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Exploring the Impact of Learning Targets and Self-Reflection with Three Fifth Graders Who Have Special Needs

Nicole Marie McCoy

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Exploring the Impact of Learning Targets and Self-Reflection with Three Fifth Graders Who Have Special Needs

by

Nicole Marie McCoy

August 2011

A thesis submitted to the
Department of Education and Human Development of
The College at Brockport, State University of New York
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Education

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Conclusions

Reflection Holds Students Accountable for Their Learning
Reflection Increases a Student’s Confidence as a Learner
Students Show Increased Self-Awareness of Impulsivity, Hyperactivity, and Inattention

Implications for Student Learning

Students Benefit from Knowing the Purpose and Goal of a Lesson
Reflection Promotes Student Ownership of Learning

Implication for My Teaching

Assessment for Learning is an Important Piece to Lesson Planning
Students’ Self-Reflection Can be Used to Plan and Adjust Instruction for Future Lessons
Continuity in Lesson Format is an Important Component for Student Success
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Chapter One: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

As a special education teacher working with students who have disabilities, I see my students experience many challenges throughout the day. The most prevalent challenges they face are the struggle to focus, attend to the task, and refrain from impulsivity. These difficulties interfere with their everyday learning. It specifically leads to inconsistent academic performance on classroom and homework tasks (Harris, Friedlander, Saddler, Frizzelle, & Graham, 2005). The following is an example of an actual conversation among my students and me regarding a text about the social hierarchy within a wolf pack. The vignette is from a whole group science/English language arts lesson. This small group of students is reading specifically about the alpha wolf who is the leader with top ranking and the most power. I am supporting this group as I would normally do by sitting at their table and encouraging conversation.

Nicole: Using your text, let’s share some facts about the alpha wolves within a pack? We can chart the facts on our poster.
Grace: Alpha is the first letter in the, um, Greek alphabet.
Nicole: Ok, so why do you think that piece of information is included in this text about alpha wolves? What is the connection to an alpha in a wolf pack?
Grace: I don’t know, maybe they are Greek wolves.
Jack: Oh I know (cutting off Jill) Alpha’s are the meanest!!
Nicole: Did it say that in the text?
Jack: I don’t know, I think I heard it somewhere. Who are those people walking by?
Nicole: Well, I want you use the information from the text in our
conversation today. Matt, maybe you can help us? Why do you think the author told us that the word alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet? Does this fact connect to any of the other facts you read about in the reading?

David: Well it did say that they are the first ones to eat. I’m hungry, when is lunch? I brought left over pizza today.

Nicole: Tell me more. How does the fact that alphas eat first connect to the word alpha being the first letter in the Greek alphabet? What is special about the alpha male and female wolves?

Grace: Mrs. McCoy, does your dog Oscar like to eat treats?

Nicole: Jill, I think Matt may be on to something here, let’s hear what he has to say. Go ahead Matt.

David: Jack can you stop kicking me.

Jack: I’m not kicking you. My feet are way over here!

David: Mrs. McCoy, tell Jack to keep his gross feet away from me.

Nicole: Let’s refocus here. Everyone, keep your hands and feet to yourselves. Concentrate on me and the text about alpha wolves. This is important information we need to know. I want you all to go back to your text. Think about the lesson we just had about the hierarchy in a pack. I want you both to look for facts that would connect to the idea of alpha as meaning first.

The students in the vignette as well as other students in my fifth grade classroom have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). They commonly exhibit behaviors of impulsivity, inattention, and hyper-activity (Raggi & Chronis, 2006). These behaviors interfere with their ability to attend to lessons and reach the learning objective. According to Raggi and Chronis (2006) students with ADHD encounter frequent distractions from assigned tasks and are slow or less likely to return to an activity once their attention has been interrupted. I find myself repeatedly giving students verbal cues such as “stay on topic” and “let’s refocus.” Given the
students lack of response, it is evident that these phrases are not as effective as I would hope them to be. Most of the time, their off topic comments and inattention lead to incomplete assignments or work that is below grade level expectations. I have also seen their off task behavior interfere with their listening skills. It is not uncommon even right after I have presented directions and then presented, repeated, and rephrased them that at times I will hear my students respond, “What are we supposed to do?”

The content area I see my students struggle the most in is reading. Many times they will copy sentences or phrases from the text when attempting to answer comprehension questions. When asked higher level thinking questions, they appear confused or respond with information directly from the text. It is not uncommon for my students with ADHD to have difficulty discussing the content of a text they have read. They struggle to make inferences, draw conclusions, and discuss the text in their own words.

I want to be able to effectively guide my students toward becoming active learners who monitor themselves while engaging in a variety of reading activities. I work with my students in small group settings as much as possible throughout the day. During lessons, I provide visual and verbal cues for refocusing and redirection. At times, I even take small groups out in the hallway in an attempt to reduce auditory and visual distractions. All of these strategies are helpful in promoting the students’ on task behavior, but they are not as efficient or consistent as I would like.
The idea of giving students a learning target to work toward is intriguing to me because learning targets are a way of sharing with the student exactly what they are going to learn, how deeply to learn it, and exactly how to demonstrate their learning (Moss, Brookhart, & Long, 2011). A learning target is a clear, reachable learning goal written in student friendly language (Moss et al., 2011), for example, “I can discuss the similarities and differences between an alpha and omega wolf within a pack hierarchy.” The idea is that students are aware of their learning target prior to the start of the lesson. Throughout the lesson, the learning target is visually accessible to the student. Then at the end of the lesson, the student self reflects on his/her learning by discussing whether or not he/she had met the target (Moss et al., 2011). I am curious to see the impact integrating learning targets may have on the learning success of students with ADHD as well as how my teaching might change in the process.

**Significance of the Problem**

During the year 2010, the New York State Education Department increased its scoring criteria for standardized tests, and according to the New York State Regents Board only fifteen percent of students with disabilities met the new proficiency standard (http://www.oms.nysed.gov/press/Grade3-8_Results07282010.html). In order to address the academic needs of these students, it is imperative that I and other teachers working with these students have a thorough understanding of each disability
as well as instructional techniques that have proven success in meeting their academic needs. Of the many disabilities, one that prominently affects students is ADHD. According to Barkley (1998), an estimated three to seven percent of students in school are labeled with ADHD. In 2000, the number of school aged students with ADHD doubled from the previous decade to a high number of four to five million students (Ryder & Burton, 2006).

Unfortunately, students with ADHD tend to fall short academically specifically in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics (Barry, Lyman, & Klinger, 2002). This in turn may lead to retention, special education placement, suspensions, and possibly even job failure in the future (Raggi & Chronis, 2006). Raggi and Chronis (2006) have shown that the following academic interventions provide support for students with ADHD: peer and parent tutoring, task and instructional modifications, strategy training, self monitoring, use of functional assessment, and homework management programs. Self monitoring strategies, particularly for students with ADHD, have proven to be an important factor in self-regulation toward improved academic success (Davies & Witte, 2000; Harris, et al., 2000; Raggi & Chronis, 2006). Many teachers like me can identify the behaviors and symptoms of students with ADHD that are negatively impacting their academic success, yet the modifications being implemented or lack thereof are ineffective. (Nowacek & Mamlin, 2007). I have not yet found any published research studies in which the researchers are investigating the influence of learning targets and their impact on self-regulation in relation to improved reading comprehension.
Expeditionary Learning

Currently I work in an expeditionary learning school, an approach that has been in place at the school for the past eight years. We pride ourselves in implementing inquiry-based learning across all academic areas. Students at each grade level are immersed in two content driven expeditions per school year. The philosophy of expeditionary learning is that teachers and students set high expectations based on the New York state fifth grade standards, and then work hard to achieve them through authentic learning that is compelling and student driven. For example, our current fifth grade expedition is, “Wolf: Friend or Foe?” This expedition includes three in-depth investigations driven by guiding questions. Each guiding question builds upon the previous one. In this particular expedition, the students are motivated to learn because as a final project they will be presenting about wolves to the public at their community zoo. Students feel an authentic purpose for their learning.

The first guiding question in our wolf expedition is: What makes a wolf a wolf? Through various learning activities, students learn about the wolf through a scientific lens. The second guiding question is: “How have people’s opinions and perceptions affected the wolf?” During this investigation students critically read and view illustrations in various texts including both nonfiction and fictional texts, specifically fairy tales and Native American legends portraying the wolf. They
analyze statistics and maps of wolf population over many hundreds of years. Students then infer and synthesize the impact that humans have had on wolves as a species of our planet. The last guiding question is: How are wolves interdependent in their ecosystem? Students discover the importance of the wolf as a keystone species. Students make conclusions through simulated activities of the food web as well as what happened when wolves were removed from Yellow Stone Park.

Throughout the four month expedition, we invite a variety of experts in to present information related to the study, including a Native American, a zoo keeper, zoo docents, and even a visit from a live wolf! Through their hard work and discovery, students feel compelled to inform and correct the many misconceptions people have about wolves.

Assessment for Learning

Within the past four years, we have been exploring the idea of assessment for learning, which means that students are aware of exactly what they are expected to learn before they begin a lesson or unit of study. Then together throughout the course of the unit, the teacher and student reflect on his/her progress towards the goal(s), making learning and teaching adjustments together to meet the goal. We have participated in many professional development sessions guided by the work of Rick Stiggens, who has written extensively on assessment for learning practices.
It is important to clarify that assessment for learning is a form of formative assessment. Formative assessment refers to the assessment that is used during learning to encourage rather than judge student success (Stiggins, 2005). It fosters cooperation between teacher and student, celebrates small successes, promotes goal setting, and guides students to advocate for their own learning (; Brookhart, et al., 2008 ; Stiggins, 2005, 2007). Using formative assessment as an instructional tool enables teachers to set specific goals for instruction, teach purposefully towards the goal, assess student growth, and use collected data to make next step instructional decisions (Brookhart, et al., 2008).

Purposes of the Study

There were multiple purposes for my study. I am a teacher who seeks to keep current with pedagogical practices. I am beginning to synthesize the various expectations my school emphasizes in our professional development related to curriculum and assessment. In the same regard, I also wanted to take the elements of the assessment for learning practices to guide my students towards becoming self-regulated learners. Through the process of this study I have strengthened my observing, recording, and analyzing skills. This has supported my growth and development as an educator as well as a researcher.
The use of learning targets is one of the assessment for learning practices that my colleagues and I are expected to incorporate within our teaching. I wanted to become more proficient in the implementation of learning targets into my lessons, and more effective at defining learning targets that align with New York state standards. I think it is important that as a special educator I become better able to guide my students towards being active learners who take responsibility for and ownership of their learning. I want my students to be successful and realize that they can achieve their learning goals. It is this reasoning that drove me towards answering the following two research questions. Question one: What happens when students with attention deficits reflect on personalized reading comprehension goals? Question two: How does the reflection process impact self-regulation for each student?

**Study Approach**

I conducted this qualitative six-week research study to document the reading comprehension abilities of three students, one girl and two boys with ADHD. Grace is a sweet, kind hearted student who works very hard in all academic areas. David is an energetic student who enjoys socializing with his peers. Jack loves math and enjoys a mathematical challenge of any sort. He is also a perfectionist and often becomes frustrated and upset when given critical feedback. During the study, Grace was reading approximately one grade level behind, while David and Jack were
reading almost on grade level. Their biggest challenge was staying focused and on task during lessons.

I presented to the three students personalized reading comprehension learning target(s) prior to each small group reading lesson. All three students were familiar with what a learning target is since all teachers within our school are beginning to implement them into their daily instruction. I developed the learning targets based on the New York State standards as well as each student’s reading goals on their Individualized Education Programs (IEP). I then reviewed the learning target(s) before, during, and after the lesson. Next, I guided the three students through a self assessment of their progress towards the learning target(s) using a student friendly rubric and written reflection. This reflection process was new to the students because we are not yet formally doing this within our fifth grade classroom.

I documented each reading lesson through audio recording of student discussion, teacher observation logs (see Appendix A), and student reflection rubrics (see Appendix B). I collected data two times a week during our thirty minute lessons, for five weeks. During the sixth week, I conducted a culminating interview (see Appendix C) as a way to capture each student’s thought and opinions about learning targets and their impact on their learning. Once all data was collected I created a case study of each of the three participants. I looked across all three case studies for themes related to the students’ use of learning targets and reading comprehension abilities, as well as their experience with expeditionary learning.
Rationale

I chose to narrow my study to students with ADHD because it is my belief that with the right guidance and instruction, these students can develop a set of skills that will enable them to be self-regulated learners. I believed the three students had the ability to be successful and I wanted to help them see their potential.

The use of a qualitative research approach enabled me to work alongside the students and make decisions that would best meet their needs. Because my students had reached the middle of fifth grade and were not yet using strategies to self-monitor their learning and behaviors, it was crucial that they received the tools necessary to do this. As they move into middle and high school, they will have more responsibilities as a self-regulated learner. I have seen a decrease in the amount of support students receive in the upper grades as compared to what they are receiving now in an integrated co-teaching classroom.

I believe that using personalized learning targets lends itself well to students with ADHD. Learning targets may help students recognize a clear vision of what they are striving to achieve during the lesson. I was able to use the learning target to remind the students of their objective when they got off task or topic. The reflective process gave the students a chance to monitor themselves and take an active role in their learning. It also acted as reinforcement, both negative and positive as they began to see success or lack thereof. Prior to my study the students were not yet aware of how their off task behaviors impacted their learning. Including this reflection piece
was an eye opener for them, enabling them to see how their behavior is connected to their progress towards meeting the learning target.

**Summary**

As a teacher of special needs students, I strive to differentiate my instruction so that students reach their full academic potential. I use differentiation to tailor my instruction in response to the many differences my students encompass as learners (Tomlinson, 1999). Assessment for learning is one way I can differentiate instruction. Students with ADHD constitute a large portion of students with special needs (Ryder & Burton, 2006). Symptoms of inattention, lack of motivation, hyperactivity, and impulsivity pose tall hurdles they must clear in order to be successful in academically (Raggi & Chronis, 2006). An academic area that I see students with ADHD falling short in is reading, specifically comprehension.

My fifth grade students with ADHD are in need of effective skills and strategies that they can take with them as they progress into middle and high school where their success is dependent on their independence. Becoming self-regulated learners who reflects on their learning may help them be more successful in reading comprehension as well as other academic areas. The assessment for learning practice of using and reflecting on learning targets may in fact guide students into realizing they can take responsibility for their learning. Working towards a leaning target, reflecting on their progress and setting new goals are a set of skills that students can
take with them and apply in future academics. The first step I took towards investigating the impact of having students reflect on their progress in relation to the learning target(s) was to integrate learning targets into reading activities with my students.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

As a teacher with three years experience working in an inclusive education classroom, I have worked with students with varying needs and abilities. One trend I have seen across many of the students who have disabilities is that they fall short in the area of reading comprehension. Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are a subgroup of the special education population. It is essential that I understand the characteristics accompanying students with ADHD, and research based teaching methods in order to develop effective reading comprehension lessons.

I conducted this study within an Expeditionary Learning (EL) school; therefore it is important to present research and literature related to this type of learning. I also believe that it was important for me to delve into the literature related to assessment for learning practices because Expeditionary Learning has embraced this ideology as an important aspect to its model. The literature related to these topics helped me frame and develop my research study.

Expeditionary Learning

The Expeditionary Learning (EL) Web site (http://elschools.org/) provides an abundance of information related to the expeditionary learning approach, its history, methodology, academic results, and educator resources. Beginning in 1987 at the Harvard School of Education, the Harvard Outward Bound Project was developed in
an attempt to increase academic rigor in schools through experiential education. Later in the early 1990s, the Outward Bound Project and the New York City Outward Bound Center took on an Education and Urban Initiative. The initiative was funded by the Wallace Foundation in a three year, $2.6 million grant. Expeditionary Learning evolved through this school-based urban programming initiative by a group of professionals including members of the Outward Bound Project, Harvard University professors, as well as organizations including Project Adventure, Facing History and Ourselves, and the Technical Educational Research Center. Expeditionary Learning was granted a nine million grant in 1992 from the New American Schools Development Corporation. One year later, a total of ten EL schools opened in five cities: New York, Boston, Denver, Portland, and Dubuque. From then on more schools have adopted the EL model. To date there are one hundred and sixty five EL schools in twenty nine states and D.C., servicing forty-five thousand students.

According to the Academy of Educational Development (1995), within two years of opening the original ten EL schools, students in nine of the ten schools exhibited significantly improved standardized test scores. In an EL model, students are motivated and inspired to learn through experimental project-based learning that is inquiry based. Students in an EL school are highly engaged in expeditions that incorporate original research while promoting critical thinking and problem solving. Each expedition leads students towards creating high quality products for authentic audiences. Within EL schools and classrooms, there is a culture that encompasses
high expectations of behavior and achievement. Students and teachers work together to learn, reflect, and meet high achievement goals.

A 2010 national quasi-experimental study by Mountain Measurement, Inc. compared over eleven thousand students from EL schools with students from non-EL schools. The researchers specifically looked at EL schools that had been in operation for three years or more. Four of six comparisons in reading, math and language scores resulted in significantly higher scores for those students who attended an EL school.

In another third party quasi-experimental study by UMass Donahue Institute (2010), elementary school students attending EL schools in Rochester, NY performed significantly higher in English/language arts as well as math when compared to students in non EL schools. The researchers also reported that EL middle school students performed higher in English/language arts compared to non EL middle school students.

Design Principles

Each EL school is built around ten design principles: self-discovery, the having of wonderful ideas, responsibility for learning, empathy and caring, success and failure, collaboration and competition, diversity and inclusion, the natural world, solitude and reflection, and service and compassion.
The primacy of self-discovery embraces the idea that people learn when challenged and taught to undertake tasks that require risk. The end result is that students and teachers overcome their fears and realize what they are capable of doing more than they thought.

The having of wonderful ideas reflects the belief that teachers and students should celebrate their discoveries by taking the time to think about and make sense of what they have learned or observed.

Responsibility for learning encourages students and teachers to personally and collectively become more responsible for directing their learning.

Empathy and caring fosters a mutual trust among students and teachers where students feel physically and emotionally safe.

Success and failure is the idea that all students need to be able to build their confidence through successes, continue to take bigger risks in order to meet higher expectations, and also learn from their failures.

Collaboration and competition encourages students to value their relationships with one another through group interaction as well as compete not with each other, but with themselves, in an attempt to challenge them to surpass their very best.

Diversity and inclusion celebrates and values each student’s histories and talents and creates an environment where learning groups are mixed in ability. The
natural world inspires students to respect their natural environment and become an advocate for our role in the future of our earth.

Solitude and reflection encourages teachers and students to take the time to explore their own thinking as well as sharing reflections with one another.

Service and compassion allows students and teachers to partake in services for others in order to strengthen one's compassion.

It is through these design principles that a sound school culture and community is formed.

**Professional Development**

Schools that implement the EL model commit to extensive professional development for their faculty and staff. Killion (1999) stated that the National Staff Development Council named EL a leading professional development organization. EL provides ongoing staff development through onsite training, residential institutes, site seminars, and an annual national conference. All professional development is led by experienced school designers and/or master EL teachers. This promotes ongoing learning and collegial sharing within and among EL schools, which leads to quality instruction and a professional culture.
Assessment for Learning

One of the professional development topics that EL faculty and staff are devoted to is assessment for learning, the idea that assessment can be used to support learning. In this approach, teachers and students use day to day assessments to reflect, set new goals, and optimize student success (Stiggins, 2007; Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005). According to Stiggins (2007) assessment for learning involves teachers sharing with the students exactly what they will be working toward over the course of a lesson or unit.

Learning Targets

Teachers present achievement goals through student friendly learning targets (Moss, Brookhart, & Long, 2011; Stiggins, 2007; Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005). Student friendly learning targets clearly state for students what to learn, how deeply to learn it, and exactly how to demonstrate their new learning (Moss et al, 2011). An example of a learning target would be: I can explain with at least four facts, the difference between an alpha and omega wolf. Sharing learning targets with students helps empower students to become self-regulated, highly motivated, intentional learners (Moss et al., 2011; Stiggins & DuFour, 2009). This type of assessment for learning strategy can be used as a form of communication with students about their learning (Stiggins, 2007).
Formative Assessment

Formative assessment practices are a form of assessment for learning. Formative assessment includes constant assessment during instruction, which provides both teachers and students with clear insight into student performance in relation to the learning target (Brookhart, Moss, & Long, 2010). In addition to the ongoing assessment, teachers provide specific feedback to students related to the learning target. Together both teachers and students interpret student work, behavior, and progress in relation to their achievement. Students become familiar with taking an active part in assessing their own work. The teacher's feedback is timely, descriptive, and includes suggestions for next steps in achieving the learning target. The teacher refrains from judgment because the purpose is to empower students not discourage them (Brookhart, et.al, 2010; Stiggins, 2007; Stiggins & DuFour, 2009).

Brookhart et. al (2010) conducted a three month qualitative study of six remedial reading teachers within a rural school district in a mid-Atlantic state. Two of the teachers taught extended day kindergarten and the remaining four taught primary students. As a part of the study the remedial reading teachers attended a professional development on formative assessment and were then asked to experiment with formative assessment and reflect on their practice through an online bulletin board. All six teachers showed professional growth and the first grade at-risk students showed increased reading readiness (Brookhart et. al, 2010). The teachers reported seeing improvement of student motivation and feelings of control (Brookhart
et. al, 2010). Another theme that arose through analysis of the data was that as the six
teachers began to feel more comfortable with incorporating formative assessment into
their teaching, they began to consciously incorporate the formative assessment
practices regularly into their reading programs (Brookhart et. al, 2010).

Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Students identified with ADHD exhibit symptoms of impulsivity, inattention,
and high levels of hyper-activity (Raggi & Chronis, 2006). These deficits in turn
affect their academics negatively. Many students have deficits in areas such as
working memory, executive functioning, peer relationships, study skills,
comprehension of material, and completion of multi-step tasks (Jakobson & Kikas,
2007; Raggi & Chronis, 2006; Wang, Bernas, & Eberhard, 2004).

Academic Performance

Frazier, Youngstorm, Glutting, and Watkins (2007) conducted a statistical
analysis of previous research found in journal articles related to ADHD, and found
that the overall results from previous studies indicated that students with ADHD
performed significantly lower on academic achievement tasks than those in a control
group who did not have ADHD. Jakobson and Kikas (2007) conducted a study in
which they compared three subgroups: students with ADHD; students with ADHD
combined with a learning disability, and a control group. The results showed that students with ADHD performed significantly lower than the control group on tasks that required sophisticated cognitive integration, working memory, visual processing, and verbal reasoning. The findings suggest that educators may need to individualize instruction to best meet the needs of students labeled with ADHD (Jakobson & Kikas, 2007).

Wu, Anderson, and Castiello (2006) found that when students with ADHD were compared to a control group, they exhibited poor state regulation and underarousal. This in turn led to low motivation and inability to focus on the task at hand (Wu et al., 2006). Students with ADHD responses tended to be slow, variable, and inaccurate as the tasks within the study became increasingly demanding (Wu et al., 2006).

Unfortunately, students with ADHD tend to fall short academically, which in turn may lead to retention, special education placement, suspensions, and possibly even job failure in the future (Raggi & Chronis, 2006). Educators can pave the way for success with students, but they need opportunities for support structures in their school as well as opportunities for ongoing professional development.
Common Knowledge Among Teachers

The special education teacher participants in Nowacek and Mamlin’s (2007) study expressed the importance of utilizing support teams within the buildings, accessing the professional library in the school as well as students’ cumulative records, and communicating with previous teachers. Interestingly enough, even though the teachers were able to identify resources to use, they lacked significant modifications within their teaching of students with ADHD (Nowacek & Mamlin, 2007). Most of the observed elementary and adolescent teachers preferred to utilize modifications that took the least amount of preparation time; the researchers also found inconsistency in the modifications. For example, teachers stated that they allowed opportunities for movement, gave shortened work time or shortened assignments, dictated their papers, or offered copies of textbook pages to reduce the amount of copying. Nowacek and Mamlin (2007) concluded that these modifications required very little individualization, little to no systematic implementation or consistency, and they did not require differentiated instruction. Their results also indicated that teachers felt as if they need further training in working with students with special needs.

Academic Support

Developing appropriate instructional adaptations and modifications for students with ADHD is important in helping them succeed academically (Raggi &
Chronis, 2006). Treatment of the behavior problems associated with students with ADHD includes stimulant medication, clinical behavioral therapy, and classroom behavioral intervention (Raggi & Chronis, 2006). These evidence-based approaches are successful in addressing the behaviors of students with ADHD, yet they do not specifically address the academic struggles the students face. Some instructional strategies that have been identified as possible options for addressing the academic needs of students with ADHD include peer tutoring, strategy instruction, computer assisted instruction, scaffolding with verbal and hand gestures, and chunking tasks into smaller, more manageable assignments (Raggi & Chronis, 2006; Wang et al., 2004).

**Self-Monitoring**

In a review of previous studies Raggi and Chronis (2006) found that on-task behavior and academic accuracy can be significantly increased with peer tutoring and guidance in self-monitoring techniques. Peer-tutoring is a strategy that allows all students to support one another in highly structured partner activities such as buddy reading or writing conferences. (Raggi & Chronis, 2006). Self monitoring includes a set of procedures where students set their own goals for on-task behavior and then they are responsible for monitoring their progress towards the goal and rewarding themselves when the goal is reached (Raggi & Chronis, 2006).
Harris, Friedlander, Saddler, Frizzelle, and Graham’s (2005) study of six third, fourth, and fifth grade students explored the effects of self-monitoring of attention versus self-monitoring of behavior in relation to spelling study behaviors. Self monitoring of attention required the participants to assess, evaluate, and record specific behaviors related to attention; for example students could use a checklist to monitor on-task behavior (Harris et al., 2005). Self monitoring of performance taught participants to assess, evaluate, and record specific aspects of their academic performance; for example number of spelling words written correctly (Harris et al., 2005). Both self- monitoring techniques led to improvement of on-task behaviors and spelling study habits. Further analysis showed that self-monitoring of attention resulted in remarkably higher improvement in four out of the six students’ spelling study behaviors (Harris et al., 2005).

Wang et al. (2004) found that the strategy of using hand gestures in combination with verbal gestures during guided instruction with students who have ADHD helped to increase attention to the task, student response, and student success rate. Hand gestures such as pointing, thumbs up for encouragement, and motions to indicate shapes or motions of objects were used while forty five seven year olds attempted to solve three sets of Tangram-like puzzles. The results suggest that additional, concrete resources such as hand gestures in addition to verbal instruction may be a key factor in the success of students with ADHD. It is evident that students with ADHD required extra support through various means.
It may be important to point out that although students with ADHD struggle in many areas as learners, there is also research that supports areas of academic strength. For example, Ek, Fernell, Westerlund, Holmberb, Olsson, and Gillberg (2007) administered a series of cognitive tests including Full Scale (FSIQ), verbal (VIQ), performance (PIQ) IQs, and Kaufman factor scores to forty-two students with ADHD and one hundred two students with milder attention problems and/or behavioral and learning difficulties. Through analysis of the data, Ek et al. (2007) discovered that students with mild attention and/or learning problems had very similar cognitive profiles. Results and analysis revealed that both subgroups demonstrated strengths in areas such as logical thinking, reasoning, and common sense (Ek et al., 2007).

**Reading Instruction for Students with Special Needs**

Students with ADHD typically have academic struggles (Frazier, Youngstrom, Glutting, & Watkins, 2007). The results from Frazier et al.’s (2007) study suggest that students with ADHD struggle more in reading than in spelling and math. The outcomes imply that because math and spelling tasks typically involve the checking of an individual’s work, students with ADHD are able to recognize and correct errors automatically. Frazier et al. (2007) propose that the reading process is performed automatically without a formal task of checking one’s work. It is through this conclusion that Frazier et. al (2007) supports the idea that the typical symptoms of
ADHD including inattention and impulsivity negatively impact the reading performance of students with ADHD.

Cains’ (2000) quantitative research study sought to evaluate and make use of teacher perceptions of students with ADHD. Cains collected data through one hundred sixty-six questionnaires completed by educators who had taught or teach students with ADHD. According to the data, teachers report that poor literacy was a significant concern for their students with ADHD (Cains, 2000).

**Guided Reading**

There are many types of reading instruction including basal programs, phonics, whole language, and individualized instruction such as guided reading (Eduger, 2010). Guided reading is a widely used instructional strategy that has been proven to significantly improve children’s reading abilities (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009). When using the strategy of guided reading, the teacher attempts to individualize instruction and work within a child’s zone of proximal development; meaning instruction should be challenging but not to the point of frustration (Vygotsky, 1978). Grouping of students for guided reading is to be flexible and dependent on the skills or strategies to be taught (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009).

The ways in which teachers facilitate guided reading groups is very important. In Hulan’s (2010) observational study of three guided reading groups at the third
grade level, she discovered student responses to questions pertaining to the text were more in-depth and higher-level when the discussion was student-led versus teacher-led. Consequently, Hulan also found that the level of student responses along with opportunities to think deeply about the text is hindered when guided reading sessions are too highly controlled by teacher posed questions.

Skidmore, Perez-Parent and Arnfield (2003), investigated the effects of teacher-student dialogue within guided reading groups in the fifth grade found similar results. The results revealed that most of the questions posed by teachers resulted in very confined and narrow responses. There was little opportunity for students to discuss their own opinions and explore the text in their own words (Skidmore et al, 2003). In order to promote higher level thinking, the researchers suggested that it may be beneficial to allow more student-led discussion of text.

Guided reading lends itself well to differentiation within the classroom. For example, Tobin and McInnes (2008) chose to construct case studies of ten classrooms through use of observational field notes, video recordings of classroom practices, audio recordings, and student samplings. They were interested in the ways teachers went about differentiating their literacy instruction. In one case study they found that the teacher differentiated her reading instruction through shared reading and writing, leveled literacy centers, and guided reading. She developed reading groups based on need, putting those who need the highest intervention in smaller groups to better meet their needs. Her guided reading instruction consisted of before, during, and after
reading components. These approaches were beneficial in meeting the needs of her struggling readers.

Small Group Reading Instruction

In their study, Bonfiglio, Daly, Persampierim, and Andersen (2006) looked specifically at the benefits of specifically prescribed small group reading instruction. The results showed that when small group reading instruction included a taped preview of the text, choral reading, and a word drill error correction technique, student response and engagement increased the most. It was noted by the researchers that the prescribed instructional techniques were custom-made for the selected students, which may have contributed to their success, and supports the idea that students benefit from instruction that is carefully thought out and tailored to their needs.

Comprehension Strategies

Reading comprehension instruction is an important piece to effective reading instruction (Antoniou & Souvignier, 2007; Roberts, Torgesen, Boardman, & Scammacca, 2008; Wooley, 2010). Many struggling readers in late elementary and into high school have difficulties in comprehension of written text (Antoniou &
Souvignier, 2007). It is important that students receive good first teaching in order to build the necessary skills for deep processing of the text (Roberts et al., 2008).

In their study of seventy three students with learning disabilities between grades five and eight, Antoniou and Souvignier (2007), examined the effectiveness of a reading strategy program containing reading and self-regulation strategies on reading comprehension, reading-strategy knowledge, and reading self-efficacy. Teachers who implemented the reading strategy program taught students both cognitive and metacognitive strategies with both fictional and non-fictional texts. The self-regulation component of the study included sharing with students a reading plan along with a checklist. Teachers gradually released the responsibility of developing and monitoring the reading plan to the students. A follow up analysis of the reading program concluded that the student participants made considerable gains in reading comprehension, reading-strategy knowledge, and self-efficacy (Antoniou & Souvignier, 2007). The results show that when explicit reading comprehension programs are paired with self regulation strategies, students with learning disabilities have increased success in their abilities to generalize their learning and apply strategies to new academics.

Roberts et al. (2008) discuss the importance of reading comprehension instruction, and report that students who have poor comprehension of text either do not monitor their reading or they lack the skills necessary to monitor their misconceptions. The researchers suggest that teachers intervene and explicitly teach
especially older struggling readers strategies for self-monitoring of comprehension and also how to repair misunderstandings (Roberts et. al). Some key components of reading comprehension instruction include building background knowledge, integrating the use of graphic organizers to support text implications, comprehension monitoring strategies, and synthesizing. In order to improve success of students, Roberts et al. (2007) suggest careful scaffolding of strategy use as well as providing students with opportunities for cooperative learning in small group discussions of texts. The ideas for instruction of reading comprehension align with the methodologies promoted by expeditionary learning environments.

Summary

A common theme across the research literature is that students and teachers must work together to achieve success. Educators need guidance with ways to meet the complex needs of learners. Perhaps teachers need to utilize the strengths these students possess to help compensate for the areas of weakness. Additionally, students with ADHD require differentiated instruction to meet their needs, especially in the area of reading comprehension. I believe that teachers need opportunities to practice specific modification strategies to ensure transfer into their practice. Teaching reading comprehension skills and strategies is important when helping students read texts for deeper meaning.
An EL approach to teaching and learning encourages teachers to set high expectations for themselves and their students. To support progress towards high achievement both teachers and students must work together. Assessment for learning strategies supports collaboration between teacher and student.
Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures

I designed this qualitative study to investigate how I could use learning targets within my reading instruction with students who exhibit behaviors of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The study took place at the current school in which I work as a fifth grade special education teacher. During the course of the study, I used learning targets as a way to focus my students’ attention to what exactly they will be working on during small group reading lessons. Students reflected on their progress towards the learning target(s) after each lesson. To gain further insight into each student and the impact learning targets has on his/her reading comprehension I conducted an open ended interview with each student. I used the collected observation and interview data to create a case study of each student participant. Throughout the study, I analyzed the collected data and searched for emerging themes and patterns in relation to student behaviors and skills related to reading comprehension. As a special education teacher and possible future reading specialist, the information gained through this study is extremely influential in my teaching philosophy and my work with future students.

Research Questions

- What happens when students with attention deficits reflect on personalized reading comprehension goals?
- How does the reflection process impact self-regulation for each student?
Participants

I invited three (one female and two males) of my fifth grade students to participate in the study. All three students are African-American and from low-income families. I asked the students to participate in this study because they exhibited symptoms of ADHD and had difficulties using deeper level reading comprehension strategies such as making inferences, drawing conclusions, and synthesizing. Two of the participating students were male, Jack and David, and one was female, Grace. All three students had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which indicated that they were to be placed in an integrated co-teaching environment in order to receive services from both the general and special education teacher. Jack and David also received speech services two times a week for thirty minutes. The three students also had an Academic Intervention Plan (AIS) in place to provide them with additional support in English Language Arts (ELA). Grace read approximately at a fourth grade level, which is one grade level below their fifth grade level, while Jack and David's reading level was close to grade level standards. A little more than half of our class was reading on or above grade level, another quarter of our class was reading one grade level behind, and there were a small percentage of students who were reading two or more grade levels below fifth grade.

The participants had been my students at one time or another for a total of one and half years. Jack and David were retained last year when I was their fifth grade special education teacher. Grace was in my third grade class two years ago when I
was a general education teacher. I had a positive rapport with all three of these students as well as thorough knowledge of their strengths and needs as learners. They were comfortable with conversing and interacting with me on a daily basis.

The students were in my integrated co-teaching fifth grade classroom, which is located in an urban school in western New York. Together with the general education teacher, I deliver instruction throughout the day in all subject areas. The classroom consisted of twenty four students, including nine students with IEPs who I serviced. The students who I provided special education services to during the study had an array of special needs, including autism, learning disabilities, and other health impairment (OHI). Student who have ADHD are typically labeled with OHI.

**Context of the Study**

I conducted this study in a separate location from my classroom. I chose a room with minimal auditory and visual distractions. The reason for this was to maximize the potential for on-task behavior and optimize use of the thirty minute lesson framework. The room where each lesson was taught had a small table, rug, and easel with chart paper. Students sat either at the table or on the rug for explicit instruction, guided practice, and independent practice. My co-teacher and I planned on a weekly basis when to incorporate the thirty minute lesson into our schedule. We chose times where both my absence and the students’ absence did not interfere with new and important instruction. Lessons occurred in the first half hour of the day or
the first half hour after lunch, as these were times of review. The instruction that I
delivered during the study complimented the current or past content related to our
wolf expedition. The skills and strategies I taught in the lessons aligned with the
students’ IEPs, AIS plans, and the fifth grade New York State standards.

My Positionality as the Researcher

I am currently completing my master’s degree at The College at Brockport,
SUNY in childhood literacy. I hold six New York State initial teaching certificates:
early childhood (birth- grade 2), childhood (grades 1-6) and middle childhood
education (grades 5-9) with additional certifications to teach students with disabilities
at each level. I have worked in western New York within the public school system for
the past three years. During these three years, I have taught at the same urban school
in co-teaching environments. One year, I was a general education third grade teacher,
and for the past two years I have been a fifth grade special education teacher.

Teaching within co-teaching settings has given me extensive experience
working with students with special needs. I have worked with students with autism,
emotional disorders, other health impairments, learning disabilities, and speech
impairments. I firmly believe that differentiating instruction is essential for student
success. It is through the differentiation process that I can work within a student’s
zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). This enables me to provide
instruction that is attainable for all students without causing frustration. With the right
amount of support from me and gradual release of responsibility to the student, students can and will become independent learners.

I believe that all students are capable of being effective readers who think critically about the text and as a result enjoy reading for all it has to offer. Fountas and Pinnell (2009) described the importance of providing good first teaching. I, too, believe that first and foremost, that I must provide quality instruction that includes a balance of rich literacy experiences. Good first teaching includes mini-lessons, shared reading and writing, guided reading and writing, independent reading and writing, and phonics instruction. There should be a balance of whole group, small group, and individual instruction. I believe I must know my students’ strengths in order to address their needs. Through a balanced approach, I am able to provide instruction that is tailored to the needs of my students. I believe this maximizes student success in all literacy endeavors.

Data Collection

I collected data during each thirty-forty minute reading lesson, two times a week for six weeks. The instruments I used to collect the data include audiotapes, field notes, student rubrics, and student interviews. These four instruments allowed me to cross examine data from multiple sources and create the most holistic case study of each student.
Audio Tapes

I audio recorded each of my small group reading lessons. I later transcribed the audio recordings verbatim. The transcripts provided a written record of the students' discussions with each other and with me as well as the students' comments and reflections related to the learning targets.

Field Notes

During each lesson, I recorded field notes of the students’ behaviors, body language, affects and other observations that may not be captured through an audio recording. I recorded my observations on an observation field notes sheet (see Appendix A).

Student Self Assessments

The third instrument I used to gather data will be student reflection rubrics (see Appendix B). After each lesson, I asked the participants to reflect on their progress towards the learning target using a student friendly rubric. This rubric served as a tool the participants used to self-monitor improvement, and provide evidence of growth over time.
Students Interviews

Lastly, I conducted and audio taped an interview with each participant (see Appendix C). The interviews provided a window into the minds of the participants, revealing how they understand the use of the learning targets and the progress they had made throughout the five weeks. It encouraged the participants to share their ideas and opinions related to learning targets as an instructional tool. I kept the interviews short, approximately five to ten minutes, and the questions open ended. I encouraged each participant to be honest and to share as much as he/she feels comfortable.

Data Analysis

The four instruments I used to collect data provided insightful information for a case study of each participant. Each participant had a compilation of reflection rubrics that served as a record of growth as well as a personal interview. I read and reread the transcripts, generated codes and then themes. I coded the comments made by students to see which reading comprehension strategy they were using throughout each lesson. For example, if they made an inference I coded it with an i or if they made a prediction I coded it with a p. I also coded each comment to reflect whether it was in response to my questioning or whether it was independently shared without help from me. In addition to reading and re-reading each lesson transcript, I collected
specific information about each student from each lesson in my field notes to supplement what was not captured through the audio recordings. I reviewed the notes weekly to see patterns in behaviors emerging for the individual student and also to see how the students were moving forward in relationship to the learning targets. This helped guide my lesson planning from lesson to lesson. After the first week I looked across the previous weeks of field notes to observe change over time. I also looked at each student’s self-reflection sheets weekly to gain insight into the student's perspective. I read and reread each piece of data to search for emerging patterns and themes. I transcribed each interview verbatim and then read and reread the transcript, coding the transcript for patterns or themes as well.

**Time Schedule**

I began collecting data in the month of April and continued for the next six weeks. I conducted two reading lessons a week for the first five weeks and then conducted the interviews in the sixth week. I analyzed the data and crafted each case study during the summer of 2011.
Procedures of Study

Lesson Format

Each of the lessons I carried out followed a similar format. First, I created student friendly learning target(s). Then I planned instruction to best support the chosen learning target. At the start of each lesson I presented the learning target(s) and explicitly modeled how to meet the learning target. I then referred to the learning targets throughout the lesson by re-reading, pointing, and discussing the target. The learning target(s) were visually accessible to each student throughout every lesson. At the end of each lesson, the students reflected on their progress towards the target(s) and set personalized goals on a student friendly rubric. After the first lesson, I used the observational field notes and student reflection sheets to devise the next lesson, a process that continued until the end of the study.

Lesson One

To begin the study, I created an initial, thirty-forty minute small group reading lesson focused on making inferences based on the students’ reading goals from their IEP and/or AIS plans as well as areas of reading comprehension weaknesses determined through their most recent Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). The DRA is a district wide reading assessment that was developed by classroom teachers along with Joetta Bever in Ohio between 1988 and 1996. It is a tool that is
used to assess a variety of reading behaviors across a multitude of dimensions. Specifically, the DRA assesses reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension (Beaver, 2001).

For the first lesson, I used the book, *Wolves: A One Whole Day Book*, written by Jim Arnosky (2001). I chose to develop this lesson as well as all the other lessons to compliment the content being taught in the students’ current spring expedition on wolves. The learning target for lesson one was: I can use my schema about wolves plus the details in the text to make an inference.

**Lesson Two**

For lesson two, I decided to use pictures instead of text. The learning target was: I can use my schema about wolves plus the details in the picture to make an inference. I also wanted to encourage discussion amongst the group so I included the following learning target as well: I can talk about the pictures with the people in our group to help me make inferences.

**Lesson Three**

Based on the success of the student participants in lesson two, I decided to reintroduce making inferences with text. I chose the book *The Eyes of Gray Wolf*, by Jonathan London (1993). The learning targets for lesson three were: I can use my
schema about wolves plus the details in the text to make an inference and I can talk
about the text with the people in our group to help me make inferences.

Lesson Four

In lesson four, I wanted the students to continue to practice making inferences
as well as ask questions throughout the text to aide in self-monitoring of
comprehension. I used the text The Call of the Wolves, by Jim Murphy (1989). The
learning targets for lesson four included: I can use my schema about wolves plus the
details in the text to make an inference, I can talk about the text with the people in our
group to help me make an inference, and I can ask thoughtful questions about what is
happening in the text.

Lesson Five

The students had some difficulty forming questions on their own during
lesson four. I Therefore I decided to give students only one reading comprehension
learning target to focus on: I can ask thoughtful questions about what is happening in
the text. I continued to use the text Call of the Wolves, by Jim Murphy (1989). I also
decided to give each student their own personalized learning target. Grace’s
personalized learning target was: I can stop, think, and gather my ideas before I share.
Jack’s personalized learning target was: I can add my wonderful ideas to the
comments that others make. David’s personalized learning target was: I can participate by sharing my ideas throughout the whole lesson. Each of the personalized learning targets was chosen because to attend to the impulsive or inattentive behaviors that I had seen interfere with their learning in the previous lessons.

Lesson Six

Lesson six was greatly impacted by the New York State English Language Arts Testing. I designed this lesson to parallel the test preparation that I was being asked to do. Therefore, the learning target for lesson six was: I can write notes in the margins of an article and I can show I am thinking while reading by coding my text with the symbols from the key. Text coding is a strategy we had been working on within the classroom in preparation for the test. I modeled how to meet the learning target using the article *Homecomings Mean Big Changes in Yellowstone: Wolves Mean More Willows, and Willows Mean More Wildlife!* by Kristen Galloway (2003). The students read the following article *Wolf Research: So Many Ways to Learn About Wolves* by Erin Alberts (2005).

Lesson Seven

In lesson seven I wanted students to work on the reading comprehension strategy: making predictions. The learning target was: I can make thoughtful
predictions about what will happen next based on the story so far. I used the text *Who Speaks for Wolf: A Native American Learning Story*, by Paula Underwood (1994). I also gave each student the same personalized learning target as stated in lesson five above to continue to work towards.

**Lesson Eight**

For lesson eight, I continued to use the text *Who Speaks for Wolf: A Native American Learning Story*, by Paula Underwood (1994). During lesson seven the students were frustrated with the text and they were giving up very easily. Therefore I decided the learning targets for lesson eight would be: I can make thoughtful predictions about what will happen next based on the story so far and I can try my best while reading; if I don’t understand the first time, I will read it again; I will not give up. This learning target was important because I knew that each of the students had the capability to navigate through the text but they needed to believe in themselves.

**Lessons Nine and Ten**

I continued to uses the text *Who Speaks for Wolf: A Native American Learning Story*, by Paula Underwood (1994) in lessons nine and ten. I decided that I wanted the students to work on using an array of reading comprehension strategies.
while reading. Therefore the learning target used for lessons nine and ten was: I can make inferences, ask questions, and make predictions and/or connections to help me understand the story better. In addition, I also gave each student their personalized learning target again.

**Culminating Interview**

During the sixth week of this study I interviewed each student to gain insight into his/her thoughts and feelings as a learner in relation to learning targets.

**Criteria for Trustworthiness**

As an educator and now researcher, I pride myself on professionalism and truthfulness. While conducting my research, I carried out my study in the most non-bias frame of mind possible. I put aside the personal bonds I had with each student in order to focus on the data collection and data analysis from a researcher’s perspective.

I believe that the students chosen for this study represent the norm for students who have ADHD because they present all the symptoms of ADHD: impulsivity, hyper-activity, and lack of attention. I have seen these symptoms negatively impact the learning of each of the prospective student participants throughout my time working with them.
Throughout the analysis process I triangulated the data collected from audiotapes, field notes, student rubrics, and student interviews; therefore it is my belief that the results are transferable to the general population of students with ADHD. I attempted to increase the validity of my study through persistent observations and collection of multiple data sources twice a week during each thirty minute lesson. The findings of my study also have great dependability because I consistently explained with clear detail the process of this study each step of the way.

My participation in this study was beneficial to the validity because the results of this study are of importance to both me and the school I work at. The school in which I work at focuses its professional development activities on assessment for learning strategies including learning targets, which is a large part of the pedagogy of my school and Expeditionary Learning. The results of the study have impacted my beliefs of how I will tailor future reading instruction, especially for my students with special needs. It was also very important to me that I explore the expectations from my school of incorporating assessment for learning practices into my teaching.

**Limitations**

As with all studies, this study is bound by several limitations. One limitation is that the participants were students who I had known and taught for almost two
years. These personal connections to the participants may have inadvertently led to my own biases.

It should also be mentioned that I am the teacher as well as the researcher in this study, which is a limitation. It may have been a limitation that each participant was cognoscente that they were a part of my graduate research study, which may have altered their effort positively or negatively.

Another limitation is that I asked my student participants to complete a self-reflection after each lesson. Due to their age and desire to be successful in school, the students may or may not have reflected honestly and accurately. As a culminating piece to this study, I interviewed each student about his/her opinions about learning targets. Again, the student participants’ statements may have been impacted by their desire to say what they think I wanted them to say rather than what they really believe.

This research study was conducted before, during, and after the administration of the New York State English Language Arts and Mathematics testing. The anxiety and pressure of the tests may have impacted the student participants. This may have had a negative impact on their attention and motivation during the study.
Conclusions

I conducted this qualitative research study within the school in which I work with three of my current students who exhibit behaviors of ADHD. I conducted a series of reading comprehension lessons while also implementing learning targets and student reflections. I collected data through the use of audio tapes, field notes, student reflection rubrics, and student interviews. I developed a case study of each of the three student participants. Through careful analysis, I uncovered the impact that learning targets and reflection had on the reading comprehension of each of the three student participants. The information I gathered through this study is important to my future as an educator, reading specialist, and researcher.
Chapter Four: Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate how reflecting on learning targets impacted the reading comprehension of students who have attention deficits. The study took place in my fifth grade classroom, which is part of an expeditionary leaning urban school located in a medium-sized city in western New York. Three of my fifth grade students—Grace, Jack, and David engaged in a series of ten small group reading lessons and a culminating interview over a six week time period. The students had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The three student participants are only three of the nine students with IEP students whom I serviced in the 2010-2011 school year.

The research questions that I explored through this study were:

1. What happens when students with attention deficits reflect on personalized reading comprehension goals?

2. How does the reflection process impact self-regulation for each student?

I began each lesson with a short explicit model of how to meet the learning target, followed by guided practice of meeting the target, and then encouraged the students to meet the target independently. The model, guided practice, and independent practice were completed with the same text. All of the students in the reading group received a copy of the text.
Throughout the study, I collected data through audio recordings of each reading lesson, observational field notes of behaviors and other notices during each lesson, student reflection sheets, and a culminating student interview. I read and re-read each piece of data in order to fully analyze the collected information for each student. I then took the information and developed a holistic case study of each student participant.

Grace

Grace is an eleven year old African American female. She has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and is labeled with Other Health Impairment (OHI) due to her ADHD. Grace has attended the school in which I work since she was in kindergarten. In first grade, Grace was retained because she was not meeting state standards. I was her third grade teacher, and I am now her fifth grade special education teacher. Grace’s mother passed away when she was born and her father is not a part of her life. She has been raised by her aunt who is very supportive and active in her life.

Grace is known for being a helper in the classroom. She goes out of her way to ask teachers and fellow classmates if she can assist them throughout the day. At times her eagerness to help interferes with completing her own work because she is concerned with being a “helper” to those around her. I find that I regularly have to prompt and remind Grace to begin and complete her work especially during
independent work time. Most of the time she takes initiative to seek adult help and guidance when she is confused or needs assistance throughout the school day. She is eager to be successful and is sometimes impulsive when participating in small and whole group lessons by quickly blurting out her thoughts.

Math is a subject where Grace feels confident and successful. Reading is an area where she sometimes became frustrated and even more impulsive because she really strives to do well. According to the results of the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Grace was reading at a middle fourth grade level during this study. As an eleven year old fifth grader, to meet fifth grade standards, she should have been reading at a middle fifth grade level.

Lesson 1

The first lesson’s learning target was: I can use my schema about wolves plus the details in the text to make an inference. I used the book *One Whole Day: Wolves* written by Jim Arnosky (2001) throughout the lesson for modeling, guided practice, and independent practice. The students had been learning a lot of information about wolves which aided them in their ability to make inferences. I also encouraged the students to use other reading strategies as well such as predicting, questioning, connecting, and reflecting; but the main emphasis and learning target revolved around using their schema about wolves plus details in the text or pictures to make inferences.
At the beginning of the lesson, when I asked the students if they knew what an inference was, Grace responded with, “An inference is a prediction,” which showed me that she had some misconceptions about inferences. To help her clarify her understanding, I used a real world example to demonstrate making and inference. I picked up a beat up looking tennis ball in the classroom and together as a group the three students and I discussed the details or information we could gather just from looking at the ball. Grace provided details such as, “It looks terrible” and “It looks ripped up.” I then modeled through a think aloud how in my schema I know that toys that are old can sometimes look beaten up and dirty, so therefore I could infer the ball was old and had been used or played with a lot by someone.

As the lesson progressed I had to guide the students towards making inferences. With prompting, Grace was able to make inferences. For example, at one point in the book the wolf was digging and I asked Grace to make an inference as to why the wolf would be digging. She responded, “because the wolf wants to eat and it can smell something underground. I know wolves can smell up to five feet underground.” The book never told the reader why the wolf was actually digging, as it was a minor detail in the story, but this example shows that with guidance, Grace was able to use information from the text along with a piece of information about wolves from her schema to make an inference.

Grace had some difficulty making inferences independently. For example, she attempted to infer that one of the wolves in the book was the omega or lowest ranking
wolf because the wolf had gone off by itself in the story, but she had neglected to consider an important piece of information the author had included, which was the wolf in the story was the lead wolf. This piece of information makes her inference impossible to be true because the omega is considered the lowest in the hierarchy within a pack.

Lesson 2

For the second lesson, I decided to use only pictures as a way to help the students practice making inferences. The learning target was: I can use my schema about wolves plus the details in the picture to make an inference. There was also a second learning target: I can talk about the pictures with the people in our group to help me make inferences. There was one picture that showed two wolves whose muzzles were touching (see Figure 4.1), Grace attempted to make the inference that the two wolves were mating. When I prompted her to explain her reasoning behind
this she replied, “In my schema. I know it looks like they are mating.” I then
prompted her to tell me more and she said, “Cause they (wolves) lick each other and
they like cuddle up and stuff when they are doing courtship.” This piece of
background knowledge about wolves was taught a few weeks earlier in class. With
prompting, Grace was able explain to me how she arrived at her original inference.
This may be related to oral language development and her comfort level in expressing
ideas orally.

All three students needed some prompting and coaching from me to listen and
interact with one another in meeting the second learning target. With reminders about
the learning target, Grace began to actively listen to her two group members while
they were talking. She began to turn her body and face the person speaking and
comment or add her opinions to their comments.

Lesson 3

for the third lesson the text and pictures lend itself well to making inferences.
Jonathan London’s writing style leaves room for interpretation therefore supporting
the learning target for making inferences. The learning targets were similar to the
second lesson: I can use my schema about wolves plus the details in the text to make
an inference and I can talk about the text with the people in our group to help me
make inferences. During this lesson, I noticed that Grace began to independently see
that strong inferences were the combination of schema and text detail. She began to support her inferences by explaining her thinking before I even asked. For example, Grace made the inference, “I infer the group of wolves is not the wolf’s pack because the text said it sensed danger and so then it must be another pack because wolves that are in the same pack are not scared of each other.”

Lesson 4

I used the text The Call of the Wolves, by Jim Murphy (1989) for lessons four and five because its story line fits well with our fifth grade wolf expedition. It is written from the perspective of the wolf which allowed the student participants an opportunity to apply the non-fiction knowledge they had been learning within the classroom to this fictional piece of text. The learning targets for lesson four included: I can ask thoughtful questions about what is happening in the text, I can use my schema about wolves plus the details in the text to make an inference, and I can talk about the text with the people in our group to help me make an inference.

At the beginning of the lesson after I shared the learning targets with the students, Grace asked a clarifying question about the third learning target. She asked, “So, are we supposed to talk to each other and say what happens?” To me, Grace’s question implies that she was actively thinking about what is expected of her and she was taking the initiative before the lesson began to clarify her understanding.
Throughout the lesson, I encouraged the students to ask questions that they thought would be answered in the text. It was evident through Grace’s discussions during the lesson as well as her reflection sheet that she was confused about how to form questions related to the text. Most of her statements were formed as predictions rather than questions. For example, at one point in the lesson I asked, “Do any of you have any thoughtful questions right now?” Grace responded with, “the wolf and the caribou are going to get shot.” When I asked her if it was a question, she responded with, “I think that…uhhhh,” which I then prompted with, “Think of our question words.” She was then able to say, “Will uh, will the illegally hunters shoot the wolf or caribou?” As we continued to read the text, Grace discovered that wolf was able to escape and run away from the aerial hunters. At the end of the lesson we stopped in the middle of the book and Grace independently formed her own question, “Will he (the wolf) catch up to his family by jumping off the cliff?” This question was relevant to the story line and was accurately formed into a question.

Grace engaged in conversation with both Jack and David about the text. Towards the end of the lesson David asked, “Is he going to get shot?” Grace responded to this question by saying, “But it says right here that he got to a safe place. He could not get shot if he got to a safe place. I think that he might make it.” It is evident that she was listening to David’s question and she used the text to try to answer it.
Lesson 5

After lesson four, I looked over each student’s daily reflections and reflected on my teaching. Grace indicated on her reflection sheet that her goal was to “have great questions and reach my learning target by thinking of questions.” I wanted to provide the students with enough tools to meet the learning target, therefore for lesson five I decided to write question words such as: what, when, where, why, how, and why on cards for the students to reference. I also decided to reduce the number of learning targets from three to two because I wanted the students to focus on the reading comprehension strategy of asking questions without being pressured to make inferences as well. The two learning targets included: I can ask thoughtful questions about what is happening in the text and I can stop, think, and gather my wonderful ideas before I share. This was the first lesson that I decided to give Grace a personal learning target to work towards. The second learning target was a personal learning target designed specifically for Grace. I wanted her to refrain from impulse and to become mindful of the things she shared with the group. In the past, I had only verbally reminded Grace to do this.

The question cards appeared to be helpful for Grace. More than once during the lesson, I noticed that she looked to the cards and even picked a card up to remind herself to begin her questions with question words. She asked more questions during lesson five than in lesson four. Examples of some of her questions include, “How is the hurt wolf going to make it, like how is he going to survive mostly? “ What is he
thinking about, like is he thinking about being hurt or is he thinking about his family? and “Will the wolves (pause), well how should I put this, will the other pack run or move far away? For each of these questions, I observed Grace picking up the question card and looking at it before she stated her question. This strategy suggested to me that the cards helped her not only to form her questions but also that she was pausing to gather her thoughts and organize her thinking before she proceeded to form a well thought out question.

Lesson 6

I taught lesson six the week before the start of the English Language Arts (ELA) state test. Our school’s administration and literacy coach were placing emphasis on teachers to prepare the students for the test. Therefore, I decided to teach a lesson incorporating a test taking strategy we had been working on within the classroom. The strategy was text coding and taking notes in the margins of an article. The learning targets for this lesson was: I can write notes in the margins of the text to help me understand what I am reading and I can show I am thinking while reading by coding the my text with symbols using the key.

Together as a group we came up with a key, which included a star to represent a connection, a smiley face to represent a “cool fact”, an i to represent an inference, and a question mark to represent a question. I modeled how to write in the margin and text code using the article Homecomings Mean Big Changes in Yellowstone: Wolves
Mean More Willows, and Willows Mean More Wildlife! by Kirsten Galloway (2003). The students then worked towards meeting the learning target independently while reading Wolf Research: So Many Ways to Learn About Wolves by Erin Alberts (2005). I chose these two articles because their topics compliment our wolf expedition and also because they are similar in length to the types of non-fiction articles the students would see on their ELA exam.

During the lesson Grace referred to the key we made as a group and used it to code the text. After the students independently read the article, coded the text, and wrote in the margins, they discussed their thoughts about the article with one another. Grace shared a specific connection she had to the text:

This article reminds me of the listening we did the other day. It was about wolves and how to track them. This article says it is easier to spot a wolf in the winter and we learned that in the listening too.

When I asked her to infer why it is easier to spot a wolf in snow, she replied, “because the paw prints are easier to see in the snow.”

Looking at the article that Grace independently read and text coded, she independently used the key to indicate she was interacting with the text. She underlined facts that she thought were “cool” and drew a smiley face next to them, she wrote a the question, “Why do they want to know this stuff?” in the margin of the text, and she also drew six stars in the margins indicating that she had made a connection. She looked at these symbols on her article when discussing the text with
David and Jack. In the past when Grace has been asked to read non-fiction articles she would underline a lot of the text but have little notes or reminders about what she had read. Therefore this was an improvement to what I had seen in the past.

Lessons 7

For the seventh and eighth lessons I focused on making predictions because this is a strategy assessed on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). I used the book *Who Speaks for Wolf: A Native American Learning Story*, by Paula Underwood (1994). This book tied nicely into our expedition and also supported one of the guiding questions: How have people’s opinions and perceptions affected the wolf? The learning target for lessons seven and eight was: I can make thoughtful predictions about what will happen based on the story so far. I also gave Grace the same personal learning target to work on from the previous lesson: I can stop, think, and gather my wonderful ideas before I share. At the beginning of the lesson Grace attempted to make a prediction:

I think the legend it going to be about grandpa when he is young. Um what is it called. Never mind. Like when he was young. Well never mind. When the grandfather was young tell legends about wolves at the fire and you know I don’t really know.

In her attempt, Grace is vocal about being confused or unsure of her ability to make a prediction. As the lesson progressed she continued to attempt to make predictions. At one point I prompted the group to make predictions about what they thought would
happen next based on what we had read so far. Below is an excerpt from that portion of the lesson.

Me: Ok, let’s stop and share some of our predictions about what we think might happen next.
David: I think that he is going to see more wolves and he is going to let them live with him.
Grace: Wolf brother is going to turn into a wolf
Me: Does the text give us any clues to guide you in making that prediction?
Grace: Well not really, I just, well I don’t know why I just think that might happen
Me: Ok, well remember a thoughtful prediction should be based on what we have read so far from the text. It should make sense with how the story is going so far.

Here, it is evident that Grace understands that a prediction is a statement about what we think will happen next, yet she has not yet grasped the idea that the prediction needs to be closely related to the story line of the text.

During the independent work time of lesson seven, I noticed that all of the students, including Grace, appeared frustrated and they were making comments that the text was too difficult. All three students independently read three pages of the book and immediately looked up at me for guidance without attempting to problem solve on their own. I made note of this dependent behavior so that I could address it in the next lesson.

At the end of the seventh lesson, I asked the students to take their time during their reflections and please be specific in their goal setting on the self assessment. Grace spoke up and said, “Do you think this could be a learning target, too?” Her
question suggested to me how important the learning targets had become in setting a clear purpose for her learning.

**Lesson 8**

For the eighth lesson, we continued to read from the text, *Who Speaks for Wolf: A Native American Learning Story*, by Paula Underwood (1994). I wanted the students to realize that they have the tools and ability to navigate text that may seem confusing or difficult to them at first glance. Therefore I developed the following two learning targets for the lesson: I can make thoughtful predictions about what will happen based on the story so far, and I can try my best while reading, if I don’t understand the first time I read, I will read it again; I will not give up. Since I wanted the students to focus primarily on these two learning targets did not give Grace the learning target of stopping, thinking, and gathering her ideas like I had in the previous couple lessons. During the reflection part of this lesson, Grace asked if she could add a column on her paper and reflect on the learning target I had not given her. This suggested to me that she valued that learning target and believed she still needed to reflect on it in order to set goals for the next lesson. Also, on her reflection sheet she wrote, “One thing I could have done better today was making it sound better when I share my ideas. Next time I plan to make great predictions and gather more ideas before I share.” Grace’s written reflection showed me that she was consciously thinking about herself as a learner and that she was taking the time to reflect and set personal goals for herself as a learner.
Lessons 9 and 10

We continued to read from, *Who Speaks for Wolf: A Native American Learning Story*, by Paula Underwood (1994) in lessons nine and ten. I encouraged each student to use all of their comprehension strategies while reading. Before lesson nine, I reminded Grace of the goal she had set from lesson eight, which related to her learning targets for lesson nine, “One thing I could have done better today was making it sound better when I share my ideas. Next time I plan to make great predictions and gather more ideas before I share.” The students worked towards the same learning target for both lessons: I can make inferences, ask questions, make predictions, and/or connections to help me better understand the text better.

During lessons nine and ten Grace attempted to use all of the strategies. In lesson nine she made three predictions, two questions, two inferences and no connections. Then in lesson ten she made three predictions, three questions, four inferences, and one connection. In both of these lessons, making connections was the comprehension strategy she used least. This may have been because there were specific lessons and learning targets in lessons one through eight that centered on making inferences, predictions, and asking questions, but there were not specific lessons on making connections.

I also gave Grace the personalized learning target: I can stop, think, and gather my wonderful ideas before I share. I decided to present her with this learning target again in response to her comments about wanting to reflect on the target in lesson
eight even though it was not a learning target I had given her. There is evidence that she was trying to reach this goal. For example, in lesson nine she said, “After all think I think…wait, hold on, let me gather. I think that brother wolf will come with his wolves, it seems like brother wolf is like a wolf.”

**Interview**

I conducted an interview with Grace at the end of the ten lessons (see Appendix C). Her responses gave me a glimpse into what her opinions and thoughts were toward learning targets and the self-reflection process. She shared with me that she believed the learning target was a goal she needed to reach and that it was important to know the learning target because it “told me what was going to happen and what I needed to reach so I could meet it.”

Through our conversation I Grace stated, “I felt grumpy doing some (of the reflections) but then I started to understand what I needed to do to help me reach the goal.” According to Grace, she would liked to have learning targets for each lesson “because it helps me to understand what I am about to do and how I should reach the goal without giving up.”

When I asked Grace what reading comprehension skills or strategies she felt she improved on she responded by sharing:
At first I couldn’t put my questions together and I wasn’t good at predictions. I know I am better at them because I reflected about it and now I take my time and I gather my thoughts and the question cards helped. Some learning targets were hard and in the beginning it was hard, but I got better and read the learning targets over and over and they helped me.

My interview with Grace helped me realize how important the use of the learning targets and the self reflection process had become to her as a learner.

**Grace’s Self-Reflection and Goal Setting**

After each of the ten lessons, I encouraged Grace to engage in self reflection by filling out a reflection sheet (see Appendix B). The reflection sheet included a rubric where she tracked her progress in relationship to the learning targets. She also was asked to make statements about what she did well, what she could have done better, and to set a goal for the next lesson. Looking across her self-reflection rubric sheets from lessons one to three, Grace reflected that she wanted to make more inferences, make better inferences that are supported by facts, and add more details to her inferences. Each of her goals expanded and built upon the goal she set from the previous lesson. This suggests to me that she was thinking more specifically about what she wanted to achieve and how she was going to do it.
Grace’s self reflections showed a progression in her understanding of herself as a learner. Her reflections and goal setting in lessons one through eight mirrored almost exactly what the learning target had been. For example, the learning target in lesson one was: I can use my schema about wolves plus the details in the text to make an inference; and Grace’s reflection was, “One thing I could have done better today was to have more inferences. Next time I plan to have more inferences.” By the ninth and tenth lessons, her reflections and goal setting began to change. She began to identify specific behaviors that would help her in reaching her goal. For example in lesson ten, the learning target was: I can make inferences, ask questions, make predictions and/or connections to help me understand the text better; and Grace’s reflection was, “One thing I could have done better today was participate by talking more. Next time I plan to participate by talking more about the story and more predictions and questions.” Grace identified that participating would help her to meet the learning target next time. This was a positive step in helping her monitoring her behavior.

See Figure 4.2 for two examples of Grace’s self reflections.
Summary

Throughout the study, Grace presented herself as eager and willing to participate. Even on days when our reading group did not meet, Grace would come to me and ask, “Mrs. McCoy is our reading group meeting today? I really like when we meet.” She would also offer to help me gather my teaching tools for the lesson such as my recorder, chart paper, and markers. My field notes show that Grace consistently faced the other members of her reading group, followed along with the lesson, listened attentively to me as well as her group members, and participated from the beginning of the lesson to the end.

As I read and re-read the transcripts of the ten, audio recorded lessons I began to see that the comments, ideas, and discussions shared by Grace were both in
response to prompts by me as well as independent and self initiated comments, ideas, and discussions she made on her own without the help of me. In lessons one through three, Grace’s comments, ideas, and discussions were largely due to the prompting and questioning made by me, whereas only about one fourth were self initiated. As the lessons progressed, Grace began to exhibit more and more self initiated comments so that by lesson ten, there was more of an equal amount of prompted and non-prompted discussion and sharing by Grace. This observation suggests that as Grace participated in more lessons she became more self confident with sharing her ideas without being asked.

Looking at the field notes and audio recorded transcripts, it appears that in the first four lessons Grace exhibited behaviors that suggest frustration and difficulty expressing and explaining her ideas. For example, she often replied with “I don’t know” when I asked for further clarification or explanation. After the fourth lesson, the number of times Grace responded with “I don’t know” decreased and was replaced with at least an attempt at explaining and elaborating on her ideas.

Jack

Jack is an eleven year old African American male. He has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and is labeled with Other Health Impairment (OHI) due to his Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Prior to attending the school in which I work, Jack attended another urban school in the same district and was in a
self-contained 12:1:1 classroom. During the 2009-2010 school year, Jack was placed in my fifth grade inclusion classroom. My co-teacher and I then retained him last year due to his levels of maturity and academic performance. Jack lives with his father, step mother, younger sister, and younger step sister. Jack’s step mother is one of the kindergarten teachers in my school; his step mom and father are very supportive of him and his academics. Jack has limited interaction with his biological mother. He sees her on some weekends, but visits are not consistent.

Jack is a very enthusiastic student who has a lot of energy. He benefits from small group lessons in order to monitor and provide cues for on task behavior. At times, Jack can behave impulsively, which can be a distraction to other students in the classroom. His disruptive behaviors include making noises, singing or humming, rocking or moving while sitting on the rug or seat, whining, and arguing with peers. These behaviors become distracting to him and those around him. Sometimes his peers will ask him politely to stop because he is distracting them but he does not stop. When teachers ask Jack to refrain from his distracting behaviors he sometimes becomes angry and has a tantrum where he stomps his feet, cries, and turns away from the lesson or group. His tantrums have decreased in number from last school year, but they are still something we are working on with him.

According to the results of the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Jack was reading at a middle fifth grade level during this study. As an eleven year old in a fifth grade class, Jack was meeting grade level standards in the area of literacy.
Jack was also on grade level in mathematics and his writing abilities were beginning to show improvement but he was performing slightly below grade level. Jack tries his best in all academic areas. He is a bit of a perfectionist and is always seeking adult feedback and approval. When he is confused, Jack seeks adult assistance and is willing to accept adult help. At times he becomes frustrated with himself and pouts or cries when he does not receive perfect grades on assignments.

Lesson 1

The first lesson’s learning target was: I can use my schema about wolves plus the details in the text to make an inference. I used the book *One Whole Day: Wolves* written by Jim Arnosky (2001) throughout the lesson for modeling, guided practice, and independent practice. The students had been learning a lot of information about wolves which aided them in their ability to make inferences. I also encouraged the students to use other reading strategies as well such as predicting, questioning, connecting, and reflecting; but the main emphasis and learning target revolved around using their schema about wolves plus details in the text or pictures to make inferences.

At the beginning of the lesson, the three students and I discussed the meaning of schema. Grace reminded us that it has to do with our background knowledge about a topic. When I commented to the students that they had a lot of background knowledge about wolves, Jack replied, “I can’t remember everything that makes a
wolf a wolf because that’s a lot of things.” I reassured him that he may not remember everything, but that some of the knowledge that he could remember would help him to make inferences while we were reading. I then explained, “Making an inference is sort of like we are trying to figure out what the author is trying to say because authors tell us some things but not everything.” Jack replied with, “Right, we have to think.” Jack’s comment showed me that Jack understands the importance of thinking while reading.

Jack attempted to make inferences throughout the first lesson. At one point in the story, the wolf howls, but the author does not tell the reader exactly why the wolf is howling. Jack made the following inferences about why the wolf might be howling, “The wolf may be trying to bring his pack together. I know that wolves can sometimes howl to let other wolves know where they are and where their territory is.” At one point Jack made the following inference while discussing the text with Grace.

Grace: Is that the omega?
Jack: No, that’s the alpha.
Me: What makes you think that?
Jack: Because the author called it the lead wolf. I know in my schema that the leader of the pack is the alpha.

Here Jack was thinking about the text and making inferences related to the text, but he also was listening carefully to the comments made by his peers during the lesson.

My observation notes and transcript from lesson one show that Jack was hesitant at first to contribute to the lesson, but that he gradually became more
confident as the lesson progressed. Throughout the lesson, I saw Jack grabbing his knees and pulling them to his chest but this behavior did not seem to hinder his participation or his group members’ participation.

Lesson 2

Figure 4.3: A Picture used in Lesson Two.

For the second lesson, I decided to use only pictures as a way for the students to practice making inferences with only a visual support. The learning target was: I can use my schema about wolves plus the details in the picture to make an inference. There was also a second learning target: I can talk about the pictures with the people in our group to help me make inferences. Jack began the lesson with confidence; he sat up straight, faced the group, and immediately attempted to make inferences about the wolves portrayed in the pictures.
My observation notes of this lesson show that Jack was kneeling in his seat but appeared to be confident with his comments and attempts at making inferences. As soon as I brought out the pictures both Jack and Grace gravitated to one and Jack immediately attempted to make an inference, “Umm I think that it is like two alphas. They are going on their courtship (see Figure 4.1) because I know that sometimes they go off alone and show affection for each other when they are in their courtship.” I was impressed by this inference because we had previously discussed the courtship rituals of wolves and their behaviors during courtship. At another point in the lesson, Jack made another inference.

I think um that well I know in my schema the pups like peek out and go out a little bit but not that far away and I see in the picture that they are close to the den. My inference is that they are still pups but that they still live in the den (see Figure 4.3).

Jack is beginning to articulate clues from the picture and his schema about wolves in relation to the inference he is making. Later he stated, “Oh I know. Umm they are the two alphas because I know only the alphas can have pups.” He made this comment in response to a picture that showed two adult wolves as well as a few pups. Jack’s comment included a fact he knows about wolves plus a clue from the picture, therefore his inference is reasonable.
Lesson 3

I chose to use the book *The Eyes of Gray Wolf*, by Jonathan London (1993) for the third lesson the text and pictures lend itself well to making inferences. Jonathan London’s writing style leaves room for interpretation therefore supporting the learning target for making inferences. The learning targets were similar to the second lesson: I can use my schema about wolves plus the details in the text to make an inference and I can talk about the text with the people in our group to help me make inferences.

In the beginning of the story, the wolf is chasing a hare. Below is an excerpt of the conversation amongst members of the reading group.

Me: (reading from book) Hare is no match for the wolf
Grace: He is too fast
Me: Who is too fast?
Grace: The hare
Me: Who is too fast?
Grace: The wolf
Me: Listen again, hare is no match for the wolf.
Jack: Oh I know, the gray wolf, he is the top predator so the rabbit knows he is going to get eaten because a wolf can run super fast and catch him if he wants.

In this conversation, Jack steps right in and makes an inference about what the hare may be thinking. Also, later in the text it read, “The fur on the back of his neck stands up.” Jack immediately added, “Those must be his hackles standing up cause he wants to show that he is not scared, Roar!” Again, Jack connects his schema about wolves to the clues in the story to make an inference. I noticed that he jumped
right in and shares his ideas with confidence. He was eager to read the text and I saw that he was even seen trying to peek ahead in the story a couple times during the lesson.

During the reflection part of the lesson, Jack wrote, “One thing I could have done better today was add more detail to my group inferences. Next time I plan to remind myself to add detail.” After discussing with Jack what he meant by these statements, he replied, “Well, I want to listen and help my group members out during the lesson.” I kept this goal in mind when creating the following personalized learning target for him to work towards in lesson four: I can add my wonderful ideas to the comments that others make.

Lesson 4

I used the text *The Call of the Wolves*, by Jim Murphy (1989) for lessons four and five because its story line fits well with our fifth grade wolf expedition. It is written from the perspective of the wolf which allowed the student participants an opportunity to apply the non-fiction knowledge they had been learning within the classroom to this fictional piece of text. The learning targets for lesson four were: I can ask thoughtful questions about what is happening in the text, I can use my schema about wolves plus the details in the text to make an inference, and I can talk about the text with the people in our group to help me make an inference.
Jack was observant in the beginning of the lesson when he noticed the book we are reading was a blue ribbon book. As we are reading the book, Jack is very inquisitive and he asked clarifying questions such as, “What does it mean by pacing?” and “What does trotting mean.” Together as a group we used the context clues to infer the meaning of these words. He also asked questions about the story line of the text, “Will the hunter just kill the wolves cause the wolves may be worth more than the caribou?”

Throughout the lesson, Jack acted very confident in attempting to make inferences and even uses language similar to my modeling. Below is an example of one of his inferences.

In my schema, I know hunters like to hunt caribou just like wolves and they get mad the wolves are stealing their game and the hunters don’t like it. Maybe he is hunting the wolves because he sees they are getting ready to hunt his game and they want to stop them.

Here Jack shares his schema about hunters as well as clues from the story to make a reasonable inference.

At the end of the lesson, Jack wrote on his reflection sheet, “Next time I plan to reach my goal by looking at the learning (drawing of a target).” When I read this goal, I decided to encourage him to do this during the lesson five by writing his learning targets on sticky notes to put in front of him as well as putting it on chart
paper. Therefore the target would be visually accessible to him in two different areas throughout the lesson.

Lesson 5

After lesson four, I decided to incorporate a group learning target that all students would work toward and one personalized learning target for each student. The two learning targets Jack worked toward were: I can ask thoughtful questions about what is happening in the text and I can add my wonderful ideas to the comments that others make. The reason I chose the second learning target for Jack was because I felt he had exhibited confidence in participating during the first four lessons sharing his own ideas and thinking and I wanted him to work on his listening skills especially when it came to listening to the ideas and thoughts of both Grace and David. I also provided question words such as: what, when, where, why, how, and why on cards for the students to reference in hopes that this would aide them in meeting the group learning target.

Jack responded or added a comment to his group members four times throughout the lesson. For example when David stated, “He (wolf) can’t fight back because he is injured,” Jack responded with, “Well, he can but it is going to be really hard. He won’t be as strong as a healthy wolf.” Jack was successful in meeting his personalized learning target and he even helped Grace to understand what the word “retreat” meant when she asked. He told her, “Grace have you ever seen a war movie,
they always yell, “Retreat! Retreat! when they want to tell their men to get out of a
dangerous situation.” Through sharing this explicit example with Grace, Jack was
able to clarify the meaning of a word for her in an authentic way while drawing on his
prior knowledge.

Even through Jack did meet the target, during the self reflection portion of the
lesson he rated himself as a two on his performance in relation to the learning target,
which indicates that he felt he started to make progress. He also wrote, “Next time I
plan to think about people’s question and see if I can answer it.”

Lesson 6

I taught lesson six the week before the start of the English Language Arts
(ELA) state test. Our school’s administration and literacy coach were placing
emphasis on teachers to prepare the students for the test. Therefore, I decided to teach
a lesson incorporating a test taking strategy we had been working on within the
classroom. The strategy was text coding and taking notes in the margins of an article.
The learning targets for this lesson was: I can write notes in the margins of the text to
help me understand what I am reading and I can show I am thinking while reading by
coding the my text with symbols using the key. Together as a group we came up with
a key which included a star to represent a connection, a smiley face to represent a
“cool fact”, an i to represent an inference, and a question mark to represent a
question.
I modeled how to write in the margin and text code using the article *Homecomings Mean Big Changes in Yellowstone: Wolves Mean More Willows, and Willows Mean More Wildlife!* by Kirsten Galloway (2003). The students then worked towards meeting the learning target independently while reading *Wolf Research: So Many Ways to Learn About Wolves* by Erin Alberts (2005). I chose these two articles because their topics compliment our wolf expedition and also because they are similar in length to the types of non-fiction articles the students would see on their ELA exam.

Jack used all of the text coding symbols while reading. During the discussion portion of the lesson, Jack shared many facts that he thought were “cool.” Jack looked at his text, looked at a smiley face he had drawn in the margin of the text and shared with the group, “Something I thought was cool was that scientists and biologists can tell from the tracks whether the wolf is walking, trotting, or even hunting. That is so cool!” When Jack shared this fact he did not read from the text, he shared from memory. This suggests to me that he was actively thinking while reading and that text coding helped him to retain this piece of information.

The article that Jack read independently shows that he drew three stars to represent a connection he had with the text, five smiley faces to indicate “cool facts,” and one question mark. He also drew arrows from facts he had underlined and wrote short reminders to himself about what he had read, such as “Wolf urinated for sent marking.” There is some underlining, but only near the symbols that he drew. The
symbols and notes Jack wrote on his article along with the group discussion suggest that text coding helped Jack monitor his comprehension of the non-fiction article.

Lesson 7

For the seventh and eighth lessons I focused on making predictions because this is a strategy assessed on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). I used the book *Who Speaks for Wolf: A Native American Learning Story*, by Paula Underwood (1994). This book tied nicely into our expedition and also supported one of the guiding questions: How have people’s opinions and perceptions affected the wolf? The group learning target for lessons seven and eight was: I can make thoughtful predictions about what will happen based on the story so far. In an effort to continue encouraging Jack to listen to his peers I gave him the same personal learning target as in lesson five: I can add my wonderful ideas to the comments that others make. Jack began the lesson with confidence when he immediately shared a text-text connection.

I have a text to text connection. My connection is with the book *Runt*. It said that when the moose was ready to die Runt sung his song and his name became Singer and now the wolf is singing her song, to this wolf is howling.
This connection helped Jack understand the text completely by making this inference about what the author meant when she wrote the wolf was singing his song. Jack continued to participate and make predictions during the guided instruction.

During the independent work time when I asked students to read independently then come together to discuss the text, Jack expressed his frustration saying, “I don’t get what it is telling me” and “I don’t get this!” or “I am done reading, I think.” While Jack was expressing frustration, I offered words of positive encouragement, “You can do this, you have been working so hard” and “Read it one more time and then we will talk about it.”

When all three students were done reading, we began to discuss the text. Due to the anxiety I was seeing in the faces and comments of the students, I decided to support their discussion through re-examining parts of the text that they found difficult. I read a sentence and broke it apart with the students’ help in order to understand exactly what it was saying:

Me: Let’s go back to page 19 (Begins reading) “Our people,” Who is the story talking about?
All: Native Americans
Me: (continues reading sentence) “grew too big in number” What does that mean?
Grace: A lot of people
Me: (continues reading sentence) “so where we were was not enough” What does that mean?
Jack: It isn’t big enough
Me: Right. Too many people for where they were living. Many young men were sent out from among us to seek a new place. So they sent some men to look for a new place to live.
This excerpt demonstrates how I helped guide the students towards understanding the text. As I modeled and supported the group, Jack began to participate more and he stopped saying negative and frustrating comments. He independently made the prediction without questioning or prompting from me, “I think they (Native Americans) are going to listen to the wolves, I mean, hmmm, to wolf brother. Since they are talking about wolves, maybe they are going to live close to them.”

At the end of the lesson during self reflection, Jack wrote, “Next time I plan to make more comments because I wasn’t really listing a lot. Also when I was reading to myself try to read it again and try to not give up.” To me, Jack’s reflection suggests that he recognized he was giving up easily without much effort to try.

Lesson 8

For the eighth lesson, we continued to read from the text, *Who Speaks for Wolf: A Native American Learning Story*, by Paula Underwood (1994). I wanted the students to realize that they had the tools and ability to navigate text that may seem confusing or difficult at first glance. Therefore I developed two learning targets for the lesson: I can make thoughtful predictions about what will happen based on the story so far, and I can try my best while reading, if I don’t understand the first time I read, I will read it again; I will not give up.
During the eighth lesson, Jack had a stomach ache, which made him uncomfortable and hindered his ability to attend to the lesson as usual. He frequently moaned and groaned while holding his stomach throughout the lesson. He did make a great notice about the text features in the text. He turned to me in the middle of the lesson and said, “Mrs. McCoy, I notice something. Every time the grandpa is telling his story, the words look sort of slanted.” This observation when shared with the group was profound because the text switched back and forth from the story line and legend grandpa was telling. Knowing that the text was italicized when grandpa told the legend helped Grace and David navigate the text with further understanding.

During the reflection part of the lesson, Jack wrote, “Something I did well today was not give up when I was reading.” He felt as if he put forth his best effort and even scored himself a four for effort.

Lessons 9 and 10

We continued to read from the text, *Who Speaks for Wolf: A Native American Learning Story*, by Paula Underwood (1994) in lessons nine and ten. I encouraged the students to use all of their comprehension strategies while reading. The students worked towards the same learning target for both lessons: I can make inferences, ask questions, make predictions, and/or connections to help me better understand the text better.
During lessons nine and ten Jack attempted to use all of the strategies. In lesson nine, he made three predictions, two questions, three inferences and no connections. Then in lesson ten he made one prediction, one question, one inference, and four connections. Jack was confident and eager to participate in both lessons; he willingly shared his thoughts and attempts at the reading strategies from the start of each lesson. I observed that he read carefully and reread parts of the story that were difficult to understand the first time reading. Throughout both lessons, he continuously reminded the group about the italicized words saying, “Hey look guys, this here shows that grandpa is telling his story.”

Jack was also very attentive and listened carefully to his group members’ comments. For example in lesson ten David said, “That (wolf) is like their (Native Americans) brother and like they have respect and leave each other alone,” and Jack replied:

Yea, they stay out of each other’s territory, they need space. Cause we wouldn’t like a random stranger just coming into our house and eating out of our refrigerator. That is like our territory, we all need our space.

Here, Jack listened carefully to David’s comment, agreed with it, and then used his own experiences to make an inference about why both wolves and Native Americans stay out of each other’s territory.
As a way to investigate Jack’s thoughts and opinions about learning targets, I interviewed him during week six of this research study. Jack’s responses showed that he fully understand the purpose of a learning target, “a goal you try to follow,” and that the learning target helped him because “it explained to me what to do, like what the objective is and what I should be doing.” As we continued the interview Jack shared that the reflection part of the lesson, “made me feel good.” When I asked him to explain a little what he meant he responded, “I felt like how I did and what I did good and what I could do better.”

When I asked Jack if he would like a learning target for each lesson, he told me “yes,” and added, “I think we should do reflection after each lesson, too.” This comment suggests that he values the process of self reflection.

Jack felt that through our series of ten lessons he had improved in making connections and taking his time to read and re-read text to better understand. When I asked him how he knew he had improved on these things he said, “Because I did it more often than I usually do and because the learning target remind me.” Learning targets helped Jack see what is expected of him during a lesson and also what to reflect on at the end of a lesson.
Jack’s Self-Reflections

After each lesson, I encourage Jack to engage in self reflection by filling out a reflection sheet (see Appendix B). The reflection sheet included a rubric where he tracked his progress in relationship to the learning targets. He was also asked to make statements about what he did well, what he could have done better, and to set a goal for the next lesson.

Looking at Jack’s reflection sheets I noticed that he almost always wrote statements that were related to the learning target(s). For example, one of lesson two’s learning targets were: I can use my schema about wolves plus the details in the picture to make an inference. Jack wrote, “Something I did well today was making a inference about being the alpha and omega.” In the example, Jack not only wrote about his performance in relation to the learning target, but he was very specific about which inference he felt he did well.

When looking across all of Jack’s reflection sheets, I notice that his reflections did not change very much throughout the course of the ten lessons. He responded similarly to the prompt “Something I did well today was” in almost all of the lessons. Examples of his observations include, “making a good inference,” “making inferences,” “making good predictions,” “asking questions,” and “when (I made) inferences, ask questions, make predictions, and connections.” His responses show that he felt he did well using the comprehension strategies that were taught.
Some of Jack's written responses to the prompt "Next time I plan to" include specific behaviors such as "think first and organize my ideas in my head," "remind my self to add detail," and "try to reach my gol by looking at the learning (drawing of a target.)" Jack's response indicates that he is beginning to think about how to achieve his goals.

Figure 4.4 shows two examples of Jack's self reflection sheets.

![Figure 4.4: Jack's Self Reflection Sheets from Lessons Two and Four.](image)
Summary

From the beginning of the study to the end, Jack presented himself confidently in almost every lesson. He willingly participated, shared his ideas, and worked through times of frustration. He exhibited very few distracting behaviors throughout the study. In lesson one he moved around a lot and was grabbing his knees, and in lesson six he wrote on his hand at one point and made low humming noises. Even though Jack exhibited these behaviors, they did not seem to distract him or his group members from the lesson.

Looking across all ten lessons, I noticed that Jack met the learning target for each lesson. He asked clarifying questions if he was confused such as, “Mrs. McCoy, can you explain what an inference is again?” Jack referred to the learning targets by looking at them periodically in each lesson. He even set a goal for himself in lesson four to look at the learning target throughout the lesson. The learning targets gave Jack a purpose for the lesson and helped him to focus his energy towards meeting the target. He proved in each lesson to be using the reading comprehension strategies to help him interact successfully with the text.

David

David is an eleven year old African American male. He has attended the school in which I work since he was in kindergarten. He was in my fifth grade class
last school year and was then retained due to not meeting academic fifth grade standards. David lives with his mother and sees his father on a bi-weekly basis. He has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and is labeled with Other Health Impairment (OHI) due to symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

David is very social and talkative. He is a class clown and is often talks out of turn and is distracted by external stimuli. When I conduct small group lessons with David I have to be sure to remove any small items or objects from the area surrounding his seat because he can become easily distracted.

David is a very fluent reader, yet comprehension is an area of weakness. He becomes easily frustrated when prompted to use higher level reading comprehension strategies such as making inferences and drawing conclusions. According to the results of the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), David was reading at a beginning fifth grade level during this study. As an eleven year old fifth grader, to meet fifth grade standards, he should have been reading at a middle fifth grade level. Writing is also an area of weakness for David and it is sometimes a struggle to motivate him to write. David’s mathematics skills are two grade levels below fifth grade standards; he exhibits the most frustration and resistance to learning during math lessons.
Lesson 1

The first lesson’s learning target was: I can use my schema about wolves plus the details in the text to make an inference. I used the book *One Whole Day: Wolves* written by Jim Arnosky (2001) throughout the lesson for modeling, guided practice, and independent practice. The students had been learning about wolves, which aided them in their ability to make inferences. I also encouraged the students to use other reading strategies as well such as predicting, questioning, connecting, and reflecting, but the main emphasis and learning target revolved around their use of their schema about wolves plus details in the text or pictures to make inferences.

At the beginning of the lesson, David only spoke or participated when I specifically asked him a question. Grace and Jack willingly spoke and shared their ideas. I had to actively prompt David with questions to aide him in participation. When prompted, David was able to make several inferences. At one point in the story a pack of wolves were howling and I asked, “Why do you infer the wolves are howling? Use information from the text and your schema.” David responded, “To tell a predator that is coming to back away.” This inference is plausible because the wolves had just brought down prey and at times wolves will howl to warn other animals to stay away.

Looking at my observation notes for lesson one, I see that David appeared more than once to be off task. He was picking at the carpet, had his eyes down while Grace and Jack were engaged in conversation about the text, and was playing with a
marker I had used to chart some of the students’ responses. David did not offer responses or engage in conversation unless prompted by me.

Lesson 2

For the second lesson, I decided to use only pictures as a way for the students to practice making inferences using visuals. The learning target was: I can use my schema about wolves plus the details in the picture to make an inference. There was also a second learning target: I can talk about the pictures with the people in our group to help me make inferences.

According to my notes, David exhibited many off task behaviors during this lesson. It was difficult to engage David in the lesson at the beginning. He was slouching in his seat, mumbling under his breath, yawning, staring off, and he was not looking at his group members while they were speaking. As the lesson progressed, I attempted to engage David in conversation through prompting and questioning:
David: Umm they are resting (see Figure 4.3)
Me: What makes you think that?
David: Because they want to protect their territory.
Me: If they want to protect their territory, why would they be resting?
David: Well, not really.

David attempts to make an inference, but the clues from the pictures and the facts he is providing to back up his inference do not make sense. If a wolf was trying to protect its territory, it would not be laying down, instead it would be alert and ready to attack.

Later in the lesson, David began to show evidence of thinking and connecting his schema to the text when he said:

David: Is this a picture of the Sabre Tooth pack (see Figure 4.5)?
Me: What makes you say that?
David: Because there is one black wolf. In Sabre Tooth pack on the video had one black wolf and there were two more wolves in the pack.

Even though, David’s attempt to make an inference was not supported by a lot of evidence from the text (picture) or his schema, it is still a closer attempt than what he made with a different picture previously in the lesson.

Lesson 3

I used the book *The Eyes of Gray Wolf*, by Jonathan London (1993) for the third lesson because I wanted to (finish this thought.). The learning targets were
similar to the second lesson: I can use my schema about wolves plus the details in the text to make an inference and I can talk about the text with the people in our group to help me make inferences.

Unlike lessons one and two, David began participating at the beginning of this lesson. He immediately made a connection when we got to the part of the wolf chasing the hare. He shared, “This reminds me of that movie we just watched when the wolf was chasing the rabbit. I can picture it in my head.” David’s comments suggest that he was making a connection and visualizing at the same time. He was interacting with the text and trying to make sense of it.

Later in the story, the wolf comes across a pack of wolves and begins to circle one of the wolves from the pack. David made the following inference, “She is probably trying to find another mate since her mate died in the beginning,” Which makes sense with the storyline of the book.

Even though David did participate more during this lesson than in lessons one and two, he still displayed off task behaviors such as putting his head down, not looking at the text, and sighing with boredom. Interestingly on his reflection sheet, David wrote, “One thing I could have done better today was focus some more. Next time I plan to focus on my work by turning around and get on task.” David’s comments indicate that he is beginning to recognize that he is not focused during the entire lesson, but his goals do not yet reflect that he knows how to improve this.
Lesson 4

I used the text *The Call of the Wolves* by Jim Murphy (1989) for lessons four and five because its story line fits well with our fifth grade wolf expedition. It is written from the perspective of the wolf which allowed the student participants an opportunity to apply the non-fiction knowledge they had been learning within the classroom to this fictional piece of text. The learning targets for lesson four were: I can ask thoughtful questions about what is happening in the text, I can use my schema about wolves plus the details in the text to make an inference, and I can talk about the text with the people in our group to help me make an inference.

David seemed uninterested in participating during lesson four. He leaned against the wall, stared off instead of following along in the book, and played with pens found on the table throughout the lesson. From the beginning, I gently cued David with verbal reminders to pay attention, participate, and read along with the group. I also pointed to the learning target as a non-verbal reminder of what he was working toward. Even with this encouragement, David did not speak until the end of the lesson when I began asking him specific questions related to the text. When he did answer my questions, it was typically in three or four word utterances. At the end of the lesson, David attempted to make a prediction and ask a question, which were very similar to one another. First he said (referring to the wolf in the story), “I think he is going to get shot;” and then almost immediately after he asked, “Is he going to get
At this point in the series of lessons, I was concerned about David’s level of engagement, and I did not feel as if David was putting forth his best effort.

At the end of the lesson David wrote on his reflection sheet, “Next time I plan to focus by not wondering of.” Again, as in lesson three, David was aware and admits that he was not focused during the lesson but has not yet been able to identify how exactly to improve this.

Lesson 5

After lesson four, I decided to incorporate a group learning target that all students would work toward and one personalized learning target for each student. The two learning targets David worked toward were: I can ask thoughtful questions about what is happening in the text and I can participate by sharing my ideas during the whole lesson. The reason I chose the second learning target for David was because I wanted him to improve his participation from beginning to the end of the lesson. I also decided to write question words such as: what, when, where, why, how, and why on cards for the students to reference when attempting to generate questions related to the text.

During lesson five, there was a noticeable difference in David’s participation. From the start of the lesson he made predictions, inferences, and asked questions without much prompting from me. He faced the group without putting his head down.
or staring off which helped him to focus and attend to the lesson. At one point in the story there was a picture of a log cabin and some sled dogs. With excitement, David exclaimed, “Huskies! I think those are huskies. Did you know huskies have two layers of fur? I think they are sledding dogs.” David was excited to share with us his knowledge and make an inference about the picture.

David also asked relevant questions about the text that was answered later in the text such as, “How is he going to find his pack now that he is hurt? Who does he think it is, his pack, or another pack?” These questions were directly related to the text and are evidence that David was thinking closely about the text.

David’s reflection at the end of lesson stated that he felt he did well “making good questions and picking up the cards.” The support of the cards may have aided in his confidence throughout the lesson; therefore setting him up for success.

**Lesson 6**

I taught lesson six the week before the start of the English Language Arts (ELA) state test. Our school’s administration and literacy coach were placing emphasis on teachers to prepare the students for the test. Therefore, I decided to teach a lesson incorporating a test taking strategy we had been working on within the classroom. The strategy was text coding and taking notes in the margins of an article. The learning targets for this lesson was: I can write notes in the margins of the text to
help me understand what I am reading and I can show I am thinking while reading by
coding the my text with symbols using the key. Together as a group we came up with
a key which included a star to represent a connection, a smiley face to represent a
"cool fact", an i to represent an inference, and a question mark to represent a
question. I modeled how to write in the margin and text code using the article
Homecomings Mean Big Changes in Yellowstone: Wolves Mean More Willows, and
Willows Mean More Wildlife! by Kirsten Galloway (2003). The students then worked
towards meeting the learning target independently while reading Wolf Research: So
Many Ways to Learn About Wolves by Erin Alberts (2005). I chose these two articles
because their topics compliment our wolf expedition and also because they are similar
in length to the types of non-fiction articles the students would see on their ELA
exam.

David came to lesson six in a bad mood. He even stated, “Do we have to do
this? I don’t want to read.” He put his head down for most of the lesson and was
slouching in his chair, even turned slightly away from the group. While I was
modeling, David refused to look at the text. During the independent work time when I
asked the students to read the article on their own David stared at the article but did
not appear to be reading it. I continuously reminded David of his learning target
through verbal and non verbal reminders (pointing to target). He randomly placed a
couple stars and a question mark on the article perhaps to make it appear as if he was
reading and interacting with the text. When it was time for the group to discuss the
text, David remained silent and refused to participate.
During the reflection part of the lesson, David wrote: one thing I could have done better today was, “do not go to sleep.” This comment suggests that David was either tired from lack of sleep or that he was bored.

Lesson 7

The seventh and eighth lessons focused on making predictions. I used the book *Who Speaks for Wolf: A Native American Learning Story*, by Paula Underwood (1994). This book tied nicely into our expedition and also supported one the guiding questions: How have people’s opinions and perceptions affected the wolf? The group learning target for lessons seven and eight was: I can make thoughtful predictions about what will happen based on the story so far. In an effort to encourage David to participate the way he had in lesson five I gave him the same personal learning target as in lesson five: I can participate by sharing my ideas during the whole lesson.

At the start of the lesson, I shared with David his personalized learning target and why I chose it, “I chose this learning target for you David because in lesson six you did not participate very much at all and I would really love to hear your thinking.” I gave David his personalized learning target on a sticky note and placed it in front of him on the table. From the beginning of the lesson, I attempted to engage David in conversation about the text through questioning. He responded three times to my questions with “I don’t know.” When it was time for students to read independently, he skimmed the text quickly and then said, “I don’t get it.” When I
tried to encourage him to read it again and pause after each paragraph he sighed and
turned his body away from the group. Even though I try to eliminate all distracters
from the table prior to the lessons, I still had to take away two pens, an eraser, and a
small piece of metal he found on the ground from David because he was playing with
them and not even looking at the text.

Again, it was a struggle to get David to participate. When I asked him specific
questions about the text, he barely answered with two to four word answers. For
example I asked him, "What was the decision they (Native Americans) had to make?"
and he responded quickly with, "To move." David’s answer was partially correct; the
decision they had to make was where to move.

During reflection, David wrote, "Next time I plan to participate more." When
I saw him write this I decided to prompt him, I said, "How are you going to do that?"
He responded with, "listening and talking." David was beginning to identify the
behaviors that are associated with participation and meeting his learning target.

Lesson 8

For the eighth lesson, we continued to read from the text, *Who Speaks for
Wolf: A Native American Learning Story*, by Paula Underwood (1994). I wanted the
students to realize that they have the tools and ability to navigate text that may seem
confusing or difficult at first glance. Therefore I developed two learning targets for
the lesson: I can make thoughtful predictions about what will happen based on the story so far, and I can try my best while reading. If I don’t understand the first time I read, I will read it again; I will not give up.

From the beginning of the lesson, David seemed uninterested and unfocused. I was unsure if he was listening while I introduced the learning target because he had his head down, he did not face me while I was speaking, and he was drawing on a piece of paper. I reminded him that in lesson seven he said his goal was to listen and talk more in order to improve his participation. He barely talked or contributed to discussion during the lesson but rated himself a four for making predictions, meaning he thought he had gone above and beyond the learning target and felt like an expert. When I asked David why he gave himself a four, he told replied, “I don’t know, I just think I did.”

Lessons 9 and 10

We continued to read from the text, *Who Speaks for Wolf: A Native American Learning Story*, by Paula Underwood (1994) in lessons nine and ten. I encouraged the students to use all of their comprehension strategies while reading. The students worked towards the same learning target for both lessons: I can make inferences, ask questions, make predictions, and/or connections to help me better understand the text better.
David’s effort during lessons nine and ten did not improve very much from earlier lessons. In lesson nine, he made two predictions and one question, but did not share any inferences or connections. During lesson ten he made two predictions and one inference, but no questions or connections. In lesson nine, he participated in the beginning and at the end, but during the middle of the lesson, he sat back and let Grace and Jack do most of the speaking. A couple times when David did speak he repeated the comments of his group members. The conversation below shows an example:

Me: Are there any questions, connections, inferences, or predictions?
Grace: Umm are they going to move?
David: Are they still going to move?
Grace: And are they going to listen to wolf brother this time?
Jack: I was wondering if they are going to say sorry to wolf brother for not listening.
David: Umm I think they are going to feel sorry for wolf brother and they are probably going to listen to wolf brother next time.

David not only repeated Grace’s question almost verbatim, he then repeated Jack’s question but rephrased it into a prediction. To me these attempts indicate that David wanted to participate but was unsure of what to say so he repeated the thoughts of his peers.

David came to lesson unsure and frustrated with having to come to the group. He verbally stated, “Why do we have to do this?” and “I am glad this is our last time meeting.” His body language also showed he was uninterested in the lesson. He turned his body to the side and stared in the opposite direction of the group. In the
middle of the lesson, he took out his brush and began brushing his hair, and he refused to speak until the end of the lesson. Toward the end of the lesson he answered one of Jack’s questions. Jack asked, “The pale ones, why are they called that?” David answered, “Because their skin is pale, and I think it is just the way Native Americans talk.” After David answered Jack’s question, he spoke again and shared a prediction, which suggests to me that he felt positive about himself.

Due to David’s lack of effort during the guided reading lessons and during the self assessment reflection part of the lesson, I decided to scribe for him during reflection part of lessons nine and ten. He was then able to verbally tell me in more detail what he wanted to work on and how he planned to achieve it. For example, in lesson nine’s reflection David told me, “Next time I plan to get into the story more by trying to understand it. I will read along silently when you are reading.” This is the most detail he had provided thus far in his reflections. During lesson ten’s reflection, David was very honest. He told me, “One thing I could have done better today was talk more and not ignore our group. Next time I plan to come to a lesson and not argue or pout.” I think that scribing the reflection for David held him more accountable and allowed him to thoroughly reflect and share without the constraint of writing it down.
Interview

As with Grace and Jack, I also conducted a final interview with David to find out his thoughts and opinions about learning targets. During the interview David indicated that he believes that the definition of a learning target is, “the definition is get your goals for the subject you are doing.” My interview with David was interesting, in three out of the five questions, he mentioned the learning target and his ability to focus. For example, when I asked him if knowing the learning target before the lesson helped him, he responded with, “Yes, because I can know like my learning target before I start and I can get focused and not off task.” When I asked him how he felt completing the reflection, he answered, “I felt confident in myself because the learning target told me to focus and I focused.” I found this answer to be puzzling because, not only did David struggle to focus during most lessons, but I had never given him a learning target telling him to focus. His comments suggest to me that her is aware that focusing during lessons is important, but he may not understand fully what it means to be focused. He may have a misconception about how to focus as well. Within the classroom, David continued to exhibit off task behaviors that interfered with both his learning and the learning of those around him. He continuously acted as a class clown and would often argue with the teachers when asked to attend to a lesson, participate, and/or complete a given task.

When I asked David whether he believed he had developed any new skills or strategies because of the learning targets he relied with:
I improved on comprehending the questions that you asked. I improved on predicting and making inferences. I know because I had to do it. My accuracy in the book we were reading, well I am really not sure.

His response reveals that he may be confused about his own progress. I thought that it was interesting that he said he improved on answering my questions. During lessons one through ten, I prompted him with questions to encourage participation. I am now wondering if he became dependent on my questioning.

David’s Self-Reflections

After each lesson, David was encouraged to engage in self reflection by filling out a reflection sheet (see Appendix B). The reflection sheet included a rubric where he tracked his progress in relationship to the learning targets. He was also asked to make statements about what he did well, what he could have done better, and to set a goal for the next lesson.

Looking across David’s reflection sheets from lessons one to ten, I notice that many of his reflection statements are related to his behavior. For example, in lessons two through four, he wrote almost identical statements about what he planned to do next time, “focus more and go back in my scema,” focus on my work by turning around and get on task,” and ”foucus by not wondering of.” In all three reflections,
David stated that he wanted to focus more in the next lesson. I always begin each lesson by reminding each student the goal he/she had set from the previous lesson. David’s reflection sheets for lessons six through ten also indicate that he was aware of his off task behavior. For example in lesson six he wrote, “One thing I could have done better today was do not go to sleep. Next time I plan to walk around before starting are groups.” He was honest and aware that his behavior during the lesson was not optimal for learning.

Beginning with lesson nine, I decided to scribe for David during the reflection part of the lesson. I had noticed in previous lessons that he would sigh and mumble about writing his reflection, and he would rush to get it completed. I wanted him to think critically and reflect about the lesson. In lesson nine he dictated to me, “One thing I could have done better today was focusing on my teacher. Next time I plan to look at Mrs. McCoy the whole time,” suggests that he believes looking and listening to me will help him reach his target.

David’s written responses about what he felt he did well during the lesson always related to the learning target. For example, in lesson two the learning target was: I can use my schema about wolves plus the details in the picture to make an inference. David wrote on his reflection sheet for lesson two, “Something I did well today was making inference and met the Lt (learning target).” Another example was in lesson eight, the learning target had been: I can make thoughtful predictions about what will happen based on the story so far,” and David wrote on his reflection sheet,
“Something I did well today was making predictions and also questions,” which suggests to me that David was aware of his learning target and believes that he met it.

Below are two examples of David’s self-reflection sheets.

Figure 4.6: David’s Self-Reflection Sheets from Lessons One and Three
Summary

David appeared unengaged throughout most the lessons. He required specific prompting, reminders, and questioning by me in order to participate. When prompted, David was able to provide adequate attempts at meeting the learning target(s). This suggests he may lack confidence in himself and therefore sits back and waits for assistance from me. In six out of the ten lessons, David exhibited behaviors of frustration or irritation with having to be in the group, such as sighing, turning his body away from the group, not following along in the text provided, and playing with arbitrary objects.

Cross Case Analysis

After reading and re-reading Grace, Jack, and David’s case study, I began to see similarities and differences arise. The following themes emerged from my analysis.

Students Self-Monitor Learning Through use of Learning Target and Daily Reflections

Looking across the three case studies I can see evidence that Grace, Jack and David demonstrated self-monitoring behaviors in relation to specific learning targets. For example Grace began to show metacognitive awareness when she consciously told herself to gather her thoughts before she shared her ideas. In lesson nine, she
verbally told herself to “stop and think.” A strategy that suggests she is becoming aware of her impulsive thinking and speaking. Grace’s self-monitoring may be attributed to the learning target that I gave her: I can stop, think, and gather my ideas before I share. The target may have helped Grace remember to form complete thoughts that were relevant to the text before speaking. She also began to meet the learning target with greater confidence because she needed less and less support and prompting from me as the lessons progressed.

Jack was focused on meeting his learning target(s) from the beginning of the study. He sought to reach the target(s) during each lesson. The off task behaviors that I see on a consistent basis within the classroom were almost non-existent during our small guiding reading group sessions. This shift in energy and focus may be attributed to the learning targets which gave him a clear and specific goal to reach. Even when Jack did exhibit a behavior that would typically be a distraction, such as rocking in his chair, it did not have a negative impact on his ability to attend to the lesson and meet the learning targets.

David also began to show some evidence that he was aware of his behaviors and how they impacted his learning. His reflection sheets show that he is beginning to acknowledge his inabilities to focus and that it had a negative impact on his ability to meet the learning target. He even made reference to some of his distracting behaviors on his reflection sheets. For example, in lesson six, he stated that in the next lesson he did not want to fall asleep. In his reflection after lesson eight, he stated that he
wanted to focus on me more during the lesson by looking at me, which suggests that he is realizing that when he did not face me and the group he was not focusing on the lesson.

**Students Value the Learning Targets**

Looking across the interviews and comments during each lesson and reflection, I notice all three students emphasized that learning targets were an important component of a lesson and of their learning. Grace, Jack and David made comments during the interview that implied that the learning targets helped them know what to work toward during the lesson. For example Grace said, “Yes, it helped because it mostly told me what was going to happen, what I needed to reach so I could meet it.” Jack said, “Yes, it helped me because it explained to me what to do like what the objective is what I should be doing.” David said, “Yes it helped me because I can know my learning target before the lesson and I can get focused and not off task.” All three responses indicate that the students recognized that the learning targets helped take away some of the mystery of the lesson because the students know exactly what was expected of them.

I made sure to review the learning targets before each lesson and to explain exactly what each target meant if any of the students were confused or unsure. The students became accustomed to this and by lesson four they began to ask with curiosity what the learning target was at the onset of the lesson. For example, Grace
would always be the first student to sit and appear ready for the lesson. While she was waiting for Jack and David to join the group, she would often look to me and say, “So, what’s our learning target for today?” She was eager to find out what was expected of her during the lesson. During each lesson, I posted the learning targets where they would be visible for all students to see. It was not uncommon for me to see the students referring to it throughout the lesson by glancing over at the target or reading them to themselves as a reminder.

**Students Use of Comprehension Strategies**

For lessons one through eight, I developed learning targets centered on one or two reading comprehension strategies such as making inferences, asking questions, and making predictions, and I explicitly modeled how to use each comprehension strategy for the students. Grace, Jack and David attempted to use the reading strategy targeted for each lesson at least once in most of the lessons. They were actively thinking about and trying to make sense of the text. Grace and Jack, for example, participated from the beginning of each lesson and made considerable efforts to meet the learning targets posed for the lesson. David refrained from participating at the onset of most of the lessons, but with my prompting and encouraging he was able to attempt using the reading comprehension strategies.

Grace, Jack, and David also used their schema or prior knowledge of wolves to help them comprehend and make sense of the texts. They referenced facts they had
previously learned outside of the research study during expedition lessons. For example, Grace used her knowledge about wolf courtship to make an inference in lesson two. Jack used his schema about the alpha wolf to make an inference in lesson two, and David used his schema about wolf communication to make an inference in lesson one.

In lessons nine and ten, I encouraged students through the use of the learning target to use a multitude of reading comprehension strategies throughout the lesson such as making inferences, asking questions, making predictions, and making connections. All three students used at least three of the comprehension strategies during each lesson, which suggests that they are beginning to understand when and how to use the strategies throughout their reading.

**Students Take Ownership of Their Learning**

Both Grace and Jack began to show evidence of taking ownership of their learning over the course of the study. The reflection at the end of each lesson enabled the students to self-assess and think critically about what they had achieved that day and what they wanted to work on in the next lesson. Grace stated in her interview, “I felt grumpy doing some (of the reflections) but then I started to understand what I needed to do to help me reach the goal.” Her goal setting statements on her reflection sheets indicated that she was honest with herself about what she did well and what she needed and wanted to improve. Grace was also assertive with her learning when
she asked in lesson eight if she could reflect on a previous learning target that I had not given to her. Grace believed this learning target was still important for her and that she still needed to reflect on it even without me asking.

Jack used the learning targets and my modeling to help guide him towards meeting the learning targets. Through the interview I learned that Jack valued the reflection piece of each lesson and even suggested to me that we do reflection after every lesson in other subject areas. By lessons nine and ten, Jack took initiative to discuss the text with his group members and use his comprehension strategies without much prompting from me.

Summary

Grace, Jack, and David took part in a six week study with a series of ten lessons focused on reading comprehension. Each lesson encompassed learning targets as well as time for student self-reflection at the end of the lesson. Analysis of the ten lesson transcripts, all of the student self-reflection sheets, as well as the culminating student interviews revealed some important themes. It became apparent that Grace, Jack, and David were beginning to self-monitor their own learning, they valued the learning targets, they used their reading comprehension strategies, and both Grace and Jack began to take ownership of their own learning. These are important findings for future research and lesson planning.
Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

Throughout this study I investigated the impact learning targets had on the reading comprehension of students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). I conducted a series of ten small group lessons with three student participants. For each lesson I incorporated specific learning targets focused on reading comprehension and specific behaviors conducive to learning. Each student engaged in self-reflection and goal setting at the end of each lesson. During the sixth week of the study I conducted an interview with each student to gain further data about each of his/her thoughts and opinions in relation to the lesson. I then analyzed transcripts of each lesson, student self-reflection sheets, and the final interview of each student. The research questions I looked to answer were: What happens when students with attention deficits reflect on personalized reading comprehension goals? How does the reflection process impact self-regulation for each student?

In this chapter I discuss my conclusions, implications for students and for my future work as a teacher, and offer several recommendations for future research.
Conclusions

Research Question: What happens when students with attention deficits reflect on personalized reading comprehension goals?

Reflection Holds Students Accountable for Their Learning

According to the Developmental Reading Assessment, at the start of this study Grace was reading at a middle fourth grade level (one grade level behind), Jack was meeting the fifth grade literacy standards, and David was reading at a beginning fifth grade level. Each student was a reluctant reader who struggled with reading comprehension, and tended to sit back and listen during whole group and small group reading instruction and listen rather than actively participate.

During the ten, structured small group reading lessons, which took place over a series of five weeks I began to see small, but gradual improvements in each student’s reading comprehension. The learning targets gave each student something specific to work toward. It was evident through my observations that Grace and Jack were engaged in the lesson while I modeled how to meet the learning target. When they were confused about a learning target or how to meet it they asked clarifying questions. For example, in lesson four Grace asked, “So, are we supposed to talk to each other and say what happens?”

Both Grace and Jack began to independently attempt the reading comprehension strategy targeted for each lesson. With my support, David also attempted to use each comprehension strategy. This was an improvement from their lack of confidence and reluctance I normally saw. I believe this positive change in
behavior was due to the fact that not only did they know the learning target but they also knew that at the end of the lesson they would be held accountable through their self-reflection.

The students' reflection sheets showed gradual awareness to their comprehension needs. Each of the students reflected back on the learning target and wrote specific goals and a plan for the next lesson. They began to identify ways to improve their reading comprehension in their written reflections. Some examples of the skills or strategies Grace, Jack, and David indentified include, “remind myself to add detail,” “go back to my schema,” “think what is important,” “make a better inference that suppress the picture,” and “ask more questions if im confused.”

Reflection Increases a Student’s Confidence as a Learner

Two of the three student participants showed gradual improvement in their independent use of comprehension strategies. At the start of the study, Grace and Jack were hesitant to participate. They required me to pose many prompts or questions to encourage discussion. By the end of the study, both students showed an increase in their independent attempts to use the reading strategies. Grace began offering more predictions, questions, and inferences without prompting by me. She also began to explain her thinking without me probing her for more information. Jack showed exceptional eagerness and independence throughout the study. He actively offered his own thoughts as he attempted to use comprehension strategies such as making predictions and inferences, asking questions, and making connections. Jack began to
think aloud which allowed me to further understand his thought process and understanding of the text.

Throughout the study, David continued to rely on my prompting and questioning. He rarely offered his own thoughts without being asked. Grace and Jack may have begun to feel comfortable within the group which allowed them to make risks, whereas David may not have felt comfortable yet.

Research Question: How does the reflection process impact self-regulation for each student?

Students Show Increased Self-Awareness of Impulsivity, Hyperactivity, and Inattention

Each student began to show an increased self-awareness of his or her behaviors and efforts during the lessons. Since all three students are diagnosed with ADHD, at times they exhibit behaviors such as impulsivity, hyper-activity, and inattention. Grace is typically very impulsive during small group and whole group lessons within the classroom. Jack is often very impulsive and hyper-active and David displays both impulsivity and inattention. At times, these symptoms can negatively affect their academic performance.

Grace showed increased self-awareness through self-talk. In lesson five of the study, I observed Grace beginning to engage in self-talk. At one point in the lesson when she was trying to form a question she said, “Will the wolves (pause), well how
should I put this, will the other pack run or move away. At the end of lesson five during reflection she wrote, “Next time I plan to think about my questions a lot and gathering everything together.” Also during the reflection part of lesson eight, she specifically asked me if she could reflect on the personalized learning target I had given to her in lesson seven but not in lesson eight. The learning target she wanted to reflect on was: I can stop, think, and gather my ideas before I share. This implies that she was working towards this target throughout lesson eight even though I had not presented it to her at the start of the lesson.

Her reflection sheets also reflected self-awareness. For example, in lesson eight she wrote the following goal, “One thing I could have done better today was making it sound better when I gather my ideas. Next time I plan to make great predictions and gather more.” Then in lesson nine Grace specifically coached herself through self-talk when she stated in the middle of her sentence, “wait, hold on, let me gather.” She then recognized that she had met this goal when she wrote during reflection of lesson nine, “Something I did well today was gathering my ideas.”

**Jack displayed greater control of his impulsivity and hyperactive behaviors.**

Through my observations of each lesson, I saw Jack displaying on-task behaviors during all of the lessons. He rarely exhibited the typical hyper-active behaviors that are normally present within the classroom. In lessons one, two, and six, Jack I observed Jack displaying behaviors that would normally distract him from the lesson-writing on his hand, playing with his glasses, and rocking on his knees. In all three of
these lessons, Jack was engaged through participation and discussion of the text. I believe this is because he had a clear target that he was determined to meet for each lesson and he was able to channel his energy towards it. His goal setting also revealed that he wanted to meet the learning target(s). For example, during the reflection piece of lesson four Jack wrote, “Next time I plan to reach my goal by looking at the learning (drawing of a target).”

**David became aware of his inattention.** David also began to show some evidence that he was aware of his behaviors and how they impacted his learning. His reflection sheets show that he is beginning to acknowledge his abilities to focus and that it has a negative impact on his ability to meet the learning target. He even made reference to some of his distracting behaviors in his reflection sheets. For example, in lesson six he stated that in the next lesson he did not want to fall asleep. Also in lesson eight he stated that he wanted to focus on me more during the lesson by looking at me. This suggests that he is realizing that when he does not face me and the group the negative consequence is that he is not focusing on the lesson.

I believe that David is beginning to become aware that when he is unfocused it negatively impacts his ability to meet the learning target. He is now acknowledging his off-task behavior at the end of each lesson during reflection.
Students may benefit from the ideas, concepts and findings that have surfaced from this study.

**Students Benefit from Knowing the Purpose and Goal of a Lesson**

I believe that students are sometimes confused and unsure of what is expected of them, which then leads to misbehavior and/or academic shortfalls. There are many times when I have heard even after I had given directions my students say, “What are we supposed to do?” When students are unaware of the lesson’s objective they spend their time and energy doing the wrong thing or they sit back and wait to be told what to do rather. Moss, Brookhart, and Long (2011) used the analogy of learning to taking a road trip; if you do not know your destination, you will not know what steps to take in order to get there.

The findings from this study support the implication that students benefit from knowing exactly what is expected of them within a lesson. Grace, Jack and David made statements reflecting the importance of knowing the goal for the lesson. When students are given clear learning targets they are able to focus their thinking and learning towards the specific skill or strategy that is expected to be met throughout the lesson. The students are no longer confused about the purpose of the lesson. Each student attempted to meet the learning target(s) during the lesson. For example, if the
learning target was: I can use my schema about wolves plus clues in the text to make an inference, the students made attempts to make inferences.

Reflection Promotes Student Ownership of Learning

One of the most beneficial aspects of this study was the reflection process. The findings show that engaging in self-reflection and goal setting is an important part of taking ownership for one’s learning. The reflection process encourages students to take responsibility for knowing the learning target so that they can look back and think about their progress towards it. It pushes students to become aware of how they were progressing in relation to the learning target. When students set goals for themselves, they begin to feel important and a part of in their own learning.

Students who engage in ongoing reflection can begin to think critically about how to better meet the learning target(s). Allowing students to assess themselves through self-reflection takes away the stigma of the teacher assessing the student. Students need to be held to the expectation from the beginning of the lesson that they will have to self-reflect and assess themselves. This places ownership on the student to become consciously aware of their behavior, effort, and abilities throughout the lesson. Through the reflection process, students can learn about themselves and they can begin to see that they are making progress.
Implications for My Teaching

I believe that the concepts, ideas and findings conveyed in this study will help me to grow as an educator in several ways.

Assessment for Learning is an Important Piece to Lesson Planning

The school in which I teach has provided the staff with numerous professional development sessions promoting the use of learning targets and assessment for learning techniques. I had experimented before with learning targets in my lessons prior to this study, but now feel as if I will make more of an effort to regularly incorporate them into my daily planning and instruction. Developing a learning target for each lesson helped me to focus and sharpen my understanding of the lesson objective.

For each lesson, I developed clear, specific, student friendly learning targets. The process of developing the learning target(s) allowed me to think critically about what exactly I wanted students to achieve through the lesson. Once I had developed the learning target I was better able to focus my lesson planning and select instructional activities that would best support student success in meeting the target. I was able to choose texts that would best support the purpose of the lesson. It also encouraged me to plan exactly how to carry out my model so that students would know how to reach the learning target. The learning target also helped guide me in giving detailed and descriptive feedback to my students throughout the lessons.
Students’ Self-Reflection Can be Used to Plan and Adjust Instruction for Future Lessons

I think an integral part of being an effective teacher involves reflecting on my lessons and making adjustments and changes to best meet the needs of my students. Reflecting on my lessons allows me to identify what my students are able and not yet independently able to do in relation to the learning target. Identifying this in my students helps me to carefully craft the next lesson using their strengths.

As a teacher, I found that listening and reading each student’s reflection sheets helped me to reflect on my own teaching. I used the written and oral statements made by students throughout the lesson and during reflection to help me make decisions about the following lesson. For example, after lesson one I reflected on my teaching and the progress of each student towards the learning target. I found that students were not yet confident in connecting their schema and text details in order to make an inference. I then decided to continue working on the same learning target, but revised the next lesson by having students look at pictures and use the picture clues and their schema about wolves to make inferences. This helped students to better meet the learning target in lesson two. Following lesson two, I decided to reintroduce making inferences with text. Looking at transcripts of lesson three as well as the reflection sheets from lesson three; all three students participated and offered inferences without much prompting or support from me.

My personal reflection as well as each student’s self-reflection helped me to better scaffold instruction to meet the needs of each student. Allowing students to
engage in self-reflection gives the teacher insight into what they feel confident in and
what they still would like support with. I think that allowing time for students to
debrief and self-reflect provided them with opportunities to specifically express their
learning needs.

**Continuity in Lesson Format is an Important Component for Student Success**

I carried out each of the ten lessons in a very structured and predictable
format. Each lesson began with me sharing the learning target, reviewing the group
norms, a brief, but explicit model of how to meet the learning target, guided practice,
and independent work time. I think that running each lesson in the same format
allowed students to know what to expect so that they could focus on learning rather
than trying to figure out what is going to happen next.

Sharing the learning target with students is not enough to help them reach the
target. Therefore, modeling is an essential piece to any lesson. For each lesson in this
study, I modeled explicitly how to meet the learning target. My modeling helped
show students what I expected each of them to achieve. It also allowed students the
opportunity to ask clarifying questions before trying to meet the learning target on
their own.

Giving students support through guided instruction allows students to feel
comfortable taking risks towards meeting the learning target because they know I am
there to support them. Also, allowing time for students to experiment with meeting
the learning target on their own during their independent work time is important. I
think I need to work on sitting back and giving my students the opportunity to work and discuss the text on their own without me interjecting. During a couple of the lessons, Grace would gently remind me during the independent work time, “Ok Mrs. McCoy, remember, you’re not going to help us now. I know it’s hard for you, but we can do it.” The times where I did interject, it was mostly because I wanted to challenge their thinking or ask them to explain their thinking so that I had a better understanding of how they arrived at their inferences or predictions.

Learning Targets Can Be a Tool in Making Accommodations for Student with Special Needs

As a special education teacher, I am always looking for new ways of accommodating instruction to meet the needs of my students. Students with ADHD are sometimes challenging due to their disruptive behaviors. I believe that this study shows incorporating learning targets into lessons is a viable option. Developing learning targets allows teachers present highly structured and predictable lessons while also continuing to have high expectations.

Throughout this study, I gave each of the student participants personalized learning targets. Each of the personalized learning targets focused on a specific behavior. For example, I gave Grace the following learning target: I can stop, think and gather my thoughts before I share. This personalized learning target was helpful in addressing Grace’s impulsive behavior. It was a positive, encouraging way of promoting self-regulating behavior. I believe that giving students personalized
learning targets like Grace’s can be a great way of addressing behaviors of students with ADHD.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings from my research study have shed light on the possible benefits of using learning targets and self-reflection with students with ADHD. Below I suggest several possible avenues of future research that would be valuable in considering.

**Teachers Should Hold Students Accountable for the Goals They Set**

As stated above, I encouraged students to set goals after each lesson. Even though I did review the goals they set at the start of each lesson, I did not hold them accountable to reaching each goal. I think it would beneficial to conduct a research study where students take their goals and then develop with the help of the teacher their very own learning target for the next lesson. This would be very student centered and would promote authentic learning. Teachers would have to model and scaffold how to write an achievable learning target but the end result would be that the students are in control of their own learning. I think it would be interesting to see how this effects student self-regulation because each student would be responsible for their own learning. I would hypothesize that students would feel greater responsibility and drive to meet their own target.
Teachers Need to Model How to Self-Reflect

Throughout the study, I supported, but mostly observed what each of my student participants wrote on their self-reflection sheets. The result was that some of their goals and written plans were brief with little detail. I think it would beneficial for teachers to model how to reflect and set goals. I would hypothesize that student reflections would be more thoughtful and useful in guiding their learning. I feel that modeling is an important component to any activity we ask students to engage in. If students are participating in reflections that are meaningful to them, it may transfer into increased motivation towards their academics.

Teachers Should Target and Monitor Student Progress and Growth Using One Specific Comprehension Strategy

I designed the makeup of my study to include a variety of reading comprehension strategies. I was curious to see how use of the learning targets influenced the students’ participation and their attempts at using the strategies. I think it would be interesting to research one specific strategy over a longer period of time. The learning targets and goal setting could focus on one strategy. This would enable the researcher to potentially measure growth over time in relation to the specific strategy usage. It would also enable students to track and watch their own progress in relation to use of the strategy. I would hypothesize that students would become experts in the one strategy and would be better able to set goals in relation to the strategy.
Teachers Need to Explore the Effectiveness of Learning Targets With Other Populations of Special Needs Students

By definition, the term students with disabilities includes an array of categories including but not limited to speech and language impairment, autism spectrum disorder, other health impairment, learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, and intellectual disability. I believe that providing accommodations and modifications to my instruction is essential in promoting students’ academic and social growth. My study focused on students with ADHD under the category of other health impairment. The findings suggest that students with ADHD may benefit from learning targets and focused self-reflection.

I believe further research should be conducted with students who fall under other special education categories. I have discovered in my own teaching that students with disabilities benefit from structure and predictable lesson formats where expectations are clear. Researching the effects of learning targets and self-reflection as an accommodation would be important in area of special education. As a special education teacher, I am always looking for research based strategies to try with my students.

I also think that it is important for future researchers to repeat a similar study to mine with students with ADHD. It may be beneficial to conduct a longitudinal study with a larger participant size. This could increase the validity and reliability of my study’s findings.
Final Thoughts

As I described in the opening pages of chapter one, my students with ADHD could easily get off topic and off task during a short discussion of a text, causing me to spend a good portion of time providing on-task verbal reminders to the students, I found this frustrating as it interfered with the flow of discussion.

It has become apparent to me through conducting this study that students with ADHD benefit from not only knowing the learning target but also taking part in ongoing reflection. I recognize that teaching students with special needs can be challenging and rewarding at the same time. It is important that I continue to look for new strategies to best meet their needs. What works for some students may not work with others. Therefore, it is extremely important for me to continue researching new and innovative ways of making my teaching even more effective.

I have found that incorporating student friendly learning targets and supporting students with ADHD in a process of self-reflection had a positive impact on their learning and their abilities to self-regulate their behaviors. I am going to continue to regularly use these strategies with my future students.
References


Hulan, N. (2010). What the students will say while the teacher is away: An investigation into student-led and teacher-led discussion within guided reading groups. *Literacy Teaching and Learning, 14*(1&2), 41-64.


Appendix A

Observation Notes

Date: __________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Body language</th>
<th>Other observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

**Student Self-Reflection Rubric**

Learning Target: ____________________________________________________________

Name: _____________________________ Date: __________ __

Place a sticker on the rubric where you believe you are in relationship to the target.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I have gone above and beyond the learning target and I feel like an expert.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I have met the learning target.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I have started to make some progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I am really confused or I have no idea.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) **Something I did well today was** ________________________________________

2) **One thing I could have done better today was** ____________________________

3) **Next time I plan to** ____________________________________________________
Appendix C

Culminating Student Interview

Interviewee: ___________________ Date: _____________________

1) What is the definition of a learning target?
   ____________________________________________________________

2) Do you think knowing your learning target before the lesson helped you? Why or why not?
   ____________________________________________________________

3) How did you feel when you reflected on your learning targets? Why?
   ____________________________________________________________

4) If you had a choice, would you prefer to have a learning target for each lesson you participate in? Why or why not?
   ____________________________________________________________

5) Do you think you have developed any new skills or strategies to help you understand while reading because of using learning targets? Why or why not?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

If yes, how do you know, and what are the skills and strategies you now have?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
Appendix D

April 15, 2011

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am a graduate student in the Department of Education and Human Development at The College at Brockport, SUNY. As part of the requirements for my master’s degree, I am conducting a research study to learn more about learning goals and their influence on the reading comprehension of students who have difficulty sustaining attention. As part of my study, I will be observing, audio recording, and interviewing students engaging in small group reading lessons.

I would like to observe and interview your child. If you grant consent for your child to participate in this study, I may observe and audio record him or her during our small group reading lessons. My observation will focus on the literacy discussions and skills or strategies used in relation to the learning goal. I will also conduct a culminating interview will be conducted for each student who participates in the study.

The collection of data will be approximately two-three days a week for six weeks. No information recorded will be assessed or graded by me or the other classroom teacher.

The enclosed Guardian Consent form includes information about your child’s rights as a project participant, including how I will protect his/her privacy. Please read the form carefully. If you are willing to allow your child to participate, please indicate your consent by signing the attached statement and returning to me.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Primary Researcher
Nicole McCoy
Graduate Student
SUNY
nbrye1@brockport.edu

Dr. Don Halquist
Thesis Advisor
The College at Brockport,
dhalquis@brockport.edu

The College at Brockport, SUNY
(585) 325-6170

(585)395-5550
Appendix E

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARENTS

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of learning targets or learning goals on reading comprehension. This will support my growth and development as an educator as well as a researcher. This research project is also being conducted in order for me to complete my master’s thesis for the Department of Education at the State University of New York College at SUNY Brockport. If you agree to have your child participate in this research study, your child will be observed during periods of small group reading comprehension lessons.

In order for your child to participate in this study, your informed consent is required. You are being asked to make a decision whether or not to allow your child to participate in the project. If you would like for your child to participate in the project, and agree with the statements below, please sign your name in the space provided at the end. You may change your mind at any time and your child may leave the study without penalty, even after the study has begun.

I understand that:

a. My child’s participation is voluntary and s/he has the right to refuse to answer any questions
b. My child will be audio taped, and the researcher will transcribe the audio tapes.
c. My child’s confidentiality is guaranteed. Her/his name will not be recorded in observational notes or transcripts. There will be no way to connect my child to the observation. If any publication results from this research, s/he would not be identified by name. Results will be given through the use of pseudonyms, so neither the participants nor the school can be identified.
d. There will be no anticipated personal risks or benefits because of participation in this project.
e. Participation or choosing not to participate will have no impact on your child’s grades or class standing.
f. My child’s participation involves participating in small group reading lessons. The researcher will be observing and audio taping my child’s literacy discussions with other group members for approximately 30 minutes two-three times a week. The researcher will actively participate with my students as their teacher during the study.
g. The audio recordings and interview answers, as well as observational field notes recorded during each reading lesson will be used for data analysis only. Only the Primary Researcher and Thesis Advisor will
have access to this information. The results will be used for the completion of a master's thesis by the primary researcher.

h. Data from each reading lesson will be kept in a locked filing cabinet by the investigator. Data and consent forms will be destroyed by shredding when the research has been completed.

i. My child can decline participation even if I have provided consent.

You are being asked whether or not you will permit your child to participate in this study. If you wish to grant permission to participate, and you agree with the statement below, please sign in the space provided. Remember, you may change your mind at any point and withdraw from the study. Your child can refuse to participate even if you have given permission for him/her to participate.

I understand the information provided in this form and agree to allow my child to participate as a participant in this study. I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my child’s participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction.

If you have any questions, you may contact:

Primary Researcher
Nicole McCoy
Graduate Student
SUNY
nbrye1@brockport.edu

Dr. Don Halquist
Thesis Advisor
The College at Brockport,
(585)325-6170
dhalquis@brockport.edu

The College at Brockport, SUNY
(585)395-5550

I grant permission for my child to participate and I understand that he/she will be audio taped.

Signature of Parent ______________________ Date: ___________________
Child’s Name _____________________________________________

or

I grant permission for my child to participate, but I do not agree for him/her to be audio taped.

Signature of Parent ______________________ Date: ___________________
Child’s Name _____________________________________________
Appendix F

Statement of Assent
To Be Read to Fifth Grade Students

I am your teacher, but I am also a student just like you. I go to college at Brockport, and I am learning about how students improve their reading skills. I would like to find out if learning targets are related to improving your reading skills.

To find out if learning targets impact your reading, I want to watch and audio record your discussions while you are learning. I may want to talk to some of you too. While I’m watching you and talking to you, you may see me writing in my notebook or looking at what you are doing. You will also see a small recorder that will record your voices. That way I can play back your discussions and see if I missed anything while I was watching and taking notes.

If you decide to let me find out more about learning targets and your reading skills, I won’t write down your name or let anyone else know who you are. When I write about my study, I will only say how learning targets are connected to your learning.

Your parent or guardian has given permission for you to take part in this study, but it’s up to you to decide if you would like to. Whether you decide to participate or not, this will in no way help or hurt your grades. If you would like to take part in my study, but change your mind later on, you can tell me that you have changed your mind. It is okay to change your mind at any time.

If it is okay with you for me to find out about learning targets and your reading skills, you can write your name on the first line below. Under your name you can write today’s date which is ________________.

Thank you very much,

Nicole McCoy

Name: ___________________________________________
Date: ___________________________________________

Witness (18 years or older): __________________________
Appendix G
March 5, 2011

Mrs. Sheela Webster, Principal
World of Inquiry School # 58
Rochester, NY 14605

Dear Principal, Sheela Webster,

I am a graduate student at SUNY Brockport. I am currently developing my thesis on learning targets and the connection to reading comprehension for students who have attention deficits. I am investigating how learning targets can be used as an instructional strategy to encourage students who exhibit symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder to be self-regulated and intentional learners. Specifically I am curious to see the impact having students reflect on personalized learning targets has on their reading comprehension.

As part of my study, I would like to observe students from my inclusive fifth grade classroom during a small group reading lesson, two-three times a week for six weeks. I plan to record my observations, encourage students to reflect on their learning with a student friendly rubric, audio record student discussions, and conduct a culminating student interview. A copy of my observation notes, student friendly rubric, and student interview, are enclosed, as well as, the parental consent form of the students from which I will be observing for you to review.

I will be taking a non-participant role in this research study. I will not disrupt instruction during my observation. I will not ask for student names, professionals within the school. In my study, I will not disclose the name or location of the school, professionals, or student names.
In order to comply with SUNY Brockport Institutional Review Board, I must submit a letter from you, on your school’s letterhead, stating your approval of this study. I must also submit informed consent forms from and the parents/guardians of her students.

Please contact me at 732-3657, if you have any questions regarding my study. If you approve of my study, please mail a letter to me at the address below. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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