Developing Strategies for Regaining Focus Based on Student Needs

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Developing Strategies for Regaining Focus
Based on Student Needs

by

Barbara Anna Gardner Messmer

June, 2009

A thesis submitted to the
Department of Education and Human Development of the
State University of New York College at Brockport
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Master of Science in Education
Developing Strategies for Regaining Focus
Based on Student Needs

by

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This thesis is dedicated to my family.
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Chapter I Introduction

How does a classroom run? Just like each person has a personality, so does each classroom have a personality. The teacher in each classroom sets the tone for the classroom. Will it be nurturing to the mind and the spirit allowing students to explore the course matter, or will it be rigid and unyielding, allowing only for the topics dictated by the teacher? Will there be a set routine or will it be take things as they come along?

Check the shelves at your local college library or on-line booksellers and you will find numerous volumes on how to make your classroom move more smoothly through organization. Fred Jones and Harry Wong, two respected educators, have been teaching teachers how they made their own classrooms work and how other teachers can use these techniques to improve their classrooms. Jones (2002) believes that teachers must keep in close proximity of their students to deter off task behavior. Teachers should arrange their classrooms so that the classroom is easily navigated, and that the teacher can be constantly moving around the room.

In addition Wong (2004) states that from the first day of school students should know what their place is in the classroom. By creating a seating arrangement based on input from students’ previous teachers the new classroom teacher can then label the desks. When students arrive on the first day of school the teacher will have an established a place for each student to call his/her own. Wong (2004) also recommends learning student names by looking at students’ pictures in their
cumulative files, so that the teacher can begin a positive relationship with the teacher, as the teacher greets each student by name at the classroom door.

Does this mean that students in classrooms with specific routines and procedures are generally focused and on task? Routines and procedures are the keys to an organized classroom according to Clark (2003), Jones (2002), and Wong (2004) because everyone will know what is expected. Clark (2003) and Jones (2002) further point out the best way to teach students the method which the students will use to complete a task is by following through with established consequences. For example if the teacher tells the class that passing in the hall must be silent and one student whispers, then the whole class returns to the room because before leaving the room the teacher has clearly stated the response to noncompliance. Similarly Wong (2004) suggests that students must be taught from the beginning of the year what the expectations for behavior and work will be in the classroom.

Within the middle school setting many factors seem to influence students' abilities to attend to tasks such as peer pressure, self concept, self esteem, and perception of the world. The purpose of this study was to discover what interventions will increase student awareness to off task behaviors so that the student may self correct. To begin my study I surveyed two seventh grade students and one eighth grade student to glean information about the students' self concept, self esteem, perception of the world, and what kinds of peer pressure they felt. I also surveyed the same students to determine the off task behavior they felt that they exhibit. I then surveyed the parents of those three students who are struggling learners in regards to
the parental perception of their child to peer pressure, self concept, self esteem, and perception of the world. Lastly, I gathered information from the parents as to what types of off task behaviors that teachers have noted to them about their children or that they have noted while observing their child completing homework.

Over the course of a few weeks, anecdotal records were kept regarding the three students’ behaviors. Individual conferences took place between the students and me to establish a signal that would cue the student that off task behavior was taking place. During this time observations of practicing responses to the signal and self correcting by returning to task were taken. Students culminated this study with a post study survey and an exit interview with the consultant teacher.

In the consultant teacher work that I have done in different subject areas within my team or house, I have seen students who struggle academically. Often these students have a range of observable off-task behaviors. Some have been the obvious off-task behaviors such as shouting out, turning around, or arguing with anyone to get some attention. Some have been less obvious to almost passive aggressive, such as students who sat and stared into space, played with purses and organizer folders, or doodled all over their notebooks. They did not disrupt the classroom as a whole, just themselves by becoming engrossed in an activity that drew their attention away from the current learning task.

Students need to learn strategies to feel more in control of their own learning. It is possible to get yourself back on track without lots of commotion that will single you out. Middle school students do not always know how to stay on track or get back
on track because there are influences that keep the student from focusing. The teacher
must develop ways along with students to keep the students focused on the lesson.

Classrooms are known to students and parents by the management style of the
teacher. Certain teachers are acknowledged for their strict discipline and routine,
while others are referred to as the ‘fun’ teachers. Different students seem to thrive in
one classroom, while some flounder in the other. Classroom teachers need to develop
a classroom in which all students can thrive.

Over the past fifteen years of doing consultant teacher work in the
intermediate and middle school grades I have worked with teachers with varying
teaching styles. Some teachers were flexible and made adjustments as required by
individual students, while others had rigid rules and compliance was mandatory.
Observing students in classrooms has made me wonder what could be done to help
students learn to adjust to the different teaching styles they encounter. Often
students who cannot modify to the teaching style of the classroom teacher find
alternate ways to occupy time or change focus. Drawing with highlighter in one’s
agenda is more enticing than asking for help from the math teacher regarding the
homework everyone else is starting. Staring out the window at the cars driving by is
better than trying to sound out words in a book you must read for English.

As a consultant teacher I need to have strategies that will help me to assist
students to regain their focus and stay on task. I need to find ways to aid students to
regain focus without having me become a distraction. Suggestions from students
about what is distracting and what the students find helpful to return to focus on a
lesson would greatly benefit me and the students with whom I am working.
Chapter II Literature Review

Every teacher has their own system of classroom organization that works for them. Students may see one teacher as extremely strict with lots of rules invading every aspect of the school day including where to sit, where to put your bag and coat, and how to be excused to use the lavatory. Meanwhile, another teacher may seem less confining, this teacher may allow students to choose their own seats, does not assign hooks in the coat room, and permits students to leave to use the restroom facilities as the student sees fit. However, there are some students that perform better in one classroom and not the other and vice versa.

Fred Jones (2002) and Harry Wong (2004), two respected educators, have been instructing teachers through books and videos how they made their own classrooms work. Fred Jones refers to his strategies as “tools” such as “Working the Crowd” (p.21). This particular approach recommends that the teacher needs to move around the classroom in order to avoid possible disruptions. It also suggests that the teacher arrange the room with the consideration of easy transversal by the teacher as well as the students. Wong (2004) concurs with Jones. One of Wong’s recommendations to teachers is to arrange the room for easy movement by teacher and students alike. However, Wong specifically endorses the desks be arranged at the beginning of the year so that every student has an easy view of the front of the classroom. These educators demonstrate to teachers how they can use numerous management techniques to improve their classrooms and avoid distractions.
Disney Teacher of the Year Award winner, Ron Clark (2003), also educates teachers in the methods he uses to organize his students through routines, rituals, and what he interprets as proper manners. Clark incorporates the ideas of classroom management of his more experienced colleagues, Jones and Wong. Clark believes that there is a proper or acceptable way to do a task or handle a situation. Clark tries to ingrain these proper responses by practicing the behavior with his students so that the response becomes automatic. In this way the teacher can avoid unnecessary disruptions because everyone in the class knows the procedure and expectations.

Jones, Wong, and Clark give practical and useful strategies to teachers to maintain orderly classrooms based on very traditional models of education. The teacher is seen as the authority, making the decisions that dictate how the classroom will be run. Palumbo and Sanacore (2007) found that when observing teachers in actual classroom situations that those teachers who were organized, had a plan, and had clear expectations of their students were less interrupted than other colleagues that lacked in one of these areas. Their research supports the theories of Jones, Wong, and Clark that are proponents of teacher organization, clear and consistent guidelines for students, and use of consistent strategies or techniques. Not only did the teachers who were organized experienced fewer interruptions from students or from lack of preparedness, but also Palumbo and Sanacore conjectured that the students in classrooms that experience more interruptions lost valuable instructional time. It was estimated that if a teacher was more efficient in the use of classroom management and started the class in less time than the “average” teacher that the
students receive 10 percent more time for instruction in the classes of efficient teachers, averaging out at significant amount of additional instructional time according to Palumbo and Sanacore.

Classroom management strategies that can permit additional instructional time may include visual or auditory cues that allow students to know what the expectations might be. According to Björn, De Koning, Tabbers, Rikers, and Paas (2007) “cueing was originally defined as the addition of a non-content aspect of prose, which gives emphasis to certain aspects of the semantic content or points out aspects of the structure of the content.” In other words cueing is when some visual or auditory signal is given to highlight or stress an important point. Jones recommends the use of “Visual Instructional Plans or VIP’s” (p.67), which are step by step examples of how a process like long division is done. This visual example gives the students a non-verbal way to observe how a problem should be done allowing the students to complete work without having to ask the teacher to reiterate what has already been taught. Björn, et al. (2007) studied the use of a visual cue with an animation that demonstrated a process in order to provide better understanding and retention of the process. They determined that cueing led to better comprehension of the process, as well as being able to transfer what was understood. The cueing also aided in the retention of information that was not cued. The visual cues provided in the animation were used as attentional guides to “reduce visual search” (p.740) or to limit the watchers awareness to a particular area. Teachers attempt to provide students with
visual cues during instruction to maintain visual attention, as well as provide examples of the concepts being taught.

The use of strategies, including visual cues, has become known as classroom management. Ronald E. Butchart and Barbara McEwan (1998) discuss classroom management and the history of discipline in schools in the United States. Looking into the history of classroom discipline the original model looked at respect for the elder that included the wielding of power by the elder, who essentially pressured the younger subservient learner into following the rules. This generally included corporal punishment. Later, in the mid 1800’s classroom discipline turned to a model of a nurturing relationship built between the teacher and student particularly because teaching was becoming a female profession as opposed to the traditional male schoolmaster. When a student did not follow the teacher’s rules, the student was told that he/she had disappointed the teacher demonstrating a break in the relationship. Telling the student that he/she had disappointed the adult was intended to have the student look inward and take responsibility for the unacceptable behavior. The student was then to find understanding that breaking the rules set by the teacher was causing a strain in the relationship, and by following those rules the student was to be seen as respectful to the adult and maintain the nurturing relationship.

Currently classroom management specialists like Linda Albert (1996) recommend a democratic type of management system of “cooperative discipline”. In the cooperative discipline model, students work along with the teacher to develop rules for the classroom in order for the students to feel that the rules are fair with clear
consequences. This model of classroom management also allows students to feel like they have a stake in their own education. Parents are included in the process in that they receive a copy of the agreed upon rules and consequences and that they sign a statement saying they agree to the rules and consequences. Cooperative discipline encourages the input of the students, their parents, and teachers in the process of discipline in a way in which everyone’s input is valued.

Posting the rules in the classroom is a visual cue that Wong recommends to maintain the relationship between teacher and student, as well as student and student. Not only should the rules be posted, but also the rewards and consequences in order to give students a structured and predictable environment. Reif (1993) and Sousa (2001) recommend structured and predictable environments especially for students with attention difficulties.

Students with attention difficulties not only require structured and predictable environments, but these students require that material or concepts be presented at their own acquisition rate. The material presented must have the correct ratio of unknown material presented to the amount of the known material. Burns and Dean (2005) discuss how the acquisition rate of knowledge in students with attention needs relates to off-task behaviors. Off-task behaviors are defined by Burns and Dean as “those that were irrelevant to the academic task at hand” (p. 274). Burns and Dean found that students increased off-task behavior when they reached their acquisition level. It was determined that teachers should think about the amount of new material being presented in a lesson to the amount of knowledge that students have already
attained on that concept. Burns and Dean also suggested that “future research could address several applied topics such as classroom uses of interventions” (p.280). A possible intervention could be the use of visual or auditory cues in order to turn the student’s attention to the task at hand.

The general recommendation made by school psychologists for students who exhibit off-task behavior is to provide visual and auditory cues to turn the students’ attention back to the task at hand. Downs and Jenkins (2001) pondered that if putting some stimulus along with a picture would create for the observer a connection between the stimulus and picture then the cue would allow the picture to be remembered. Downs and Jenkins used a circle of projected light to turn the focus of the observer to the chosen part of the picture. The circle of light turned the focus of the observers to the desired aspect of the picture shown. ”Students need to experience the different forms of representation as a regular part of the learning process in order to become proficient with the various tools that will increase their conceptual learning,” (p40) according to Downs and Jenkins. The results of Downs and Jenkins support previous research regarding “selectively attending to visual stimuli” (p37). Similarly, Björn, et al. (2007) found that when adding a visual cue to an animation, students focus to that part of the animation rather than the part that is not cued. Both studies found successful use of visual cueing to augment functioning.

Weibe and Annetta (2008) looked at how visual attention is distributed when the use of multimedia as part of the instructional process. Multimedia in this
experiment consisted of slides in a PowerPoint presentation where half of the subjects viewed the presentation silently, while the other half viewed the presentation including audio narration of the text. Like Björn, et al. (2007), these researchers wondered if the graphics described by a passage would be observed more closely if the passage cued the subject by mentioning the picture rather than if the passage did not mention the picture. Weibe and Annetta believed that “animations demand more visual attention, regardless of the nature of the text accompanying it” (p. 265). As a result of their research Weihe and Annetta found that subjects observed the graphics longer if they listened to the auditory narration. The fact that the text was presented auditorally to the subjects may have allowed the listener the ability to focus on reading the text less and observing the graphics more, therefore having to split visual attention less. These results would tell educators that text is important to learning, however, the use of narration while using graphics accompanied by text would make the student more available to learning what is being presented by the graphics. This may be especially helpful to students who have difficulty maintaining attention because their visual attention would not have to be split trying to read the text and looking at the picture, going back and forth from text to graphic and possibly losing where he/she left off with one or the other.

Visual and auditory cueing are not only used by teachers to keep students’ attention, but are often times used by other speakers to gain the attention of the audience to whom they are speaking. Keintz, Bunton, and Hoit (2007) worked with patients with Parkinson’s disease whose communication depended on the clarity of
speech and accompanying gestures or cues that permitted the listener to understand what information the patient was trying to share. Keintz, et al. (2007) found that “visual information is especially beneficial to speakers with severely impaired intelligibility” (p. 230). This statement translates into the positive support that visual cues give to the speaker when presenting information, so that allowing normal gestures along with speech might be considered as a suitable part of an evaluation of expressive language. Use of visual cues or gestures to enhance the passing of information from the Parkinson’s patient to a listener should be encouraged.

Similarly, the use of gestures and facial cues was investigated by Sueyoshi and Hardison (2005) as to whether it assisted second language listeners with comprehension. Participants in the study found that visual cues augmented the comprehension of what was being said. Gestures and lip movement positively affected the understanding of the information being presented to the second language learners with better proficiency. However, students with lower proficiency found that visual cues diverted their attention causing them to be annoyed, and high proficiency students felt most strongly that the visual cues were a positive influence in understanding.

Attention to a particular object, especially visual attention, has been researched since J. Ridley Stroop coined the term “the Stroop effect” back in the 1930’s according to Eric H. Chudler of the University of Washington on his Neuroscience for Kids website (2006). Chudler says that Stroop had two ideas to
explain his ‘Stroop effect’. One idea was that it was caused by the speed at which we can process the information and that reading was processed faster than color recognition. The other was that reading and color recognition interfered with one another causing selective attention. Chudler challenges people who visit his website to replicate Stroop’s experiment. Chudler first asks people who can read to try the experiment, and then to repeat the experiment with a child who knows his/her colors, but does not read yet. Chudler conjectures that the non-reader child would not be confused by the words.

Wühr and Frings (2008) did two experiments regarding the Stroop effect in the area of selective attention. In the first experiment Wühr and Frings tried to discover whether selective attention “inhibits the processing of an irrelevant object” (p119). In this experiment subjects sat in front of a monitor, were told to focus on the center of the screen, and tried to say the color of the ‘relevant’ object into a microphone. Sometimes the ‘relevant’ object had the name of its color on the object, sometimes it had another color written on it. Another object would also be on the screen somewhat behind the ‘relevant’ object to be identified. It also contained a color and may or may not have had the correct color word, also. The color of the background would also have the correct or incorrect color word. The color words were centered within the objects or background. The researchers found that attention increased for the ‘relevant’ visual objects, the objects for which to attend and increased restraint or control for ‘irrelevant’ objects or objects that also were present, but not the main focus of attention.
In their second experiment Wühr and Frings (2008) tried a similar experiment to the first; however, they chose to make the color words equidistant from each other in order to see if visual attention was affected by not having the words centered in the objects. It was determined that words in the background had a slightly higher effect on the ‘relevant’ object than words in the ‘irrelevant’ object. The results of the second experiment were similar to those of experiment one. Attention increased for the ‘relevant’ object, possibly because the use of objects with colors and color words changes the processing of what is the important object. Wühr and Frings tried a third experiment similar to the first, except that the subject was to say aloud the word that appeared on the monitor, as quickly as possible. Uniform results were found for response times when reading the words. Wühr and Frings determined that the results for their experiments could be ascribed to attention rather than other factors.

Obtaining and holding a student’s visual attention is important to the learning process. Although these experiments show that visual attention of the majority of participants can ignore unimportant visual stimuli, the question still remains as to why it appears that a group of people cannot maintain attention to an object to a degree that will allow for learning of the information presented.

Johnson, Hollingworth, and Luck (2008) looked at how aspects of objects that have been seen are remembered as particular to that object, and that the memory of an object is not made by mixing specific aspects of several objects. This is believed to occur because of ‘visual selective attention’ (¶ 1). Johnson, et al.(2008) surmise that more attention is needed to hold in memory an object, than remembering the parts of
basic images. Johnson, et al. (2008) refers to the work of other researchers such as Resink and Simons and Levin regarding what is known as ‘change blindness’ (¶ 2). ‘Change blindness’ is the inability of a person to notice an obvious change outside the area.

The theory of ‘change blindness’ could explain why students may not be able to notice that the teacher has changed notes on the board or that the overhead is projecting something new because the student is focused on the teacher who is talking. The student truly does not realize that a change has occurred that is as important as what the teacher may be saying because the student’s complete energy is being placed to focus on what is being said. Johnson, et al. findings were not in concert with the work of previous researchers, but that holding on to the memory of an object was damaged, as well as memory of a particular aspect of an object by the search task subjects were asked to do. In the experiments conducted by Johnson, et al the attention of test subjects’ was manipulated because of the importance of attention in making memory. However, the researchers wondered if asking subjects to perform two tasks may have been influenced by other factors such as the amount of space between objects on the monitor. This theory could support why some students have difficulty attending to the teacher who is explaining the notes and taking notes from the board or overhead. The amount of space between the teacher that the student is watching, and the board or screen where the notes are located, may be too far apart for the brain to attend to both and make a correct memory.
Visual cues and signals can be associated as a form of behavior modification for the student. Seeing the signal or cue evokes a response that the student has been taught should be done in place of the action he/she is currently taking. If the student is off-task and the teacher lightly touches the student on the shoulder, then the student knows that he/she is not doing what the rest of the group is doing and should change his/her behavior.

Behavior modification systems tend to have rewards attached to them. It could simply be a positive comment or it could be something more tangible like a stamp or sticker. Pelham, W.E., Fabiano, G., Waxmonsky, J., Greiner, A., Burrows-MacLean, L., Massetti, G., Washbusch, D., Hoffman, M., Murphy, S., Carter, R., Gnagy, E., Bhatia, I., Verley, J., & Mitchell, C. (2007) found that medications for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or ADHD can be reduced when used in conjunction with behavioral modifications. Pelham et al. (2007) are a part of a research group at the Center for Children and Families at the State University of New York at Buffalo. The Center for Children and Families has ongoing studies that take the shape of a summer camp where the students are treated in three groups. One group had only behavior modification, another group had a little behavior modification, and another group had high behavior modification. In each behavior modification group the amount of medication a student received varied. One group of participants might have been receiving a placebo, another group might have been on a low dose of medication, and another group might have been on a stronger dose of medication. It did not matter whether the participant was on a placebo, low dose, or
stronger dose of medication, all participants showed improved behavior with modifications.

The positive results to Pelham et al. (2007) would lead to the belief that providing a visual cue, a small behavior modifier, would have a positive effect on a student’s behavior. In combination with proper medication, behavior modification may reduce the amount of medication a person with an attention deficit may need to help him/her to focus on the necessary task. Therefore, a person who has some attention issues that do not meet all the criterion for being diagnosed as ADHD should benefit from the use of behavior modification such as the use of a visual cue to bring him/her back to task.

The success of the behavior modification is linked to how the adults in the ADHD student’s life use the system. According to Coles, E.K., Pelham, W.E., Fabiano, G.A., Massetti, G., Hoffman, M.T., Burrows-MacLean, L., & Gnagy, E. M. (2003) the parents of students who received behavior modifications consultations used medication less at home, but that difficulties continued to happen while the student was at home. Also, the parents of students who had taken medication prior to the study continued their child on medication whether they received behavior modification consultations or they did not receive consultations. All parents in the study said that they had learned some new strategies for dealing with their child during the parent training sessions. Cole, et al. (2003) note that the students who
received behavior modification and consultation reduced the amount of medication he/she took daily, as opposed to those students who did not receive consultation.

Cole, et al. (2003) support the findings of Pelham, et al. (2007) that the use of a combination of medication and behavior modification help students with attentions problems to attend to the task at hand. Vujnovic, R. & Fabiano, G.A. (2007) found that when asking a random sampling of teachers at various grade levels what was effective for aiding students with ADHD, teachers felt that a combination of behavior modification and the student being on medication was best for the child. Teachers also noted that they would try behavioral modifications before utilizing other interventions. Medication alone was not considered the best treatment for the child by the teachers surveyed.

In their survey of teachers Vujnovic et al. (2007) were surprised to find that the majority of the teachers surveyed had no training deal with ADHD students. This lack of training for the majority of classroom teachers may have been the reason the researchers found important differences in teacher beliefs regarding treatments for ADHD students. Training of parents and teachers in behavior modifications to help students maintain focus is crucial to the student with ADHD.

Moreover, teachers were not focused on off-task behaviors of students. Massetti, G., Pelham, W.E., & Waschbusch, D. (2007) found that teachers were unable to observe as many rule violations or off-task behaviors as an independent observer in the classroom. When comparing the teacher's findings to that of the
independent classroom observers, Massetti et al. (2007) discovered that about one third of the rule violations that occurred in the classroom were where the teacher could not see the violation. This prompts one to recall that class management experts like Jones and Wong are correct when they tell educators to move around the room and not remain in one area for extended periods of time. If the student thinks that the teacher cannot see the rule violation that is taking place, then the student is willing to try breaking the rule because he/she knows that the teacher cannot see everything that is taking place in the room at one time.

Masseti et al. (2007) also found that for a third of the violations of rules the teacher did catch, the teacher did not address the infraction, but ignored the infraction. Ignoring a rule violation was seen as a strategy used by teachers. Strategies for dealing with rule violations fell into two categories, appropriate and inappropriate. Appropriate strategies were seen as “positive verbalizations and commands” and inappropriate strategies as “negative verbalizations and commands.”

Massetti, et al. (2007) observed a small number of teachers using negative verbalizations and commands, but these teachers used these inappropriate responses over half the time that rules were violated, which brought cause for concern. Jones notes negative responses become a battleground because the student is trying to save face, so backtalk occurs. The teacher becomes an unwitting partner as the straight man to the student clown in the ‘duo’ comedy act. Instead the teacher should give the
command and when the student talks back, just say nothing and let the student continue alone. The student will eventually stop because you are calm and strong.

According to experts like Jones, Wong, and Clark, students need a structured predictable school setting with explicitly expressed rules and consequences. This type of setting is exhibited in the summer camp study of Pelham et al. (2007). Students know the expectations and the consequences of when those expectations are not met. When teachers can create a positive learning environment that gives students cues to keep the students on track like a visual cue that changes the focus of the students' attention to what is important, students learn. Not only does the student learn the material for the curriculum that is being taught, the student is learning a strategy for life.

The goal for teachers of students with ADHD is to teach the students strategies to help the particular student to focus. Different strategies work better for different students. Visual cues can be general signals arranged with students confidentially, that would not single out any particular student, but would draw a particular student or set of students to focus on an important point.

Instruction of teachers in areas of classroom management is a significant part of working with students with attention difficulties. Good classroom management strategies that allow for a consistent and predictable classroom environment benefit teacher and students. Clear guidelines also allowed for more instructional time.
Providing pictures in conjunction with auditory narration of the caption of the picture was found to better hold observers’ attention to the picture or visual cue. Using only a text caption with a picture without the narration may split the attention of the observer because the observer is trying to read and look at the picture at the same time. Students, especially those with attention issues, may want to read the text and may not spend enough time observing the visual illustration the text accompanies. It may also be difficult for a student with attention difficulties to read the text material, causing the student to lose focus not only on the text, but on the picture because the student becomes frustrated.

Overstimulation from too many factors at one time can be stressful for the lower achieving learner. Although cues and gestures may be beneficial to higher achieving learners, those same cues and gestures may be too distracting to lower achieving learners and may hinder learning. Teachers need to be attuned to the particular student to assure that cues are helpful yet not overwhelming.

It is important for teachers to understand the needs of students with ADHD and other attention difficulties. Students with ADHD can benefit from strategies they can learn at school, or through programs offered through universities that hopefully carry over into the rest of their life. Parents working in conjunction with teachers and health professionals are an integral part of the student developing useful strategies to deal with their attention difficulties. If consistency can be established between home
and school, then it will benefit the student. The student may find success that boosts confidence and permits the student to excel.
The purpose of this study was to determine if certain strategies like a visual cue would improve a student’s ability to maintain focus in the classroom. Participants for this study were selected by the researcher through researcher observation and input from classroom teachers regarding the students. Students who were to engage in this study were determined based on concerns about the students’ poor academic performance and classroom teachers’ concerns about the students’ ability to attend in class.

Eight students were asked to participate in the study. Only three students and their parents granted permission to be a part of this project. Of the three participants who agreed to be part of this research project, two were boys and one was a girl. All three students lived in traditional families with a mother, father, and one or more siblings. All students had attended parochial school for several years.

Stephen, one of the boys who agreed to participate, was 7th grader who had been diagnosed with attention difficulties and was born with an eye disorder that required he wear glasses and take medication for his attention needs. Stephen had a 504 Plan that expected preferential seating for his sight problems and seating with limited distractions particularly for testing situations. Stephen took medication for his attention difficulties. Stephen had a difficult time making the transition to the added responsibilities of middle school. Teachers noted that Stephen was very disorganized with his personal belongings, rarely copied homework assignments into his agenda book, and frequently missed important assignments. Along with Stephen’s mother,
the team of teachers determined that some additional interventions needed to be implemented with Stephen. The Academic Intervention Services (AIS) teacher began to check his agenda book every afternoon to confirm homework assignments were written correctly and helped him to pack his backpack to assure all necessary homework materials were being taken home. Although Stephen took advantage of his test accommodations of his 504 Plan mainly for standardized tests, midterm exams, and final exams, he managed to pass his classes.

Stephen did not have any trouble making friends with other students. He got along well with other boys in his homeroom, as well as students in classes. Stephen had more positive friendships with other boys than with girls or adults. No outstanding negative relationships appeared with Stephen.

Nicholas, another boy who agreed to participate in the study is also a 7th grader. He had been diagnosed with attention difficulties, as well as, obsessive behaviors, but took medication for his attention problems, only. Nicholas had a 504 Plan that included preferential seating, extended time for tests, a separate location for test taking, and use of a word processor. Transition to middle school demands was not as difficult for Nicholas as it was for Stephen. Nicholas was highly organized with his personal belongings. He kept a very neat and orderly agenda book with all homework assignments meticulously copied from the board. At times, Nicholas had difficulty prioritizing assignments. He would work intensely on long term assignments, however he might not have taken time to complete shorter assignments that are due the next day.
Nicholas’ team of teachers was mainly concerned with his interpretation of directions. When long written assignments, such as document based questions, were given to Nicholas, he insists that he understands what the teacher requires. Later when the teacher evaluated the assignment, Nicholas has only met part of what was required in the rubric that was provided. Nicholas’ English Language Arts teacher had discussed problems with at least two of his long term assignments and had him redo those assignments for more credit. When Nicholas received one-on-one time with the teacher he understood more clearly the assignment and was able to make the necessary changes which resulted in more credit for the assignment. On his midterm English exam, Nicholas received a poor grade because he thought he knew what the teacher wanted him to write about on the Part III essay. Although test modifications were provided per Nicholas’ 504 plan, and his teacher was available to visit the test modification room, Nicholas never asked for help and told the proctor that he understood what he should do. Nicholas was encouraged to use the word processor to produce written assignments including tests because of the meticulous way in which he wrote. The school provided Nicholas with an AlphaSmart word processor which he used to take all of his notes except mathematical problems, graphing, and charts.

Nicholas had positive relationships with adults, other boys, and with girls. In comparison, he had more positive relationships with adults and girls than with other boys. Nicholas tended to seek out relationships with adults and girls rather than boys.
his age. He did have about six male friends, but he tended to be shy and not as interested in video games and sports as other boys.

Tabitha, an 8th grade girl who agreed to participate in the study, had had academic concerns throughout her school career. At the elementary level teachers suggested that Tabitha be academically tested by a school psychologist, but the parents did not feel it was necessary. During middle school however, Tabitha’s parents agreed to academic testing. Due to confusion caused by the changing rules in New York State in order to come into compliance with Federal education rules, Tabitha’s testing had not been completed by the end of the 2007-2008 school year. At the time of this study Tabitha had not been diagnosed with any learning problem or attention difficulty.

Tabitha’s team of teachers was concerned with her academic progress because Tabitha acted like she knew what was going on during class, but when it came time for tests, she did poorly. Although Tabitha and her mother said they spent a considerable amount of time studying for tests and Tabitha knew the information the night before a test, she could not pull that information from her memory or express it on the test. Tabitha did tell her team of teachers that tests made her nervous, and that she felt like everything she knew left her mind when she sat to take the test. The team of teachers implemented test modifications for Tabitha that included using a separate location away from distractions, extended time, and clarification of questions and directions. However, there were no marked improvements.
The AIS teacher tried studying with Tabitha before tests. She tried to teach Tabitha techniques such as association of vocabulary words with prior knowledge. When studying vocabulary the AIS teacher had questions regarding what Tabitha had written in her notebook as words and definitions that were given by the classroom teacher. It was obvious that Tabitha was having difficulty copying what the teacher had on the overhead screen or board. She admitted to having a problem with her eyesight and was supposed to wear glasses. One teacher commented that Tabitha only needed the glasses to read the board or screen. However, at one point Tabitha said she had copied the vocabulary and definitions from a friend’s notebook, but that was copied incorrectly also. The AIS teacher believed that the incorrect vocabulary problem was not because of a problem with Tabitha’s friend’s notebook. Tabitha’s friend did not have difficulties on the vocabulary tests given. During math class Tabitha had no problems copying the information from the board.

Tabitha is well liked by adults and peers. She had positive relationships with adults, boys, and other girls. Tabitha would seek out recreational time with her parents, as well as peers. Another concern of the team of teachers was the great extent to which Tabitha could be social with her peers. Socializing appeared to be a priority, according to her teachers.

To begin the study, the student participants and their parents were each asked to fill out a pre-investigation questionnaire, see Appendix A and Appendix B. The purpose of the pre-investigation questionnaire was to determine how the students and their parents felt that the students learned best and the type of things that interfered
with the student’s learning. Students were then observed by the researcher and a meeting occurred between the researcher and the student. The student and the researcher worked together to come up with a small sign or signal to let the students know that he/she was not attending to the lesson at hand and that he/she needed to refocus. The researcher began the next day to take anecdotal observation notes of the student in the classroom. The researcher noted during observation times that the student was off task and the other types of things that might have been preoccupying the student. Upon noting the student’s off task behavior and the cause, the researcher, who was also the AIS teacher, would have provided the signal or sign to help the student return to task. At the end of the study each participant and their parents were asked to fill out the same questionnaire as a post investigation questionnaire, to see if anything had changed during the study. The student participants were asked to fill out the pre-investigation questionnaire & post-investigation questionnaire at school in a separate setting from the other participants to allow for confidentiality.

All returned questionnaires were kept in a locked drawer of the researcher’s desk. Parent questionnaires were returned in sealed envelopes to the researcher. Student participants were seen individually so as to maintain confidentiality.
Chapter IV Data & Results

Prior to the initiation of the investigation three students and their parents who agreed to participate each answered a pre-investigation questionnaire. The three students who participated in this small study attended a parochial junior high school. Two students were seventh grade boys and one was an eighth grade girl. None of the students in this study took a foreign language, but due to academic difficulties, attended an alternative class that provided support in the core subject areas of English language arts, math, science and social studies. Student names have been changed to protect their identity.

Stephen, a strawberry-blond haired, disheveled looking young man with glasses, noted at the beginning of the research that his best subject was math because he liked it and learning math came fairly easy to him. Stephen said he felt he learned best through visuals, listening, and writing. His parents, however, described Stephen’s best subject as science because he liked the subject and that the teacher used visuals and fun activities. Stephen’s parents commented that he learned best through visuals and hands-on activities. Both Stephen and his parents said that English language arts (ELA) was his most difficult subject.

Stephen said he felt good about himself and that school was a positive experience. He also noted he was glad that he was not bullied at school. His parents agreed that Stephen felt good about himself and that school was a positive experience for their son. Stephen’s parents mentioned that occasionally he felt as though his...
younger sister was favored by them, as siblings often do feel sibling rivalry for attention. Sometimes Stephen wanted to go to school while at other times he wished he could stay home. He said that he sometimes talked to his parents about school and his parents concurred. Stephen often communicated with his parents the fun things that happened at school and what grades he attained on tests or projects. His parents mentioned that conversations revolved around interactions with other students, his friends, and remarks that tests he had taken were easy. Stephen said that forgetting or not paying attention in class was why he did not complete assignments. His parents referred to his ADHD symptoms as reasons for not completing assignments or not paying attention in class. He and his parents felt that other students and their behavior were not a factor in Stephen not completing assignments.

Nicholas, a meticulously groomed blond–haired young man, began the study stating that his best subject in school was math because he liked the subject, it came easy to him, and his teacher used visuals. Nicholas felt his best ways to learn were through visuals, listening, and writing. Nicholas’ parents believed that his best subject was math because he liked the subject, as well as the teacher, and it was interesting. His parents agreed that visuals were one way in which their son learned, but they felt that hands-on activities were another way. Nicholas and his parents agreed that ELA was his most difficult subject.

Nicholas expressed that he felt good about himself because his family was healthy and everything was going well. His parents did not answer those questions. He and his parents concurred that school was a positive experience for him.
Although, Nicholas said he liked school sometimes, but at other times wished he could stay home. Nicholas’ parents did not answer as to whether their son just wanted to get through the day or wanted to go to school. Nicholas and his parents agreed that he did talk about his day when he got home from school. His parents noted he did not say too much, while Nicholas said he talked about “the usual unless something different or good happened.”

When asked if other students affected his school experience, Nicholas parents said yes. He agreed and said some students make school better while others do not. Nicholas mentioned that loud talking kept him from paying attention or completing assignments, while his parents noted that activities going on nearby were something that distracted his attention and kept him from completing assignments. Nicholas commented that other students’ behavior, such as yelling, screaming, or people running around kept him from completing assignments. His parents said they did not believe that the behavior of other students affected his completion of assignments. This was contradictory to how they responded to the previous question.

Tabitha, an attractive, dark-haired young lady, stated at the beginning of the study that social studies was her best subject and that she learned best through visuals and hands-on activities. Her parents concurred. Tabitha said that social studies was her best subject because her teacher talks, makes the subject interesting, that the teacher is likeable and uses fun activities. Tabitha’s parents noted most of the same reasons, except using fun activities. Tabitha felt she could do better at school by studying more and being more concerned about her grades. Her parents felt she was
hard on herself because she does study but does not produce grades consistent with the amount of times she studies. Tabitha said she feels that she can do better in school based on test grades and report card grades. Her parents agreed. Although Tabitha struggled to produce academically, she and her parents felt that school was a positive experience.

Some of the time Tabitha said she liked school and her parents mentioned that she was happy to talk about the school day. She said that when she talked to her parents she spoke about friends, classes, and tests. Her parents agreed that Tabitha talks to them about her friends, what is being taught in class, and struggles with academics. While her parents noted that she gets along well with everyone, she also noted that other students affect her school experience by talking or passing her notes. Tabitha said that friends and classmates kept her from paying attention and completing assignments. She also said that the behavior of other students such as talking and being compelled to listen to what others had to say kept her from completing assignments. Tabitha’s parents believed that she completed all of her assignments and that sometimes the behavior of other students, such as talking kept her from completing assignments.

At the beginning of the investigation all three students felt that school was a positive experience. The boys felt good about themselves, but the girl was concerned about grades and not having done enough to improve her grades. The boys and their parents agreed that ELA was the most difficult subject. In contrast, Tabitha and her
parents noted that math was most difficult for her. Liking a subject was a theme for all the students in regards to feeling that subject was their best subject.

All students did talk to their parents some about their school day. Two students said that the behavior of others, such as talking, yelling, screaming, and people running around kept them from completing assignments.

At the conclusion of the investigation the students and parents filled out a post-intervention questionnaire that was identical to the pre-investigation questionnaire. Again, students’ answers were compared to the answers of their parents.

Stephen recorded at the end of the study that his best subject was science because it came easy to him, as opposed to his pre-investigation questionnaire in which he reported his best subject as math. His parents’ responses matched his in that they felt Stephen’s best subject was science because it came easy to him. His parents continued to note as in the pre-investigation questionnaire that their son likes science and that the teacher used visuals. Stephen noted his best ways to learn were through visuals and listening, but didn’t mention writing as he did in his first questionnaire. His parents agreed that they felt he learned well through visuals, but also through hands-on activities, similar to what they said in their pre-investigation questionnaire. Stephen and his parents stated on both questionnaires that ELA was his most difficult subject.

Stephen commented that he felt good about himself, but unlike the pre-investigation questionnaire he mentioned that he felt nervous. His parents confirmed
this by saying they felt their son was insecure, he felt inferior, and he exhibited these through "goofy" behavior when he was with his friends. They did not elaborate in this way on the first questionnaire, nor did their son. Stephen described his nervousness as it had developed from thinking about taking exams. On the other hand, his parents again stated that Stephen felt that his sister is being favored at home, however this time they mentioned that their son was trying to fit in and be liked by other students at school. Stephen and his parents continued to find school a positive experience for him. He usually wanted to go to school, as he had stated earlier when filling out the pre-investigation questionnaire.

Stephen said that he did not talk to his parents much and his parents agreed that they had to probe their son to have him talk about what was going on in his school day including funny things his friends did or said. This response was similar to what Stephen and his parents said on the pre-investigation questionnaire. Stephen also noted that other students affected his school experience by providing him help when he needed it. This is contrary to his pre-investigation response that other students did not affect him. However, his parents felt that the other students did not affect him other than to do things that made him laugh where as during the pre-investigation questionnaire his parents did not feel that other student affected Stephen.

Stephen mentioned that what keeps him from completing assignments was a lack of understanding of the assignment or a lack of understanding of what the teacher was talking about. This response was contrary to what he had stated in his
first questionnaire because at that time Stephen had said that he was unable to complete assignments due to his lack of attention and forgetting. His parents continued to attribute his inability to complete assignments to his ADHD symptoms including lack of organization, careless mistakes, and sloppy handwriting, as they had in the earlier questionnaire. His parents also mentioned that socializing and laziness affected Stephen’s ability to complete assignments, which they had previously not stated. Stephen and his parents said that other students’ behavior did not keep Stephen from completing assignments, as they had said previously.

At the conclusion of the project Nicholas again stated his best subject was math because he liked the subject, it comes to him easily, and the teacher used visuals, as he had in the pre-investigation questionnaire. Nicholas’ parents concurred that his best subject was math because it comes easy to him, which they had not mentioned earlier that their son found math easy. However, they remarked as in the first questionnaire that their son also liked the teacher and that math was interesting for him. Nicholas and his parents agreed that his most difficult subject was ELA. His parents again stated on the post-investigation questionnaire that he learned well through hands-on activities, but Nicholas felt he not only learned through hands-on activities, but also through visuals, as he had mentioned on the first questionnaire.

Nicholas again stated as he did in the first questionnaire that he felt good about himself because his family was all healthy and things were going well. His parents mentioned that their son felt dumb at times because he worked hard, but his grades might not reflect the hard work he had put into the assignment, which they
previously did not answer on the first questionnaire. Nicholas and his parents continued to describe his school experience as positive.

Nicholas parents said he was excited to go to school which they did not respond to on the previous questionnaire. He said he liked school, but sometimes wished he could stay home, as he had previously stated. Nicholas elaborated on the second questionnaire that some students made school fun while others made it difficult to concentrate. His parents felt that the negative comments made by other students affected Nicholas school experience; previously they had not answered that section on the pre-investigation questionnaire. Nicholas explained that he talked to his parents about “the usual unless something different happens,” as he had previously remarked on the pre-investigation questionnaire. His parents elaborated on the second questionnaire that Nicholas talked a little about school such as taking promotional pictures for the play or in regards to negative comments made by other students that made him feel bad. Nicholas mentioned that the behaviors of other students like talking or whispering kept him from completing assignments. This is in contrast to what he had previously said referring to people yelling, screaming, and running around the room. His parents, however, were unaware of this according to both questionnaires because he did not say anything to them at home.

Upon the culmination of the study Tabitha continued to report that her best subject was social studies, but her parents said it was ELA, however her parents had previously described her best subject as social studies. Tabitha said she thought her best subject was social studies because the teacher talks and makes it interesting, and
the teacher is likeable and organized. Tabitha noted all of these qualities except the teacher being organized, in her first questionnaire, but had also noted previously that the teacher used fun activities. Her parents felt that because the teacher used fun activities and the teacher was likeable and organized that ELA was her best subject. This somewhat contrasts to their answers on the pre-investigation questionnaire where they said the teacher talks, makes the subject interesting and is likeable. Tabitha and her parents continued to agree that math was her most difficult subject, as in the pre-investigation questionnaire.

Tabitha noted that she felt okay about herself, while her parents saw her as mostly happy and cheerful. Tabitha mentioned that school stress made her feel just okay, this is similar to what she previously said in the first questionnaire where she described herself as able to do better academically and could study more. Her parents on the other hand noted that Tabitha’s poor body image and school work being difficult for her brought her down. They had noted in their first questionnaire that Tabitha was too hard on herself, and that although she studied she did not achieve the desired grades. Overall, Tabitha and her parents continued to feel positive about her school experience.

Tabitha remarked that she liked school sometimes and her parents commented that she wants to go to be with her friends. Both Tabitha and her parents agreed that she talks at home about school particularly in regards to friends and what happens in classes like tests, as they noted in the pre-investigation questionnaires. Other students affected her school experience according to Tabitha and her parents, similar to what
they noted in the first questionnaires. Again as previously, Tabitha intimated that friends and classmates kept her from completing assignments or paying attention. Her parents continued to believe that Tabitha completed all of her assignments, but other students fooling around or being disruptive could make paying attention difficult. Tabitha's parents also said, as they had in the preceding questionnaire, that the teachers and students made school a friendly experience for Tabitha.

When looking at the data from this study it is interesting to see that although the parents of the students who participated did not necessarily agree with their child in regards as to what was their child's best subject, they were well aware of where their student was having difficulty. Parents were cognizant of their child's feelings, especially about the child's self perception. Students were very conscious of the types of things that pulled their attention away from the task at hand.

All three students noted that the use of visuals was helpful for them. Students also mentioned in either their pre-investigation questionnaire, post-investigation questionnaire, or both questionnaires that the subject in which they did the best was because they liked the subject and/or liked the teacher. The boys agreed on both questionnaires that ELA was their most difficult subject, while the girl noted that math was her most difficult subject on both questionnaires.

The students and their parents felt that school was a positive experience for the student, both at the beginning of the study and at the end of the study. Although Stephen was the only student to admit that he had some unsettled adolescent feelings about himself, the others just said they felt good. The parents noted the typical
negative adolescent feelings of self that their students’ had like poor body image, feelings of inferiority, and that people looked at them as being stupid. Responses of students and their parents to the questionnaires can be found in Appendix C.

Each student was observed during regular class periods. If the researcher felt the student was off task, a signal was to be given to assist the student to refocus. Upon review of the anecdotal notes the number of off-task behaviors was compared to the number of visits and whether the signal was used. It was determined that Stephen had 18 off-task behaviors during 12 visits. A signal was never used as each time he was off-task Stephen returned to task upon seeing the researcher. Similarly, Tabitha experienced 16 off-task behaviors during 10 visits, but realized the researcher was nearby and returned to task without the signal. Nicholas experienced 20 off-task behaviors in 15 classroom visits. The researcher used the signal once to cue Nicholas that he was off-task and he needed to return to task. Nicholas, like the other two student participants would notice the researcher nearby, but did not the one time the signal was used. Off-task behaviors included, but were not limited to staring out the window, talking or listening to other students about something not related to the class, picking and biting at nails and cuticles, looking through their assignment book, and drawing in notebooks pictures that were not related to the subject being taught. Each student had one or more off-task behaviors per visit.
Chapter V Conclusions and Recommendations

This research project’s objective was to determine if providing a visual cue improved students’ ability to maintain focus in the classroom. Two seventh grade boys, an eighth grade girl, and their parents agreed to participate in the study. The students and their parents answered a pre-investigation questionnaire and a post-investigation questionnaire in order to determine whether any changes occurred due to the intervention provided. Intervention took place in the classroom where the researcher provided a visual cue when the student appeared off-task. The researcher took anecdotal notes of the students’ off-task behaviors and if the pre-agreed upon visual cue was needed.

The following are the results of this investigation. Each student had at least one off-task behavior per classroom observation. Each student had his/her own particular type of off-task behaviors. One student picked and bit at nails and cuticles, while another looked for opportunities to socialize. The other student usually became lost in thought. Only one student required a visual cue to be reminded to return to task. Teacher movement around the classroom dissuaded students from losing focus. Students and parents believed that visuals and hands-on activities were the ways in which the students’ learned well. Parents and students saw school as a positive experience.

The results of this investigation led me to believe that constant teacher movement around the classroom is a deterrent for all students. I believe that not having to provide a cue, except for one time, was due to the fact of the students being
in close proximity of me as I moved around the room, as Jones (2000) and Wong (2004) suggest. Both Jones and Wong believe that moving around the room deters students from off-task behaviors because the student does not wish to be caught off task by a teacher. Moving around the room deterred not only the students that were part of the study, but also other students in the class. This encourages me to continue moving around the room. Keeping students focused on the task at hand is very important for their learning of information and skills. I can do this not only by moving about the room, but by helping the classroom teachers with whom I work in preparing lessons that are differentiated so that all students feel capable, yet challenged, by the material.

The results of this research also led me to believe that Pelham et al. (2007) are correct that behavior modification such as providing a cue for attention is as important to students with attention difficulties as medication. Although both boys who participated in this investigation were taking medication for their ADHD symptoms, it was very obvious that medication did not totally control all the boys’ ADHD symptoms. It makes this researcher wonder that if all students diagnosed with ADHD were required to receive behavior modification classes in conjunction with their parents that those students would greatly benefit especially if the techniques to help the student maintain attention to task were shared with the students’ classroom teachers.

As a teacher I would talk with students who have attention issues and determine what type of visual cue he/she would like to have me use to remind
him/her to return to task. I would also encourage parents to speak with their child’s pediatrician regarding what type of behavior modifications they could use at home or if the doctor could recommend another medical professional who could provide some suggestions for appropriate behavioral modifications. These results have also prompted me to add a link on my school webpage for the Center for Children and Families at SUNY at Buffalo for parents and students who are looking for resources.

Results of this investigation have also led me to look at the webpage for the Center for Children and Families at SUNY Buffalo at least twice a month for new information regarding children with ADHD. I also find myself looking at other websites that provide information regarding ADHD. This investigation has encouraged me to remember that research like students can change and each student is an individual that responds differently to different stimuli than another student. It keeps me focused on looking for techniques that are going to help my students. It keeps me from becoming complacent and using the same strategies over and over that may not work for every student.

Students’ and parents’ belief that the use of visuals and hands-on activities were the ways in which the students learned well also led me to believe that when students are actively participating, then students maintain focus to task. This reminds me to collaborate with the teachers with whom I work to design lessons that include visuals and hands-on activities to engage students. Engaged students will have less inclination to off-task behaviors.
This investigation was extremely limited. Participant numbers were very small and the time frame in which this investigation took place was across a six month period. Two of the participants had known the researcher for four months prior to the investigation and the other participant had known the researcher for more than a year prior to the investigation.

In the future I would like to see an investigation that began with a program like that of Pelham, et al. (2007) where students and their parents work to find what behavior modifications work for the student during a summer program. The investigation would continue from this program into the student’s school year. The teacher or an investigator would provide those behavior modifications within the student’s classroom. If this could possibly take place over a couple of years it might allow the researchers, student, parents, and teachers an opportunity to find what works well for that student so that those behavior modifications can be used consistently to help the student. The objective after all is to develop focusing strategies that will work for the student to aid the student in obtaining an education.

While doing this research I learned a great deal not only about student focus, but about my students and their parents. I learned about my students’ insecurities. I learned that the parents of my students know their children and are involved in their lives. The parents know their child’s insecurities and were willing to share those insecurities with me. They know the ways in which their child learns best. Students know how they learn best.
My students and their parents have reminded me that school is not just a place where the students learn subject matter, but students also learn about being part of a society. They discover that not everyone reacts favorably to every part of their being and that some parts we shelter for only a few people that we can trust. Students learn what is acceptable in school versus out with friends or home with family. Parents and students have reminded me to be an observer and a gatherer of many types of information that make up a person.
References


Appendix A
Student Survey

Student __________________________

1. How do you think you learn the best: (circle all that describe you)
   a. hands-on activities  b. visuals  c. listening  d. writing

2. What subject do you feel you do best in: (circle one)

3. Why do you think you do well in this subject? (circle all that apply)
   a. I like that subject
   b. It comes easy to me
   c. The teacher talks a lot and makes it interesting
   d. The teacher uses visuals so I can see what he/she is talking about.
   e. The teacher uses fun activities that I learn from
   f. That subject reminds me of something I learned elsewhere.
   g. I like the teacher as a person.
   h. The teacher is very organized and there is little time to get off the subject

4. What subject do you do you find the most difficult: (circle one)

5. Overall how do you feel about yourself? What makes you feel that way?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

6. Is school a positive or negative experience to you? Do you want to come to school because you enjoy the school environment, or do you want to just get through the day and get home?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

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7. Do you talk to your parents about your school day? What do you tell your parents about school?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

8. What do other students do to affect your school experience?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

9. What things keep you from getting assignments completed or paying attention to a lesson?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

10. Does the behavior of other students ever keep you from completing assignments? If so, how does the behavior of the other student keep you from completing your assignment?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________
Appendix B
Parent Survey

Student _______________________

1. In what manner do you think your student learns best: (circle all that apply)
   a. hands-on activities  b. visuals  c. listening  d. writing

2. What subject do you feel your student does the best: (circle one)

3. Why do you think your student does well in this subject? (circle all that apply)
   a. He/She likes that subject.
   b. It comes easy to him/her.
   c. The teacher talks a lot and makes it interesting
   d. The teacher uses visuals so my student can see what he/she is talking about.
   e. The teacher uses fun activities that my student can learn from
   f. That subject reminds my student of something he/she learned elsewhere.
   g. My student likes the teacher as a person.
   h. The teacher is very organized and there is little time to get off the subject

4. What subject does your student find most difficult: (circle one)

5. Overall how do you think your child feels about himself/herself? What makes your student feel that way?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

6. Is school a positive or negative experience to your student? Is your child happy and excited about school and wants to talk about their day or is your child unhappy and anxious and doesn’t want to talk about their day?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
7. If your child talks to you about his/her school day what kinds of things does he/she say to you?

8. What do other students do to affect your student’s school experience?

9. What keeps your student from getting assignments completed or paying attention to a lesson?

10. Does your child tell you that other student’s behavior keeps him/her from getting his/her assignments completed? If so how does it keep you child from completing the assignment?
### Appendix C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student/Parents</th>
<th>Stephen Parents</th>
<th>Stephen's</th>
<th>Nicholas Parents</th>
<th>Nicholas' Parents</th>
<th>Tabitha</th>
<th>Tabitha's Parents</th>
<th>January</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best ways to learn</td>
<td>visuals, listening, writing</td>
<td>hands-on, visuals</td>
<td>visuals, listening, writing</td>
<td>hands-on, visuals</td>
<td>hands-on, visuals</td>
<td>hands-on, visuals</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Subject</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why you do well in this subject</td>
<td>like it, it comes easy to me</td>
<td>like it, teacher uses visuals &amp; fun activities</td>
<td>like it, comes easy to me, teacher uses visuals</td>
<td>likes it, teacher talks &amp; makes interesting, teacher likeable</td>
<td>likes it, teacher talks &amp; makes interesting, teacher likeable &amp; uses fun activities</td>
<td>teacher talks &amp; makes it interesting, teacher is likeable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Difficult Subject</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix C**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings About Self</th>
<th>good</th>
<th>good</th>
<th>good</th>
<th>(Blank on questionnaire)</th>
<th>can do better, study more, concerned about grades</th>
<th>hard on self b/c studies, but doesn't produce on tests</th>
<th>January</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What Makes You Feel This Way</td>
<td>not getting bullied</td>
<td>feels like younger sister is favored</td>
<td>family is all healthy &amp; things are going well</td>
<td>(Blank on questionnaire)</td>
<td>tests, report card grades</td>
<td>grades</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Experience</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want to Go/Get Through the Day</td>
<td>want to go, but sometimes don't want to go</td>
<td>talks about school</td>
<td>like sometimes; sometimes wish could stay home</td>
<td>(Blank on questionnaire)</td>
<td>like sometimes</td>
<td>happy to talk about the day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to Parents</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Said</td>
<td>fun things I did, what grade I got on an assignment</td>
<td>interactions w/ other kids, friends, says his tests are easy</td>
<td>the usual unless something different or good happens</td>
<td>not too much</td>
<td>friends, class, tests</td>
<td>friends, what is being taught in class, struggles w/ academics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do Other Students Affect School Experience</th>
<th>they make it more fun</th>
<th>has made friends easily, sits w/ a group at lunch</th>
<th>some make it better, some don't</th>
<th>yes, talk to me or pass me notes</th>
<th>gets along well w/everyone</th>
<th>January</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What Keeps from Completing Assignments/Paying Attention</td>
<td>I forget, not paying attention</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>loud talking</td>
<td>other things going on nearby</td>
<td>friends/ classmates</td>
<td>Gets all assignments completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the behavior of Others Keep Student from Completing Assignments</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Does Others Behavior Keep Student from Completing Assignments</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>yelling, screaming, people running around</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>talking, listening to what the other student has to say</td>
<td>talking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student/Parents</th>
<th>Stephen</th>
<th>Stephen's Parents</th>
<th>Nicholas</th>
<th>Nicholas' Parents</th>
<th>Tabitha</th>
<th>Tabitha's Parents</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best ways to learn</td>
<td>visuals, listening</td>
<td>hands-on visuals</td>
<td>hands-on visuals</td>
<td>hands-on visuals</td>
<td>hands-on visuals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Subject</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why you do well in this subject</td>
<td>it comes easy to me</td>
<td>like it, comes easy to him, teacher uses fun activities</td>
<td>like it, comes easy to me, teacher uses visuals</td>
<td>comes easy to him, likes the teacher</td>
<td>Teacher talks making it interesting, is likeable, &amp; organized</td>
<td>Teacher uses fun activities, is likeable, &amp; organized</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Difficult Subject</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings About Self</td>
<td>good, nervous</td>
<td>insecure; inferior; goofy w/ friends</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>he sometimes thinks he's dumb</td>
<td>Ok</td>
<td>mostly happy &amp; cheerful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Makes You Feel This Way</th>
<th>exams make nervous</th>
<th>feels sister is favored at home; trying to fit in &amp; be liked by others</th>
<th>family is all healthy &amp; things are going well</th>
<th>he works hard, but sometimes his grades don't reflect the hard work</th>
<th>Stressed by school</th>
<th>poor body image, &amp; school work not coming easily can bring her down</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Experience</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want to Go/Get Through the Day</td>
<td>want to go</td>
<td>want to go</td>
<td>like sometimes; sometimes wish could stay home</td>
<td>excited about school</td>
<td>like sometimes</td>
<td>wants to go to be w/ friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to Parents</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>not unless probed</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes, a little</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Said</td>
<td>nothing</td>
<td>funny things friends say or do</td>
<td>the usual unless something different happens</td>
<td>talks about wanting to take promo pictures for the school play; negative comments made by other students that make him feel bad.</td>
<td>class, tests</td>
<td>talks about school friends, what happens in class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do Other Students Affect School Experience</th>
<th>other than fun, others make it hard to concentrate</th>
<th>negative comments affect his school experience</th>
<th>yes, teachers &amp; students make it a friendly experience</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>help me if I need help</td>
<td>not much</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Keeps from Completing Assignments/Paying Attention</td>
<td>ADHD symptoms (lack of organization, careless mistakes, sloppy writing); socializing; laziness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Completes all assignments; other students being disruptive or fooling around makes paying attention difficult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Usually gets most assignments done; ADHD symptoms sometimes cause missed assignments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>friends/ classmates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Does Others Behavior Keep Student from Completing Assignments</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>talking &amp; whispering</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>