair next to Braedon during the math lesson today. Until now, I’ve been sitting at the table in the back and just moving up to him when he needed refocusing during the lesson or help to complete his page. Previously, he was just quietly distracted, but he today was silly and doing things he shouldn’t have been doing. As the lesson continued, the teacher gave the students manipulatives to use, so that made it even more difficult for him to listen and stay on task. He needed me sitting right next to him today.

At the end of the morning, I was in the spec. ed. room. Four 5th graders were taking the math MAP test on computers. I read the questions for the girl because she also has reading difficulties. My mentor shared information about how the MAP tests work. She also shared a website that has lots and lots of games specifically designed to build the skills that the MAP tests. I’m excited to explore the website because I think that many of the games will help my Title I students also.

September 8, 2011

Your working with a number of students will, indeed, be helpful to you in your work as a Title I Teacher. I am happy you are learning new resources which you can use in other settings. One of the goals of the internship is to glean information from SPED classes and classrooms that you can use later in your ministry. Make sure you write your ideas down for later use. In fact, maybe this document will help in that regard. Then, when you have finished your work and graduated as a Master Teacher, you can share your wisdom at a teachers’ conference by giving a sectional. YEA!!

I hope you are feeling comfortable in your role in the various classrooms. As time goes by, you will develop a very good working relationship with all the children. From your description of the children and what you are doing to help each child, I would anticipate you will have a positive relationship built very quickly. Make sure you still keep a professional distance with the children because it is so easy to get drawn in by them. I know you already have a soft spot in your heart for the children in your care.

You should find the MAP testing protocol interesting and informative. The continual assessment will give you clues to the progress of the child and where intervention is necessary. Continuing assessment is a very good idea. You simply have to know where the child stands to be able to teach in his or her “zone of proximal development.” Progress monitoring is a very good idea.

Last day of the week tomorrow. Time surely flies when you are so busy and having fun.

September 9, 2011

A spec. ed. assistant and I helped Darin, Kenny, and Susan to use [www.spellingcity.com](http://www.spellingcity.com) to practice their spelling words and take the final test. The three of them were only given the first 5 words out of 16 words to work on. The headphones were not working properly, so the kids weren't able to take the final test on their own. Normally they can click a button to hear the word spoken, and then they type the word. I worked with Darin to use Microsoft Word to type his words. He seems to be pretty computer savvy, though he has a hard time finding the letters on the keyboard. He was slow to get started with his typing and wanted the font size bigger. I made a deal with him that I would enlarge the font size if he would get down to business and do his words. The deal seemed to work for him. He spelled his words correctly.

In math, the 3rd graders needed to correct any mistakes they had made on their pretest, now that they had had lessons on all of the skills. The 3rd grade teacher has them correct the pretest after covering the skills during the week as the posttest, so students don't have to complete work again that they already had mastered. I thought that was a smart idea! Kenny started to shut down right away when he got his paper back and saw the problems he needed to correct. I reassured him that I was going to help him, and then he brightened back up. With a little reviewing, he was able to work mostly on his own to correct the mistakes. Then I worked with Darin who hadn't completed the pretest. The 3rd grade teacher didn't have an extra paper for him, so I had him complete some of the same problems on a blank paper. For the time problems, I had him show me the correct time using a hands-on clock. Something that has been suggested for the future is for Darin to focus on completing at least one of each type of problem on his math assignments, rather than just starting from the beginning and then never practicing all of the skills. His attention difficulties and poor writing skills get in the way. In addition, whoever works with Darin often does much of the writing for him. My mentor says that Darin will begin working on his writing with the OT specialist.

This did not occur today because the students were correcting the pretests, but on most days the two 3rd grade teachers teach math at the same time, and some students go with one teacher, and the rest go with another. The students that go with one teacher or another vary every day based on how they performed on their pretests. One teacher does enrichment while the other teacher does more in-depth teaching. Pretty cool!

September 9, 2011

Sounds like as day to catch up and do closure activities, especially in Spelling. I think technology can be a real benefit for children with special needs, providing the technology works. Too bad the headphones did not work and that is why a teacher is needed. Teachers must be very flexible and adapt to the situation that arises. Your being there to help the children is a wonderful thing.

Your Math involvement with the children was varied and interesting. The manipulative ideas with the clock were good and provided a concrete example of an abstract concept; time.



I really think Darin would benefit greatly with OT service. The OT is skilled in graphomotor function. I wonder if she would work with Darin's shoulder muscles to have that anchor point established. Working with proximal muscles involves working with distal muscles as well.

I really like the work of the OT. The OT really does intervention which is uniquely different from the PT. Again, I think Darin would benefit from OT services and you may want to collaborate with the OT to see what you can do to follow through on the OT's work during the week.

The two teachers can team up to work with children's special needs based on the formative assessment that goes on in the classroom. The education response is based on data collected from the continual assessment. What a neat idea. However, if you are the only teacher - well!!

I am really happy you had a great first week. I can only imagine the weeks flying by and you will soon be bidding the children a good bye. Enjoy your time with the children and the teachers at Lincoln.

9/12/11

I observed Carrie working with Braedon in fourth grade math. Carrie was sitting near him and prompting him to track his eyes on the smartboard and/or teacher. We will be starting a self-monitoring checklist for Braedon to fill out after most subjects with a special ed. staff member. His checklist includes-did I track the teacher/smartboard?, did I keep working? We also talked about highlighting specific problems in his math journal so he is not expected to complete all work. He is often overwhelmed when given several full pages of work to complete. We also discussed highlighting keywords in the journal such as parallel. We will be giving Braedon math "cue cards" which are index cards on a ring with specific math topics covered in class ex. parallel, perpendicular, subtraction with borrowing, etc. He can use these when working in his journal and on tests.

In 3rd grade, Carrie was working with Darin on his spelling words. She did a great job having him try to "beat the timer" when completing the task. He was very motivated and completed his work quickly. We talked about modeling how to form letters using a highlighter and then he can trace over. She should also use a dot allowing him to visualize where to start. We will also be working with the OT to meet Darin's fine motor needs. He uses a slant board, specific pencil grip, lined paper and will be working a great deal on letter formation and keyboarding.

Carrie is fitting right in with the students and the staff. We are very fortunate to have her as part of our special education team.

September 12, 2011

Mentor, thank you for your update on Carrie's progress to date. I appreciated your observations of her in action, working with specific children. I am impressed by your program and how you handle each child individually based on needs. I am getting to

learn about the children vicariously. To me learning about children and how they tick is lots of fun. I also like to problem-solve for teachers and parents who have questions or concerns about their children.

I am also thankful to your for helping Carrie fit into your setting. She has experience and the goal was to have her working with children from the onset of the experience. You have provided her with a collegial environment in which she can thrive. Again, thanks for offering Carrie the setting and the encouragement to succeed. You have helped her to fit in and be successful.

September 12, 2011

I am learning many new things from my mentor, the special ed. team, and the regular classrooms teachers as well and am grateful for the experience.

As my mentor talked about, I worked with Braedon in his math today. He needs lots of reminders to keep his focus on the teacher and often needs to be directed to the correct page or to complete the task as directed. While watching him during the lesson, I was wondering how much he was actually taking in. I think that his learning is very spotty from observing him trying to complete the math work after the lesson. My mentor suggested writing some of the information that the classroom teacher puts on the smartboard onto a small whiteboard and setting it on the table in between Braedon and another boy who also has attention problems, especially if it is material they need to write down. I also took my mentor's suggestion of highlighting some of the problems on the two pages Braedon was assigned to cut down on the amount he needed to complete. He got right to work and completed half of the first page while I was there; I had to leave to go to 3rd grade at that time, so I instructed him to finish the first page and then show it to the spec. ed. assistant. On his own, he decided to use post-its to mark the two pages he needed to complete, so that was probably a strategy that was modeled for him at one point in time.

As my mentor talked about above, I also worked with Darin to take his spelling pre-test. We moved to a quiet cubby space at the back of the room. He wrote 7 of the 16 words today. He didn't get started right away, so I pulled out my timer, and that seemed to motivate him to work more quickly. He would remind me to start the timer when I forgot. Some of his letters are hard to decipher, so for some of the words I asked him to tell me his letters, and I wrote them underneath his writing. For one of the words, I did not rewrite the word underneath, and Darin wondered why. I explained to him that he did a great job with all of the letters, so I didn't need to write the word again. He seemed to like that and continued to write his letters carefully. Darin has trouble with his c's. They look like e's. My mentor suggested I use a highlighter and model those letters. Then Darin traced over them.

The spec. ed. assistant supplied Bentley with a hundred chart today during the mental math exercises. That seemed to help him keep up with the class and eliminated his need to look at someone else's board for the answer.

September 13, 2011

I noticed you are working a lot with Braedon and Bentley and that is a good thing. You will get to know these boys very well and discern how they learn. I anticipate Braedon is having much difficulty in filtering out extraneous stimuli and pays attention to everything. The prefrontal lobes of the brain are used to filter stimuli and Braedon's prefrontal lobes have not developed or are different than the neuro-typical child. Whatever you can do to cut down on external stimuli will be very helpful to Braedon. Highlighting problems to solve and using lots of white space helps a child with attention deficits. I look forward to how you intervene to help Braedon learn.

Darin is another case. Look over the following link to see if any of the topics is indicative of Darin's difficulties

[http://www.idonline.org/article/Visual\\_Processing\\_Disorders%3A\\_In\\_Detail](http://www.idonline.org/article/Visual_Processing_Disorders%3A_In_Detail) . I think visual motor processing is problematic for Darin. At first I thought it may be muscle related, but the more I think, visual motor appears to be the issue. I surely cannot and do not pretend to diagnose from here in New Ulm, I just want to share my perceptions. I will be very interested to see what the OT anticipates the difficulties are for Darin. My wife has a child in childcare who has visual motor problems which sound eerily like Darin's issues.

Keep up your top quality work and your journaling. I am getting a clear picture of your experience. I am especially pleased you are picking up clues and practical strategies to build your own repertoire for future use in your helping children with special needs.

September 13, 2011

Darin did have a vision diagnosis at one point in time, but at his most recent evaluation, it was dropped. I'll have to ask my mentor more about that. Today my mentor was talking about possibly using an Intelli keyboard with Darin because she suspects he may have trouble seeing the letters on the keyboard. He has trouble reading his teacher's morning message on the Smartboard, even though he is seated right in front. We have been walking right up to the board to read the message. His reading skills are weaker than I would expect for a third grader, so I help a lot with the reading. However, his reading far surpasses his spelling and writing abilities. The website that you provided seems to describe Darin's difficulties.

I worked with Braedon in math today. My mentor gave him a tracking sheet that he will use throughout the day to track two things: 1) how well he tracked the board/teacher during the lesson and 2) how well he stayed on task and finished his work. He really had trouble focusing during the lesson today, but made attempts to focus after being reminded. I wrote the important points from the lesson on a small whiteboard during the instruction time. That seemed to help him focus a bit more, and he referred back to the notes to complete his work. Another thing that we started with Braedon is writing down key terms, definitions, and examples on index cards which he will keep on a ring and store in his binder.

The third grade students took the math MAP test today on the computers. The spec. ed. students went to the spec. ed. room to take the test. Teachers sat with the students one-to-one and read the test questions for them. Kenny became frustrated during the test because he didn't know many of the answers, but he kept working at it. Eventually he reached his frustration point, so we stopped. From what the team has told me about him, last year he would not have been able to finish nearly as much before reaching his melt-down point. He seems like a different child than what they describe of him from last year--his home situation has changed for the better since last year.

September 14, 2011

Darin was placed in the "extended learning" math group today based on his pretest scores; however, the teachers weren't quite sure if it was he that should have been there or Kenny. Darin's math group worked on adding and subtracting fractions with common denominators. Although Darin seemed to pick up the concept and answer questions correctly, the pace of the instruction seemed too fast for him. The teacher presented information on the smartboard that was awful small for him to read, even though I made sure he was seated right in front. At times the teacher wrote other things on the chalkboard, which was even farther away from Darin. I wrote some of the same things on a piece of paper so they would be right in front of him, although he rarely looked at the paper. The students were given 3 different math papers to complete, but I only highlighted a couple of rows of problems on each paper. Darin and I worked through all but 3 problems during math time. He knew how to get the answers, but had trouble adding or subtracting basic facts correctly. I pulled out a number line to help him with his facts. It seems that he processes things slowly, plus he is easily distracted, so the work is slow going.

The rest of the morning was spent working with the 3rd grade students complete the second half of the math MAP tests. All four of the students worked hard and completed the test.

September 14, 2011

I seem to have lost a day somewhere so I will reply to September 13 and 14 together. I would be interested in how Darin's vision turns out. Keep me posted on what interventions and assessments are done to help Darin with his difficulties. I wonder what would happen over time with the strategies and ideas you use with Darin to help him maximize his learning potential. Darin has affinities that can be worked on to help keep him positive. His reading is his forte so encourage him to work hard on his strengths. Often, so much work is done on the disabilities that the abilities are overlooked. From today's posting I think your reasonable accommodations by reducing his work load will help Darin from giving up or shutting down because the pile of work is too daunting.

Any type of help to get Braedon organized will ultimately help him in the long run. The note cards are a good idea. Braedon may not want to use the cards after a while, but do not get up on the idea. The cards may not work after a time; however, bring the cards back at a later date and try the strategy again. As with the case of Darin, reducing Braedon's work load is a great idea and will help him from shutting down.

I am also interested in how the children do on their MAP tests. I do not want individual scores, just generalizations on how the children interacted with the test and their success. Your comment concerning how hard the students worked is really a positive. I hope the results are as good as the effort.

September 15, 2011

Overall, I thought the students interacted fairly well with the math MAP tests. They kept at it, even though the questions were difficult. Kenny seemed very drained after each session--he only completed half the test in each session. However, he stuck with it, which would not have been the case last year. My mentor decided that Susan will not be allowed to use the mouse herself to choose answers because she stims on it. The teachers will have her point to her answers, and the teachers will click the mouse for the answers. My mentor anticipates that the reading tests may not go so smoothly for the students.

The spec. ed. team was commenting this morning on how Kenny seems to be reverting back to some of his OCD behaviors from last year. I saw a bit of that this morning when he refused to move to a different seat for math class. I suggested he move to a different desk so that he was closer to me and the other students I needed to help. The classroom teacher asked him to move also, but he declined. We didn't push it today. My mentor arrived after math class started and helped Kenny throughout. A spec. ed. assistant was working one-on-one with Susan, and I was working one-on-one with Darin. Due to the nature of the math lesson (What's My Rule?), the students really needed that much help. The classroom teacher ended up helping George quite a bit. I don't know that there will always be so many adults in the room, so it remains to be seen whether Kenny's seating will be an issue in the future.

My mentor and I talked about ways to help Darin in math. She talked about a colored hundred chart instead of the plain white one. She provided some transparent chips to help Darin count on the hundred chart. He has difficulty moving the chip and counting accurately, so often I guided his hand as he was counted. I suggested that maybe he needed a larger chart, since it seemed he was having difficulty seeing the numbers and keeping the chip in the squares. We also talked about him using post-its on the large class hundred chart in the future.

During 3rd grade reading, my task consisted of keeping Darin, George, and the girl seated next to George (undiagnosed) on the correct page as the teacher read the story. The girl who is undiagnosed has attention problems very similar to George's. The classroom teacher also turned their pages quite often to keep them on the correct page.

September 16, 2011

The MAP tests went as well as expected. I am happy to note the progress of Kenny, successive proximation can take lots of time and practice. As far as Susan is concerned, stimming can be very soothing to the child. Stimming can also be very distracting. Teachers need to make judgments to see if the stimming will help or hinder the child's academic progress. In Susan's case the stimming was interfering with her ability to take the test.

You continue to help Darin in Math. Have you offered suggestions concerning Darin's math? I am sure you have a number of strategies you have used in the past that may help Darin. If you feel comfortable offering suggestions, go for it!

If you need information on a topic, let me know. Otherwise, I will be happy to follow your progress via this document. By the way, I did send Professor Meyer and Dr. Klindworth your journal to date and they were very pleased with the work you have done on the journal and the experience you are getting at Lincoln. Keep up the good work and quality effort.

September 16, 2011

My mentor asked me to think about a method to help Darin stay focused. Darin takes a long time to get started on a task. Today I tried counting down from 5 to 1 and saying "Go" to signal him to start working. He also gets distracted or loses focus during a task. I suggested to my mentor that we develop a tracking chart with those 2 key issues to track how well he gets started and stays focused on his work. We also discussed having him work in the study carrel in the back of the room to help eliminate distractions. Sometimes it is not feasible because the teacher is teaching a lesson, has the students work for a couple of minutes, and then continues teaching, etc.

I spent my morning primarily with Darin today. I worked with him on the reading MAP test. He worked for about 25 minutes and only completed 10 out of 50 questions. He was already tired halfway through, so he had a drink break, and then worked for 10 more minutes. He reads one word at a time--very slowly. Most kids would give up if they had to labor so hard to read a story, but he attempted every word. Some of the text was at an instructional level for him; however, some was at a frustrational level. He held his face very close to the screen while he was reading. I moved the mouse across the text on the screen to help him stay focused. Darin and I also decided it was better for me to click his chosen answers, since he seemed to have trouble hitting the right buttons today. My mentor has a pointer that we might use next time to help him track the text. After I described the testing session to my mentor, she said that she would like to work with him and observe how he is doing while taking the test.

September 19, 2011

Whatever you can do to help Darin be successful is wonderful. So many children will simply give up when the task is so hard for them. Your help is invaluable for such a child. Darin is definitively benefiting from your tutelage.

I know the testing is important for the children. Yet, much instruction needs to be done to specifically help the children with the testing so the child will be successful with the test. Will you be part of the instructional package to help Darin with the tests? I am just curious how the child is taught to do well on the tests.

Have a great week. I look forward to your postings.

September 19, 2011

The classroom teacher did show a powerpoint before starting the MAP testing and talked about some strategies. One of the spec ed. assistants does a good job of reviewing a few test-taking skills just before the students sit down at the computers. As the spec ed. students take the test, we observe them carefully to make sure they aren't just clicking random answers but are taking time to read and think about the questions.

I was in the 4th grade classroom today for math class. Braedon has a tracking sheet for recording how well he tracks the teacher/board during the lesson and how well he stays on task and completes his work. He did pretty well today, but really seems to tune out, even if he appears to be watching the teacher. He needs a lot of re-teaching. There is another boy that sits at his same table. He has not been identified or diagnosed up to this point, so it breaks my heart to observe him, because it is very apparent that he has some issues. He exhibits symptoms characteristic of ADHD and ASD. I don't think he heard a single word of the lesson today. He zones out, looks down in his lap, and stims with his hands.

I worked with Darin on the reading MAP test. He was more focused today, but is only 40% finished with the test after two sessions.

My mentor is making plans for reading instruction for the 3rd graders. It is a work in progress to figure out what they need regarding whole class instruction and pull-out instruction.

September 19, 2011

For all the antecedents, strategies, and one-on-one help; many children still have a hard time learning. However, the teacher still continues to provide interventions in spite of all the difficulties and rejoices in the little things. For example, Darin did try even though he only completed 40% of his work. Try to focus on the little victories, 40% is better than nothing.

When a teacher has experiences, like you have, children with disabilities seem to just stand out. Although each child is unique, certain behavior patterns emerge which are indicative of a disorder. I would bet the child you observed, although undiagnosed, is ADHD just as you indicate. I hope the child gets tested and receive help.

How are you involved in the reading instruction for third grade? Although your mentor is planning, do you get involved? I am just curious. I hope you can either get involved with preparation or, at least, see the process.

I hope you are doing well, adjusting to your new schedule. I can only imagine how it is to go from Lincoln to St. Lucas each day. I do not like city driving, so I am glad you are doing the commuting, and not me. Be safe.

September 20, 2011

My schedule is actually quite nice. I have enough time in between Lincoln and St. Lucas, and since Lincoln is only 5 minutes from my house, I go home for lunch. Driving home, there is much more traffic.

I've mentioned some observations about Darin's reading to my mentor since I've been helping him as he takes the MAPS test. The MAPS testing has really taken up a lot of time and thrown schedules off. I still don't feel like there is a consistent schedule in 3rd grade. I think my mentor has definite plans for the reading instruction which we will start soon. Since reading is one my expertise areas, I will certainly share observations with her as we get going.

Braedon did a very nice job staying focused during math class today, and he completed all of his work for math. It was a review lesson, and I was pleased with the amount of information he remembered from Unit 1.

I worked with Bentley for about 15 minutes today--the first time another spec ed. assistant wasn't in the room. The class took mad minute math tests on addition and subtraction during that time. I read the problems, Bentley told me the answers and I wrote them down. He completed about 6 on the addition--most of which he figured out on his own. For the subtraction, we used the hundreds chart to find the answers. He completed 9 of those and needed help to figure those out. He worked well during that time. Previously, during math he had difficulty and was taken out of the class.

At the end of my morning, the 3rd grade went outside for a bit of recess. Kenny became very anxious and was near to having a meltdown when he saw that his friend wasn't outside. Last year he didn't have any close friends, but this year a new student has befriended Kenny. He continued to keep looking for his friend, but did play on the play equipment. When his friend did come outside, the friend decided to join the kickball game instead of playing only with Kenny. I encouraged Kenny to join the game, but he wasn't comfortable with that. His friend also encouraged him. I offered to stand right next to him by 3rd base, and he did walk over for a few seconds, but he didn't stay. He decided to sit down and watch. I'm hopeful that he will start participating more eventually if his friend continues to play kickball and encourage him to play.

September 20, 2011

I am delighted to hear your schedule works out well. I can only imagine trying to get through traffic in the late afternoon. I have such an easy commute compared to you. If I have to wait for two cars I start to get antsy.

You worked with a variety of students today, each with their separate issues. What a neat experience! Concerning Kenny, his EBD really interferes with his socialization. Good thing he has at least one friend. Whatever you can do to encourage him to secure other friends go for it. However, if Kenny ends up with only one friend, so be it. Sometimes having one friend is as good as it gets.



Did you have trouble typing into the document? I had a really hard time because the typing had to be done slowly so the document could keep up. Quite frustrating! I rebooted the document and it worked a little better. If the problem persists with me or you are having trouble, I will work on the issue from this end.

September 21, 2011

Yes, I've had trouble with the document. It takes a while to catch up to my typing.

The spec ed. team met with the OT specialist briefly this morning to discuss Darin's needs. Though his class is beginning to work on cursive, Darin will work on manuscript using the *Handwriting Without Tears* program. If Darin has trouble with letters, we should model the letters with a highlighter or on a whiteboard so that Darin can trace them and then try them on his own. We use paper with wider lines for Darin when he needs to do writing. He really has a hard time with diagonal lines. Darin could use practice tying his shoes, except that his shoes have velcro straps.

I worked with Kenny in math today. Just as the class began math, he became all out of sorts. Just the task of getting out his math journal and getting a math book of the shelf seemed difficult for him. He was very anxious and was saying, "It's too much." He requested to go into the back room for math, but the spec. ed. assistant was working in there with Susan who does her own math programs. I gave him the choice of remaining at his desk or moving to the back corral space, but he couldn't seem to make the decision. I then prompted him to move with me to the back corral space. He continued to be agitated throughout the math lesson, but I talked to him calmly, encouraged him for each positive thing he did in his math. He never totally seemed calm, but did become calmer as the lesson went on.

I took a look at Darin's IEP and read about his vision difficulties. I saw that he has amblyopia in both eyes. His fine motor control, manual dexterity, fine motor precision, and manual coordination are all well below average. Years ago I worked with a student at Atonement who had strabismus, and he seemed to have motor control issues as well. Is it common for kids with these vision problems to have motor control and coordination issues?

In the past week or so, I've noted how Darin worked so slowly when reading the questions on the MAP reading test on the computer. He held his face 4-6 inches from the screen. In the morning, he stands just feet away from the smartboard to read his teacher's morning instructions. However, today he read two pages out of book, guided reading level M, with fluency. He needed help with some words, but he performed much better than I've heard him read in the past. Is it possible that it's more difficult for him to read things on a screen than in a book?

September 21, 2011

I talked with Dr. Grunwald about the typing issue and he said try a different computer. I am working at home tonight and the computer seems to be keeping up just fine. I wonder

if the computer makes a difference. My laptop at home is quite new, so that maybe is helpful. Let me know if you continue to have difficulties.

I will try to answer your questions. First, children who have vision problems often have motor control and coordination issues as well. Vision is essential to control motoric responses. I believe I referenced Visual Processing disorder in an earlier response (September 13th). When vision is affected, processing in the brain is limited and therefore effects coordination of movement. I would maybe suggest vision therapy to help Darin. Are you familiar with Dr. Kelly Knueppel at the Vision Therapy Center, 13255 West Bluemound Road in Brookfield, Wisconsin? She is very good and has helped a number of children with vision issues. I was able to see firsthand how vision therapy worked when I helped an MLC student with her vision therapy. That student will be graduating from MLC soon, much to the credit of vision therapy. Again, my suggestion is just a thought, not a diagnosis. I mention vision therapy because I saw it work very effectively. Second, many times children can read better using different applications. Some children will see the contrast on paper (black and white) better then the black and white on a TV screen. I think it has to do with the resolution of the screen. Have you heard about colored overlays? Sometimes a child can read better when a yellow or blue acetate sheet is placed over the reading material. I know colored glasses were the rage many years ago and were debunked, but sometimes colored sheets helps people to see better and thus read better. Again, I do not necessarily recommend colored overlays, but sometimes it works! Therefore to answer your question specifically - sometimes it is easier to read print on a page than print on a screen.

Concerning Kenny, sometimes children just have bad days. He may have gotten up on the wrong side of the bed this morning. I think you handled Kenny wonderfully. Maybe he was not at his optimum today, but you helped him learn. Kudos to you. Maybe tomorrow will be better. On the bad days, just a little progress is a time for rejoicing. Keep up your calm and steady influence on Kenny.

September 22, 2011

Darin did receive services for vision, but that has been dropped now. My mentor explained that the therapy did all it can do, and now they just make accommodations for his vision.

Kenny had a better morning today.

I worked with Darin on the language MAPS testing. He stuck with it fairly well but still has more to complete.

Darin is taking initiative to walk over to the large class-size hundred chart posted on the wall to help him figure out 2-digit subtraction problems. He had trouble writing a 2 in his math journal and asked me to do it for him. Instead I wrote it with a highlighter, had him trace my 2 and then had him write his own.

The spec. ed. assistant and I talked about a plan for spelling activities for the kids. Our reading plan is still coming together. One of the struggles is the lack of a firm schedule for the whole class at this point, so it's hard to get into a routine.

My mentor and I talked about creating a list of the morning tasks Darin needs to accomplish before class starts. He has trouble getting started and staying on task to complete these tasks. She suggested writing them on an index card, laminating the card, and attaching it to his desk. We can check off the tasks as he completes them. Eventually, the goal is for Darin to become more independent with completing these tasks.

My laptop is only about 2 years old. I still have to wait for the document to catch up with my typing.

September 22, 2011

I will talk to Dr. Grunwald and see if he has any suggestions for making it easier to type into the Google Document. Maybe he has suggestions. I am again working at home and the program is keeping up with my typing. Something like this makes me go HUMMMMM!

You did lot of different things today with the children and the other helpers today. Sounds like you are getting a well rounded experience on many fronts - wonderful. You really fit in with the people and programs at Lincoln. I could not be happier for you. I am truly thankful you found a great place to conduct your internship.

I am also happy Kenny had a better day today. Maybe he had a good night sleep or had a good morning at home. I am sure Kenny was ready to learn. A long time ago, William Cruickshank from Michigan State University said something that really sunk in my head. He said that a child has to be ready physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually in order to learn. If one of the areas lag, the child will not learn. If Kenny had one of these areas lagging yesterday (i.e. emotionally), he was not ready to learn. Meeting each child every day to determine if all the areas are on an even keel is essential. If one of the areas is lower (no breakfast so the physical area is not up to par) the child needs something substantial to eat in order to learn. I think he had a good concept. Of course, I would add the spiritual as well as the other four.

Working with the spec. ed. assistant on Spelling planning is great. Two heads are better than one. When collaboration and co-teaching occurs, the children are the beneficiaries of that cooperation. Keep up the collaboration whenever possible.

Sounds like you are having a great week.

September 23, 2011

We gave Darin's "morning routine" checklist a practice run today. He needed a lot of prompts to stay on task to complete the checklist. He gets easily distracted by everything else that is going on.

I met Tyler, a boy in kindergarten today. I sat with him as he worked on the math MAPS testing. He's such a nice boy. During his breaks, we played air hockey and worked on a puzzle.

Darin was less focused during math today. He seemed tired, and it took lots of prompting to get him to write down some numbers in his math journal.

I worked with Kenny on a practice paper/pencil reading assessment. He, Kenny, and Susan actually worked on a test that was two levels below their grade level. Kenny was very agitated as we started. First we moved to the back corral area, but that didn't help, so we went out in the hall. He had a difficult time, but made it through. Since the assessment was practice, I read the story, the questions, and the answers. He did well on the reading comprehension questions. When we finished, others in the class were still working, so I suggested that Kenny find a book to read to me. I carried the book bins to his desk since he was still having a hard time and didn't seem able to walk over to find a book for himself. He pulled out a book and opened it, but then his OCD kicked in and he was worried about germs on the book. He went to wash his hands twice, and after I realized why he was washing his hands, I suggested we go out in the hall again. The book was at his independent reading level, so he didn't have problems reading it. I held the book so he wouldn't have to touch it. About half way through the book, he said he was tired and said, "I can't do it," but with encouragement and me supplying a few words here and there, he finished it.

September 23, 2011

You had the opportunity to work with a new student today - great! How was it working with someone that young? I would imagine you can really see some maturation issues when working with a younger child. OR Maybe Darin or Kenny acts like a Kindergartner sometimes. Anyway, I am glad you had the opportunity to interact with Tyler.

Kenny must have a major issue in his life which brings on his issues like OCD. You have good patience to deal with Kenny in such a calm manner. I am sure if you push, he would not hear a word you say. With children who are disturbed, they seem to listen only when the setting is calm and cool. "The teacher must be regulated to help the child get regulated," says Denna McMahon (MSW, LICSW). I still wonder what is happening to push Kenny into his OCD and refusals. To really manage Kenny's issues, getting to the root is important.

I am typing at school and am getting really frustrated with my ultra slow computer. I will try to work on this issue very soon. Blessings on your weekend. Make sure you greet your mentor for me come Monday.

September 26, 2011

Tyler is a sweet little boy and listened very well. He chose to work on a Superman puzzle on Friday and wasn't deterred when he saw that it had 100 small pieces. I found

pieces that could go together and had him put them together. We didn't get a lot done, but he kept at it for at least 10 minutes.

Kenny started to get upset today when gluing pictures on his notebook. Messy things are upsetting for him. He began saying, "I can't do it." It seemed to help him when I said, "If you need help, I can help you." He was able to finish the task.

We are using a checklist with Darin in the morning to try and keep him focused on the tasks he needs to accomplish before school starts. He was very unfocused today. I think he needs some external motivation in order to be successful with the checklist. I've been thinking about setting the timer for 15 minutes tomorrow and letting him know that he has that much time to complete his tasks. I'm also wondering whether he needs a sticker or a note in his assignment book, or something else that he earns for accomplishing the tasks. I'll have to consult with my mentor some more.

My mentor is going to have me start working with Bentley more, especially on Tuesdays during math and maybe other times. So far I have been mostly observing the spec. ed. assistant work with Bentley.

September 26, 2011

I like your ideas concerning Darin. I think each of your strategies may work for a time. However, do not give up on them. If they work for a while and erode, try something else and then go back to the original strategy. Children seem to forget quite quickly. I would hope you can eventually work on intrinsic motivation for Darin. Children should do what they are told because it is the right thing to do. I wonder how ABE would teach intrinsic motivation?

I see you are going to work more with Bentley. I think you will have a good experience with Bentley. I think you can bring a lot of ideas from your past teaching to help Bentley be successful.

I hope you have a wonderful week. If I can help in any way, please do not hesitate to ask.

September 27, 2011

I worked with Bentley for about 45 minutes, and it was difficult today. He was already noncompliant with the spec. ed. assistant when I arrived to the room. He wouldn't leave his seat to get his belongings out of his cubby. After the spec. ed. assistant left, I thought it was positive that he did go get his things when I directed him to, and then he followed his morning routine well. However, he became noncompliant again when it was time for him to put his book away for math class. Eventually I had to take the book away, and then he began grabbing other papers, crumpling them, trying to rip them, throwing things. I removed all of the items from his work area, and then he grabbed books and other things of the bookcase behind him. The classroom teacher even reprimanded him, but he continued. I warned him that we would have to leave and go to room 201, but he persisted. When I directed him to come with me to room 201, he refused. The classroom

teacher called for support. When Bentley heard the announcement over the PA, then he decided that he was going to listen and do what he was supposed to. My mentor and the spec. ed. assistant both came to check on him and scolded him for making them come. My mentor and the spec. ed. assistant were both in and out after that. Unfortunately, the math lesson was difficult for Bentley, and I don't know that he could follow all of it. My mentor assisted me in helping Bentley complete selected problems in his math journal.

After that, I went to the Lutheran Home with the third grade class. They are each assigned a senior resident as their buddy. The students visit their buddies once a month. Today was a bit chaotic because only half of the residents were there. The other half was somewhere else in the building. The students had interview questions to ask their residents. I worked with Susan to complete hers. Normally, it's two or three students per resident, but Susan was grouped with three other girls, so it was difficult for everyone to hear what the resident said. Susan was very intent on writing things on her paper but didn't understand that she needed to listen to what the resident said. I listened and then told Susan what to write down.

I downloaded Google Chrome today and am using that with the Google document, and the document is working as it should.

September 27, 2011

I am happy you were able to solve the Google Document issue. Dr. Grunwald and I looked over the problem with my computer and he indicated Network Services would be the better help. I am having Network Services come and help me now. Good News!! Network Services installed Internet Explorer 9 and that solved the problem. Explorer 8 did not have the power to keep up with all the applications that were running at the same time. Explorer 9 is much quicker.

I am sad you had difficulties with Bentley. It shoots a hole in the confidence to have a child who is oppositional and others have to help you intervene. I know you are a very good teacher and manager of children. I believe you will get to know and understand Bentley in such a way he complies with your requests. Give it a little time.

Concerning your visit to the Lutheran Home, when children get out of the familiar environment and routine, all bets are off. Your helping Susan is very soothing to her when she is in somewhat unfamiliar grounds. Good for you to pick up on Susan's issues and you offering her help. She will remember your helping her for a long time.

Mid-week is approaching. Hope the rest of your week goes well.

September 28, 2011

I was disappointed that things didn't go better with Bentley, but from my estimate, for at least 50% of the math classes I observe, he has great difficulty and has to leave his classroom. I have ideas floating around in my head for next time. The experience serves well to keep me humble.

I was responsible for Kenny and Darin in math class today. They both went to the other 3rd grade teacher's room for math. Darin sat up front and Kenny was at a back table. Kenny was agitated right away from the beginning, so I sat by him. He was concerned about germs on his paper...I got him a new paper, but he continued to be stubborn, wouldn't hold his pencil correctly, just scribbled on the paper, and wouldn't do his work, even though he was quite capable. After a little while, I told him that he wasn't working, so I was going to go work with Darin. Darin was doing very well, keeping up with the teacher and class as they solved math problems together. He was writing the numbers himself, though he was basically just copying what the teacher wrote down. I spent some time with him to make sure he understood how to solve the problems (2 and 3-digit addition with regrouping) by himself. After a while, he did get behind, so I highlighted 3 problems for him to complete by himself. Since the rest of the class was done and were starting to play math war, Darin moved to the back table. It was amazing how focused he remained to finish his three problems. I checked on Kenny a few times throughout the session, and I was glad to see that he was doing his working and writing legible numbers.

I discussed Kenny with the spec. ed. assistant, and she said that he has been refusing to do his work quite often, so we need to start having him complete his work at recess if he refuses to do work at work time. I asked her about giving Kenny a new paper each time he's worried about germs, and she said that it would be best to avoid doing that too much now because he needs to get over it. I also wonder if he's using the germ thing as an excuse to get out of doing work.

I had another "battle" with Kenny during independent reading time. The spec. ed. assistant and I gave Kenny, Darin, and Susan a mini-schedule for independent reading time. They are to choose 3 books from certain baskets that contain books at their level and one fun book. The spec. ed. assistant specifically instructed them that they had to read the words and not just look at the pictures. The spec. ed. assistant also reminded Kenny that if he doesn't do the reading, he would have to do it at recess. I sat next to Darin and listened to him read for a while. I watched Kenny, and he seemed to read his first book, but then I observed him flipping through the others. Since Darin was doing well, I went to Kenny and told him that he needed to read the words. He wanted to argue with me and told me I was lying when I said that I saw him flip through the books. I let him know that I would talk to the spec. ed. assistant about Kenny needing to read at recess because he refused to read a book to me. Finally, after him saying "okay" three times but still continuing to argue, I told him, "You already said 'okay' three times, and this is it. You need to read it now." He finally gave in and read the book, though he continued to argue that he had already read his 3 books.

**September 28, 2011**

**What a day you had!!! I think the children are becoming more familiar with you and are trying to test the waters, so to speak. Everyone is working together to help the children and the collaboration will pay big dividends later. I know you are using your repertoire of strategies to help the children be successful.**

Kenny wants to be the boss and do his own thing. Children learn very quickly they can use their disabilities to their advantage. Even though Kenny has OCD, he should not use his problem as a crutch or an excuse. You already know when he is trying to control the environment by using his disability as reason to not complete his work. How sad it is for Kenny to not realize he is the one who will suffer the consequences of his actions. Over time and with a number of interventions, he may understand. Conversely, he may never get it! Nevertheless, keep working on Kenny to comply with reasonable requests.

I like your comment about Darin and how fast he could finish his work if he was self-motivated. Had he not wanted to participate in the activity the class, he likely would have taken a long time to get his three Math problems done. Although a teacher will not want to use the leverage to make the child comply (i.e. if you get your problems done, you may join the Math game), knowing what motivates the child can be used effectively to help the child do what is required. Keep this in mind in your future dealings with Darin.

Hope you are having a good week. Keep up your quality work with the children in your care.

September 29, 2011

Hopefully our rainy weather is coming to an end soon. We needed the rain, but I could stand to see the sun again.

The morning hummed along pretty well today. I worked with Darin during math. He was able to do the figuring himself, but needed the assistance of transferring the problems printed on a worksheet to a scratch piece of paper in larger print so he could solve them. Then he had to draw lines to match the problem with the correct answer on his paper, so he needed some assistance doing that. I kept an eye on George during this time. George also benefited from having the problems written for him on another piece of paper. He wasn't as focused today because it was quite a long work time, and the work required a lot of focus.

I sat with the spec. ed. assistant as she did reading with Darin, Susan, and Kenny today with the "skinny books" (supplementary books to the reading program), so next time I would be comfortable doing that myself.

The third graders read to their reading buddies (4K kids) today for the first time. Susan was paired with another third grader and a 4K kid. The other girl did a good job of trying to keep Susan involved by having Susan read some words. It worked better on the second book, because that book was more at Susan's level. Kenny was also paired with another 3rd grade student, and that group seemed to work well, although the other boy did the reading. I didn't see where Darin went to read, so I don't know how his group did.



September 29, 2011

Please send the rain our way fast. So far in September, we accumulated .08 of an inch of precipitation and everything is super dry. We could use a welcome rain.

You had a great day today working with a number of students. Darin will continue to give you trouble. However, just look back and see how much progress you made with him so far. From the beginning of the year until now, Darin has made strides, maybe little ones, but significant steps and he is improving. I see you worked with George today as well. When children have problems focusing, difficult work can be daunting. Sometimes putting only two problems on a page helps the child to feel the task is manageable. Lots of white space helps.

You keep on experiencing lots of new strategies and concepts. The “skinny books” should be fun to do and the methodology in teaching may be different than what you have done in the past. Much of what you need to do is pretty much procedural so you probably know what to do already. Keep me posted on your experience with the “skinny books.”

One day left this week. It is hard to imagine how far you are in your Internship to date. Mid-semester will be here before we know it. Have a great day tomorrow.

September 30, 2011

What do you think of the proposed changes to NCLB? How will it affect special education?

I gave Darin his spelling test today. We would like them to take the test on spelling city, but it seems that the computers/headphones are unreliable. Darin wrote his words himself and kept working pretty well. He needed me to model the letter “s.” He only had one incorrect word.

The work in 3rd grade was pretty light today. They didn’t really have a math lesson. I assisted George and Darin in adding up their “bonuses” on their “checkbook sheet.” They get bonuses and fines during the day for various behaviors, and they keep track of it on a sheet of paper.

I spent a little time with Bentley today. He was supposed to be completing a reading test. He had to read a story and complete the multiple choice questions. The first time he went through the 8 questions, it didn’t appear that he really read any of it, and he just wrote down answers. When checking with my mentor, I was told that he would have to read everything to me and do it again. Bentley is very difficult to understand when he speaks. He did appear to do more actually reading the second time, though I couldn’t tell if he really read all of the words. He did a lot of moving around, making noises, etc while he was working. It is difficult to get him to do work. I think he only had 2 of the 8 questions correct. My mentor said that he does really well on MAP testing, so he should have done much better, especially since the reading test was actually two levels below. I feel at a disadvantage when working with Bentley because I really don’t have an understanding of

what he can and can't do. I have a goal of reviewing his IEP file on Monday to see what else I can learn about him.

September 30, 2011

Concerning NCLB, I have not heard about the changes except I think the schools can ask the feds for more flexibility without consequences (i.e. funding). I believe the current administration in Washington is not in favor of NCLB so I think major changes are coming down the road. Although I am not all that familiar with Race to the top, I think this may down play the NCLB emphasis enacted by the previous legislation. Race to the top appears to encourage districts in certain states to develop research based programs and curriculum to enhance schools. I believe 4 billion dollars are available to school districts to make quantitative change in the way the school delivers their education programs. How Race to the top will turn out is any one's guess. I ran across this [website](#) that you may find interesting.

What do all the programs have to do with special education is also any one's guess. With all the money in the pot right now, I think special education will likely stay pretty stable. What will impact SPED more is RTI. More students will not be served using RTI because more children will likely stay in tier two and be held back from SPED. RTI, in some school districts, is a way out of serving children with special needs and reallocating more money to regular education. Some of the most recent studies indicate school districts have identified few students for SPED using RTI which tends to make me a bit skeptical of the new process. The numbers of children with special needs has grown by leaps and bounds. RTI may put on the brakes for serving some children, maybe even those with special needs. Keep tuned.

Sounds like you had a good day with your children. I really like the variety of experiences you are getting at Lincoln. All of the info gleaned from your experience is invaluable.

Have you had an opportunity to be involved in meetings or in the IEP process? I know that is one of your goals and you were interested to see how IEPs are constructed and applied to your real live setting. I also was curious if you had any opportunity to look at 504s and if any of the children you serve are under a 504 plan?

In addition, I was wondering if you have been thinking about taping yourself in action. You do not have to think about videoing your lesson soon. I was just interested in the logistics and how it would work. Keep this on the back burner for right now.

Hope you have a wonderful weekend.

October 3, 2011

I started to type September and then realized it's not September anymore. It sounds like the impact of RTI on SPED could create problems. Regarding NCLB, what I heard was that Obama's administration wants to eliminate the "all students must be proficient in

math, science, (reading?) by 2014.” Instead, they would be looking for whether the students made reasonable progress.

Bentley has an IEP review meeting tomorrow, but I’m guessing that it’s in the afternoon. I looked at some of his IEP today. He scored in the 90%+ range for reading, language, and math, so he certainly has the abilities. His lack of compliance and work ethic get in the way of him doing what he can do. My mentor discussed the reading assessment Bentley took on Friday and that in the future, the adult working with him will highlight two of the questions based on the story, and tell Bentley that he must get those correct. He will still complete all 8 questions, but the expectation is that he will get at least 2 of the questions based on the story correct. (Some of the questions check grammar and spelling skills and are not really based on the story).

I worked with Bentley in math today. Things went much better today. I try to keep him engaged by asking him questions or having him write some numbers in his math journal during the lesson discussion. Some of the writing I did for him, but periodically had him fill in the numbers. He was rolling some pencils and a highlighter on his desk during some of this time, but I chose to “pick my battles” since it wasn’t a terrible distraction. I’m also aware that some kids need to be moving to help them listen. After the lesson, he ate his snack, and then was ready to work on his math workbook page. Today he wanted a classmate to help him with his math, and the classmate was glad to do it. I oversaw what they were doing. I transferred math problems from the workbook onto a whiteboard, and then Bentley solved them. His friend wrote the answers in Bentley’s math book. It worked out very well!

I gave Darin his spelling pretest today. He was unable to focus in the back of the classroom, so we moved to the hall. Since the rest of the class was nearly ready to move onto the next subject, I had him dictate the letters, and I wrote them down for him this time.

When Darin and I returned to the classroom, the class was talking about writing story leads. Then the students had work time for their writing. Darin hadn’t started his rough draft yet, so we worked on that. He dictated it, and I wrote it down for him. He ended up with two pages of writing (skipped lines). George has a really difficult time staying focused during writing time. The other two adults in the room and I gave him many prompts. He didn’t want to move to another place in the classroom to work, but he didn’t keep working by himself either. When I finished working with Darin, then I moved next to George. I would ask George what he was going to write to keep him working, but a lot of the time, he just get writing down his words.

Just before I left Lincoln today, my mentor was trying to locate one of the 5th grade boys. Apparently, he went somewhere without telling anyone. No one knew where he was. I searched my mentor’s room as she was looking down the hall. He was being paged as I left the building. To be continued...

I am not really teaching any lessons yet. Most of my work is just assisting students as they do work in the general classroom. Would you be interested in a video tape of that? It might be distracting for students. Let me know what you have in mind.

October 3, 2011

I hope you find the information gleaned from Bentley's IEP interesting and helpful. The IEP is supposed to drive Bentley's educational program. Look especially hard at the long term goals and short term objectives to see where Bentley needs to be going in his education. Maybe you will have a chance to sit in on an IEP meeting in the future.

You had a good opportunity today to see how varying strategies can be helpful for different students. Both Bentley and Darin needed specific and structure strategies in order for the two individuals to be successful in their learning. Being able to think on your feet is very helpful. What works one time may not be successful the next. That is why these students need a teacher to guide them in their learning. The students need you to help them out.

I hope the student who was lost was found. Tell me about the search and rescue of the 5th grade boy. I would also be interested in the reason the boy was not found right away.

If you are going to be doing similar activities with the children in your care, mainly tutoring, I think videoing what you normally do would be acceptable. You do not have to make a big production of your videotaping, simply record what you usually do with your students. I think the children will be delighted to think they will be in the video. Talk to your mentor about what she feels would be appropriate to video tape.

October 4, 2011

Conrad, the 5th grade boy, left the school building. The school had to call the police and Conrad's mom. There were at least 4 squad cars at the school and lots of police officers. He was found very far away from the school, possibly 18 city blocks away. Needless to say, he cannot go anywhere in the school now without a chaperone. I'm not sure what happened before he disappeared. He is new to the school this year. His mom didn't even tell the school that he had an IEP at his previous school. I don't know his diagnosis, but he is very noncompliant. I experienced some time with him today because my mentor asked me to help in 5th grade writing. My mentor and much of the staff were at Bentley's IEP meeting. Conrad was extremely disrespectful to me and the other students. I marked something on his tracking sheet when he threw a pencil at another student, and that didn't sit well with him. He told me that I couldn't mark on his sheet because I wasn't a teacher. He also was not listening to his classroom teacher during this time. Before I left today, my mentor talked to Conrad and he really didn't admit that he did anything wrong. My mentor spoke to me, in front of Conrad, saying that some students have to spend a lot of time in 201 when they aren't able to work in their own classrooms.

I tried working with Bentley this morning, but that did not go well at all. He was noncompliant the entire time. When he began grabbing things off the shelves and throwing them around the room, I called for assistance. Another spec. assistant came,

and then Bentley worked well with her on his math. After the spec. assistant left, it was time for snack. Bentley said he didn't have a snack--he wanted to borrow a snack. Later I found out that Bentley says that when he doesn't like his snack, but at the time, I couldn't understand what else he was saying, so I told him to show me. We walked down to 201, but there was no one there, so I told him we had to go back to his room and he just wouldn't have a snack today. He refused to go all the way back to the room with me. He stopped midway down the hall because his IEP was going on in one of the classrooms between his room and 201. He continued to stand in the hall, so I went back into the 4th grade room to check on Braedon. I continued to check on Bentley in the hall. At one point, Bentley had wandered farther down the hallway and around the corner, so I wasn't sure where he was. That was a scary moment. I found him, but he still refused to come back to his room. Eventually the principal came out of the meeting and firmly told Bentley that he needed to go back to his classroom. Bentley continued to be noncompliant and wouldn't do his work. He kept grabbing calculators off the shelf and wouldn't put them back when I asked him to. He also wouldn't sit down in his chair. Finally, it was time for me to leave to go to the 5th grade room. I walked out of the room, but stood outside the door for a bit to see if he would sit down. I was worried he might wander out in the hall. (There was a sub for the classroom teacher.) When I peeked back in the room, I saw that he was sitting. During this time with Bentley, I utilized different tools that are set up for his behavior plan--using a timer, giving choices, marking on his tracking sheet, drawing if/then scenario on paper, etc. but none of those things worked to help him become compliant. He's done this several times with me--where he will be noncompliant with me--but when I call someone else, then he works. I talked with my mentor whether there should be a consequence if I have to call someone else, and she said Bentley would miss his recess today and would probably have to write an apology note to me. Usually there will be someone else in the room with me when I work with Bentley, or someone who is in and out, but today they were all in the IEP meeting. I don't mind being alone with Bentley, but Bentley and I are not at the point where he respects me enough to listen to me, and I haven't found something that motivates him to comply.

October 4, 2011

I am sad to hear that you had a tough day with your children. When children are quite involved behaviorally, they can hardly learn. The children have to comply or little else gets accomplished. Keep on trying the best you can and collaborate with the other teachers and paras. I would hope the situation gets a little easier for you.

Good thing Conrad was found. It is amazing he was found close to two miles away from school. You had some real excitement with the police and all.

Keep up the good work and do the best you can. Maybe the IEP will have a behavior plan for Bentley that is successful.

October 5, 2011

I asked my mentor if they made changes to Bentley's IEP. She mentioned that they changed some of his goals, and for his behavior plan, they are going to track percentages

for his behaviors now instead of just using smiley faces, etc. on his tracking sheet. She didn't go into great detail about other changes. I want to do more reading of his IEP in the future.

Darin started out his morning routine so well today, but at the end, lost focus and didn't put things away from his desk even with several prompts. I communicated this with him and filled in his tracking sheet.

I worked with Kenny in spelling as he did a word sort of words with short e, ee, and ea. He did a nice job. Then he used magnetic letters to spell 3 words and did those correctly as well.

I monitored George, Darin, and Kenny during math as they were solving subtraction problems of 3 digits, with regrouping. Darin was so extremely unfocused in math today that he didn't even finish a lesser amount of the problems. He was warned that he would need to finish at recess, and he still has one problem to finish. George seemed to understand the concept pretty well and worked well during this time. Kenny didn't have confidence in his ability to do the work and shut down even though I repeatedly told him that I would help him. He was trying to opt-out of doing the last two problems. I agreed that we could cross out one, and he picked the one to cross out, but it was still a struggle to get him to even try on the last problem. I provided a list of the steps and really had to guide him through the whole problem.

I listened to Susan read during independent reading time. She is reading lower level books, but she does a nice job reading, considering her CD. She had trouble with the word "places," even though it was in the story several times. I wrote it on a whiteboard for her later, and she was able to read it. Yay!

October 5, 2011

A much better day today. Rejoice in the little victories. Susan did have a great time and learned.

As a teacher you cannot learn a child anything; you can only provide the opportunity to learn. The learning resides within the learner. You can only teach, making sure the children have that opportunity. You, as the teacher of your special children, have given them the chance to learn!!! Sometimes the child does not take advantage of the opportunity; and as hard as you try, the child refuses to learn. Although you feel bad and will tenaciously try to help the child learn, sadly some will not.

Looking over the IEP may provide some insight and background into Bentley's issues. Additionally, you will find the long term goals and short term objectives which drive Bentley's education. Having goals and objectives for Bentley's behavior should prove helpful. Bentley's IEP is probably quite long by now. His cumulative folder should be quite thick. Looking through all the material can be daunting, but it is necessary. Teachers need to look at etiology to help the child be successful.

Mid-semester is coming in two weeks. Your mentor, you, and I need to set aside some time to go over how the internship is progressing. I would hope this could be done by a teleconference. I would set up the teleconference from this end. When a mutual time is determined, I will have the administrative assistant in the Education Office set up the conference. I would anticipate 45 minutes would be needed for the conference. Both of you should have the mid-semester/final form. If your mentor would like to fill out the form to be sent to me, that is fine. If your mentor would like to talk to the various points on the form, I would take notes and fill out a form from the conversation. Tuesday and Thursday mornings until 9:30am work for me. Let me know when you have time to conference. Carrie, please take the lead and set up a time with your mentor. If either of you has a question, let me know via this document or via email.

Have a great rest of the week.

October 6, 2011

Darin was absent today, so it was a little more relaxed in 3rd grade. The students worked on cursive for a bit, and then had math. George did a fine job of subtracting 3-digit numbers with regrouping. He needed just a few prompts to keep working. His classroom teacher questioned him about what happens in his head after he finishes a problem (and is distracted). He described it as "lots of stuff" and he used a made-up word to describe the stuff. It was good that he recognized that something is happening in his head that keeps him from working. I worked with Kenny most of the time, but checked on George occasionally. Kenny worked a little bit better on his math today, but still needed guidance in order to complete the subtraction. He lets himself feel overwhelmed when faced with difficult task, but I reminded him again that he could do it because I was going to help him. I enthusiastically praised him when he completed one of the problems correctly by himself.

I began the mini-reading lesson with Kenny and Susan in the back room. They were reading a leveled "skinny book" today, and we were going to discuss the problem and the solution in the story. We finished the oral reading of the story, but then the fire alarm went off, so we had to go outside. The fire alarm was unplanned; some workers were in the basement, and the smoke from whatever they were doing set the alarm off. By the time we got back in, it was time for me to leave, so the spec. ed. assistant finished the reading lesson with Susan and Kenny.

Since my research paper is focused on accommodations, modifications, and differentiation techniques used in the classroom, I want to comment on a few of those things. One thing that I have noticed in both the 3rd and 4th grade classrooms is the lack of "wait time" given for students to think. For example, in the 4th grade classroom, the students often solve mental math problems on whiteboards, but the teacher asks them to show the answers so quickly, without giving adequate wait time for students like George and Bentley. Today in 3rd grade math, the teacher went through a subtraction problem on the board so quickly, that I think students who struggle really wouldn't have followed what she was doing.

I do like how the 3rd grade teacher uses popsicle sticks to call on students to answer questions. She asks the question first, and then draws a popsicle stick with a student's name on it.

One other thing that students need, especially students with special needs, is scheduling consistency. All of the classrooms post the schedule for the day on the wall, and the teachers go through the schedule before the day starts. Abrupt changes to the schedule sometimes occur, which can be unsettling for students. It can also be a problem when a lesson is completed within the given time frame and then an abrupt transition occurs.

October 6, 2011

I am happy you are looking at the focus for your paper. Start planning your reflective essay to include concrete examples in that essay. I anticipate your reflection would focus on the three items you noted: accommodations, modifications, and differentiation. I would also think you will include some items you found serendipitously such as schedule consistency. Just start your thought process on how your final project will look like.

One child absent really changes the classroom climate and stress load on the teacher. Usually, children like Darin never are absent so you have to be on top of them all the time. I wonder if Darin being absent brought about a change in the classroom? You can see if Darin returning will impact the climate in any way.

I can also see you are picking up on some of the tips and strategies you are encountering in the various settings and working with specific children. You need a huge repertoire of strategies because each child will require a number of strategies to be successful. I know your mind is like a steel trap and you will remember all the things you experienced and practiced. Just in case, maybe write the tips and strategies down. However, re-reading this journal could be very beneficial because you include a plethora of the ideas and strategies you could use in your future work with children with special needs.

Fire drills can really be problematic for children. The change in the routine and structure can set children off and they may find it hard to return to tasks the rest of the day. Teachers really need to calm, cool, and collected when the unexpected happens. Maybe it was good Darin was absent today. I know children with Autism really find a change in routine or schedule very hard to handle.

Have a wonderful day tomorrow.

October 7, 2011

Darin will be absent until Tuesday, so that is giving me opportunity to focus more on some of the others. Today I administered the spelling test to Susan. She did very well and got 9 out of 10 words correct. I also administered a reading assessment to Kenny and Susan. Kenny showed some impatience when he finished a question and Susan was still working on it. Most of the time I just ignored his "Okay, let's do the next one" type comments. At times I reinforced the need to wait by saying things like, "We're going to wait for \_\_\_\_\_, and then we'll go on."



Kenny asked for my help in math, but he did not work well when he had to solve the subtraction problems. I suggested taking a big breath, moving out into the hall, and tried reassuring him that he could do it because I was helping, but he was convincing himself he couldn't do it and didn't latch onto any of those strategies. The classroom teacher asked if he wanted to deliver something to the office, just to give him a little break, but he didn't want to do that. Then she said he could stop work and play a game with another classmate. I expressed concern to the spec. ed. assistant that Kenny was getting out of doing his work, and she agreed that Kenny needs to do his work. We conferred with the classroom teacher and talked about how if Kenny isn't ready to do his work during math time, he will need to do it at recess, later in the day, or as homework. We do reduce the amount of problems he has to do to make it manageable.

I have been thinking that Kenny needs a list of strategies to use when he feels overwhelmed with work. I noticed a book, *The Incredible 5-Point Scale*, sitting in the back room today (Buron & Curtis, 2004). It has different scale sheets for students to help them monitor their anger, stress, etc. It looks like my mentor is planning on implementing something like that with Kenny. I really think he needs specific strategies spelled out for the 5 different feeling levels because when he stressed, he is unable to make decisions. Kenny's IEP meeting is coming up in a couple weeks, and it will be held after school, so I should be able to attend it. I am very interested to see what goes on in an IEP meeting.

I do plan to re-read my journal and pick out all the strategies in order to write about them in my paper. Another strategy I observed the other day in the third grade room--the students had completed a work session, and the teacher told them to take 100 steps around the room. I thought that was a clever idea to give the kids some movement time before sitting down to work again.

A couple of other random things--use of slant boards with students who have difficulty writing, wider lined paper, larger squares on grid paper for computation, re-writing problems on paper for students, highlighting a reduced quantity of work for students to complete

October 7, 2011

Today seemed to be a bit calmer for you. You should be happy with the results of Susan and, after all the issues, with Kenny. Kenny really seems like a troubled child with no confidence. He really uses his disabilities as excuses for not working, yet he should respond to instruction much better than he has shown. Maybe a new approach as you indicated with the five levels will help Kenny be successful.

Looking back through the journal will be fun to do when you are done. I will expect a list of 100 strategies you gleaned from your journal all typed out with specific children listed as examples - well not really. However, you are really experiencing a great variety of strategies, tips, ideas, and concepts on how to help all children, especially with special needs. I anticipate you will take your information and go all over the United States and share your information in conferences. I will highly recommend you to speak at

conferences because you will be a Master Teacher; one who will share their wisdom with other teachers who may be struggling with a child with special needs.

Have a great weekend. I hope you can take time to relax and enjoy the Brewers beating Arizona.

October 10, 2011

It was a good weekend in Wisconsin with both Brewers and Packers victories, yet it was still hard to get up today for some reason.

I was in 4th grade for math today. I took notes as the spec. ed. assistant interacted with Bentley because I really wanted to see how she reacted to Bentley's noncompliance. I observed many of the same things that I tried with Bentley (if/then statements; warnings; reminders about earning/losing recess; ignoring some behavior; removing objects that he might destroy). He reacted better to the spec. ed. assistant than he did with me last week, but in the end, she had to take him to 201. Bentley took part in the mental math exercises and wrote his answers on paper (he's ruined all of his whiteboard markers, so he's not using a slate.) to show to the teacher. As the teacher was teaching the "What's My Rule?" lesson, Bentley sat pretty quietly, but was rolling his pencils on his desk. The spec. ed. assistant allowed him to do that. The spec. ed. assistant left for a few minutes, and then Bentley was rolling his pencils onto the table where other students were working (the front of his desk touches the table). One of the students reminded Bentley that he shouldn't do that, but he kept doing it. I warned him that I would have to take the pencil away, and I did have to because he continued to bother the others. Then he broke the other pencil that he had. I chose not to react to that behavior, because I sense that he is intentionally doing these things to get a reaction from me. When the spec. ed. assistant returned, she saw that he had broken another pencil and took him to 201. One thing I've been wondering about is whether Bentley needs more frequent reinforcement/rewards, in addition to the recess. When I worked with an autistic child in home therapy, we gave very frequent reinforcement--after every few minutes of work. I don't think Bentley needs it that frequently, but the promise of extra recess, or the loss of recess--that takes place at lunch time--seems to be too far removed. I wonder if he could be rewarded after getting his morning supplies out, for sitting through the math lesson, after completing the math work, etc.

Changes were made to Bentley's behavior tracking sheet. There are now fewer targeted behaviors on the tracking sheet, which I think was a good change, and they are tracking the percentages of good behaviors. If Bentley gets 90%+, he earns 15 minutes of extra recess. If he gets 80-89%, he loses 10 minutes of recess. If he gets 79% or below, he loses all of his recess. I like the changes that they made; however, I still wonder about more frequent rewards, as I mentioned above.

After Bentley left, I focused on Braedon. He really was not focused on the math lesson at all. The teacher was going through examples in class, and he wasn't tuned in, so I questioned him and worked through some of the examples with him while the lesson went on. When it was work time, it was apparent that he really didn't know what to do.

We worked together on a few of the problems. He seemed to gain a bit more understanding, but really needs lots more reteaching on that skill.

When I returned to 3rd grade, I worked with Kenny. He chose 10 words for his spelling list, and then he sorted the words according to their vowel sounds. We also worked to finish up his 2 subtraction problems that he was supposed to do for homework. He was acting really silly today, started to eat his pencil eraser, and broke his pencil, but we did accomplish the math problems, and he did sort his words. I took a minute and talked to him about how his math seems hard sometimes, but he can do it because I or the spec. ed. assistant will help him.

George was unable to track the whiteboard and listen to his teacher's directions during Social Studies today. I had intended to have George move to another location to work on the test, but the teacher was going through each question on the smartboard and giving them hints about where to find the answers. I prompted George several times to stay on task, but that wasn't enough. I ended up moving my chair to seat next to him. He needed lots of help to stay on task when completing his social studies test. He kept wanting to be silly, destroying an eraser, chewing on paper, etc. The teacher read the questions and even helped the students know where to look in the book to find the answers, but George didn't hear any of it. He needed one-on-one assistance just to accomplish the work today. In one section, there were a number of directions for him to follow. I read through them with him and numbered the different steps. That seemed to help him a bit.

I took a look at the webpage that you shared with me regarding changes to NCLB requirements. It will be interesting to see exactly what parameters a state comes up with--what constitutes enough progress made.

October 11, 2011

My mentor and I were together in the 4th grade room today working with Bentley. It was helpful to observe the different strategies that she uses with Bentley. One key thing seems to be writing out a mini-schedule for him for math hour. When Bentley had trouble listening during the lesson, she offered him paper and pencil so he could draw while listening. She carefully watched his behavior levels and would offer him frequent drink breaks during work time. He did fairly well during this time. He did break a pencil and ripped a paper, but my mentor was able to deescalate the situations quickly. He became extremely agitated at snack time because he didn't like the snack his mom packed him. The classroom teacher came over to Bentley to find out what was wrong, and she offered him some pretzels. It took a bit before Bentley asked her for pretzels, but he did, and then he was happy again. One thing that I want to remember when working with Bentley next time is that it is better to find ways to say "yes" than "no." For example, during math today, he was blowing air into his ziploc bag, and instead of telling he couldn't do that, my mentor drew up his mini-schedule, and told him he could do that again later at break time if he wanted.

When I returned to 3rd grade, the kids were outside for recess. The spec. ed. assistant and I talked a bit about reading plans. Then we assisted the kids as they looked at books at the Scholastic book fair.

October 11, 2011

Whew! Sorry I did not get back to you yesterday - much to do with many irons in the fire lately.

Having the Packers and the Brewers win has a big impact here at MLC. Many of the students here are from Wisconsin and are really die hard Packer and Brewer fans. Yesterday was a good day with many of the students really feeling good resulting in a positive learning environment.

October 20th at 8:45am will work for me for a teleconference. I can set up a conference where each of us can be on our own telephone, or your mentor and you can get on a speaker phone and we can work the conference in that fashion. Let me know what would work best for you.

You bring up a very good point concerning Bentley and his delayed reinforcement. The structures in place should be successful; however, any new ideas to help Bentley comply expediently would be in order. I also think you are working on symptoms and not the etiology. Finding the fundamental problem or the root of the problem is often very helpful. Dr. Mel Levine talks about finding the source of the problem and either remediation at the breakdown point or providing a bypass strategy to get around the breakdown point. If Bentley stays non-compliant, he may need further assessment to find the etiology to his issues. This said, the etiology may be already ascertained and I do not know the whole story. I just wanted to share some thoughts.

Braedon, Kenny, and George are recipient of your help as well as the others. How fortunate these children are to have such great help! In the long run, all of the children you work with will eventually succeed. You are a part of that success. You may not know it right now, but the work that is done on behalf of the students pays dividends, maybe when they are 35 years old. All you can do is be faithful in your work with the children.

I like the idea you used today by providing a mini-schedule for Bentley. Having a schedule really does what you proposed on Monday - immediacy of reinforcement. He can see what is coming soon and he can make decisions as to if he will be on task or finish his work at recess. It will be interesting to see if the mini-schedule will have a longer term effect. I will stay tuned.

Concerning NCLB, the states opting out of this program by requesting waivers may be the way out. I think NCLB is going to go away and be replaced by Race to the Top. However, the funding for Race to the Top may not be sufficient to cover the entire country. I think the funding will be given based on politics and not need.

Almost to mid-week. Hope you are doing well. Make sure you say Hi to your mentor and give her best wishes from me.

October 12, 2011

My mentor was absent again today; she has various trainings that she attends. On Friday, Lincoln has parent/teacher conferences. My mentor and I plan to talk a bit about the teleconference and video-taping tasks for the internship then. It sounds like Oct. 20 at 8:45 works for my mentor; we just have to work out the details. Do you need a phone number to call?

Regarding the etiology for Bentley--I think that he has difficulty sustaining attention to a task for long periods of time. In his IEP, one of his goals is to sustain attention for at least 10 minutes out of a 15 minute time period. It seems like it takes great effort for him to focus on any work tasks, and he probably chooses to be noncompliant as a way to avoid tasks.

The 3rd grade teacher plans to teach the students a different way to practice their spelling words every week. This week she showed them that they could write their words on a piece of paper, and then draw a line around each letter while saying the letters--bubble letters. I can see these different spelling practice ideas as a way to differentiate for students. This task was difficult for Darin because of his writing weaknesses. I wrote the letters of several words in very large print on paper, but he has difficulty doing the bubbling. After he tried the first one, we both held his pencil to do two more. The spec. ed. assistant and I debated about whether Darin should do the activity or have him practice spelling his words with letters. In the end, we decided to let him try it because he enjoyed trying it, and he does well on his spelling tests at the end of the week.

I pulled Kenny and Darin out for math today because the other 3rd graders were teaching a partner how to do measuring of perimeter, etc. Kenny and Darin worked on some review concepts in their math workbooks. I highlighted different problems for them to work on to reduce the quantity and gave them assistance when necessary. Darin was easily distracted by noises, doors, and other things. Kenny became worried about missing snack and other kids seeing him in the hallway where we were working. I gave Kenny options about where he wanted to work, and I allowed Darin a drink break, so those things seemed help them continue working. Both students completed the tasks successfully in time to return to the room for snack.

I listened to Darin read a just-right book, and I observed George as he completed two reading workbook pages. George was more on-task today. I played a game with Susan during break time, which really just consisted of rolling a dice and moving a playing piece the correct number of spaces. She needed some guidance with moving her piece today because she kept wanting to count the square that she was on as "one."

I need to read about Race to the Top. Do you have a good source?

October 12, 2011

Let me know how best to do the teleconference on the 20th. If you two could use one speaker phone, you could send me the telephone number via email and I will call you. Keep me posted.

Look over the following articles connected with RTTT. I have included two articles which support and two articles which do not feel RTTT is a quality and viable program. In the WIKI article I see that Wisconsin did not apply for RTTT funds. Take the articles with a grain of salt. I am sure more articles with better research are available. I wanted you to see contrasting viewpoints.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204886304574308442726348678.html>

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/fact-sheet-race-top>

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/diane-ravitch/obamas-race-to-the-top-wi\\_b\\_666598.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/diane-ravitch/obamas-race-to-the-top-wi_b_666598.html)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race\\_to\\_the\\_Top](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_to_the_Top)

You had a varied day today, working with a number of students. From what I can tell you made some good progress. I like the way you were able to help out George and Susan in their game so both could participate and have fun. Kenny and Darin seem to be masters at procrastination. If you look at the consequence of their behaviors, they want to get out of something. I do not know if you remember A (antecedent) B (behavior) and C (consequences). Looking to the antecedents, what led up to the behavior, is a good thing to help prevent possible behaviors before they start. I know you are looking to have the learning environment just right for each child to learn. The behavior is the action or activity of the child. Behaviors can be positive or negative, constructive or destructive, helpful or not helping the child learn. Now about consequences! The consequence of the behavior is not the punishment the child receives for acting out, the consequence is what the child gets out of the behavior. Is the child trying to get into something, get out of something, seeking attention, seeking recognition from peers/teachers/parents, seeking comfort, etc. Ascertaining what the child is trying to get out of the behavior is really important. It appears Kenny and Darin are constantly trying to get out of something. Why? I wish I had the answer for you.

Keep up your important work of helping the children in your care succeed. I know you are really trying hard to get Bentley, Kenny, and Darin to be compliant. You have great patience to work with them to help them learn the best they can at this point in their education.

October 13, 2011

I will take a look at the articles this weekend. I meet with my mentor tomorrow to talk about the teleconference and videotaping, so I'll get back to you on those things.

I know that Kenny's behaviors come out when he is trying to avoid a task that is difficult for him. He also has anxieties about germs and other people witnessing his emotional

upsets. Darin doesn't avoid work; he really enjoys everything. He just is unable to focus and filter out extraneous noises or activities. There are times when Darin seems really tired, and then he really has a hard time focusing.

I worked with Susan on some math for the first time today because the spec. ed. assistant was in another room at that time. The spec. ed. assistant had provided some work that she could do. Susan did very well on her activities today; it is hit-and-miss with her. Sometimes she does real well, and other days, it's like she doesn't remember anything. During math, the 3rd grade teacher was teaching a lesson on graphing, range, median, and mode, so Darin and Kenny could just participate in the whole group instruction while I worked with Susan. I'm glad that it was more of a sit/listen/watch activity today because it would have been difficult to navigate working with Susan individually and assisting the others at the same time. I'm not sure what will happen when I am no longer at Lincoln--whether the spec. ed. assistant will have to do it alone, or not.

My mentor talked to me and the spec. ed. assistant about George in 4th grade, and about weaning away some of our help because he is becoming too dependent upon our help with math. She said that we should highlight some "starter" problems in his math workbook, and then his classroom teacher could highlight others for him to do if he finished those correctly. I asked about how much help we should give; for example, should we make sure he has all correct answers, or allow him to make some mistakes. My mentor suggested that he could work on his own unless he asks for help, and then make sure he understands the concept, but allow him to make some mistakes so that the classroom teacher can get a better understanding of what he knows and doesn't know.

October 13, 2011

Each child is so individual that they really need an IEP. Just from your comments today I can see that each child has certain needs to be met by the teachers and paras. Yet, that is the fun of it all. Each day is so different that teaching is always problem solving and new. When teaching children like Darin and Kenny, there is never a dull moment. You really have to be with-it and on your toes. Although exhausting, teaching can be very exhilarating. I worked in a factory a couple of times during summer break and doing the same thing every day was not for me. Each day the children are different and present new challenges in learning. Enjoy each day with the children in your care.

Children who struggle really look for a crutch and that crutch is often the teacher. Transitioning a child to more independence can be daunting. The child, who has received the attention, does not want to be on their own. However, the goal is to get the child to be as independent. Whatever can be done to promote the independence will be very helpful for the child in the long run. I like the idea of providing helps and hints to get the child going on their own. Tuck these strategies in your memory for later use.

I look forward to tomorrow to see what you and your mentor come up with for videoing you in action and about the conference. Have a great Friday.

October 14, 2011

We are planning on October 20 at 8:45 for the teleconference. My mentor is going to think about the logistics of doing that. We are planning on video-taping a pull-out reading lesson with Darin, Kenny, and Susan on October 26. My mentor will fill out the mid-term evaluation from that lesson.

I sat in on some parent/teacher conferences today of some of the students on my mentor's caseload. The conferences are only 20 minutes long, so when there are a lot of specialists involved, that is not a lot of time. Plus, the specialists sometimes have more than one conference that they need to attend during the same time slot. It was worthwhile activity for me, because I learned more about Kenny, Darin, and some of the students by listening to the other specialists. For both Kenny and Darin, there are goals that everyone has for them, but both kids are doing well and making progress. Kenny was doing specialized PE twice a week, in addition to PE with his class, but he's doing well in regular PE, so the specialized PE will be dropped from his IEP--the review is coming up in a couple of weeks. I sat in on a conference regarding a second grade student who is really having a lot of behavior issues, so much so, that he has not been in his regular class at all this week. He and a spec. ed. assistant spend the day in room 201, working on compliance and academics. His parents and teachers talked about the advantages and disadvantages of his attending half-day day treatment at a nearby facility to work on compliance and behavior. It sounds like his parents are going to move forward with that. The teachers stressed the fact that they would like to visit while he's there and communicate with the day treatment about what they are working on. According to my mentor, the facility has not communicated well in the past. I asked my mentor whether teachers recommend students for day treatment, but she told me that they avoid doing that because then the school has to pay for it. In this case, the parents are choosing to do the day treatment, and have done so in the past with another of their kids.

My mentor and I talked about reading plans in 3rd to help get a better understanding of the overall system that they are using. She is working with the three 3rd graders during the afternoon intervention time on reading with a program called Leveled Literacy Intervention by Fountas & Pinnell.

We also talked about Bentley and possible reinforcers/rewards that would work for him to encourage positive behavior during math. He enjoys looking at pictures and looking up the weather for different places. I thought about bringing in some books to share with him. My mentor has photos on her phone and access to the weather, so Bentley could do that during his break time. My mentor also said that I could bring in my scrapbook that I'm working on, and he would enjoy looking at that. She thought he might also enjoy making his own scrapbook if we take some pictures of him at school. We talked about the snack issue--he sometimes doesn't like the snack that his parents provide. To build our relationship, and to help him work better on his math workbook, she suggested that I bring him to 201 to do his math, and I could let him know that I have a special snack to share with him, or I have some pictures to share with him, etc.



October 14, 2011

I look forward to viewing your video when you teach the children on the 26th. The way you set up the videoing is up to you. If you can save the video digitally and send it to me, great. If you need to video and send me the CD, that would be fine too.

I look forward to talking to your mentor and you on the 20th. As I indicated, we will use the Intern Observation form for the format to facilitate discussion.

I am happy to see you had an opportunity to sit in on a couple of conferences. The insights you gain from the conferences is invaluable. You can see the connection with home, child, and school - how it functions and morphs. I would imagine the next conferences would be quite different because the child changes constantly.

The system set up to help Bentley be successful is quite comprehensive. Keep me posted how it works for Bentley. I like the variety and the personal touch to help him be on task and compliant.

Have a great weekend. We have a short week next week with mid-semester break on the 20-21.

October 17, 2011

I had the opportunity to work with Bentley this morning in math. He had a very good morning and was compliant. Today Bentley indicated that he wanted to chat with me or the spec. ed. assistant. After he's ready for the day, he gets bored waiting for class to start. He really wants to chat with others; unfortunately, because he has little speech, people don't naturally talk with him. I shared some photos with him, and he seemed to like that. I plan to bring some photos again next time and maybe find some books that we could look at together. I also wrote out a mini-schedule for him for math class, and he referred back to it a couple of times, so I think the mini-schedule is good for him.

I assisted Kenny and Darin during grammar as the class worked through some workbooks pages. I made accommodations for Darin and Kenny by just having them write C or P for common or proper. Kenny started to get anxious when first beginning the page, so I wrote some notes on his page to give him additional hints about doing the work. Once he knew what to do, he was fine. On the second workbook page, the students had to find the noun in the sentence that was supposed to be proper and rewrite the noun using capital letters. For Darin, I had him circle the words in the sentence. Then, Darin wrote the capital letters for each word, and I finished writing the rest of the words for him.

October 17, 2011

Sounds like you had an uneventful day today. Good for you!! I like your picture idea because it forms a connection between Bentley and you that you can build on in the future.

Your work with Darin and Kenny was also successful. What you are doing for Quentin is scaffolding, a term often used when referring to Vygotsky and ZPD. What the child

really needs is you, a teacher. You can scaffold for Kenny to help him be successful. Nothing promotes success like being successful. Keep helping your children be successful.

We have a short week here at MLC because of state teachers' conferences. A lot of the students are really looking forward to going home. I need to go to Rochester on the 20th after our conference so that day will be filled. Friday will also be filled with correcting 39 response papers. Teachers usually do not get much time off when the students have a break.

10/18/11

Dr. Spurgin- Are you available to teleconference on Thursday, October 27th at 8:45? This date would work out best because Carrie and I have scheduled her video recorded lesson on the 26th. I would like to use this lesson, along with the others I have observed, to complete the mid-term observation form. Please let me know what I need to do on my end as far as setting up the teleconference. Thank you

October 18, 2011

Hi Mentor,

I can do the teleconference on the 27th at 8:45 with no problem. I think it is good to have the video piece done before the teleconference. I anticipate the teleconference to be between the three of us. What you need to do is to have ideas in connection to the various descriptors on the mid-term observation form. I will take notes on our teleconference which I will then share with you so you will see if I have summarized the teleconference accurately. If you would like to write in the opposing column and send your thoughts to me, that would be fine. However, I would anticipate you already know what topics you would like to discuss. The mid-semester teleconference is a formative type of assessment, determining what has been accomplished and what needs to be accomplished in the rest of the internship. I hope this conference would be a dialogue.

October 18, 2011

Scaffolding--I would say that I did some scaffolding with Kenny today. I had to administer the weekly reading assessment to Kenny, Darin, and Susan today. The spec. ed. assistant was somewhere else, so I was attempting to work with all three. The students really need to read the story and complete the questions on their own, but at the beginning of the year, we have been reading the story and questions for them. The regular classroom teacher said that she is now having the other students read them on their own, so I thought it would be good to get our kids towards that goal also, since they have to do the reading on the MAP tests alone. There were 3 paragraphs to the story. I began reading the first paragraph and then asked the students to read the rest to themselves. Darin was able to focus and read the rest of the story by himself. Kenny was having a rough day, so he needed more guidance. We took turns reading--I read the first half of the paragraph, and then I listened as he read the second half. When he came to a word he didn't know, he would start to melt down. I talked about strategies he could use and sometimes just supplied the word. We continued taking turns with reading the

questions, though Kenny actually read most of the words himself. He lacks the confidence to do it completely on his own.

I also worked with Bentley today. I shared the objective for the math lesson with him and discussed his math mini-schedule. We talked about options that he could do during his mini-break time between the math lesson and his math work time. He did pretty well during the lesson time itself, participating in the mental math exercises, opening his books to the correct pages, etc. Then he was getting antsy, so I suggested he needed to write down one number in his book, and then he could have his mini-break. He chose to get a drink and then look at some more pictures that I brought. Unfortunately, when his mini-break was over, he was not compliant and wouldn't work. My mentor was there with me, and used various strategies to get him to work--timer, if/then, choices, reminders of rewards, loss of rewards, etc. In the end, he wouldn't comply, so my mentor called the spec. ed. assistant who had to use some physical force to have him move down to 201. My mentor, the spec. ed. assistant, and I talked to each other, but in front of Bentley, about the things he needed to do in order to have snack and earn some break time back, etc. My mentor set a timer for 5 minutes for him to cool down, but he still chose not to work.

Dr. Spurgin, I hope your trip to Rochester is beneficial and that you have to time to rest as well.

October 18, 2011

Scaffolding does work. How scaffolding is carried out - that is what a teacher does to help the child be successful. The teacher needs to have a ton of ideas and strategies in his or her repertoire to provide that scaffolding for individual student's success. I hope you are building your repertoire while doing your internship

Bentley really is an enigma. I have a sad heart for Bentley because he really resists the best efforts of the teachers. How terrible it is for Bentley to have this attitude in his head and his heart. I would hope, over time, Bentley would slowly change his attitude and be more compliant. I think the strategies used today should bear fruit over time. Keep up the steady pressure on Bentley and he should hopefully show improvement. Stay the course, keep on plugging on, and you will be successful.

October 19, 2011

My mentor worked out the schedule so that I had another opportunity to work with Bentley today for math. She had me work with him in 201 instead of his classroom. She wanted to provide me with an opportunity to work with Bentley in 201 because he tends to work much better there. She is pondering the idea of having Bentley do math in 201 for a while and then scaffold it so he eventually can do math in his classroom again. She mentioned that the classroom may be overstimulating for him. It can also depend on what happens at home how his day begins. I wonder, too, whether there is too much down-time before math class actually begins. He is supposed to get organized during that time, and there's usually some quiet work time before math starts. Bentley is expected to stay at his desk and read, but I wonder whether that time, plus sitting and listening during

the math lesson is too much. My time with Bentley went well today; he got all 3's on his chart and enjoyed his break time.

Kenny seemed to be having a better day today. There were a couple of times when he asked me for help in order to complete his work, so that's a good sign. At one point, he needed to get an eraser out of his desk and wasn't doing it, so then I let him know that I was going to check on one of the other students and then come back when he had his eraser out. That strategy seems to work with Kenny because he really does want the help.

10/19/11

Carrie did a great job with Bentley today. I real

October 19, 2011

Seems like Bentley does well in the alternate setting. You are also spending your time helping him prepare for the lesson so he does not have to wait for others or is distracted by others. Sounds like a great accommodation to help Bentley be successful. Kenny appears to want to please. I wonder if he really knows how the social skill of how to please others. He may have to taught that skill. For children like Bentley and Kenny social skills need to be taught because they are not caught. You can model appropriate social skills all day and children with EBD will not catch on. It seems funny the children will not imitate the teacher as Bandura suggested. Some children just do not get it for a variety of reasons (MR, ADHD, EBD, PDD).

I am happy that your mentor and you are planning on videoing a lesson on the 26th. I look forward to watching you interact and teach the children. As I indicated to your mentor, the 27th at 8:45 will work out for me just fine. It is hard to believe half of the semester is over already. Time flies when we are having fun.

October 20, 2011

As the spec. ed. assistant and I work with Kenny, we do refer to a page that has a list of strategies (and pictures) for him to use when he feels overwhelmed, but he hasn't wanted to try using the strategies. My mentor created the strategies page for him. Kenny does worry about what the other kids think when he's acting different, but doesn't want to try the strategies. The strategies are ones that he learned and practiced during day treatment last year. I think he would benefit from some counseling to re-learn and practice the strategies in a non-stressful setting so he can apply them in real-life situations. I was also thinking about replacement behaviors that Kenny could use instead of eating his pencils, scribbling on his paper, sniffing his hands, etc. I was trying to think of something Kenny could chew on instead, or if he could squeeze crumpled paper or squeeze his hands.

I'm a little nervous about the video-taping session next week because I've only worked with the 3 third graders and taught a reading a lesson with them a couple of times. One of the challenges is that we do not often know ahead of time what the classroom teacher is planning for the day, or the exact schedule that she will follow. In addition, when our kids are in the back room, they become very concerned about what they are missing in the classroom, so their attention spans can be short. My mentor assures me that it will go

fine, and she will communicate with the classroom teacher so that I can plan on 30 minutes with the kids. My mentor is working to coordinate the teleconference and the video-taping so they are successes.

October 21, 2011

I administered the spelling test to Susan and Darin this morning, and they both did a great job. Kenny did very well in math today. He asked me for help a couple of times, but primarily watched the Smartboard, copied the information he needed, and worked with a partner to find the circumference and diameter of a can. About 9:30 or so, it seemed like something was in the air in the 3rd grade room as the whole class was very talkative and active. George and Darin seemed to be more out of sorts than usual. Plus, the math lesson--especially the time when the students had to watch the Smartboard and listen--was longer today. I observed Darin gradually lose focus, become restless, and purposefully drop his pencil over and over.

After math, the schedule became topsy-turvy, but I was able to do a short vocabulary lesson with Susan and Kenny. Darin had a bathroom accident, so the spec. ed. assistant helped him with that. Kenny really comprehends the vocabulary well, but Susan, because of her CD, does not. In one case, I tried to relate one of the words--usually--to her own life and asked her, "Do you usually have pudding for snack?" She has the same thing every day, but it's Go-gurt. She said, "Yes," when I asked her that question. I tried a different question--"What do you usually have for snack," but she said, "I don't know."

Susan exhibited some of her stubbornness today when it was time for her to read her "just-right" books. She and our other two kids are instructed to read three just-right books, and then they can read a book of their choice. Susan loves fairy books, and I reminded her twice about reading her just-right books first. She refused and then sat on the book so I couldn't take it from her. I let her know that she would receive a fine (the classroom's behavior system), and the classroom teacher also scolded her.

I worked with a group of about 10 students in practicing their play. The group included Susan, Darin, Kenny, and George. Kenny has expressed several times that he doesn't want to participate in the play, although, each time we've practiced it in the past, he did read his lines. Today he read his short lines the first time through, but as we continued to practice, he refused to read his lines. Instead of reading his lines, he was playing with things at the chalkboard. The spec. ed. assistant let him know that he needed to "do his work" or he would have to sit down and do some other work later. Kenny had a meltdown then. The spec. ed. assistant guided him to the back room. After a few minutes, the rest of the class went to the library, so I was able to go to the back room and observe the spec. ed. assistant as she worked to calm Kenny down. He didn't want to use his calming strategies, but the spec. ed. assistant used a calm voice and talked through the strategies as she rubbed his shoulders. He was especially upset when he saw that the rest of the class had left, but the spec. ed. assistant told him that he needed to calm down before he could go. Eventually Kenny calmed down and even started to do some of the deep breathing. He complied and picked up the book that he had thrown and was able to walk with the spec. ed. assistant out the door.

October 24, 2011

I took the weekend to get a lot done, therefore I did not respond to your last posts. We had mid-semester break and I had lots to do. From what I can read, you had two very busy days with lots of different issues. I will catch up with you this afternoon or evening.

October 24, 2011

I didn't go to Lincoln this morning since I didn't feel well, but I did attend Kenny's IEP meeting after school. Participants in the IEP meeting included the principal, my mentor (SPED teacher), The spec. ed. assistant (SPED assistant), the speech therapist, the OT therapist, the PE teacher, Kenny's mom and a male family friend. Kenny met many of his last year's IEP goals, despite a very difficult school year last year. He graduated out of specialized PE and out of OT. The speech therapist wants to work on some specific articulation goals and would like to help Kenny carry over the things he's practicing into conversation. She is also going to work on pragmatic language and social thinking skills with him, which I think will help him with many of the behaviors he exhibits in the classroom. Kenny made over a year's progress in reading and is reading at a mid-1st grade level. My mentor wants to help him make another year's progress this year. He lacks confidence in reading, and often resists trying to read. One idea was having him read to a pet at home, or read to a younger child at school because Kenny likes to be a leader. Kenny resists many writing tasks, often due to his concern over spelling and perfection in his writing. Several suggestions were made, including having Kenny dictate his story to an adult who then reads it back to him so that he can write it himself, helping him with spelling as needed. Another suggestion was for him to write pen pal letters to his senior home buddy or his friends who moved to Switzerland. A third suggestion was for his parents--to write down weekend activities in his assignment book for writing topic ideas. Kenny is not making as much progress in spelling; he has difficulty recalling the spelling patterns he's practiced. A suggestion was that we send home his word sorting cards so he can practice sorting them at home. Kenny's test results show average performance in math; he just lacks confidence in his ability to do math at times. However, he is making use of manipulatives and other strategies; whereas last year, he wouldn't attempt using those things. We will continue to help Kenny initiate and maintain peer interactions and to use his calming strategies when he is upset.

October 24, 2011

I am sorry to hear that you were ill today. I appreciate your special effort to get to Kenny's IEP Meeting this afternoon. Although progress appears to be slow for Kenny, he is progressing. I think a goal of one year progress is realistic, especially when he made good progress through a troubling year last year. The removal of his adaptive PE as well as his OT services also speaks to his progress. It was good to see his mother and her special friend attended the meeting. Coordination and collaboration between school and home is crucial. If the school and the home are not in agreement or not in communication, Kenny will triangulate the situation and play one against the other. I hope the mom takes the suggestions and strategies to heart and actually follows through on Kenny's home plan.

On another note, working with children on a special activity, like the play, gives you an opportunity to interact with children at a different level. Usually, the children are all excited and want to be participants in the special activity. I wonder if Kenny is so scared about failure he does not want to even try. I would imagine he is very insecure in the inside and that permeates his behaviors. If Kenny actually participates and is successful, it will be a big lift for his self-confidence. However, lack of trying is the problem. Encouragement and success is pretty critical. Hopefully he will come around and actually participate. He will have fun if he is willing to try. His prior experience has driven the risk taking from Kenny and he will balk at any attempt where he may not succeed.

Susan is another person who may resist because of her negative view of herself. She apparently has lower abilities, but she can succeed. How will you get her over the negative attitude about herself and get her to find a sense of accomplishment, I am really a competent person. How sad for children to have such a negative self-image which leads to some real negative behaviors and attitudes. Keep working with her, don't give up, and try as many ideas/strategies you and the other professionals can think of to help her with her issues.

Children have to take ownership of their actions and not do what the world advises by blaming others. Children have to understand the natural consequences of their actions. An example would be Kenny who knows he has to do his work at recess if it is not finished on time. Repetition is the mother of learning and hopefully, if Kenny has enough practice, will understand the concept of natural consequences. Everyone knows about natural consequences (just try driving 80 mph on the freeway), and natural consequences in life experiences need to be learned early. Again, be consistent as possible with natural consequences and the child should respond. If the child does not get this concept when he or she is young, the natural consequences later in school and life will be extremely unpleasant. Teachers know what happens to children who cannot take ownership of their behaviors. How sad!!!

Do not fret about the video work you will be doing on Wednesday. I realize a lot of negative outcomes can result from videoing a class. I have been in many classrooms viewing lessons and if something can go wrong it will. Do what you can. I understand. Send me what you get and I am sure you will be fine, even if it not perfect. Thanks go out to both you and your mentor for going out of your way to do the videoing.

Hope you are feeling better tomorrow. Being sick and pushing through it by teaching is not easy.

October 25, 2011

You definitely identified the reason why Kenny didn't want to read his lines in the play-- he is fearful of failure. We purposefully picked lines that he could do easily. Sadly, yesterday, when they read the play, Kenny chose not to participate.

The third grade went to the Senior Home today, so I stayed behind and worked with Bentley. The first half of our math lesson went very well. He was compliant, used his materials to solve problems, and followed directions. However, when it was time to do his math workbook problems, he became noncompliant. He broke his pencil, and I told him he needed to stand up and go get another one. He refused to do that. Things went downhill from there. My mentor and I both used different strategies to try and get him back on track, but he just didn't want any of it. My mentor had to call the spec. ed. assistant to come and restrain him in his chair because he was throwing things, kicking, etc. When the spec. ed. assistant restrained him, he kept banging his head back against her arm, so she asked for a pillow to put between her and Bentley. Eventually my mentor called for the spec. ed. assistant to come and help also because it appeared that they might have to move him to the floor. Since the spec. ed. assistant was called away from her 5th graders, I went and worked with them for a few minutes.

Davy and Antoine, the 5th grade boys, were working on writing a letter. Antoine worked well, but Davy did not. He was chewing on a pencil, an eraser, his hoodie string, and being loud. After a few minutes, it was time for them to go to speech. The classroom teacher asked me to escort them because Davy was being too loud. As we walked down the hall, Davy started opening the windows. I let him know that I would tell his speech teacher that he would need to go back and close those before going to speech. He did go back and close them then. As we got to the speech teacher's room, he admitted that he didn't remember taking his pill that morning. The speech teacher was going to call home and ask about it.

When I returned to 201, Bentley was still being restrained. It was probably about 20 minutes total that he was restrained. Eventually, it seemed that he calmed down. The spec. ed. assistant let go of one arm and then the other arm. Then they had Bentley sit calmly in the chair for one more minute. After that, my mentor talked to him about the choices he made. She directed him to relax for a minute and then look at this Social Detective book. However, Bentley continued to be noncompliant. He would yell at the ladies and tell them to leave. He said, "Die" or "stop it" over and over. He made spitting sounds or hissing sounds at the ladies. The spec. ed. assistant and the spec. ed. assistant had to restrain Bentley all over again. He was just calming down for the second time as I left for the day. I felt sad for Bentley because he was having such a tough morning. He wasn't having fun but couldn't seem to make the right choices to fix the situation.

October 25, 2011

Sad to see that Bentley really made bad choices which led to escalating behaviors. Sometimes the child's neurological pathways get stuck and will not go any further. Then, the child will really get balky and not comply to reasonable demands. The neurological pathway problem is often indicative of children with pervasive developmental disorders; MR and ASD. Now, I do not suggest that Bentley has these disabilities. I just find the situation interesting that Bentley reacts similarly to children who have PDD. I wonder what Bentley has in his past history which would be the etiology of his issues? Any guesses?



I am curious if you had training in restraint of a child. I know courses are offered in this area. I would imagine the spec. ed. assistant and your mentor would have the training because of the nature of their work. Getting a child to mid-line with the child vertical helps with the semi-circular canals in the inner ear. Getting the child to mid-line helps the child sense equilibrium and calming often results. Gentle rocking helps the fluid pass over the little structures in the canals and this is soothing. Just as rocking a baby calms the baby down, the same holds true for older children as well. Just my rambling thoughts:)

You had a chance to work with a couple of fifth graders today - great! The experience with children at this grade level presents another set of parameters and issues. By the time many children get to fifth or sixth grade, puberty looms in the offing. Puberty often has its own number of really interesting characteristics. Davy wants to be in control and presents behaviors to help him keep control. So sad! If only the child could feel comfortable being a child and let the adults make sure he is safe and secure. His hypervigilance and control issues do not let him be a child.

I looked over your lesson plan and it is very thorough. I can see you have all the bases covered and the lesson should go very well. However, I know that nothing is ever perfect, so do not worry if your lesson does not go exactly as planned. Flexibility is a trait teachers must have to adjust to any eventuality. Just do your best. I know tomorrow will go well.

October 26, 2011

Bentley is diagnosed with autism. I know his home life is not the best. I have observed how when Bentley gets in his defiant stage that he just get stuck there. He doesn't seem to be able to get out of the defiant stage, even with all of the strategies. As we were discussing Bentley this morning, the other teachers mentioned that sometimes when another person comes into the room to work with him, then he is suddenly able to comply again. It doesn't seem to matter which teacher, but just the change in person can help.

Kenny had the worst morning that I've seen all year. He wasn't able to cope from the very beginning of the school day. The spec. ed. assistant and my mentor worked with him in the back room to calm him down for an hour and a half. My mentor had to leave the room then, and the spec. ed. assistant was working with Susan, so I had my chance to work with Kenny to try and calm down. He was trying to use his strategies as I worked with him. When he was more calm, he sat in his desk and kicked his feet for about ten minutes. Then the spec. ed. assistant moved him out into the hall. He continued to have a hard time there. Kenny did not participate in my reading lesson today because he was having such a difficult day. Around 10:30, he did seem calmer as he sat in his desk. He was supposed to be reading a story as practice for WKCE testing. I let him be for a little bit, but then did try to get him to read some of the story. When he became agitated, I had him go out in the hall with me. I modeled what to do when reading and coming to words you don't know. He did successfully read a few short paragraphs, and I continuously praised him. He wasn't pleased with how he did, but I told him, "I know you didn't do as

well as you would like, but for this test, it was good enough.” That seemed to resonate with him, as he looked directly at me and nodded.

The reading lesson with Darin and Susan (minus Kenny) went very well. Both of them attended well during the lesson. I’ll reflect on the lesson more after I watch the video tape. My mentor should be sending it to you by email.

October 26, 2011

I am looking forward to your video lesson. Your mentor did alert me to the fact that your lesson could not be sent via email. She is having the tech from Lincoln work on the problem. Your mentor indicated she could just send me the flash drive via snail mail and I said that would be fine. She also made a suggestion we postpone the conference until next week so I would have time to look over your lesson. I thought that would also be fine with me and I suggested Tuesday or Thursday next week at 8:45am. We will get everything done in due time.

Kenny has a tough time today. I was looking forward to seeing him on the video. That is OK. I am really happy he did finally get his act together and you were successful with his reading activity. I think you struck a nerve with him and he realized that he can be successful without the big behaviors. Keep plugging away with him, continually doing what works and trying to find ways to help him be successful

I am sure you will do well reflecting on your lesson. The planning was well done and I am sure the lesson went fine. Being a reflective teacher is one thing that is promoted a great deal in the methods classes here at MLC. Good reflection leads to top quality teaching. Make sure you are objective in your reflection and not be too tough on yourself.

October 27, 2011

Since I didn’t have to be at St. Lucas today, I spent the entire day at Lincoln. I wanted to get a feel for what happened in the afternoons. However, the afternoon was mostly a Halloween celebration--party and parade. There really were not a lot of heavy academics that took place today. I administered the spelling test to Susan and helped her write an additional sentence for her writing story. Nothing else exciting to report on. My mentor and I are still working on getting the video to you. Tomorrow Lincoln does not have school, so I won’t have an update.

October 27, 2011

Thanks for spending the day at Lincoln. Often, the heavier academic work is done in the morning. However, some teachers think that right after lunch is a good time for teaching academics. The children have sugar in their system and have lots of oxygen because they were running around at noon recess. I did try out the afternoon for a heavier academic subject after dinner at times and it worked, especially for some children.

I hope you have a great break. I think you need some time to gather your thoughts. Next week will be here soon enough. Concerning the video, thanks for all of your efforts. I

know you will be successful. I look forward to the teleconference next Thursday, November 3rd.

October 31, 2011

After getting the third graders organized for the day and preparing spelling word sorts, I sat with Braedon (4th grade) as he took his math assessment. He worked well, but just needed occasional prompting to keep working. When I returned to 3rd grade, the spec. ed. assistant and I worked with our 3 kids to choose their spelling words and sort the words according to phonics rules. Then the kids did WKCE practice for the first section of the math test. I floated between Kenny, Darin, and George to keep them on task and assist them where necessary. For Kenny and Darin, I read the test questions. For Darin, I sometimes rewrote the problems in larger print on another piece of paper, and I acted as a scribe when he needed to write an explanation for his answer. George just needed prompting to stay on task. Kenny finished the test in short order and was very pleased with himself for finishing so quickly. Darin was the last one done because he works slowly and is often distracted, but he had the skills to complete the test.

I forgot to mention that last Thursday, my mentor, the spec. ed. assistant and I discussed Darin's tendency to get out of his seat at inappropriate times during class. The spec. ed. assistant and I took notes on instances when Darin gets up and wanders around. My mentor is considering putting together a social story for Darin to help him recognize appropriate and inappropriate times to walk around. It's concerning that he will wander off sometime, especially because of his fetish with doors. He ended up locking himself outside the school building after recess a few weeks ago. Thankfully, the spec. ed. assistant noticed he was missing and went to look for him.

I watched a video on the internet by CBS 60 Minutes about iPad Apps for children with autism.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=7385686n&tag=contentBody;storyMediaBox>. My mentor has an iPad at Lincoln, but the staff is just starting to use it with the students. The App called Proloquo2go sounded very interesting because it helps kids with restricted communication communicate more easily with others. While I was sitting with Braedon during the math test, I spent some time looking through Bentley's IEP some more. It was interesting to see that Proloquo2go was mentioned in his recent IEP update; it seems that the speech teacher is using it with Bentley. I want to ask my mentor about if Bentley would benefit from using it even more in other classes. Speech is difficult for him, and I know that he has much more to say than he does.

October 31, 2011

You are doing a very good job providing what the child needs to be successful. George needed little prompts whereas Darin and Kenny needed more help get their work done well. Being able to provide for the child is with what they need is scaffolding. Len Vygotsky would be very happy with your work today. When you have a small group, the individualization is a bit easier to do for each child. The larger the group is, the harder teaching becomes to provide for these individual needs. Keep doing what the child needs in order to succeed.

I am very interested in how the “social story” for Darin will work out for you. I know the literature highly touts “social stories” as a very good way to help children with PDD establish and keep up with tasks and routines. The “social story” idea helps the child internalize what is going on as well as developing a cognitive map for the child. I think “social stories” are a great idea on paper, you will see how this strategy helps in practice.

I viewed the 60 minutes segment on Autism and the iPad. I think the iPad has possibilities as illustrated in the video. I had not heard about the Proloquo2go before. From the video, this application looks like a very big help for some children. I wonder, too, if Bentley would benefit from the iPad with a program like Proloquo2go. Securing an iPad and the app may be a really good fit for Bentley.

I found the video fascinating, although I have to consider the source. Further research probably would be best before decisions are made to procure such an item for Bentley.

Hope your week goes well. Greet your mentor from me. I look forward to our conversation on Thursday.

October 31, 2011--Mid-Term Video Reflection

After taking Dr. Melendy’s class this past summer on formative and summative assessment, I have been using learning targets with my students. The teachers at Lincoln usually begin their lessons by sharing the learning target with the students as well. I like how the learning targets help focus the students’ attention on what they will be learning, and I think Darin and Susan really understood what we would be doing when I shared the learning targets. I think that sharing learning targets is a way to initiate the lesson.

**Content Knowledge:** I feel that I had a thorough knowledge of the content for the lesson. I have a lot of background teaching reading to struggling readers, so the lesson felt natural. At the beginning of each segment of the lesson, I made a statement to connect what we were presently doing with something they had done previously; for example, I pointed out that we had been work with words spelled with *ea* and *ee* in reading and spelling.

**Preparation:** In preparation for the lesson, I studied the lesson, wrote the lesson plan, prepared note cards, drew the pictures for Susan, and gathered the materials. I neglected to grab my post-it notes before the lesson began, and because of the tight quarters in the back room, once I realized I didn’t have them, I chose just to write the fantasy/reality elements on the whiteboard. I would have preferred to write them on post-it notes and have the student stick the post-its to the board, because I think that would require them to think about where the story elements really fit on the chart. Knowing that Susan has difficulty comprehending vocabulary words and expressing their meanings, I chose to draw the pictures of the sunset to help her with the concept of at least one of the vocabulary words. I also tried to relate the word “usually” to something from Susan’s life--her usual snack of Gogurt--to help her understand that word. Darin has a strong vocabulary knowledge, so he was capable of providing his own definitions and examples.

**Instructional Delivery & Knowledge/Appreciation of Student Development and**

**Diversity:** I like to keep students actively involved in my lessons, so I often provide activities that require students to do something hands-on. In addition, the hands-on activities require them to do deeper thinking. I chose to have the students underline the vowel combinations, sort the phonics words, and pick vocabulary words. I had intended to have them stick the post-it notes (fantasy/reality) to the board.

I used modeling to help Susan know how to sort the phonics words and to use the post-it note to turn to the proper page in her book.

In my questioning of the students about fantasy and reality examples, I know that Susan has trouble with providing original examples and responds better to questions that require a yes/no answer. When she struggled with my original question, I would rephrase the question so that it required a yes/no answer.

I knew that the story text would be difficult for the kids to read, so I chose to read sections of it. When I called on the students to read, I tried to match the difficulty of the text with their reading abilities. In my opinion, the texts are too difficult for the kids. The texts correlate with the regular 3rd grade reading texts, but are supposed to be two levels below. In my estimation, the texts are at a second grade reading level, which is above what Susan, Darin, and Kenny are reading at. I think that the texts are definitely at a frustrational reading level for them. My mentor noticed that the texts were difficult as she was videotaping the session. However, when talking about it with the spec. ed. assistant, the spec. ed. assistant indicated that she didn't think the texts were too difficult. It seems that we are sticking with them for now. In the future, I may try doing some choral reading with the students; although the spec. ed. assistant said that she had tried that in the past, and it didn't go well. I think it may depend upon how the kids are focusing and behaving that day.

**Classroom Management:** Early on, Darin asked for a drink, and I suggested that he wait for later. I ignored his burping. When Susan dropped her pencil, and Darin went under the table to get it, I started counting, because he often milks the "falling out of his chair" act. I purposely found ways that Susan and Darin could help to keep them involved--erasing the whiteboard, stacking the cards, throwing out the kleenex.

**Student Assessment:** I took mental notes of the students' responses during class and later wrote down some of the sight words that they struggled to read. I was happily surprised that Susan read the word "usually" because that's a difficult word. Both Susan and Darin did well reading the phonics words and sorting them. Darin tripped over the vocabulary words "gleamed" and "deeds" even though they fit with the phonics rule we had just worked on. Darin has a sound understanding of fantasy/reality. I think Susan understands the concept as well, but her answers are hit and miss depending upon her focus. Besides some of the sight words, I also noted that the students have trouble reading words with endings: petted, spotted, seemed, etc. I intend to write some of the sight words that Susan and Darin struggled with on their Word Boards--a grid of 5x5

squares that has 5 new sight words written in the squares each 5 times. The students read the words and try to beat their previous time.

**Collaboration:** As mentioned earlier, my mentor, the spec. ed. assistant, and I talked about the difficulty of the text. My mentor adds words to the students Word Boards when she works with them, and I add words when I work with them. The spec. ed. assistant and I make notes in a daily log for Reading, Writing, Math, and Spelling so that we know what we worked on with each of the students that day.

**Overall Reflection:** Overall, I was very pleased with how the lesson went. Susan became a little restless at the end, but they really focused well throughout the lesson. I will think about using choral reading in the future, and next time I want to remember my post-it notes. In conversation with my mentor after the lesson, she suggested that I point out a few difficult words from the story and “break them down” with the students. I agree with her suggestion and I would prefer to do that; however, I was also aware of the difficulty of the text and the time restraints, so that wasn’t a main objective for me this time.

November 1, 2011

Your reflection on your lesson is thoughtful and gives me insight to the background of the lesson.

I did get your drive in the mail today and it played very well on my computer. Thanks for all the effort you put into getting the video to me.

I looked over the lesson twice today and filled out the rubric. I will send you the rubric with my comments in an email. Your lesson went very well and I got to see two of your children - way too cool!!!!

November 1, 2011

After getting the third graders organized for the day, I moved to 4th grade to work with Bentley. My mentor was occupied with another student who needed to be restrained, so I was alone working with Bentley today. Bentley did an awesome job in math today! He was compliant throughout and worked well to finish his tasks. We worked off of a mini-schedule, and he earned 10 minutes of computer time when he was done working. I wasn’t able to pay a lot of attention to Braedon during that time, though I tried to keep an eye on him. He is supposed to keep his hundred chart, multiplication chart, math cards, etc. all in his binder, but he hasn’t been doing that, so that has been a problem because he doesn’t always have the tools he needs to do his math. The spec. ed. assistant and I reiterated with him again that he needs to keep all of those things in his binder. He had more trouble focusing on the lesson today, but he worked well during work time.

I moved back to 3rd grade and had a bit of a break because the classroom teacher allowed the students to go outside for a while. I looked ahead at the next reading lesson and organized the back room a bit. When the students came inside, they listened and watched on the screen as the teacher explained the new Compass Learning computer program to

the students. This program allows each student to work on reading or math skills at their own levels and to meet their own needs. Then we went to the computer lab, and I helped the students log on to the program. The spec. ed. assistant and I are discussed whether Susan would be able to work on the program in the computer lab. She has the tendency just to click anything, so we feel it would be better for her to work in another room so she doesn't need head phones and we can hear what the computer is asking her to do. Then the adult working with her would take control of the mouse and click the answers Susan chooses.

It seems that the 3rd grade will be working on Compass Learning every Tuesday morning now, and I'm a bit concerned because it seems that reading instruction getting pushed to the wayside. Our special kids need lots of time for reading instruction.

November 1, 2011

Wow! You had a good day with Bentley. Capture the day and replay it tomorrow:)

I saw Susan in the video and she is a bit of a puzzle. She had a pretty good day with the vocabulary and read with some fluency. On the other hand, she is easily distracted and impulsive so she may not make good decisions in the computer. Give her a try at the computer and see how it goes. She may be very successful.

It was surely fun to see Susan and Darin.

If you want to share my comments with your mentor concerning your lesson, please help yourself. Your mentor may be interested in my comments from a complete outsider.

Hope you have a wonderful rest of the week.

November 2, 2011

The rest of the week may be tough because WCKE testing. Today was the first day of testing for the 3rd graders. Darin and George handled it well, but Kenny had a rough time of it. It was stressful for me, too. We had Darin, George, and Kenny working in a separate room. Kenny just wanted to shut down and not even try. With lots of encouragement, he did make attempts at reading the stories, but when it was time to answer the questions, he half-read the questions, but didn't really read the answers. My mentor looked at his test when he was done and said that he had gotten them all wrong. On the other hand, she was pleased that he got through it. It sounded like it was an improvement over his experience last year. The students had a break after finishing the reading, and then they had to work on the first section of the math. Unfortunately, Kenny was already not in a good frame of mind because of the earlier testing. Math is his stronger subject, but he had already shut down in his mind. Kenny really lost his cool, so I moved with him to another room to work with him alone while my mentor continued to work with Darin and George. It took a lot of encouragement to get him to even try. He didn't finish the test section, so he will need to finish it later today. Test accommodations for all three boys included a teacher reading the math questions to them. Darin and Kenny could use a hundreds chart on the whole test and a calculator on sections 2 and 3.

A scribe can write response answers for both Darin and Kenny. These are things that are written into their IEPs.

November 3, 2011

What a great discussion in the teleconference. Thanks goes out to you and your mentor for taking the time and expending the effort to check how progress was being made to this point in the experience. I am pleased with the results and will share my notes with you concerning the mid-semester review.

You will have your hands full the rest of the week with the WKCE testing. The change in the routine affects all children, especially those with special needs. As I indicated in the conversation, good luck!!!

I look forward to your posting later today.

November 3, 2011

I appreciated our discussion as well. It was good to have an extended amount of time to chat with you and my mentor. After our discussion, I kept Susan busy with some simple tasks while Darin and George worked on WKCE testing. The spec. ed. assistant worked with Kenny on the testing in another room. Because he had such a difficult time yesterday with the testing, it was thought that he should be in a separate room. Then he wouldn't worry about whether the other kids were faster than he was. The spec. ed. assistant also used the IPAD with Kenny at regular intervals during the testing to keep him calm and give him breaks. Susan will be taking an alternate test next week because of her cognitive disability. Susan worked on things like reading simple sentences and drawing lines to match the correct picture of the sentences, doing dot-to-dot to practice the order of numbers 1-20, reading books, and doing math addition of basic facts up to 5. When we returned to the classroom after testing, the class had a break, and then it was time for me to go.

November 4, 2011

I worked with Darin to finish section 2 of the WKCE math test. I read the test questions to him and acted as his scribe for the short answer questions. Darin's brain seemed to be working more slowly today. It took him a long time to process things and complete tasks. This was evident later in the classroom as well. He was very distracted, and he couldn't tune out anything in order to focus on the task at hand.

Kenny began exhibiting behaviors after math, and the spec. ed. assistant took him to the back room. He still is unwilling to use his calming strategies to calm down. My mentor and the spec. ed. assistant have found that the IPAD helps him calm down, so the spec. ed. assistant used that with Kenny again. I talked with the spec. ed. assistant, and then later with my mentor, about the idea of him practicing his calming strategies after he used the IPAD and was calm. When I did home therapy with an autistic child, we regularly practiced his calming strategies when he was calm as part of his programming so that he could hopefully use them when he was stressed. Both the spec. ed. assistant and my



mentor thought that was a good idea, because Kenny needs to learn how to calm himself and self-regulate when he's anxious.

November 4, 2011

Collaboration works! To see all of you working together and sharing ideas is a wonderful thing. The beneficiary of collaboration is definitely the child. Teachers need to be willing to consult and connect with each other. Doing so is coming from a position of strength. Not that long ago, if a teacher had to consult with another teacher concerning a child, the teacher would feel embarrassed or inadequate. In 2011, teachers absolutely need to help each other and collaborate for the benefit of the child. I can only commend you for your collaboration.

I find it fascinating that the IPAD is a real motivational tool for Kenny. As long as it works, use it. The novelty will probably wear off in time. I also like your idea of quieting and calming strategies to promote self-discipline and self-control. Ultimately the child needs to have this self-regulation in order to survive in society. Learn the techniques as early as possible.

The excitement of teaching is to have the children different from day to day. Today, Darin is different from yesterday. So how does one teach Darin today? What a challenge!! Sure beats working on an assembly line all day. Teaching for a long time teaches all of us that children are changeable, complex, and exciting all at the same time.

Have a wonderful weekend.

November 7, 2011

I worked with Kenny to practice his spelling words. He used letters to spell each of his words. He did a good job choosing the correct vowel for most of the words when spelling his words. He didn't realize that "gruff" needs two f's and "cross" needs two s's. After he spelled his words, I incorrectly spelled a few of them and asked him to correct my mistakes. He needed a little help with some of those, but worked at it. Then it was time for writing, and Kenny asked me to help him with his writing. We read the story that he had started, and I gave him suggestions for continuing the story. He wrote two more sentences easily, but with lots of help on spelling. Then he didn't seem to know what to write, and didn't like--or wasn't able--to choose any of my suggestions, and he began to fall apart. We tried taking a walk in the hall, but he didn't like that and wanted to go back to his seat. I let the spec. ed. assistant know that Kenny was having a hard time, and we decided to "switch kids" to see if that would help. Then I worked with Darin on trying to bring his story to a close. Darin tends to get way off topic when writing (speaking also), but I gave him a lot of direction so that he could finish his story. Because of Darin's writing difficulties, we have him tell us his sentence, and then we draw lines in his notebook for each word. He writes many of the words himself, but longer words, we will write out. In addition, because of time, I wrote more of the words for him, but had him write some of the words himself. During spelling and writing time, I was also monitoring George. George really did not work well during this time period. I prompted George numerous times during writing, and he ended up with an N on his chart

for “not working” during writing. His classroom teacher had written out the directions on the smartboard for the class, and I had given him several direct instructions, but he was really choosing not to do the work--reading a story he had written; reading the story to a classmate; adding on or revising story. Instead he was drawing, wandering around the classroom, or talking. I alerted his classroom teacher, and she told him that he needed to have a certain amount down in order to go out for recess.

November 7, 2011

When you describe “switch kids” it sounds like the children you teach (I know I made a bad pun). The children seem to flip a “switch” and get belligerent. I wonder if antecedents can be determined to find out what sets the children off. I would anticipate behaviors, attitudes, body language, verbiage, or other cues can be found to see what triggers the non-compliance. Changing the antecedent may be a way to prevent the behaviors from happening or escalating. Keeping a chart of antecedent behaviors may be helpful. On the other hand, even if you could find antecedents, the child may still tantrum or do big behaviors. The idea of Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) and Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) are really predicated on the idea of Antecedents, Behaviors, and Consequences (ABC). Antecedents being the precursors to the behavior, the behavior itself, and what the child wants to get out of the behavior (getting into something, getting out of something, attention, recognition from peers, etc). Look at the following website and look at the part about consequences of the behavior: [http://www.beachcenter.org/pbs/pbs\\_at\\_home/understanding\\_behavior.aspx?JScript=1](http://www.beachcenter.org/pbs/pbs_at_home/understanding_behavior.aspx?JScript=1) I know the children are difficult to predict, so you have to stay very flexible, a trait very important to have in teachers. I have great admiration for your team who work with children each day and have to be on top of the game at all times. Kudos to all of you.

I like the way you all work together as a team. To be able to collaborate for the benefit of the child is wonderful. Switching children brings out the best in the teachers involved. Team work works!! Kudos to all of you again.

November 8, 2011

Today was the last day of WKCE testing, so I didn't do a lot today. I read some of the math questions for George and Darin. At first I was in with the 5th grade students in case the spec. ed. assistant needed another person because the testing hadn't gone so well last week, but the students were doing a good job.

I've been thinking a lot about ABC for Bentley and Kenny. I have some theories about Bentley, but I don't work with him a lot, so it's difficult to get a read on him. I think that he basically avoids doing work, but why does he work sometimes and not others is the big question. Yesterday there was something on his schedule that he didn't like so he was trying to cross it out. His noncompliance just increased from there. I didn't work with him today, but did see him in 201, and he was being noncompliant again for the spec. ed. assistant and my mentor--not doing his work. When he's noncompliant, he receives a lot of attention--negative, but it's still attention. My theory is that the attention may be stimulating for him--he enjoys the negative attention. In the end, he always gets out of doing the work, no matter how many strategies and how much talk the teachers

use. He has to do the work later, but he has the power at the time. I've been wondering if his behavior plan could be structured more positively--that is to reward him for every act of compliance. Instead of taking away recess, he could earn minutes of recess. I know that when I worked with the autistic child in home therapy, we used frequent positive reinforcement with him and then faded it over time. The more the child struggled with something, the more frequent positive reinforcement we used. We also avoided lots of reaction to negative behavior. Using consequences really would not have worked with him. That's why I'm wondering about a more positive behavior plan for Bentley, but he's a tough cookie to read, and I don't know him as well as the other teachers do.

Kenny is a different story. For him, he is generally trying to avoid/escape unpleasant circumstances, which are mostly created in his own mind and based on his anxieties. He is on medication, but I don't think he always gets his meds. At conferences, his mom mentioned that his doctor was going to add a med in the afternoons, but I don't think that has happened yet. It seems that the communication between school and home hasn't been successful in the past couple of weeks.

November 8, 2011

You do have a good understanding of Bentley and Kenny. Children are often a puzzle to solve. Sometimes solving the issues takes a lot of time and patience. Sometimes, the issues are never solved and the children will continue with the behaviors throughout their lives. The goal is to try, even though success is not achieved. Being faithful in trying is the key.

With the finalization of the WKCE tests, maybe the children will settle down a little. However, now the holiday season is fast approaching and you know that will really get the children excited again. From the frying pan into the fire, so to speak. Children with behavior problems find the holidays particularly difficult.

Meds can really be an issue. I just know when I teach the SPED course, next semester, the people coming back from student teaching have story after story about children who have not taken their meds. Usually, the stories are accompanied by a rather horrified look on their faces. For children who are good responders to meds, I liken it to insulin. Children who are diabetic need the insulin. If the children need the meds to maximize their education, they need the meds. Medication does not replace teaching skills; however, the meds can enhance the skill building.

Do you have any questions concerning your internship? I know we talked a bit last week and I hope we covered all the bases. Just let me know if I can help you in any way. The goal is for you to be successful.

November 9, 2011

I don't have any questions at this time. I'll let you know if I think of something later.

I spent the morning in third grade. I helped Darin get organized and work on his handwriting page (y). He really has trouble with writing y's. I checked in with George-- he said he had completed his handwriting page, but later looked in his book and found out that he had lied. This has been an issue with George lately.

During math, The spec. ed. assistant worked with Susan in the back room, so I bounced back and forth between George, Darin, and Kenny. Kenny was able to do the task pretty much on his own--forming groups of counters (division). George could do the work, but needed some reminders to stay on task. Darin really needed me to sit with him most of the time to keep him on task. He works so slowly and gets distracted that it takes him a long time. To speed things up, I would count out the number of counters he needed, and then he would divide them into groups per the teacher's directions. But even with that, he needed constant prompting to continue with the task. Halfway through the math lesson, Kenny began a meltdown. He refused to do the next problem, purposely dropped counters on the floor and wanted me to pick them up, scribbled on his paper, etc. He was doing so well, so I don't know what set it off. Perhaps it was that the lesson was getting long for him. After the lesson, Darin was supposed to work in a group with 2 other boys, but he took so long to get all of his materials, that they had already finished 3 problems before he was ready to start. Another problem is that Darin's group was sent out in the hall to work. The circumstances were not ideal because I needed to keep an eye on Susan while The spec. ed. assistant was working to calm down Kenny. After Darin and I finished one problem, I asked him to move back into the room with me. It was interesting that he readily agreed and even said, "Yeah, because I work better in the room. It's too distracting." We went to a back table and worked together to finish two more problems--very slow going as he needed to manipulate counters to solve the problems.

The spec. ed. assistant and I worked with the kids for a reading lesson--reading a short nonfiction book and talking about details. The kids were having a hard time focusing already, and on top of that, the fire alarm went off. It was raining outside, so that was so fun. Susan decided to misbehave outside. Kenny was upset because he was cold. When we got back in, the principal announced that the fire alarm might go off again because they were having trouble with it. Then Kenny was upset and said if the alarm went off he would just leave because he didn't like the noise. Darin was really disturbed about the possibility of the alarm going off again; he kept saying he was tired and had a hard time focusing back on the reading story. Thankfully, the alarm did not go off again. We got through the reading lesson, and I think the kids got the idea of some of the details about whales from the story.

November 9, 2001

Wow - could anything else have happened this morning??? You had quite a day!!

I know when the children get out of the routine, good things usually do not happen. I can only imagine how the children were feeling having to go outside in the rain (and probably cold, according to Kenny). Routine and structure are like "Linus's blanket" to your children. Get them out of the routine --- and -- look out. Although the children may balk

at routine and structure, they need it to thrive. I am sure you handled the situation with calm determination.

Keep working with the children in spite of the behaviors. As I indicated a number of times before, you are making progress, you are making a difference in the lives of the children; you are doing well and will be sorely missed when you go. Celebrate the little things with gusto!

November 10, 2011

The excitement today was the periodic snowflakes falling. We didn't get a blizzard like up by my mentor's house. Actually the snowflakes falling were helpful with Kenny this morning. He started out well in math again today, but then began to have a meltdown. The work is not too hard for him, but the spec. ed. assistant and I are thinking that he starts to feel overwhelmed after 10-15 minutes in math class. I was proud of Kenny today because when he started having trouble, he asked if he could work somewhere else. It was great to see him taking the initiative to help himself. We went in the back room, and I talked with him about his calming strategies. He noticed the snow falling, and we chatted about that for a bit. He said he was ready to work on math, so I gathered up his materials and brought them to the back room. We worked through the last problem together. I had to leave Darin unattended during that time, but so be it. Darin wandered to the back room a couple of times because he wasn't sure what to do. I asked him to go back and sit down, and told him I would help him when Kenny was done with his problem. Darin's appearing didn't help Kenny stay calm, but we managed to finish the problem. Then Kenny was ready to go back to class, and he worked with a friend on the math activity. That left me free to help Darin individually.

The spec. ed. assistant started reading a chapter 1 of a book called *What To Do When You Worry Too Much* to Kenny (Huebner, 2005). This is a book that I shared with my mentor. It had been used with the autistic child I worked with in home therapy, and I thought it would fit Kenny very well. The plan is to devote 15 minutes right away in the morning when Kenny is calm, twice a week, to reading a chapter from the book and doing the "worry" activities in the chapter. For example, in chapter 1, there is a page where the child can write words or draw pictures of things he worries about. The spec. ed. assistant said that Kenny talked about the worry of being late to school, but that he didn't talk about worries he had at school. I suggested that we could add other "worries" to the page as Kenny expresses them during the school day. We will focus on one chapter a week and refer back to chapters as needed. Also, during this time, the spec. ed. assistant will practice Kenny's calming strategies with him, so that, hopefully, he is able to use them when he is anxious. I think that I did see some improvement in that area from Kenny today during math!

November 10, 2011

After yesterday, I am really happy you had a great day. The snow may have been just what was needed today. Send some moisture this way. New Ulm and the surrounding area has had very little moisture since mid-July. The fire hazard here is very high.

The book, *What To Do When You Worry To Much*, sounds like a very good approach for Kenny. He should relate to the topics in the book and may find it therapeutic. Follow through should prove to be very helpful because the child takes ownership of his or her problem. The book gives the children an opportunity to express themselves and can see their own writing is involved. The strategy is similar to having children come to the board to write and answer or present an idea. If the children see the work on the board, it is theirs - they made a contribution -- they own what was written. I think you will be successful with this strategy. Having the spec. ed. assistant use the book with the other strategies should prove successful.

If children are at the frustration level academically, some will fall apart. The mountain is simply too high. The goal would be to teach in the children's zones of proximal development, like Vygotsky postulated. The trick is to find the ZPD and teach to the upper limits of the zone by providing scaffolds to help the children succeed. Continual assessment gives the teacher the clues to determine the ZPD. Whew! Lots to consider for each child, individually. In a class of 18 children, just think of all the ZPD's the teacher needs to determine and then teach in the zones. Lots of work, but not impossible. In a larger class, a number of children who are developmentally at the right stage and age will have similar zones so the teacher can have larger group instruction. No wonder teachers are exhausted at the end of the day!

November 11, 2011

The third grade class has 25 students in it--a new student just started on Thursday. In addition, when the two third grade teachers divide the kids up for math, one teacher sometimes has over 30 at once.

Kenny was absent today, so it was one less to work with today. I administered the spelling test to Darin. He wrote his words on the white board today, underneath the appropriate heading (vowel combination). He worked quickly on the task today; I think he liked writing them on the whiteboard instead of paper for a change. The spec. ed. assistant and I administered the weekly reading assessment to Susan and Darin. The kids in the general classroom do all of the reading themselves, but we had Susan and Darin take turns reading different parts/questions and assisted them with words as necessary. I would like to see this scaffolded so that eventually they can read the stories/questions more themselves because that is what they have to do for MAP testing and WKCE testing.

I spent 45 minutes today with the 4th grade as they worked on laptops and did Compass Learning or keyboarding. Bentley wasn't present; I think he had speech for at least part of the time. The classroom teacher was glad to have another person in the room to help kids get logged on, but that went pretty smoothly today.

Susan has been "naughty" more in the last week or so. She will skip in line, spit on kids, disobey instructions, throw tantrums. Sometimes her behavior upsets the other kids. The classroom teacher was wondering if she should speak to the class, without Susan present, about the fact that Susan doesn't always understand "Abe's way," and that the kids can

give her gentle reminders. I suggested that the teacher use modeling to show the right way to give Susan a reminder and the wrong way. The spec. ed. assistant suggested being cautious about saying too much about Susan's abilities or lack thereof.

November 11, 2011

Funny how one student changes the day, or the climate in the classroom. With Kenny gone, the day is qualitatively different from the days he is present. Sometimes, the atmosphere in the classroom is just different, often more positive. Teachers certainly want the children to be in school so they can learn, but sometimes the environment is much calmer with the child gone for the day.

You really had a good variety of experiences today. I do not know how you just go from one activity, class, or situation to another fluidly. The art of teaching is making those changes and transitions smooth without having chaos in the classroom. The amount of instruction time lost in the transitions or management of children is staggering, often measured in days if the literature is correct. Teachers need to be aware of the "time vacuum cleaner" called transitions.

What is up with Susan? Something in her young life is really causing conflict in her neurology. She is not processing well and the ramification is deviant behavior. Structures need to be in place until she can handle ABE'S way as a classroom management approach. So sad to hear she is struggling with her behavior:(

I hope you have a wonderful weekend. Please send some of you wet and cold weather this way. Still no snow and none in the forecast. On another note, I sent your thumb drive in the mail. With 11/11/11, you may not get your thumb drive until next week.

November 14, 2011

I received the thumb drive today. Thank you! We just had flurries here in Milwaukee, but when we drove west to Wisconsin Dells this past weekend, we saw 4-5 inches on the ground. Unfortunately, it didn't blow your way.

The spec. ed. assistant is concerned that Susan hasn't been getting all of the attention and routine that she is accustomed to. On Wednesdays and Thursdays in the past weeks, the spec. ed. assistant has to go to 2nd grade, and I work with Darin and Kenny during math. For at least 30 minutes, Susan has some fairly unsupervised time. The spec. ed. assistant provides a few things for her to do during that time, but the unstructured time is not the routine Susan is used to. The spec. ed. assistant has had to go to 2nd grade because the spec. ed. assistant, who is normally in 2nd grade, has had to work with a 2nd grader in 201 who has not been able to function behaviorally in the classroom for some time. In addition, with the testing, Susan had larger blocks of unstructured time while the other kids were taking the WKCE test. On the other hand, I'm not sure what is going to happen when I leave at Christmas. The spec. ed. assistant will not be able to do Susan's math and help Darin and Kenny at the Same time.

I worked with Bentley for a while today. He was in a good mood and pretty compliant today. He can only sit for so long during the lesson before he needs a break. In his IEP, the goal is for him to sit and listen for at least ten minutes. During his mini-break, he did an overall thorough job of wiping of his desk with a wet towel...his chair...his desk again. However, he did get back on track to work on his math workbook page. When I asked him where he wanted to work on it, he chose 201. I found that interesting because he's never chosen that with me before and he usually likes to be with his class. He tends to work better in 201, so I'm glad he chose that. Something I've noticed for a number of weeks is that Bentley usually has a good day on Mondays, but then as the week progresses, the days are harder for him. I'm curious what tomorrow will be like.

The spec. ed. assistant has been keeping a journal regarding Kenny's meltdowns, but she requested a tracking sheet from my mentor in order to write quick notes about his behavior, including the antecedent, behavior, and calming strategies used--not quite an ABC chart, but similar. It will be easier to see patterns with a quick glance rather than reading all the notes. I think the spec. ed. assistant will continue to keep the notes, but fill out the tracking sheet as well.

November 15, 2011

I am happy the thumb drive arrived safe and sound. You can keep the drive for future reference.

I know you have become part of the team working with your cadre of students. I imagine you would need to pull back some and gradually transition out of the classroom after Thanksgiving. For children with the needs you see, having you has been a big benefit.

The idea of developing a tracking sheet for Kenny's behaviors is a good idea. Keeping track gives your team a written record. Decisions can be made based on the data collected. You should also see what settings and tasks are particularly difficult for Kenny. Additionally, I know some teachers wear a wrist band to keep track of behaviors. (I tried to find a source for the wristbands but was unsuccessful - maybe a teacher store would have a frequency count wristband.). Keep trying new ideas or re-using old ideas to help the children be successful.

Hope your week goes well.

November 15, 2011

The idea of the frequency count wristband sounds intriguing. I could see myself using that in other settings with other students.

Would you like me to videotape a second lesson before the end of the internship?

I worked with Susan to finish a measurement worksheet. She had to measure the different lines on her paper and write the correct number of centimeters. She needed some assistance to line up the ruler. She wasn't completely focused on the task. I would ask her, "How long is it?," and she wouldn't always respond. I changed my question to,



“What does the number say?” Then I got more of a response. I don’t know if the question made a difference or if she was just unfocused on the task. I also worked with Darin to complete a reading workbook page. The page was at the level of the general classroom, so I read the vocabulary words and the questions out loud. He was able to tell me which word belonged in the blank to finish the sentence. I had him write some of the answers--at first, he wanted me to write them, but I told him that I had to help Susan, too, so he could write some of the words. It just takes him a long time to write a word.

Then I moved to 4th grade to work with Bentley. Bentley did not last real long during the actual lesson today. Instead of writing what he should have on the slate, he was writing other things. Then he got marker on his hand, and he couldn’t focus until he washed it off. He went to the bathroom, and my mentor had to retrieve him. He didn’t want to return to the classroom and do his work. Eventually my mentor got him to 201. Then I was able to work with him, and he completed quite a bit of math work very well today. Bentley needed to look at figures and write a decimal and vice versa. He enjoyed using actual Base 10 blocks, and they seemed to help his understanding. Sometimes I wrote his answers for him; other times I asked him to write them. On his break, he enjoyed putting a little stuffed bunny and a small plastic dog on top of a small car and rolling them back and forth with me. He enjoyed the sound effects I made when the dog fell off and wanted me to do them again and again.

Since 3rd grade was gone to the Lutheran Home, I stayed behind and got extra time observing Bentley. He didn’t want to go to Social Studies and resisted going, but did make a good choice to go. The students were to look up 11 vocabulary words and write definitions. The spec. ed. assistant had Bentley look up the words in the glossary and read the definitions to her while she wrote out the definitions for him. I also observed Braedon working on this task. He seemed really confused about what to write. He had written one term, but wrote a definition for one of the other words on the list. Even with explanation, I’m not sure he understood that he was copying definitions for the words. By looking at his eyes and body language, it seemed to me that the concept wasn’t sinking in. This was the first time the class had done this task in 4th grade, though the classroom teacher said they had certainly done it before in previous grades.

November 15, 2011

I see you worked with Braedon today. I suppose I could look back in this document, but did you work with him in the past? I wonder why he was confused with his assignment seeing he had this type of activity in the past. Sometimes children forget or get a neurological connection blocked and cannot do a task previously mastered. At other times, children are hard to understand because no logical explanation is available.

You really did connect with Bentley - yea!!! The Base ten blocks were the ticket today. You also had fun working with him with the car and the dog. Good relationships come with fun. I would hope your working with him today produces good results tomorrow. Hard to tell day to day what a child will do.

I think we can by-pass your second lesson taping. Unless you want to try another time, it may be best to not upset the children and video a second lesson. I am pretty content with your first lesson and with all the rigmarole for the first one, let's leave well enough alone. I will leave this matter up to you.

Susan seems to be backsliding with her work and understanding. I am glad you found an alternate way of asking questions so she was successful. Keep me posted on her progress. I find it fascinating that Susan appears to be regressing. When I saw her on the video, she seemed to be pretty much on task (with the exception of the pencil) and worked quite well.

Hope tomorrow goes well. Thanksgiving is looming. Do the children have off on Wednesday of next week or just Thursday and Friday?

November 16, 2011

Braedon is diagnosed with ADHD. He's in 4th grade, but receives little support. I'm a bit fuzzy about how much support Braedon should be getting. Earlier in the year, there was concern that we were helping him too much. On many days, he really could benefit from someone sitting right next to him and working through the math concepts with him. He needs help focusing, and he needs reteaching or more explanation to do his math. If he were a student of mine in my own classroom, I would naturally do more to help him. However, his support seems to take the form of reminders to stay on task and some further explanation of concepts. He doesn't get a lot of attention because Bentley is in the same room. As with writing the definitions, I don't think he was able to focus enough to hear and understand what the task was all about.

I would happily bypass the second lesson taping. I'm sure my mentor will appreciate that as well.

Susan is inconsistent with her attention. My mentor is now going to work with her two mornings a week so she is not left to her own devices for extended periods of time. There were a couple of times today when she didn't follow the directions I gave her. Most of the time, she does what you ask her to do. The spec. ed. assistant was happy that Susan made improvement in understanding more/less. The spec. ed. assistant has been working on that concept with her for a long time without success. The spec. ed. assistant explained that my mentor worked with Susan on the concept and used sticks in two cans to help Susan understand the concept. That seemed to work better than pictures on paper.

The spec. ed. assistant said that Kenny had his worst meltdown of the year yesterday afternoon. She doesn't know what set it off. The students had a very busy day with special activities. It may be that he was overstimulated. It appears that Kenny was worried because the principal was in the room, but when Kenny is worried about someone seeing his behavior, that is usually the secondary problem.

Kenny was having a tough morning today, too. I could tell right away when he came to school that he was agitated. He became very upset when the little note from a friend that

had been taped to his desk was missing. He was upset and thinking that it had been stolen. I let Kenny and his friend out into the hall, hoping that his friend could assure him that she would make another note for him. When that wasn't enough to calm Kenny, the classroom teacher and I asked her to make another note for him right then and there. That helped a little bit, but he was still kicking, crying, shaking, etc. The speech teacher came down the hall and stepped in to help. She's been working with Kenny on some social therapy and talked about strategies with Kenny. He calmed some, but not enough to join the class. The spec. ed. assistant returned from another room and took him to the back room where he worked on the iPad. The iPad seems to be the ultimate thing to help him when he is really upset. It seems that his brain gets stuck on his worry, and he can't get his brain to turn it off. The iPad gets him to focus on something else so his brain can move away from the worry.

November 16, 2011

Thanks for the update on Braedon. I was curious why Braedon was getting some help from you and others. I will be looking forward to you working with him again. I believe with so many children having needs, Braedon may be less needy than the others.

What is happening with Kenny? Big behaviors are indicative of some really big inside. I hope he can learn that teachers are out to help him, and teachers are not his enemy. By this age, he should have the concept in his head, now he needs to demonstrate in his actions. I am sure you are happy the iPad seems to be the current strategy working with Kenny. When the iPad no longer works, then it is time to try an old strategy or come up with something that will work. This dance between what and what does not work will go on all year.

With Susan, she also needs a variety of interventions. Many of the interventions are really common sense, but the teacher needs to think of something that works. I am sure you have added to your repertoire by observing others and trying techniques you have mastered already. All I can say, you surely had a variety of experiences with a mind-numbing number to techniques, strategies, and ideas. I hope you have a list of interventions you can use with future children in your care.

Concerning the taping of another lesson, I think all of us will be happy not doing the video. I also think not videoing is in the best interest of the children. I am very happy with the video you did, so leave things well enough alone.

November 17, 2011

It seems that Kenny had a great afternoon yesterday. Later in the day, Kenny told the spec. ed. assistant that he had been worried about the special activity scheduled for the day. The activity involved arts/drama appreciation with numerous classes in the gym all at once. I think the kids were doing lots of moving around and acting out things as part of the activity. The spec. ed. assistant and I are guessing that his anxiety about that activity that took place on both Tuesday and Wednesday caused him to have a harder time. I am seeing progress in this area--Kenny is now sometimes able to express his worries, though usually at a later time when he's not so stress. Hopefully, in the future,

he can express his worries earlier so that his teachers can avert the meltdowns. I'm glad that I was able to share the "worry" book with the team and hope that it is helping Kenny.

Kenny had a great morning today. He's very excited about his birthday party. He did more talking to me and Susan today than normal. He was excited to invite Susan to his party and to talk to her about seeing her at the grocery store. He also had lots to say as we read our nonfiction story about inventions. I was very surprised that when the substitute teacher asked him to move his desk next to Darin's during math that he did it without a second thought. On most days, that probably wouldn't have worked well.

Susan was acting stubborn when we started working on her math today. She was refusing to follow directions. When I reminded her that she needed to do her work so she could use the computer, that set her into motion. It also helped that I wrote out a mini-schedule for her on the whiteboard. As she completed each task, she crossed out the task on the board. She was working on basic addition facts and used a number of strategies to solve problems, including memorized facts, touch points, and the hundreds chart.

Next week will be a short week as they only have school on Monday and Tuesday. I will still go to St. Lucas on Wednesday afternoon, but I'm looking forward to Wednesday morning off.

November 17, 2011

You have a good report today. I am happy for Kenny, Susan, and yourself. The different strategies that work on any given day are to be treasured. Kenny really does not like change in his routine or structure. His brain does not operate well without the sameness which may seem really boring to the neurotypical child. On the other hand, Susan simply wants her own way - period. The self-monitoring strategy (mini-calendar) is a great idea because Susan wants it her way and she thinks she is in control - which she is not, she just thinks so. By the way, self-monitoring strategies have really received some good press in current literature.

Have a good day tomorrow.

November 18, 2011

Before school, I sat in a collaboration meeting with the spec. ed. team and the second grade teacher. It was interesting to learn more about the strengths and challenges of the two second graders who receive services. One boy is on a waiting list to attend day treatment. At school, he has been working with the spec. ed. assistant outside of the classroom for the most part. He is unable to function in the classroom much at this point. A major concern lately is his tendency to wander off and go places he shouldn't. The idea of a weighted backpack came up, but it wasn't discussed as the way to go at this time. The group talked about making a list of places that he's not allowed to go, or putting it into a social story for him. They also talked about having him go down to lunch early so that he's first or second in line to avoid problems with him standing in line. For the other boy, there has been a positive, noticeable difference since the first boy has not been in the classroom.

The math activity in 3rd grade was a complex, critical thinking activity in which the students were to explore using counters to find the number that met the different criteria. I was concerned as the teacher explained the activity because I know such a task is difficult for neurotypical students. Kenny became agitated during math even though I was giving him lots of support and telling him exactly what to do. I asked the classroom teacher if he could work on something else because the activity was beyond him at that point. Kenny did do a few problems on another page but was still agitated. With some encouragement, I got him to move to the back room. We used some of his calming strategies, and I read part of a book to him. When I worked with the autistic therapy, I found that if I just started reading a book, that eventually that would help the child calm down. It seemed to help Kenny today as well. His meltdown was minor compared to some he's had lately. On a side note, the classroom teacher did end up doing much of the activity on the smartboard and talked through the activity as many students didn't have the skills to do the activity on their own.

My mentor told me a little bit about her autism talk that she had in 4th grade yesterday. She talked about social stories and showed the class some of the social stories that she has used with Bentley in the past. She asked the class if there was something they thought Bentley needed to work on, and the one girl suggested that Bentley could be quieter in the classroom. My mentor had the students create social stories about that topic for Bentley. My mentor is planning to take their social stories and choose pieces of them to compile together into a story for Bentley. Bentley is in the room and does participate in the autism talks

November 18, 2011

Collaboration is very helpful for the teachers as well as the student. When everyone gets together and brainstorms ideas, the child is the one who benefits. I am really happy you were to attend one of the collaboration meetings.

So sad to hear that one of the children cannot function in the classroom. Alternate schools or placements are a necessity for some children who cannot handle regular school. Thankfully, schools(placements) exist where children can learn in spite of their inability to function in the regular or special education classrooms.

Your reading strategy with Kenny proved successful. If you have tried something and it worked, try it again!!! The same holds true about your mentor's talk to the class. She empowered the class to be involved in helping Bentley with his big behaviors. Children know when something is wrong or going on in the classroom. I think the children should know what is happening and the teacher should be forthright and frank. I know the children in the class want to have a quiet learning environment and will help Bentley with his issues if given a chance. Social stories provide the opportunity for all the children to get involved.

Hope you have a great weekend. A short week looms in the offing.

November 21, 2011

Braedon really does not focus well during math lessons in 4th grade. He is often not looking at the teacher or smartboard. I reminded him a few times to track the board/teacher, but unless someone is sitting right next to him, he has great difficulty. Because of the concern of helping Braedon too much earlier in the school year, I'm unsure about how much I should help him. I think he would benefit better from individual or small-group math instruction.

Darin was unfocused today. He needed quite a few reminders all morning long about staying on task. Susan was being a bit stubborn and not wanting to complete her reading papers. She will act like she doesn't hear you and stares into space. I wasn't sure if she was just unfocused or if it was intentional, but the spec. ed. assistant confirmed that Susan does it intentionally. It's a delicate balancing act to avoid Susan choosing to tantrum and "sweet-talking" her into completing her work. The spec. ed. assistant suggested reminding her that she can choose a sticker for her paper when she's finished.

I worked with Darin and Susan both during writing time. They were both working to add more sentences to stories. Susan needed me to give her most of the ideas to write. I asked her simple factual questions, like "What color is Tinker Bell (dog)?" Then I would say, "Okay, then you could write 'Tinker Bell is black.'" She needs some help with spelling but writes the words herself. Darin needs some prompting for ideas as well, but is able to think of more ideas on his own. For both Susan and Darin, after they have a sentence in mind, we draw lines for each word in their sentences, and then they write a word on each line.

November 22, 2011

The MUTT (Mobile Urgent Treatment Team) has been at Lincoln two times--last Friday and yesterday--to help with a boy in 5th grade. He is the child who ran away from school earlier this year, and who recently threatened violence to teachers during one of his episodes. My mentor has stated that this student is the most difficult case she has had in her years as a special education teacher. She will be consulting with people from Student Services regarding an isolation area for him when he gets out of control.

During math, Kenny became agitated again. I usually go back and forth between him and Darin, helping both of them as needed. Again today when I moved towards Kenny, he said, "What took you so long?" He indicated that he wanted help, but then when I tried to help him, he refused to try. He scribbled on his paper and said, "I can't do it." He also refused to move to the back room to work. The spec. ed. assistant took him to the back room, but she insisted that he do his math work. We both feel that Kenny is using his behaviors to get out of doing work at times.

During reading, Kenny excitedly talked about his upcoming birthday. He worked well with me and Susan in the back room on his reading work. When Darin joined the group, Kenny's behavior changed. He began rudely insisting that I read the sentences on his paper instead of reading them himself. When the kids were done working, the spec. ed. assistant kept Kenny in the back room and talked to him about his rude behavior (during

reading and math). Kenny became very agitated during this time as we talked to him, though I think some of the behavior is his way of avoiding the discussion. He did apologize to me for being rude. My mentor came in during the tail end of the short discussion and spoke to him also about being polite to all of his teachers and needing to do his work.

The spec. ed. assistant is hoping that when Kenny's birthday has passed, he will settle back down. Apparently, last year before his birthday, he had a really difficult time as well.

November 22, 2011

From what I read, you had an interesting two days. Now you have a little time to relax over Thanksgiving, although you plan on being at St. Lucas tomorrow.

I have never heard of the Mobile Urgent Treatment Team. The intervention team appears to be quite involved with a number of personnel who are specifically trained in crisis intervention. How this team operates would be quite enlightening.

I have been meaning to ask if Wauwatosa has an alternative school for children who are deeply involved in abnormal behaviors. Here in southern Minnesota, school districts usual band together to pay for an alternative school for children who are too violent or cannot be successful in a classroom (SPED or otherwise). The 5th grade boy may benefit from an alternative school if the school district has such a school.

I find the fact that Kenny acted similarly a year ago near his birthday quite interesting. He may have some negative happenings in or on his birthday which gives him mixed signals. He is happy to have his birthday, yet he is agitated because something unset him in his prior experiences. Just a guess on my part.

I marvel at the fact that you have experienced so much at Lincoln. How you and the other teachers and paras keep it all together is amazing. In spite of all the issues, learning is taking place and the children are making progress. I give special kudos to your mentor for her orchestrating the learning environment for the children. SPED teachers are masters at knowing the children and how they are best served.

Have a happy and blessed Thanksgiving. Let me know if I can be of help in any way.

November 28, 2011

I hope you had a great Thanksgiving with your family. It's hard to believe that it's only a month until Christmas. I participate in the Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee, and we had our big concerts yesterday, which both went well.

The isolation space for the 5th grade boy is in place; unfortunately, he was spending time there already when I left this morning. The boy needs extra personnel to help with his issues, but the isolation space has cut it down from 3-4 people helping him, to 2 people. It is kind of a makeshift space in the walk-through closet area in room 201. A partition is

set up on one end, but it has to be tied down to keep it from moving around. My mentor says that there are partitions that can be screwed into the wall, and she'll probably have to get one of those. The spec. ed. assistant stands on the other side of the partition, and my mentor stands at the door.

Things went well in the 3rd grade room this morning. Kenny seemed much calmer today. He shared a birthday treat with the class. His teacher chose him as the class president for the week, so he began the Pledge of Allegiance for the class this morning. Other duties include passing out or collecting papers, or directing the rows of students to line up. It'll be interesting to see if his role of class president influences his behavior, or even if he will be able to rise to the responsibility each day.

In 4th grade, Bentley was noncompliant and refused to participate in math or do his math work. The spec. ed. assistant ended up taking him down to 201. Meanwhile, I observed Braedon during math class. At first, I was impressed with how well he was attending, but halfway through the lesson, he wasn't tracking the board or teacher anymore, even with reminders. I checked on him after he had done one section in his math workbook, and he had the problems all incorrect. He clearly does not understand the concept of place value. I'm still unsure how much I am allowed to help him. I would prefer to have him sit right next to me during the lesson so that I could prompt and re-teach him the whole time. If he were a student in my own classroom, I would find ways for Braedon to have more help. The math instruction in 4th grade seems more geared to the mid- and upper-level math students in the room. However, I'm only in there 2 hours a week, so I don't know what other help the students receive.

November 28, 2011

I am happy you had a great concert. I also hope you had a very restful Thanksgiving and break. I can hardly believe it is one month until Christmas. We have two weeks of school and then finals. The first semester is fast drawing to a close.

I am intrigued about the isolation space for the 5th grader. I will be interested in how this area will function for the child. I know in the isolation rooms for the alternate school here in New Ulm, the room is very quiet with subdued lighting and minimal distractions. The children here in New Ulm are taken to the isolation room with a para so they can cool down, get themselves calmed down, and return when they are compliant.

I do not remember if I mentioned a sensory area or room for children. I have never actually seen one in person, but I have attended a number of sessions at conferences explaining the rationale for such an area for children who have a hard time behaving. These areas have soft chairs, textures on the walls, subdued lighting, lava lamps (they will probably be the fad soon), and often butterflies. The children may take a self-time out if they need to go to the room or may be sent to the sensory area by the teacher. Abilitations is the name of the company on the forefront of sensory areas. I have a catalogue and for a mere seven thousand dollars, the classroom can have a sensory area!!!! I really think this is the up and coming thing so stay tuned. Along with sensory areas or rooms, leaded vests, and other sensory items are being suggested to help



children, especially those who are sensory defensive. The *Out of Sinc Child* is a pretty good book to read on sensory integration dysfunction. I know many children with developmental delays (Autism and IDD) seem to be helped by sensory areas or rooms.

So happy to hear that Kenny had a very good morning. Maybe the distraction of his birthday and him being the president of the class will help him feel good about himself and he has a good week. I hope the extra attention will not go to his head, so to speak. Whatever helps the child is a good mantra to follow. Concerning Braedon, he needs to have material he can handle in his ZPD. He must be really frustrated not understanding the content in Math. Do your best for him within the limits of your responsibility.

Have a wonderful week. Greet your mentor for me and wish her a belated Happy Thanksgiving. I look forward to your comments tomorrow.

November 29, 2011

At this point, the isolation space (chill room) is a makeshift space in part of my mentor's walk-through closet. There are some mats on the floor and maybe a blanket, but it's not a real cozy space right now.

As I was leaving this morning, my mentor was talking on the phone to the 5th grade boy's mother and saying that the chill room was good for Conrad because he doesn't like it, and it takes away control of the situation from him. Ideally, the chill space would be a place where students willingly go to calm down, but right now the students who've been in the space haven't chosen to go there willingly. It was quite a circus in 201 today as 3 different students needed chill time in the space. My mentor and the other staff members were constantly putting out different fires.

I was able to work with Bentley quite a bit in math this morning. His morning did not start out well, and he needed some chill time, but then he worked very hard and finished lots of math with me, despite all the chaos going on in close proximity to him. We did work out in the hallway, but there was still lots of chaos going on.

Apparently, Kenny had a very rough afternoon yesterday. The spec. ed. assistant said that he did quite a bit of talking with her though, telling her what was upsetting him, so that's a good thing. He was upset about another child's mean comments to him at recess, and he just wasn't able to handle those bad feelings. He also expressed feeling bad about his being upset and out of control on his birthday. The spec. ed. assistant said that she tried to reassure him that the back room was a safe place for him to go, and it was okay if he needed to go there when he was upset.

Susan was tantruming today and not following directions. She acts like a very young child, saying "no," throwing things, kicking, etc. The spec. ed. assistant was thinking that Susan could use a social story to help her learn what is appropriate for her to do when she is mad. She throws the fits for attention, so usually the spec. ed. assistant takes her to the back room and just lets her get it out, without giving her the attention she's looking for. When Susan is supposed to do certain work on the computer or iPad, she'll

just start clicking or suddenly close out. We've talked about the necessity of having the sound on so we can hear what she is supposed to be doing, but that is not usually feasible. We need earphones that give the capability of the student using one, and the teacher using the other. Maybe setting a timer for Susan would help, too--she's not allowed to close out until the timer goes off.

I am may have read *The Out-of-Sync Child* for another class, but I'm not sure. It sounds familiar. I will have to check it out.

November 29, 2011

You really had a varied experience this morning. The "chill room" seems to be a popular space, yet a very necessary space for children who are out of control to gain their sense of normalcy. Hopefully, a more permanent space can be provided for the students. I still like the idea of a sensory room for the children. When I was teaching, I had a recliner in the classroom. Children could go to the easy chair if they were getting out of control. However, the easy chair was accessible for all the children when it was not used as a self time-out space. By having all the children accessing the chair, it was not a punishment per se.

I really like the way you have been evaluating the various techniques and strategies utilized to help the children at Lincoln. You also have been adding bits and pieces of strategies you use already or will incorporate in your future teaching. I can see the wheels turning in your head as you reflect on the little things that help the children in their learning. Keep up this reflective attitude because the information can be included in your final reflection on your experience. If you have in mind what you will write already, the reflection will be a snap. I think you should be looking at the big picture of you final reflection. You may want to run some ideas by your mentor about your final reflection to get her direct input

Susan continues to be an enigma. Something is not going right in her own mind. I also wonder if some pre-puberty is affecting her ability to comply. Just a thought. I like the idea of social stories to help children internalize the proper response to the environment and learning. She looks like a year-long project and will continue to struggle with her compliance and academic issues. I feel really sad for Susan. I feel really bad because I have a very good idea of her outcome in her life-span and the picture is pretty grim.

*The Out of Sinc Child* is a really good book. I sure learned a lot and handled children differently after I read the book. I also suggested the book to a number of parents here in New Ulm and they implemented some of the concepts and strategies found in the book for their own children. If you can access the book, I think it is a good resource to re-read or peruse.

November 30, 2011

I, too, wonder about Susan in the future. She struggles to communicate and is unable to answer questions unless they are very low-level or yes/no types questions. It seems that

she is unable to comprehend many questions, but she also has a difficult time formulating her thoughts and expressing them. Her communication reminds me of a 3-year old.

I like your idea of the easy chair being accessible to all students so that it doesn't just have a negative connotation. Did you ever find that students lost control on purpose so that they could sit in the easy chair?

I worked with Darin quite a bit today in spelling and math. In 3rd grade, the students are beginning to work with multiplication facts. Darin knows how to use the multiplication chart to help him with his facts, but because of his vision (spatial?) issues, when he moves his fingers across and down the rows, he is unable to keep his fingers moving in straight lines. My mentor had given me some wiki sticks earlier this year that I could use with students. I pulled those out and modeled for Darin how he could lay them on the horizontal and vertical rows and look for where the wiki sticks meet for the product. Later, the spec. ed. assistant told me that she sometimes cut an L-shaped piece of paper for students to use. The wiki sticks might work better for Darin because he can stick them inside the front cover of his book, and he won't lose them somewhere in his desk as he would a little piece of paper.

December 1, 2011

To answer your question, I found the children were really good about the easy chair. It was a privilege to use the chair, so if a student got into trouble, the chair was off limits. I cannot recall a child being non-compliant just to use the easy chair.

Your use of the wiki sticks is a good strategy. Using this tool helps the children to visualize as well as manipulate them with the hands. I like the idea of the L-shaped paper because again, it helps the child see in a concrete way what is going on with the math problem. I assume the child manipulates the L-shaped paper, thus the math becomes tactile, just like the Wiki sticks. On another note, this child may be a candidate for vision therapy if his eyes jump around the paper. You have probably heard of Dr. Kelley Kneuppel, an optometrist, from Brookfield who is an expert in vision therapy <http://www.thevisiontherapycenter.com/>. Vision therapy can help with reading as well as writing and math. Just a thought.

We received a little snow over night so it is beginning to look a lot like Christmas. Wow! Just a couple of weeks until Christmas as well as a couple of weeks when you end your internship. Hard to believe time goes so quickly. Hope your day goes well.

December 1, 2011

It's hard for me to believe that today is the first day of December. I guess snow on the ground would make it seem more real. We may get a dusting later today.

The spec. ed. assistant worked with another child in 2nd grade for a good a part of the morning, so I was in 3rd grade myself during that time. Susan went to 201 to work with my mentor, so I just had the boys. Kenny became agitated when it was time for him to do his math work. He was pointing (the secret signal) as if he wanted to move to the

back room, but when I asked him the first couple of times if that's what he wanted, he said "no" and couldn't express what was wrong. That is one of the challenges with Kenny--when something is wrong, he mumbles and doesn't use his words to let us know. When I said, "I think you're giving me the signal," then he did willingly move to the back room. The spec. ed. assistant had discussed the signal again with him right at the beginning of the day, so it was good to see him put it to use. When we got to the back, Kenny was saying, "It's too hard." I assumed he was talking about the math, but wasn't sure because he uses that phrase whenever he's upset. After a few minutes, Kenny was able to tell me the math was hard. We worked together on his math work, and he was able to complete all of it. He showed some agitation and used different vocalizations during the time, but was pretty much in control of his body and able to do the work with encouragement. The work really is not too hard for him, but he thinks it is and then gets agitated. He tends to shut down when things are new or he doesn't know exactly what to do.

Then I taught a reading lesson to Susan, Darin, and Kenny. They did a nice job throughout the lesson and stayed pretty focused. Near the end of our lesson, Susan just got up and walked out. I followed her and saw that she had intended to go to the bathroom. I let her know that she needed to tell me that before leaving.

Another highlight today--Kenny is the class president this week, and as part of his job, he gets to start the Pledge of Allegiance. When I asked him to go to the back of the room for some spelling work, he was very concerned that he would miss the pledge. I got him started on his spelling and then went to let his teacher know that he was concerned about missing it. She came to the back and assured him that they wouldn't do the Pledge without him. Kenny very clearly said "thank you" to me a couple of times. He said that he wanted to tell me to talk to the teacher, but he couldn't tell me that. Good times with Kenny today, as he's learning to trust me and learning that I want to help him. He's also communicating his feelings a bit more.

December 1, 2011

Sounds like you had a good day. Your reading lesson was on your own and it went very well. I hope you have more opportunities to teach small groups of children.

Kenny's conduct today was good. Celebrating the little things make such a big difference. When working with children with disabilities, the small victories become big triumphs!! Good for you and your fellow teachers - I hope you took the time to celebrate today.

I am interested in when you plan on being done at Lincoln. I know you want to work until Christmas break for the children, but do not know the date. I would like to know so I can set up the final conference call and get your internship wrapped up in the neat package by Christmas (pun intended). No hurry on the matter, just information seeking.

December 2, 2011

The last day of class at Lincoln is December 22. I plan to stay at Lincoln until then because it's a more natural break. I'll talk to my mentor about a good day/time for the final conference.

While Kenny had a good day yesterday, he had more trouble today. He became agitated at the end of math class again today and didn't want to do his work. He starts scribbling on his paper and just writes down zeroes for his answers. He was quite capable of doing the work. I was taking turns helping both Kenny and Darin, and Kenny became impatient when I would help Darin for a few minutes instead of him. He did finish the work, but then he wanted me to go hand in his paper. The spec. ed. assistant also experienced some tough times with Kenny this morning when he didn't want to do his reading test. It's always a struggle to know whether Kenny's behavior is mostly the result of his anxiety, or if it is more a behavior issue. Today the spec. ed. assistant felt it was more of a behavior issue and insisted that Kenny needed to do his work, either at the present time or at recess. He wasn't able to go down to the library with his class, though he was there by the time I left about 15 minutes later. At I was leaving, he was standing out in the hall with the spec. ed. assistant, and the spec. ed. assistant was giving him the options of being in the library or going to 201. Apparently, Kenny was still resisting participation in class activities.

I had opportunity to work with Darin and Susan on their reading test. Ideally, they would be able to read the test and questions on their own, but they still need assistance. We take turns reading, and I assist them with words they can't read on their own. Darin did a great job with the comprehension and reading skill questions. With Susan, it is hit and miss--it's difficult to know what she really knows and when she is guessing. The students take a test that is two levels below that of their classmates but still tests some of the same skills that the class works on during the week.

December 3, 2011

I will await your word on the time and date for the final conference. The week of December 19th is meeting week for me so I am sure we can set up a time suitable for all of us to talk.

Kenny surely has his issues. I like the idea of choices providing the teacher can live with the choices. Children will have to make choices the rest of their lives so giving the children opportunities is good practice. Sometimes the choices may be a bit hard to make, but in the end, the child has ownership in the choice making process.

Children have good days and not very good days. Susan appears to be one of the children who can have good days and not. The same holds true for classes. Sometimes the child can be on task and compliant for part of the class and then do a one eighty and really be off track for the rest of the class. One wonders what is going on in the heads of the children. I would like to be able to be inside the child's head to really understand how they think.

New Ulm is expecting snow today. Depending on the forecaster, anywhere from a dusting to four or five inches is expected. It would be nice to have a white Christmas. Hope your weekend is good for you.

December 5, 2011

I did not go to Lincoln today, as I was not feeling well. We got our first dusting of snow today, but it has already melted. I hope you didn't get too much snow.

December 5, 2011

Sorry to hear that you are ill. I hope you are better soon. I await your next posting.

We did get snow all day, but just flurries. The snow is really pretty, but is accompanied by cold. We expect near zero degrees F. tonight. Welcome to Minnesota.

December 6, 2011

This morning, I had opportunity to work with Bentley for math. He worked really hard and accomplished a lot of math work today. We've gotten to know each other more now, so we can tease each other and have some fun as we're working together. To assist him with his math, sometimes I act as his scribe; other times, I have him write his answers. I often write his computation problems on a whiteboard so they are larger for him. Bentley had a little trouble knowing when to "carry" in addition problems, so my mentor suggested putting a line above the column of numbers for him to remind him to carry. Bentley regularly uses his multiplication chart and hundreds chart to help him with his computation.

During reading in 3rd grade, the students were listening/watching a story on the Smartboard. Periodically, the teacher stops, and the students answer a question based on the story. The students need to write the answers down on their papers. The spec. ed. assistant and I worked together to assist our students. The spec. ed. assistant wrote a shorter version (usually one word-answers) on a small whiteboard and set it on a student's desk, so the student could just copy that rather than the complete sentence.

As I was leaving Lincoln today, I observed the spec. ed. assistant working with a second grader on spelling. She was having him use rubber stamps to stamp the letters on paper as a way to practice his spelling words.

I mentioned to my mentor about the final phone conference, so she will think a date and time.

December 6, 2011

I am happy to see you are back at work today. I know you probably still do not feel the best, so I appreciate your effort.

The idea of using stamps to write out the letters for words is a good idea. With younger children, the use of shaving cream is another way for children to write out letters and words. The tactile sense is powerful and if a child is a haptic learner, any way to get the

child to use their tactile sense is great. I also know that sandpaper letters are helpful for some children.

From what I read, you had a good day. I really appreciate your work to get to know Bentley and his individual needs. Whatever you can do to keep Bentley on task and learning, good for you. About the time you get Bentley “figured out,” you will be leaving. By the way, keep me posted on when your mentor can do the final conference.

Hope you continue to feel better.

December 7, 2011

I've been thinking ahead to the final draft of my research paper, so these are some general observations I've had lately: Though inclusion is the ultimate goal for most students, many spec ed. students are still best served with some pullout services. I've observed an increase in the amount of pullout for the students at Lincoln as the year has progressed. As the students' needs become more apparent during the course of the school year, it is recognized that the students are better served with some pullout time. For a number of students at Lincoln, it is due to emotional/behavioral disabilities, and they are just unable to function in the classroom, let alone, the classroom function with them in the room. For other students, it is because the students are working at a considerably lower level than the rest of the class and need small-group or one-on-one instruction.

There are many accommodations, modifications, and differentiation techniques that classroom teachers can use to help students; however, the classroom teacher is only one person, and unless there is another assistant available to help the classroom teacher, working with students with severe emotional/behavioral disabilities, autism, or cognitive disabilities in a general education classroom may not be possible.

My mentor is starting a reading program with George, a boy in 3rd grade (can't recall the name of it right now). I was upstairs in 201 with her and George as she began the program. She would like me to work with George on the program during the remaining time that I'm there. While sitting there watching the lesson, I observed that there were 3 special ed. professionals and 3 students in the room at that time (not counting me). I was reflecting upon the fact that these 3 students all were pulled out from class at that time, although it was right away in the morning before most instruction begins in the classrooms. I was also thinking about the fact that in religious/private schools, there would not be 3 professionals to work with 3 individual students at the same time.

Some notes about Kenny--We've seen an increase in his behaviors over the last few weeks. There is a meeting scheduled with his mom to discuss the escalation of behaviors, find out if there has been medication changes since parent/teacher conferences, and to discuss day treatment. Today the spec. ed. assistant and I experienced quite a bit of noncompliance from Kenny which we really felt was separate from his anxiety issues. He was rude, wouldn't follow directions, and wouldn't do his work--work that he is capable of doing, especially if we're there to help. We've been

discussing the use of consequences when Kenny is noncompliant, similar to those used for the rest of the students in class. Up until this point, he hasn't always been held accountable for not working, not following directions, or not having his work done.

December 7, 2011

I am happy to see you extrapolating concepts, ideas, and strategies from your internship so far. I do not think you will have a problem building your reflective essay which is chapter four of your capstone project. I can see you having a problem with delimiting the information so your reflection does not end up twenty pages long. You have a large amount of information in this journal to draw from so getting your reflection down to a manageable amount may be interesting.

Looks like you have a new student to work with for the next couple of weeks. George will be an interesting study because of the program he will be working through. Would you call George's program a Tier II intervention or would he be in Tier III? If he is new to the program, he may be Tier III because the regular classroom teacher has tried a number of strategies and ideas which were not successful. I would like you to determine if George is Tier II or Tier III. In any event, George will be a new challenge. Sounds like a lot of fun to me.

Collaboration between home and school may be a very good idea to help Kenny work through his escalating issues. Knowing what is going on at home may be a key to determine why Kenny has become so noncompliant. I hope for Kenny's sake some answers can be gleaned from the meeting with his mom. Usually by this time in the school year, the child would be making progress not regressing in his behavior. If you can share, I would like to know how the meeting went, what was the outcome of the meeting, and your opinion on the interventions to be instituted.

December 8, 2011

I agree that streamlining the last chapter of my paper could be a challenge!

George does receive special education services. He is low in reading and is diagnosed with ADHD. Therefore, I think that technically he is receiving Tier III services. However, he reminds me of many students with ADHD that I see in parochial schools who do not receive special education services. His reading deficits are not extremely severe--in fact, I'm surprised that he qualifies for special education when I think of other students who struggle more but did not qualify.

I will be unable to attend the meeting with Kenny's mom because I will be at St. Lucas at that time, but I will be sure to get a summary from the others.

Today the spec. ed. assistant was absent. Although there was a sub to fill in for the spec. ed. assistant, the sub was unfamiliar with the school and students. It gave me an opportunity to take the lead and experience what it's like to be the spec. ed. assistant, who is often alone, trying to cover 4 students in 3rd grade. Kenny had 2 significant meltdowns during that time. Unfortunately, the other 3 students take the back seat during



Kenny's meltdowns. I worked through the calming strategies with Kenny and helped him recover, though he was still struggling when I left. When he's in his anxiety state, he is unable to make decisions or to take steps to help himself. Reading a book to Kenny while he's in this state has seemed to help him--that's a strategy I used in the past with the autistic child that I did home therapy with. The spec. ed. assistant often uses the iPad, but Kenny didn't want me to get that out--though, Kenny's usual response to anything during these times is "no." Overall, I think my efforts with Kenny were as successful as possible.

December 9, 2011

Thanks for the information on George. From what I am seeing in the literature, a child may be in different levels of RTI for the same issue. I am also seeing the child being at different levels of RTI for behavior problems. I was just curious what you thought of George and RTI.

When a key person is absent, the situation changes. The same holds true for when certain children are absent. The dynamics of the classroom change when someone is missing. I know you had to juggle a number of issues, including Kenny's meltdowns, while still covering the rest of the children. Whew!! I hope the spec. ed. assistant is back today.

December 9, 2011

The spec. ed. assistant returned today. Kenny had another difficult morning; he spent 1 ½+ hours in meltdown and noncompliance mode. The spec. ed. assistant worked with him during those times today. All of the staff is looking forward to the meeting with his mother on Monday.

Meanwhile, I worked with Darin. He has been extremely unfocused this week, often wandering around the room, falling out of his desk chair, crawling on the floor. You ask him to do something, and he totally forgets 5 seconds later. I asked the spec. ed. assistant about whether he was taking meds, and apparently he takes a small dose in the morning, and can't go much higher because of some side effects. One of the struggles with Darin's attention is that he will tune out the teacher who is working with him as soon as he hears his classroom teacher say something to the whole class. It's difficult to get him to finish a task when he tunes out in the middle of completing the task.

I also worked with George this morning on the new reading program he began this week. It's called Benchmark Word Identification (Word Detectives Program) (O'Hara & Gaskins, 2000). It is an explicit program that really helps students look at spelling patterns and word chunks in order to decode words and spell words.

My mentor is wondering about December 22 at 1:30 for our final phone conference.

December 10, 2011

I just finished giving my first final of the semester. Hardly seems the year is half over already.

I hope the meeting with Kenny goes well. I await to see if you can tell any improvements in Kenny after the conference. I am sure you will hear what went on in the meeting from the others at Lincoln.

As far as Darin is concerned, medications can be tricky. All meds have side effects that are really nasty, therefore, should the child have more of the medication and be more compliant or does the child have less medication to control for contraindications? Hard call to make. If the child cannot concentrate and learn, what good are the meds? On the other hand, I am sure your help with Darin is invaluable to his education. Over the long run, Darin will benefit from the extra attention and one-on-one learning.

Hope your weekend is going well. Greet your mentor for me when you get to school on Monday. NOTE: the 22nd at 1:30pm will work for the final conference. I look forward to talking to you and your mentor about your experience at Lincoln.

December 12, 2011

Congratulations on finishing the first final of the semester!

This morning I worked with Bentley as he was typing a persuasive letter he had written. At first, he was reluctant to begin working. He was probably overwhelmed with the amount of typing he needed to do and wanted to avoid the work. We used post-its to mark on his paper a starting point and a stopping point. My mentor had a new remote control car for him to try out when he was done with this typing. I tried to make a game out of the work...He uses Read & Write Gold when typing, which has a prediction box that lists possible words for the student after the student has typed the first few letters. I encouraged him to guess how many letters he had to type before he saw the word he needed in the prediction box. We both guessed to see who was right. It's feels good to know Bentley a little better now and be able to find some things that will help him work. He accomplished his typing, so we were able to race remote control cars together.

The rest of the morning, I enjoyed watching the 4th-5th graders in their holiday concert.

December 13, 2011

You had a very good day. I hope the concert was fun to watch. You did not indicate anyone had a meltdown, so good for you.

How did the new remote control car work? Maybe the car is the incentive he needs to help with his noncompliance. Giving Bentley prompts appears to be very helpful. I know in the past you have used the little white boards to set a schedule so the child is prompted to complete tasks according to the schedule. The little white boards are great and give a visual picture of the time frame for the children to work. Breaking the work into chunks is also helpful. If the child sees the whole activity or assignment, they may just shut down. Giving the child tasks in manageable chunks within the time frame is a double positive.

I look forward to your post later today. I would have posted last night but a four hour meeting took up most of the evening.

December 13, 2011

Four-hour meetings are too long!

No one had a meltdown yesterday during the concert. There was another concert today for K4-3rd grade. Kenny was unable to participate. The spec. ed. assistant reported that he started out on the risers during the practice before the concert and was doing fine, but then suddenly ran off the risers. He was unable to sit and watch either. The spec. ed. assistant took him back to the classroom to help him calm down. I watched the concert, and the other kids did really well. The kids perform the concert again later today for parents. Maybe Kenny will try again this afternoon.

After the meeting on Monday, Kenny's mom scheduled a doctor's appointment for Kenny to investigate other meds to help Kenny with his anxiety. The spec. ed. assistant told me that Kenny is excited about going to the doctor. Kenny seems to know that he needs help and wants help. He really wanted to participate in the concert but was too anxious to do it. He often gets upset with himself when he has a meltdown because he really wants to be able to do things and not have the meltdowns.

When I went to 201 to work with Bentley in math, he was being noncompliant. It took about 20 minutes before he finally decided to work. My mentor employed all of her strategies, but what eventually worked this time was that my mentor had a timer that she set to 1 minute, and Bentley had grabbed a timer and set it to one minute. They pushed start at the same time and waited to see if they went off at the same time. (During the 1 minute, Bentley needed to sit in a chair and show compliance). The little timer game got Bentley to sit in the chair. He also enjoys checking the weather on the internet, so he was promised that he could do that and see if snow was coming after he finished his computer work. Bentley finished his computer work, and he transitioned over to the table to do math with me. I set up a mini-schedule, and we got to work. Bentley worked well during our time together. We weren't able to finish the math work during that time because his earlier noncompliance got us off to a late start, but he'll work on it later with the spec. ed. assistant.

An interesting note--Beginning last week, the Wauwatosia district placed another spec ed. assistant at Lincoln, due especially to the demands placed on the team by the 5th grade boy, but also because of the other challenging cases at Lincoln. I'm glad that the team has help, and also glad for the other students because they often get neglected when the team has to respond to a crisis.

December 13, 2011

I knew you were so valuable that the school district had to hire another person to replace you :)

I am really happy the children are getting the help they need to be successful. With so many children with behavioral issues, each probably should have a shadow para every hour of every day. I am also happy that Kenny is going to be re-evaluated concerning his meds. Children usually know when they are causing problems which do not make them feel good about anything. For Kenny's sake, hopefully the doctors can get a good handle on the type and dosage of meds he needs to be successful in school.

Give your mentor credit for exhausting her repertoire of strategies and coming up with a new one. I like the way she made it fun for Bentley to be compliant with her wishes. At times, just getting the child settled will help him get the idea that quiet really works. A side-bar here: I know you have written down the strategies and ideas from your experience in this internship in your journal. I think you should write a book, based on your journal, on the strategies used to help children learn and sell it for a million dollars. What an experience you have had so far. Hope tomorrow goes well for you.

December 14, 2011

The people at Lincoln have been very kind and welcoming. They keep lamenting that I will be leaving, so I'm glad that I was a help to them during my internship.

I would love to sell a book for a million dollars, but I can't take credit for the ideas.

Kenny attempted again yesterday afternoon to join the holiday concert but was unable to. His mom was attending the concert, noticed he wasn't on stage, and went to find him. She was able to see Kenny in one of his meltdowns, so that was probably good that mom could see exactly what was happening. We haven't heard the results of Kenny's appointment with the doctor yesterday.

I assisted Kenny during math. He is gifted in drawing, and he wanted to draw during math instead of watching the teacher/board. I gave him several reminders that he shouldn't be drawing. He kept trying to draw in his math workbook, so I covered his drawing with my hand. Eventually, I had to hold the workbook in my lap to get him to stop drawing and look at the board. Even so, Kenny handled math class much better today. With my guidance, he was able to complete the in-class workbook page. Then he worked with a partner to complete his practice page.

Kenny actually did well all morning. He did well and worked hard on some reading pages. He asked me to listen to him read during independent reading time. He's excited about his Lunch Bunch today during which he gets to eat lunch in 201 with a small group of friends.

I worked with George this morning on the Word Detective program. He's doing a great job in the lessons. I like what I've seen of the program so far. It gets kids to look carefully at word chunks/spelling patterns and to use words they know with similar patterns to help them decode/spell unfamiliar words.

December 14, 2011

You had a very good morning. Now that the children are compliant, you have to look forward to leaving:(

I hope for Kenny's sake the doctor's appointment bears fruit. So sad he could not participate in the concert:( I would hope some type of mediation by the doctor proves helpful. With such anxiety and such a variety of meds, Kenny should be receiving something to alleviate his anxiousness

[http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts\\_for\\_families/psychiatric\\_medication\\_for\\_children\\_and\\_adolescents\\_part\\_ii\\_types\\_of\\_medications](http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/psychiatric_medication_for_children_and_adolescents_part_ii_types_of_medications) .

What fun it is to have a student "get it" and do a good job. Success promotes success!! You utilized the correct strategy to help George be successful.

As your internship winds down, I find less and less to say. If you have a question or concern, please let me know and I will address the issues either within this document or by email.

December 15, 2011

It's hard to believe I'm at this point in the internship. A year ago at this time, I was wondering how I would find a place to do the internship, and now I'm nearly done.

I know that many of the anti-anxiety meds make people tired and sleepy. It must be tricky for a doctor to prescribe just the right medication and dosage to avoid those side effects and still be effective to alleviate the anxiety.

We haven't heard any news about Kenny's doctor appointment which seems odd because his mom had said she would call right away after the appointment. However, since the supposed appointment, Kenny has done really well (last 1 ½ days) without any major meltdowns. If he did go to the doctor, maybe just the psychological effect of the appointment is helping him.??

The last two days Bentley has asked me to work with him in math. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to because I needed to be in 3rd grade, but it's encouraging that he's expressing the desire to work with me.

I asked my mentor about the reading curriculum used at Lincoln and in the district. I was curious if all reading programs have similar resources or not, but apparently the curriculum they use is pretty unique. It has the regular materials (Treasures) and then lower level materials (Triumphs) for each grade level. We've been using the Triumphs with Darin, Susan, and Kenny. The materials coincide so that the students are working on similar reading comprehension skills and grammar skills in the same week. The vocabulary, phonics, and story texts are different. The students participate in the whole class story reading at the beginning of the week--The teacher displays the story on the smartboard, and a recording reads the stories. Then our group works on the lower level

materials the rest of the week. The lower level materials still seem too difficult for our group sometimes, though.

December 16, 2011

Maybe the placebo effect is working for Kenny. Sometimes the extra attention helps a child feel better and therefore better compliance. How things work out in the long run will be interesting to see.

For the reading curriculum, often schools and teachers take an eclectic approach, one that has worked in the past. As far as methods, again if the methodology has worked in the past, the approach is used because prior success. I wonder if the present curriculum and instruction is used to make sure the children can pass the state standards tests. Curriculum can be tricky based on the long range goals and short term objectives for the children to encounter to be successful in their learning.

Good to hear that Bentley is looking forward to your help. You must have a strong connection with him. He feels comfortable with you and knows that you help makes him feel successful. I think Bentley will really miss you when you have to leave after next week. As you indicate, you are just about done. Whew!!!

Hope your day goes well today.

December 16, 2011

The placebo effect lasted until the end of the day yesterday; then he had trouble again. He had trouble in math again today. He resisted moving to the back room when he started having trouble, but then eventually did give the signal and moved to the back room willingly. He didn't understand a problem in math, and it took a bit for him to calm down enough for me to explain. He gets frustrated when he doesn't understand something right away. A new strategy for Kenny--a glitter stick. The spec. ed. assistant had a glitter stick--a 12-in clear plastic with glitter and fluid inside. Playing with that seemed to help Kenny calm down a bit. We were able to work through the problem he didn't understand using manipulatives. He was still agitated during the rest of the math work, but he did complete it without a major meltdown.

The administering of the reading assessment to Susan and Kenny was a bit dicey today. Kenny told me that he had to use the restroom, but then didn't want to go. Apparently, this is an on-going issue with him; he waits and waits and doesn't want to use the restroom. He refused to go on his own, so Susan and I walked with him to the restroom. This got the assessment off to a bad start, and then Kenny was agitated. He was tapping his pencil on the table, which Susan then began to copy. When I told her to stop, she kept doing it, and then became stubborn when I tried to take her pencil away. She moved her chair and her test away from the table, and then she began walking around the room, looking at things on the shelf. I used a stern voice and told her to move her chair back. I wasn't confident that she would respond, but she did. There were a few questions that Kenny didn't know the answers to, so that was another hiccup in the administration

because he becomes upset when he doesn't know the answers. Eventually we made it through.

The spec. ed. assistant told me today that the new special ed. assistant who has been helping the past few weeks is only assigned to Lincoln until Christmas, or until the 5th grade boy moves to an alternative school.

December 17, 2011

Sometimes you simply have to use a stern voice to let the children know the expectations. I know redirecting the child, providing an alternative (i.e. the glitter stick), taking the child from the setting, providing positive reinforcement, and giving negative reinforcement are all suitable ways to manage the child. However, using a stern voice, physically taking the child to an alternative setting, and using other stern strategies sometimes is what the child needs to comply. The teacher must impress on the child who is the boss. Children will often rebel. However, in the long run, children develop a sense of security when they know who is in charge. In fact, knowing the teacher is in charge lets the child be a child. The security of the teacher in charge, routine, structure, and sameness lets the child feel safe. In too many classrooms today the teacher is not the boss and the students are upset by not having a safe and secure environment. Good for you to get a bit stern with Susan. Be confident in your skills and be the boss.

Too bad the new SPED assistant will only be in the school for another couple of days. The 5th grade boy going to the alternative school is a big step. I fear this boy will likely be in the alternative school for quite some time. When a child has so many big behaviors, the alternative school is the only safe and secure choice.

Hoping you are having a restful weekend, if possible. We had snow here last night but it is mostly gone today. I was hoping for a white Christmas.

December 19, 2011

I was actually hoping that we wouldn't have snow this year for Christmas... just one less thing to deal with before Christmastime. So far, my wish has come true. It can snow in Minnesota if you want.

My mentor observed me working with Bentley this morning. She is working on the Final Evaluation. Do you want me to write out a lesson plan for the lesson?

Bentley gets a little overwhelmed in math after working for a while. At one point, my mentor set the timer for 15 minutes and told Bentley he needed to work during that time in order to earn a break. She would stop the timer if he stopped working. He stopped only one time, but with a reminder got back to work. He was also thinking about his dentist appointment for which he needed to leave at 9:45.

In 3rd grade, the students worked on planning a new writing piece. The spec. ed. assistant and I worked with the kids to write down their ideas and plan out purpose, audience, opinion, and details. For Darin, I acted as the scribe. For George, I discussed his ideas

with him and helped him with spelling. For Kenny and Susan, I wrote their ideas on whiteboards so they could copy them on their papers.

Darin worked on manuscript handwriting this morning. He struggles with writing, but especially with slanted lines, like in v and w. I used a highlighter to write the letters at first and had him trace over them. Then I put dots on his page to indicate where the different lines should begin and end. Eventually he wrote the letters without the extra prompts. His handwriting has improved over the semester. It's a wonder that he does as well as he does because he holds his head only 6 inches from his paper when he writes.

Hopefully you are done with the major demands of the semester and have a quiet week!

December 19, 2011

To answer your question, you do not have to write out the lesson. Your mentor's notes will suffice nicely. I am looking forward to the conference on Thursday at 1:30 pm. Please give me the telephone number where I can reach you on Thursday.

Overall, you had a good day today. I am happy to see that the timer intervention worked out well for you. I can also see the scaffolding you did for Darin was successful. The trick is to get the right strategy for the situation. I suppose finding the right strategy is part of what I like to call the "art" of teaching.

I hope you have a great final week. It hardly seems possible the semester is coming to a close. I know you will miss the children, but you have other children to work with in the near future. I also hope you get a couple of nice notes from the children. I think the children really do appreciate the effort and time you spent with them to help them learn.

December 20, 2011

This morning I shadowed Bentley as he walked with his class across the street to the high school for a special activity. The students moved around between several stations while at the activity. Since the activity took place in a large, open common area, there was a lot of noise. Bells would go off to signal the end of classes, and high school students were moving through the area. There were also frequent PA announcements. Bentley handled all of the noise very well and transitioned between stations without problem. He was concerned that the fire alarm might go off because last time he was at the high school, the fire alarm went off, though he had known about it ahead of time and went outside before it went off. He needed some assurance that the fire alarm wasn't going to go off. The bells that sounded were rather loud and startled him each time. He walks more slowly than the rest of the class, but he kept up pretty well as we walked across the street. When he lagged behind, I teased him that he was going to be the turtle--that's a little game he likes to play (turtle or rabbit). He quickened his pace so he could be the rabbit.

Back at Lincoln, the spec. ed. assistant had a tough hour as Kenny had his worst meltdown all year. She had to call 201 for assistance so that the other students would be covered. It was very emotional as Kenny expressed very negative emotional statements about himself. He feels very badly about himself when he isn't able to control his



anxiety. Kenny started his new meds this morning; it's unclear whether the new meds triggered this episode. It occurred during math time, which is usually when Kenny has trouble anyway. Maybe he was upset that he was feeling anxious during math because he was hoping the new meds would help??? It's a mystery at this point. Thankfully, Christmas break is coming up, so he'll have time to try out the meds before school resumes in January.

I will have to get back to you with the phone number to call for the conference on Thursday.

December 20, 2011

From what you have written, you had kind of a mixed up day. I think it is super that the children had an opportunity to go to the high school for activities. I hope a number of high school students took time to interact with the children from Lincoln. The cross-age piece is good for the high school students to be good examples for the children at Lincoln and for the children to see positive role models with the students at the high school. I am so glad to hear that Bentley did well in the new experience.

On the other hand, Kenny was really out of sorts. You provide good insight in to Kenny's psyche and have posed a good question with no real good answer. Maybe Kenny really did feel let down that the new medication was not making him feel any better. Kenny is quite young to understand that the medication may take time to work or what he should be feeling. If he perceives the medication is making no difference, well, why not show his displeasure? On the other hand, the medication may have a paradoxical effect which makes the situation worse because the child is feeling worse. Tough to figure out. I agree with you that Christmas is a good time to get meds regulated as long as the parent keeps giving the child the medications. I fear that Mom may want to do a drug holiday and not give the meds faithfully. Children on meds need to take them year round with no drug holidays. Taking the breaks really is hard on the child physically as well as emotionally.

Your mentor did contact me about the final. I think she has a great idea in that she will call me. I will be in my office at 1:30 on Thursday and she can call my cell phone at 507-217-7859. That is the day after tomorrow, WOW!!!

December 21, 2011

I woke up feeling so lousy this morning. I started to get ready, but just couldn't make it to Lincoln today. I'm sad to miss the second last day. I'm thinking it is a case of food poisoning, or at least something last night at the restaurant didn't agree with me. I should be back into commission tomorrow. I'll spend the whole day at Lincoln tomorrow, so that'll make up for today.

December 21, 2011

Sorry to hear you are ill. Hopefully a good night's rest will help so you can spend your last day with the children you worked with so hard this semester. I look forward to our conference tomorrow at 1:30. Have a good night.

December 22, 2011

The last day arrived and has gone.

I observed my mentor working with Darin and Kenny for a reading lesson and saw her use a separate learning target for each child: fluency, breaking apart words, reading to the end of words, etc.

We were pleased that Kenny, though he got off to a shaky start this morning, did very well during the Christmas party and attended both music and phy. ed. this afternoon. We had been doubtful that he would be able to manage those things. Kenny was very sad to hear that it was my last day and gave me many hugs. We talked about how he could draw me pictures or write notes and give them to the spec. ed. assistant or my mentor, and I would come back and visit some time.

I am very grateful to the staff at Lincoln and cherish the wonderful experience that I had there. Thank you, Dr. Spurgin, for all of your work and encouragement throughout my internship.